CHALLENGES OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES IN COMMUNICATION AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP: A BIBLIOMETRIC APPROACH

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***ABSTRACT*:**

Sustainable Development Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality, reports that despite having the same abilities and skills as men and demonstrating equal effort, women receive lower compensation, thereby restricting their economic and professional growth. It is further emphasized that it will take approximately 140 years for women to achieve parity in positions of power and leadership. In this context, female leadership has become increasingly crucial in organizations, where gender diversity in top management positively influences business outcomes. This study seeks to answer the question: What are the challenges that organizational strategies face regarding communication and female leadership? To address this, a bibliometric methodology was applied to a corpus of 141 scientific articles sourced from the Scopus and Web of Science databases, prioritizing publications indexed in Q1 journals. The results, derived from a co-occurrence analysis of keywords and thematic clustering of the scientific output, identified four conceptual clusters: (1) structural barriers and professional development; (2) transformational leadership and gender-sensitive work environments; (3) cultural diversity, resilience, and regional leadership; and (4) stereotypes, representations, and symbolic challenges. These findings reveal that the challenges faced by women in leadership roles are not only structural but also symbolic and cultural, affecting their visibility, legitimacy, and capacity for action within organizations. This work contributes to the literature on gender equality by providing empirical evidence that can guide legislation and the formulation of more inclusive organizational policies.

Keywords: *Gender equality, bibliometrics, decision-making, women leaders*

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary organizational management, communication strategies are increasingly being redefined by the growing influence of women in leadership positions. Changes in organizational communication management not only reflect a shift toward gender equity but also a renewed focus on effectiveness and inclusivity. According to Tripathi et al (2023), the primary goal is to develop a deeper understanding of how female leaders can transform traditional communication practices to respond to emerging challenges, highlighting the importance of strategies that promote transparency and active stakeholder participation (Torres-Mancera et al., 2023; Abdalla et al., 2024a; Elaigwu et al., 2024).

Additionally, (Kanter, 1979) draws attention to how perceptions of power can be significantly influenced by the presence of women in senior management roles. This study argues that "power" (Vyas et al., 2024; Carter et al., 2025a), in the organizational context is not merely a prerogative of formal authority, but also manifests through strategic communicative skills that facilitate more effective negotiation and cooperation among diverse organizational groups (J. D. Schaechter et al., 2023; Han & Zatepilina-Monacell, 2024a; Carter et al., 2025b).

Similarly Elaigwu et al. (2024) highlight how female leaders used their social media platforms to implement communication strategies that not only responded effectively to crises (D'Amato et al., 2023; Saleem et al., 2024a) but also enhanced public policy implementation through a proactive and communicative approach. This strategy demonstrated female leaders' ability to integrate communication methods that catalyze change and foster greater community engagement.

This study is structured as follows: first, we review the existing literature relevant to our topic, as contained in our document corpus. Second, we outline the bibliometric methodology used to address our research question. Third, we present the results, and finally, we provide conclusions based on our findings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theorical Implications
2.1.1 Theory of Circumscription, Compromise, and Self-Creation

The theory of circumscription, compromise, and self-creation, proposed by Gottfredson (2002) argues that career decisions and identity formation are influenced by social factors, particularly gender and class barriers. This theory examines the constraints that limit individuals' career choices from an early age and how these limitations are intrinsically linked to perceptions of gender roles and societal expectations.

In this regard, individuals develop a "public identity" that may be compromised by the need to conform to gender roles or prestige expectations, even if these diverge from their personal desires or aspirations. This tension between internal self-concept and external expectations is crucial for understanding how women, in particular, navigate professional environments. Despite possessing the necessary skills and ambitions, many women may be compelled to pursue careers aligned with traditional gender roles—barriers that persist in society and become normalized, thereby limiting their full potential and leadership.

Moreover, the theory highlights how individuals—especially women—may adjust their career aspirations to align with what is perceived as compatible with their gender and social status. For instance, high-performance or decision-making professions are often segregated by gender, which can discourage women from aspiring to certain careers due to perceived incompatibility with their gender identity.

In the context of communication and leadership strategies, the theory suggests that women can benefit from environments that promote awareness of and challenge these constraints. This implies cultivating organizational cultures that value diverse aspirations and capabilities beyond gender stereotypes, while also supporting female leadership development by providing opportunities to break from traditional expectations.

Thus,Gottfredson 's theory (2002) provides a foundation for understanding how social norms and gender structures influence women's career decisions, and underscores the importance of adopting strategies that allow women to express and develop their leadership without undue restrictions. These strategies include mentoring, support networks, women-focused leadership programs, and organizational policies that explicitly address gender barriers in professional advancement.

2.1.2 Theory of Individual Differences and Leadership

Chan & Drasgow (2001) present a theory that focuses on the motivation to lead, evaluating individuals' predisposition toward leadership based on personal differences. This framework proposes that variations in leadership motivation explain why some individuals feel more inclined than others to assume leadership roles, regardless of their competencies or environment.

Three key factors influence leadership motivation: affective-identity, non-calculative, and social-normative motivations. Each factor contributes uniquely to how a person is driven to lead. The affective-identity factor relates to the personal satisfaction derived from leadership; the non-calculative factor refers to leading without regard for personal gain; and the social-normative factor reflects a sense of duty or cultural expectation to lead.
In relation to communication strategies and female leadership, the theory reveals the importance of understanding how individual differences in leadership motivation affect women's leadership development. Women may face unique challenges that influence their motivation, such as pervasive gender stereotypes or sociocultural expectations that discourage them from pursuing leadership roles.

Therefore, understanding how individual differences shape leadership motivation provides a valuable framework for developing strategies that foster effective and inclusive leadership. Recognizing and addressing these motivational factors can help create environments where female leadership not only becomes feasible but also flourishes.

2.1.3   Gendered Organizations Theory

ACKER (1990) gendered organizations theory addresses how workplace structures are inherently shaped by gender, challenging the common assumption of gender neutrality. According to this theory, gender assumptions are deeply embedded in organizational structures, work processes, and corporate imagery, reinforcing male dominance and gender segregation in the labor sphere.

