

Climate Change, Entrepreneurship and Sustainability at United Nations Conferences

Implications of the role of women entrepreneurs in climate change and health

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is considered one of the greatest threats to health and quality of life. International cooperation initiatives, such as the United Nations Climate Change Conferences (COP), aim to promote solutions to this situation. These include proposals for female entrepreneurship, which seek alternatives to mitigate climate change and ensure the well-being of women, as the group with the highest poverty rates and most dependent on threatened natural resources.

The objective of this study is to describe the evolution of research on aspects related to climate change and health carried out at the COPs and to analyse the relevance of women entrepreneurs in the scientific literature on international meetings.

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1. Introduction

The twenty-eighth edition of the Conferences of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) at the end of 2023 (from 30 November to 12 December). The twenty-ninth edition was held in Baku (Azerbaijan) from 11 to 23 November 2024. These meetings brought together representatives from nearly 200 United Nations member states, ministers and heads of state, technical experts and heads of non-governmental organisations, among other dignitaries. Following open consultation with stakeholders on the topics and sequencing, the programmes included health as a specific section of the agenda for the first time, as well as the incorporation of cross-cutting issues, among which gender and inclusion aspects stood out (United Nations, 2023c). As a result, COP28 and COP29 hosted events such as the first Health Day and the first ministerial meeting on climate and health, where priority actions to address the devastating health problems resulting from climate change were discussed.

With regard to gender, the need to strengthen funding to reduce the gender gap with climate action solutions was highlighted, especially in relation to labour market access policies for small and medium-sized start-ups. Both issues, health and the relevance of entrepreneurship and women's empowerment in climate-related aspects, have been addressed at previous Conferences of the Parties (UNFCCC. Conference of the Parties (COP), 2020, 2022, 2023; UNFCCC. Secretariat, 2023), although it is in recent years that they have been developed in greater depth.

This article analyses the impact of the above-mentioned issues in prestigious publications. It begins with a general analysis of the bibliometric treatment of the Conferences of the Parties, paying particular attention to the consequences of climate change for health and female leadership. The work focuses on a detailed study of the role of women as drivers of climate solutions from a leadership and entrepreneurship perspective in scientific literature.

The study of developments and trends in health research and