Organizations often obscure their gendered nature through practices that depersonalize workers, treating them as disembodied and gender-neutral entities. This abstraction favors the ideal male worker, whose work and personal life are distinctly segmented, while relegating women to roles deemed less valuable and closely tied to caregiving responsibilities—under the assumption that they cannot fulfill the expectations of the "ideal worker."

In terms of communication strategies and female leadership, this theory emphasizes that to foster authentic female leadership, organizations must acknowledge and dismantle practices that perpetuate gender segregation and inequality. This includes redefining leadership roles so they are not exclusively modeled on traditional masculine traits and recognizing the unique skills and competencies women bring to the workplace.

In conclusion, the theory offers a critical framework for understanding how gender norms and structures influence organizational dynamics and leadership development. It suggests that meaningful transformation in organizations requires a fundamental shift in how gender roles are conceptualized and valued, which is essential to empower women to assume leadership roles and have their contributions recognized on par with their male counterparts.

2.1.4   Role Congruity Theory and Prejudice Towards Female Leaders

Eagly & Karau (2002) present the role congruity theory, which addresses the prejudice faced by women in leadership positions. The theory explains that the perceived incongruity between traditional female gender roles and leadership roles results in biases that negatively affect how women are perceived and evaluated as leaders.

Regarding communication strategies and female leadership, addressing the biases that hinder women in leadership is crucial. According to Eagly & Karau (2002), role congruity suggests that women face specific challenges due to stereotypes that place them at a disadvantage. Therefore, effective communication strategies should include promoting leadership images and actions that combine communal traits with assertiveness—ensuring that women are viewed as both empathetic and decisive.

Crafting narratives in media and organizational settings that highlight successful female leaders can help reshape stereotypical perceptions. Women in leadership roles can also benefit from adopting assertive communication styles that project confidence and competence while maintaining approachability. This balance can help challenge the perceived incongruity between gender and leadership roles.

Additionally, creating inclusive organizational environments that provide equal opportunities for women to attain and succeed in leadership roles is essential. Implementing gender-equality policies and combating implicit bias are key steps toward enabling women to thrive as leaders, free from gender-based prejudices. Addressing the challenges outlined in the role congruity theory through effective communication strategies can enhance women's leadership representation and contribute to broader cultural change.

2.1.5   Motivational Language Theory

Mayfield & Mayfield (2018) propose the motivational language theory, which suggests that leaders who effectively employ three types of speech acts—locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary—can influence their employees' motivation and performance. These speech acts define how leaders create meaning, provide direction, and build emotional connections with employees.

1. **Locutionary acts** involve using language to create shared understanding and convey organizational culture, rules, and values—often through metaphors or illustrative stories.
2. **Perlocutionary acts** focus on providing direction and reducing uncertainty by clarifying tasks and establishing specific goals.
3. **Illocutionary acts** involve empathetic and humanizing communication, enabling leaders to share emotions and acknowledge employee achievements, thereby strengthening interpersonal relationships.

For women in leadership positions, strategically applying these speech acts can be especially powerful. In environments where gender stereotypes may undermine their authority or question their leadership competence,

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using structured motivational language can help establish credibility and promote a more inclusive and inspired workplace.

Furthermore, the theory highlights that effective communication is not only about the content but also about delivery, ensuring consistency between words and actions. For female leaders, alignment between communication and behavior can enhance perception and impact, reinforcing their leadership legitimacy.

2.1.6 Charismatic Leadership in Organizational Contexts

Conger & Kanungo (1987) propose a behavioral theory of charismatic leadership that emphasizes how certain leaders, through their personal capabilities, can generate profound and extraordinary impacts on their followers. This theory is particularly relevant for understanding female leadership and communication strategies in organizational settings.

Women leaders often face additional challenges due to gender stereotypes and traditional expectations. However, charismatic leadership provides a powerful framework for female leaders by underscoring the importance of vision, innovation, and emotional connection with followers.

Charismatic leadership relies on a leader's ability to articulate an inspiring vision that challenges the status quo and mobilizes followers toward ambitious goals. For women, this involves not only setting clear and visionary objectives but also communicating them in ways that resonate with their teams' values and aspirations.

Establishing genuine, trusting relationships with team members is fundamental. By being open, approachable, and empathetic, female leaders can enhance their charismatic influence and foster environments where creativity and innovation flourish.

In conclusion, charismatic leadership offers a valuable paradigm for female leaders seeking to become effective change agents within organizations, highlighting the significance of vision, strategic communication, and contextual sensitivity in cultivating inspirational and transformative leadership.

2.2 Existing Literature

2.2.1 Communication Strategies and Female Leadership During the Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, communication strategies and female leadership had to undergo significant adaptation to face unprecedented challenges, from managing remote teams to leading frontline healthcare responses (Lengel et al., 2023). In this regard, Tripathi et al. (2023b) highlight how Indian professionals faced increasing domestic responsibilities and job insecurity, emphasizing the need for human resources policies that promote transparent communication and strong organizational support to mitigate these difficulties (Chernyavskaya et al, 2022).

Cruz et al. (2023) note that in the healthcare sector, female leaders had to directly confront the challenges posed by the pandemic. Their visibility and communication strategies in leadership roles during the health crisis challenged prevailing gender stereotypes and required leadership characterized by both empathy and decisiveness. Shelton & Wu (2023) add that the effectiveness of leadership was also evident in the education sector, where female leaders employed digital technologies to ensure educational continuity, adapting teaching methods and student-parent interactions through virtual platforms.

Furthermore, Agénor et al. (2018) demonstrate how leaders in non-governmental organizations leveraged communication to mobilize resources and coordinate community efforts, illustrating how effective communication can drive collective action and support during crises. In the technology sector, Han & Zatepilina-Monacell (2024b) emphasize the promotion of diversity and inclusion, showing how female leaders fostered an empathetic and inclusive work environment—crucial for innovation and adaptability during uncertain times.

2.2.2 Communications Barriers in Female Leadership

The communication barriers faced by women in leadership positions are complex and multifaceted, influenced by a combination of gender equity, cultural stereotypes, and organizational structures. According to Balakrishnan & Moonesar (2015), female leaders are often held to higher standards than their male counterparts, which can negatively impact perceptions of their authority and effectiveness. Biju & Pathak (2020) emphasize the challenge

of balancing assertiveness with empathy, where women must avoid being labeled as either too emotional or too harsh. Striking this balance is crucial to being perceived as both competent and approachable leaders.

Research by Rafnsdóttir et al. (2018) & Carter et al. (2025c), underscores the importance of access to mentoring networks and adaptation in technically demanding fields. In a study by Rafnsdóttir & Júlíusdóttir (2018b), the expansion of support networks is shown to equip women with essential tools for developing effective communication skills. Madden et al. (2022) further notes that women in technology must establish credibility in male-dominated environments by employing direct and strategic communication to overcome prejudice and linguistic barriers.

Similarly, Lengel et al. (2023) offer insights into how women leaders in the healthcare sector must communicate with clarity and empathy, particularly during crises, to lead teams through high-stress situations while maintaining strong performance.

Studies by Arora et al. (2019) and Živković et al. (2024) highlight additional challenges in political and multicultural settings. While Živković et al. (2024) examines how political leaders must use persuasive communication strategies in environments where they are minorities, Arora et al. (2019) focus on how linguistic and cultural barriers demand intercultural competencies to lead effectively across borders.

2.2.3 Cultural Perceptions and Female Leadership

Cultural perceptions play a decisive role in shaping the opportunities and challenges women face in leadership roles. These perceptions vary not only by region and sector but are also deeply rooted in social norms and expectations that may either hinder or facilitate women's access to positions of power. According to Tripathi et al. (2023c) cultural norms can severely restrict women's leadership opportunities by imposing traditional roles that associate leadership and ambition primarily with masculinity. This underlying bias suggests that interventions must not only target structural change but also seek to educate and shift the cultural perceptions that sustain these norms.

Erzikova & Berger (2016) highlight a common challenge for women in leadership: they often must adjust their communication style to navigate gender-based biases. While women may adopt effective communication styles, they are frequently criticized for being either too aggressive or too soft. This double standard not only affects their effectiveness but also their perceived legitimacy in leadership roles.

Martin (2015) explores how in fields like technology, perceptions that women are less capable in STEM areas can limit their advancement. This highlights the importance of implementing specific policies that promote equal opportunities and challenge gender stereotypes in male-dominated sectors. Additionally, Weber-Lewerenz & Vasiliu-Feltes (2022) emphasize the value of support networks and mentorship, which not only help women develop and refine leadership skills but also overcome cultural barriers. Such networks provide crucial spaces for guidance and support, strengthening women's resilience in the face of persistent cultural challenges.

A holistic approach is required to address cultural barriers in female leadership. Changing policies is not enough—transforming cultural perceptions about what is considered acceptable or expected for women in leadership is also vital. By challenging and reshaping these perceptions, organizations can foster more inclusive and equitable environments that benefit not only women leaders but the entire institutional culture.

2.2.4 Power Dynamics and Gender in Organizational Leadership

According to McCarthy et al. (2015), traditional expectations of leadership—often based on masculine ideals—can undermine the authority and effectiveness of female leaders. This phenomenon is evident in the tendency to interpret leadership traits such as assertiveness and decisiveness through a masculine lens, which may lead to the undervaluation of women's contributions. Similarly Main et al. (2022), discusses how organizational structures that favor men can systematically exclude women from leadership opportunities, particularly in male-dominated sectors. They highlight the importance of implementing equity-focused policies that dismantle barriers preventing women from advancing. Ruiloba-Núñez & de Zuazu (2022)) extend this perspective to international contexts, noting that global cultural perceptions of gender can significantly affect female leadership. Women leaders

working across cultures must possess intercultural skills to navigate diverse and often contradictory gender expectations.

Moreover, Ford et al. (2024) argue that communication strategies can be instrumental in shifting organizational power dynamics. By embracing approaches that prioritize transparency and collaboration, women can challenge conventional leadership expectations and foster cultural change that values diversity and inclusion. J. Schaechter et al. (2023) highlight the particular challenges faced by women in high-tech industries, where power structures can be especially exclusionary. Female leaders in tech must overcome gender stereotypes and fight for visibility in spaces that have historically minimized their presence and achievements.

Heriberta et al. (2024) reinforce the crucial role of mentorship and support networks in helping women carve out pathways to leadership and transform workplace power dynamics. These support systems provide guidance and platforms for challenging gender norms and expanding the influence of women across sectors.

2.2.5 Communication Strategies in Public Policies Led by Women

In the field of public policy, female leadership and their communication strategies play a vital role in the development and implementation of inclusive and effective policies. According to Ford et al. (2024b) and Madden et al. (2022), women leaders often adopt a communicative approach that emphasizes empathy and inclusiveness, which facilitates broader societal engagement. This communication style not only promotes transparency but also helps build trust between governments and communities. This has proven especially effective in public health initiatives, where clearly communicated policies have succeeded in achieving high levels of community participation (Campos-García & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019; Thu, 2024a).

Female political leaders use communication strategies to educate and mobilize voters around critical issues. Truijens et al. (2015) show that communication focused on women's rights and social justice can be a powerful tool for changing narratives and addressing systemic inequality, leading to tangible legislative reforms and lasting societal impact. This kind of strategic communication not only challenges established norms but also sets a new standard for inclusive and committed leadership.

Nonetheless, women in public leadership frequently face complex challenges, such as gender biases and stereotypical expectations that affect public perception of their effectiveness (Adato et al., 2005). To counter these challenges, robust and adaptive communication strategies are essential (Chao, 2011). Effective female leaders use personalized narratives and data-driven evidence to reinforce their leadership legitimacy, as shown in studies where clearly articulated policies led to greater acceptance and support for public programs (Haeseler, 2013).

2.2.6 Co-Occurrence Analysis in Bibliometrics Applied to Corporate Governance

Bibliometric analysis has become an essential tool for mapping knowledge development in applied social sciences, particularly in management and economics (Lim et al., 2024). Among its various techniques, co-occurrence analysis stands out for its ability to identify conceptual networks structuring a field. According to Cao et al. (2024) and Şengöz et al. (2024) this methodology reveals associations between key concepts based on how frequently they appear together in article titles, abstracts, or keywords, thereby identifying thematic trends, research cores, and gaps in the literature.

This technique has been widely used in recent studies to explore the positioning of topics such as corporate governance, organizational leadership, transparency, accountability, and financial performance (Nirmal et al., 2024). Balkan Akan (2025) notes that tools such as VOSviewer, Biblioshiny, and CiteSpace are frequently employed to visually map relationships between terms, identify thematic clusters, and construct co-term networks. (Gautam & Kumar (2024) add that these platforms have enabled the identification of emerging research patterns in management, ranging from corporate sustainability to innovation in organizational structures.

(Kumar et al., 2024) point out that in the context of corporate governance, this technique has enabled the classification of prevailing approaches in the literature, revealing strong connections between governance structure and variables such as sustainability, business ethics, and gender equity. Various studies have applied this method to track the evolution of leadership and management practices and their impact on corporate reputation and performance in competitive markets (Razmjooei et al., 2024). Moreover, co-occurrence analysis has also been

used to visualize links between corporate policies and sustainable development goals in emerging contexts (Mondal & Singh, 2025).

Therefore, the present study poses the following question: *What are the challenges organizations face in their communication strategies and female leadership?* To answer this question, we conducted a bibliometric analysis (James et al., 2024) to identify key challenges such as gender disparities, cultural and structural barriers, and strategies for inclusion (Shelton & Wu, 2023b). For this analysis, we compiled a document corpus of 327 articles sourced from top-tier databases including Scopus and Web of Science. Table 1 lists the software tools used in the study.

Table 1. Software Applications Used in the Bibliometric Analysis

Software	Version	Description
Bibliometrix	4.3.2	Data preprocessing, scientific performance analysis, and conceptual structure mapping.
VOSviwer	1.6.20	Mapping co-occurrence of keywords and visualizing thematic clusters
Python	3.13.2	File integration and classification

3. <u>METHODOLOGY</u>

To conduct the bibliometric analysis, it was necessary to establish a document corpus. For this purpose, the PRISMA methodology was applied (Hermala et al., 2025; PRISMA Flow Diagram, 2024), to define the selection procedure for both data sources and articles (see Figure 1). Two search equations were developed to retrieve the documents—one for each of the selected databases: Scopus and Web of Science (see Table 2). These two databases were chosen due to their adherence to high-quality standards and the rigorous peer-review process of their indexed publications

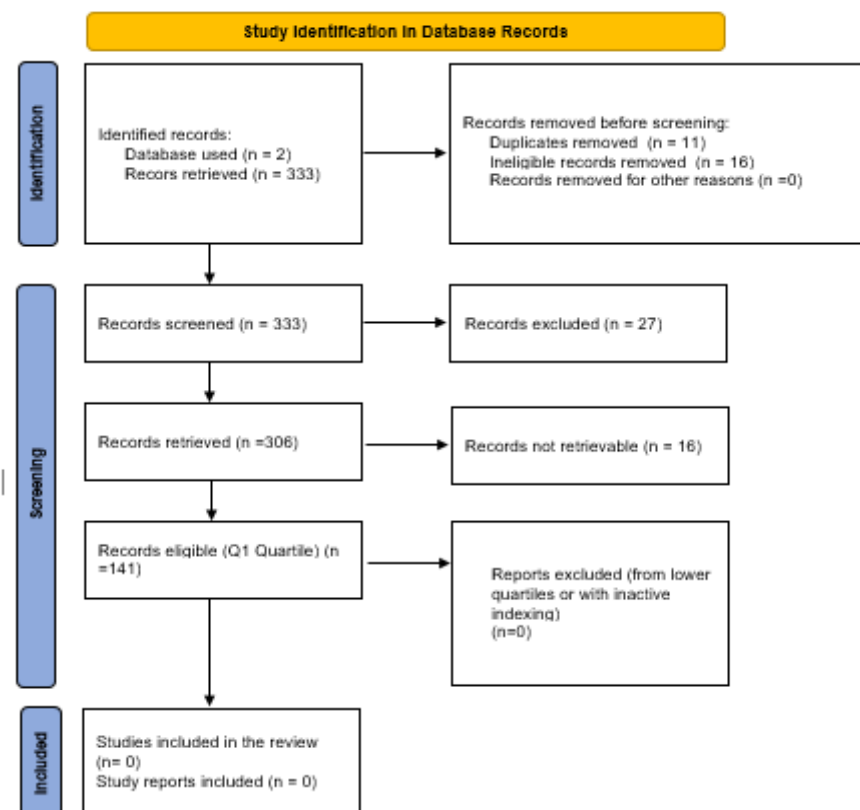**Figure 1.   Flow Diagram the PRISMA methodology**

Table 1. Search Equation

Database	Equation	N° of documents
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (communication AND leadership AND (organization OR firm OR company OR business OR enterprise) AND (woman OR women)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "ECON") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "MULT"))	132
Web of science	communication AND leadership (All Fields) AND (organization OR firm OR company OR business OR enterprise) (All Fields) (woman OR women) (All Fields) Document Type: Article Web of Science Categories: Management, Economics, Business, Communication, Social Science Interdisciplinary, Business Finance,	201
Total		333

To perform the bibliometric analysis, we developed the following workflow:
1. In line with the search equations outlined in Table 2, documents were extracted in .bib and .csv formats, as required by the software tools listed in Table 1.
2. All .bib files were merged into a single dataset. Duplicate entries were removed using a custom Python script that harmonized metadata fields across the two sources, accounting for format inconsistencies.
3. Another Python script was developed to classify journals by quartile (Q1 to Q4) based on scientific quality and relevance (Santos & Amorim-Lopes, 2025; Wu et al., 2025), ANazarovets & Mryglod (2025) quartile classification is a widely used methodological strategy in bibliometric and systematic reviews, enabling a more focused and rigorous selection of high-impact literature (Lee et al., 2025). A total of 141 Q1-indexed records were selected.
4. A bibliometric overview was conducted using Biblioshiny (from Bibliometrix) to explore core bibliometric indicators.
5. Based on the analysis of conceptual terms provided by the authors, four relevant clusters were identified using Biblioshiny and VOSviewer (Bhunia & Singh, 2025; Sundar & Gurupandi, 2025a).
6. A co-citation analysis was conducted for each of the four clusters to address the research question: What are the main challenges organizations face in their communication strategies and female leadership? (Gomes et al., 2024; Bukar et al., 2025; Sundar & Gurupandi, 2025b).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Exploration of Key Bibliometric Indicators

Figure 2 presents the bibliometric processing of 141 documents published in Q1-ranked journals. The analysis spans the period from 1975 to 2025. The dataset comprises 141 publications from 85 scientific sources, including journal articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings. The data reveal an average annual growth rate of 1.4%, suggesting a moderate yet sustained increase in academic interest in this field over five decades.

The average age of the documents is 7.16 years, indicating a relatively recent knowledge base aligned with the growing academic focus on gender equity, female leadership, and communication strategies in organizational

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contexts over the past decade. Moreover, the documents show an average of 21.9 citations per article, reflecting high visibility and significant impact within the scholarly community.
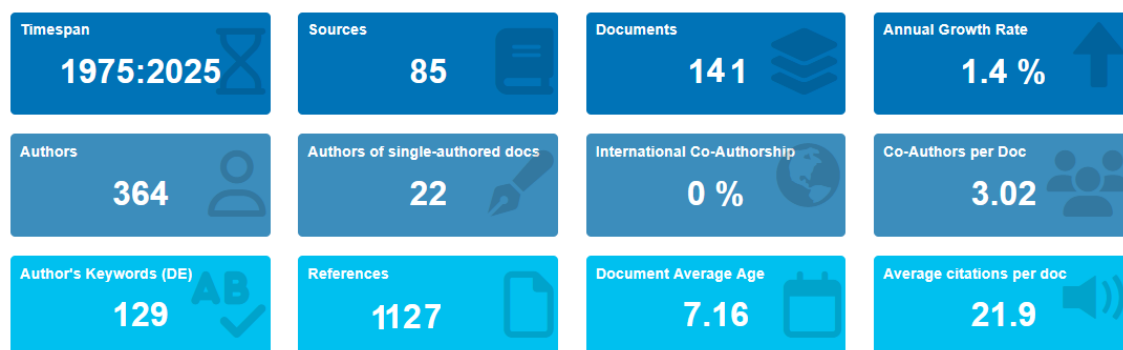
In terms of content, the analysis identifies 599 Keywords Plus and 129 author-defined keywords, suggesting a high degree of conceptual dispersion. This may reflect either a lack of theoretical consensus or the presence of multiple disciplinary approaches—both of which represent challenges for consolidating a unified theoretical framework on female leadership and strategic communication within organizations.

From the perspective of authorship, 364 researchers have contributed to this field, including 22 who published as sole authors. The average number of co-authors per document is 3.02, consistent with collaborative patterns typically observed in the social sciences.

Regarding document types, journal articles are the most prevalent (134), followed by early-access publications (4) and conference papers (3). This distribution highlights a clear preference for peer-reviewed scientific publishing, reinforcing the quality and methodological rigor of the analyzed literature.

Taken together, these bibliometric indicators highlight structural challenges in the development of knowledge on female leadership and organizational communication, such as thematic fragmentation, limited internationalization of scientific production, and the need to strengthen more interconnected and collaborative research lines. These findings provide a solid foundation for proposing academic and organizational strategies to advance this emerging field of inquiry.

Figure 2. Bibliometric Metric

Timespan	Sources	Documents	Annual Growth Rate
1975:2025	85	141	1.4 %
Authors	**Authors of single-authored docs**	**International Co-Authorship**	**Co-Authors per Doc**
364	22	0 %	3.02
Author's Keywords (DE)	**References**	**Document Average Age**	**Average citations per doc**
129	1127	7.16	21.9

Note: Extracted from biblioshiny > Overview>Main Informaction

4.2   Challenges for Organizations in their Communication Strategies and Female Leadership

To address the research question—*What are the main challenges organizations face in their communication strategies and female leadership?*—a co-occurrence network analysis was conducted using the Biblioshiny tool. As shown in Figure 3, and in the Degree Plot in Figure 4, four primary clusters were identified, accounting for more than 60% of the conceptual terms defined by the 364 contributing authors. Based on these results, the clusters were conceptually named as follows:

First cluster: Structural Barriers and Professional Development
Second cluster: Transformational Leadership and Gender-Sensitive Work Environments
Third cluster: Cultural Diversity, Resilience, and Regional Leadership
Fourth cluster: Stereotypes, Representations, and Symbolic Challenges.
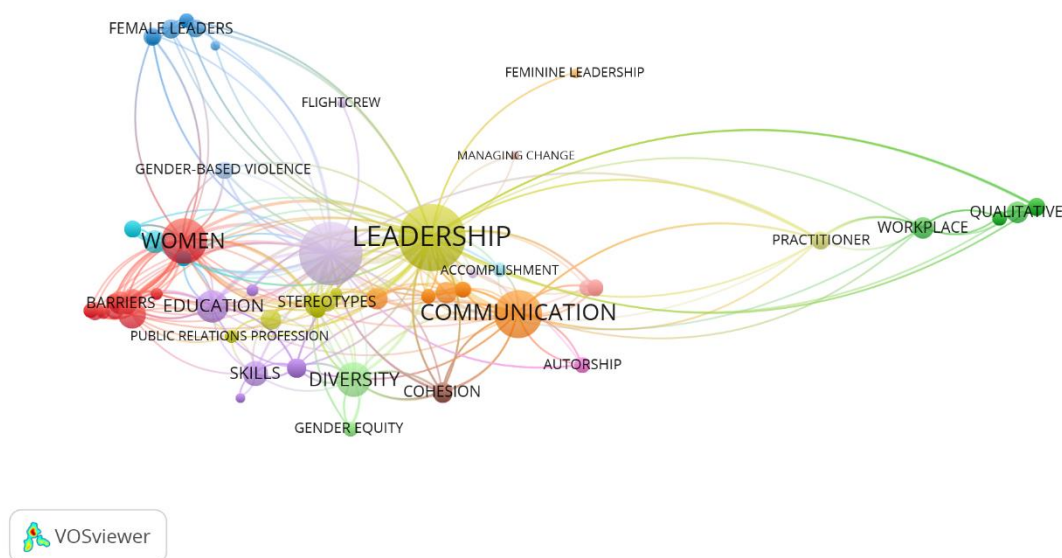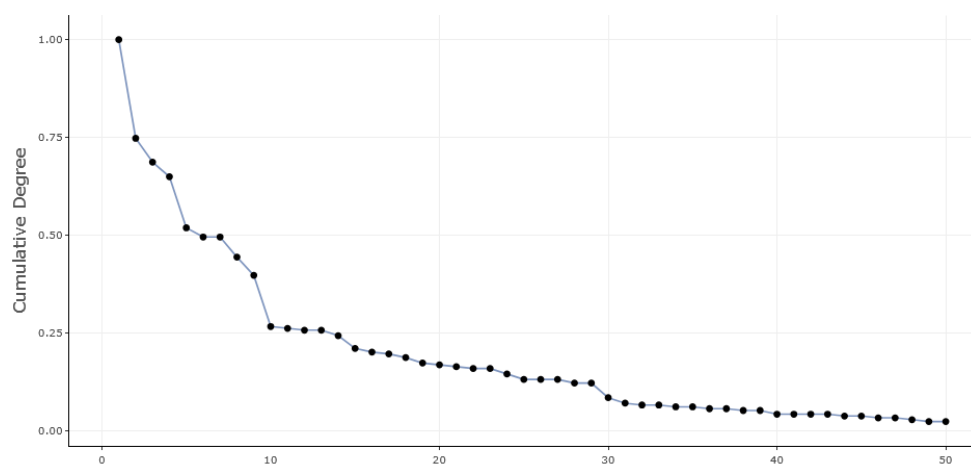
Figure 3.   Co-occurrence Network Graph

Figure 4.   Graph of cumulative degree of nodes in the bibliometric network

Cluster 1: Structural Barriers and Professional Development
Figure 5 illustrates the co-occurrence map for Cluster 1. This group includes terms such as *career barriers*, *empowerment*, *equality*, *feminism*, *personnel management*, and *women managers*, pointing to a focus on systemic obstacles and organizational dynamics that hinder women's advancement, particularly in access to leadership, promotion, and favorable working conditions.

Studies within this cluster show a strong consensus around the existence of structural barriers that affect women's professional growth and leadership access. These barriers operate at multiple levels—individual, organizational, and societal—and are manifested through factors such as lack of self-confidence, the glass ceiling effect, hierarchical organizational cultures, and persistent gender stereotypes. For instance, in the ICT sector in Lithuania, Naseviciute & Juceviciene (2024) identified both intrapersonal barriers (e.g., self-perception) and environmental constraints (e.g., male-dominated work environments), along with strategies applied at both the individual and organizational levels.

Similarly, Carter et al. (2025d) highlight how women's professional motivations and workplace needs vary across multicultural contexts—such as Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. These studies underscore that factors

like professional development, fair compensation, organizational culture, and empathetic leadership influence women's job retention and turnover decisions (Živković et al., 2024b). This diversity of expectations emphasizes the need for organizations to offer sensitive and adaptable responses (Saleem et al., 2024b).

In summary, this cluster reveals that the challenges surrounding female leadership are not limited to external factors, but also emerge from the internal configuration of power structures, institutional communication, and professional socialization. Organizational communication strategies must therefore take a proactive stance in identifying and dismantling invisible barriers, fostering inclusive, equitable, and sustainable work environments where women can thrive professionally without structural constraints..

Figure 5.   **Co-occurrence graph of cluster 1: Structural barriers and professional development**
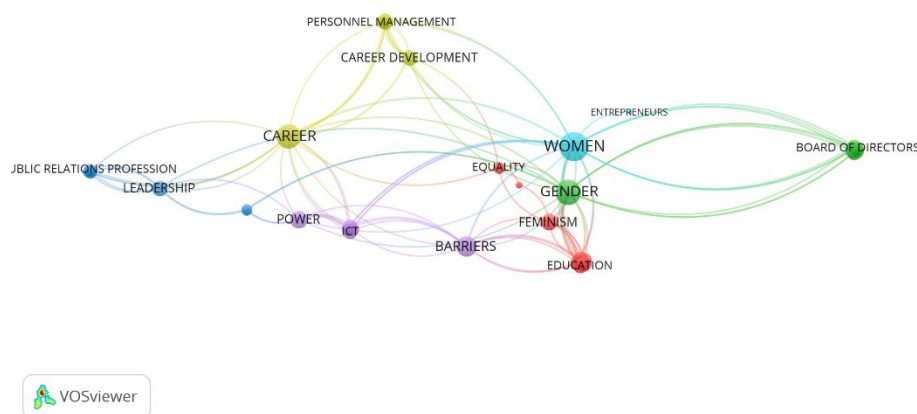
Cluster 2: Transformational Leadership and Gender-Sensitive Work Environments
As shown in Figure 6, the co-occurrence map for Cluster 2 includes terms such as *transformational leadership*, *workplace*, *well-being*, *community service*, *qualitative analysis*, and *postpartum*. These terms reflect a focus on leadership styles that are responsive to personal and social contexts, as well as the design of inclusive and gender-sensitive work environments.

This cluster addresses the need to rethink power dynamics and organizational culture from a perspective that prioritizes equity, inclusion, and well-being (Ramseook-Munhurrun et al., 2025). Studies by Chakraborty & Serra (2024) & Hosseini et al. (2024) suggest that leadership styles rooted in empathy, effective communication, and talent recognition foster more inclusive and collaborative workplaces, where women are offered greater opportunities for career advancement.

Transformational approaches are characterized by encouraging active participation of women in decision-making processes, fostering organizational resilience, promoting teamwork, and facilitating peer support (Hosseini et al., 2024). In organizations that adopt such leadership models, women report increased recognition, motivation, and clarity in their career trajectories—especially in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as the automotive and technology industries (Heriberta et al., 2024b).

Carter et al. (2025e) further argue that transitioning to gender-sensitive work environments involves more than formal policies; it requires a cultural transformation within institutions—incorporating structured mentorship, openness to diversity, and emotional intelligence as integral components of strategic leadership (Ford et al., 2024c). In this sense, leaders who emphasize collaboration and flexibility have demonstrated a positive impact on organizational commitment, female talent retention, and innovation(Ford et al., 2024d).

In conclusion, this cluster demonstrates that transformational leadership with a gender-sensitive lens is essential for breaking traditional patterns of exclusion and for building organizations that are not only more equitable but also more resilient and human-centered. These leadership models, which focus on the individual and their environment, emerge as strategic tools for both organizational and social innovation in the 21st century.

Figure 6. **Co-occurrence graph of cluster 2: Transformational leadership and gender-sensitive work environments**
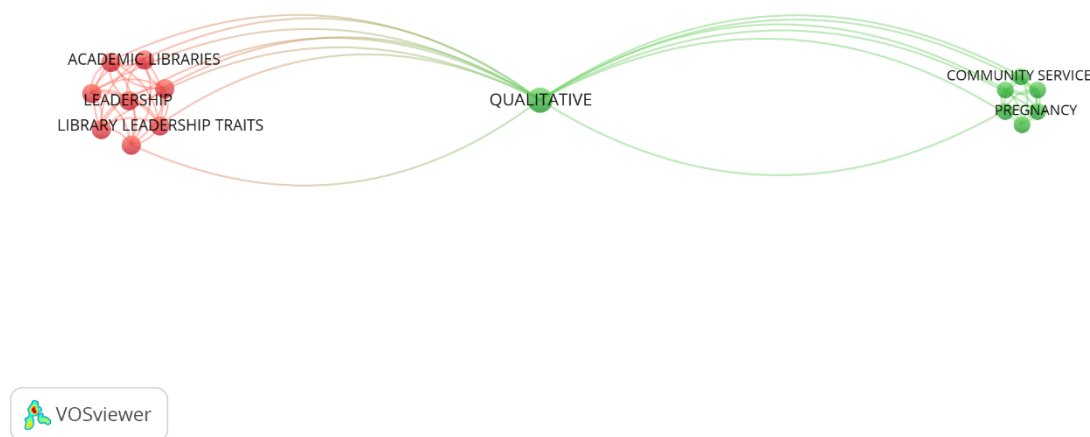
Cluster 3: Cultural Diversity, Resilience, and Regional Leadership

Figure 7 presents the co-occurrence map for Cluster 3, which includes concepts such as *Asian female leadership*, *cross-cultural theory*, *disaster risk reduction*, *MENA region*, and *executive presence*. This cluster emphasizes the analysis of female leadership through an intercultural and geopolitical lens, highlighting resilience, visibility, and region-specific conceptual frameworks.

This cluster brings together studies that examine how women leaders navigate and transform institutional and cultural environments marked by restrictive social norms, rigid hierarchical structures, and adverse geopolitical contexts (De La Cruz et al., 2023). Patterns are particularly evident in regions such as Asia, the Persian Gulf, and North Africa, where female leadership faces symbolic barriers, such as the so-called "concrete ceiling," which reinforces the systematic exclusion of women from positions of power (Heriberta et al., 2024c).

According to Abdalla et al. (2024b) community resilience emerges as a key category in these contexts, not only as a collective capacity to cope with crises (natural, social, or institutional) but also as a strategy of female leadership rooted in environmental commitment. Women leaders in disaster-prone regions have demonstrated outstanding capabilities in designing inclusive local responses, underlining the importance of gender-sensitive risk management strategies (Pato et al., 2024a).

Saleem et al. (2024c) show that regional female leadership involves constant negotiation between visibility and legitimacy, requiring the strategic use of executive presence, impression management, and the construction of professional credibility. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Middle Eastern countries, where female leaders employ adaptive communication strategies to maintain their roles in patriarchal corporate environments Saleem et al. (2024c).

Furthermore, many female leaders in culturally conservative regions must overcome not only internal organizational barriers but also external societal resistance related to traditional gender roles, family pressures, and the lack of inclusive public policies. These women develop multiscalar strategies that combine technical competencies, emotional intelligence, informal networks, and institutional activism, thereby enhancing their impact both within and beyond their organizations (Pato et al., 2024b).

In conclusion, this cluster demonstrates that female leadership in diverse regional contexts is deeply shaped by the intersection of cultural identity, strategic resilience, and social transformation. These women become key figures in both organizational evolution and broader community-level structural change.

Figure 7. **Co-occurrence graph of Cluster 3: Cultural diversity, resilience and regional leadership**
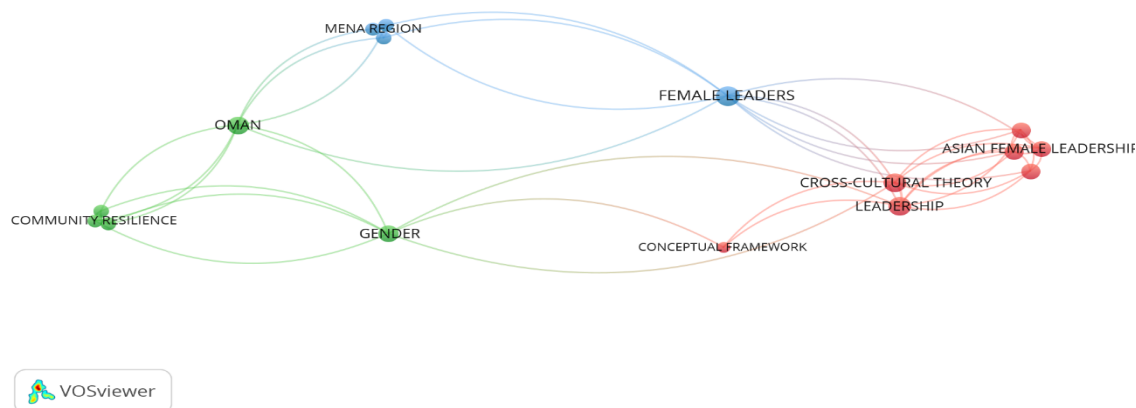
**Cluster 4: Stereotypes, Representations, and Symbolic Challenges**

Figure 8 depicts the co-occurrence map for Cluster 4, where dominant concepts include *biases*, *stereotypes*, *sexism*, *role models*, *women leadership*, and *public relations profession*. This cluster focuses on the symbolic and cultural challenges facing female leadership, particularly in relation to social perceptions, media representation, and gender stereotypes.

This cluster delves into the symbolic obstacles that women leaders face—challenges that are often not codified in formal rules but embedded in cultural expectations, social imagery, and dominant narratives about leadership (Thu, 2024b). Numerous studies show that female leadership continues to be constrained by persistent stereotypes that associate power, authority, and rationality with traditionally masculine traits (Chakraborty & Serra, 2024b).

According to Pato et al. (2024c), women's leadership—particularly in sectors such as winemaking, sports, or science—is often assessed through masculinized performance standards. This forces women to adopt hybrid leadership styles, manage their visibility, or establish legitimacy through additional symbolic effort. Bartolini & Massa (2024) similarly note that many women experience identity ambiguity, having to constantly balance contradictory expectations: to be competent without appearing aggressive, and empathetic without appearing weak.

Consequently, this cluster calls for an expansion of organizational strategies into the cultural and communicative domain, recognizing that gender gaps in leadership are not only structural but also profoundly symbolic. Combating sexism requires a rethinking of not only promotional practices but also the narratives that legitimize and reproduce inequality.

Figure 8. **Co-occurrence graph of cluster 4: Stereotypes, representations and symbolic challenges**
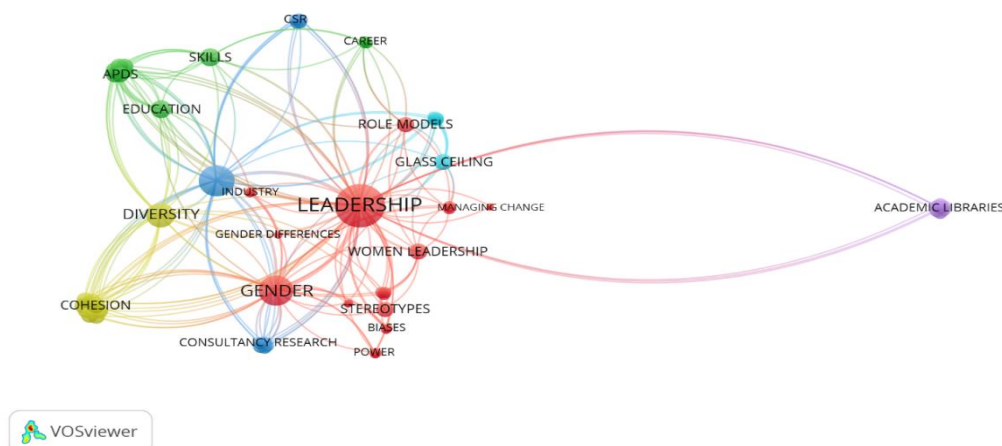
5. **CONCLUSIONS**

This bibliometric study has allowed for the structured identification and analysis of the main challenges faced by organizational strategies concerning communication and female leadership. Based on an analysis of 141 documents indexed in high-impact databases (Scopus and Web of Science) within the Q1 quartile, it is evident that the topic has gained increasing relevance in scientific literature, with an annual growth rate of 1.4%, an average of 21.9 citations per document, and an average publication age of 7.16 years, reflecting a recent and high-impact body of literature.

The co-occurrence analysis of keywords and the construction of conceptual clusters allowed for the structuring of the field into four major thematic axes: (1) structural barriers and professional development; (2) transformational leadership and gender-sensitive work environments; (3) cultural diversity, resilience, and regional leadership; and (4) stereotypes, representations, and symbolic challenges. These clusters account for over 60% of the conceptual connections in the network, evidencing strong thematic centrality.

Among the main findings, it is confirmed that women face multidimensional barriers (structural, cultural, symbolic) that limit their access, retention, and advancement in leadership positions. Likewise, the most effective organizational strategies to counter these barriers combine empathetic communication, cultural transformation, collaborative leadership, and mentoring networks.

From a regional and intercultural perspective, the challenges vary significantly depending on the geopolitical context, being particularly critical in regions with deeply rooted patriarchal structures. In such cases, women lead through adaptive resilience strategies, symbolic management, and communicational positioning, challenging traditional norms and reshaping authority models.

Finally, this study provides relevant empirical evidence for policymakers, educational institutions, and private organizations by offering a robust conceptual framework for designing strategies that promote greater gender equity in leadership spaces. For future work, interdisciplinary and comparative research is recommended, as the results are promising for developing meta-analyses that quantitatively reinforce the identified clusters. Furthermore, these clusters open avenues for deeper research and transformation into constructs suitable for multivariate methods such as factor analysis.

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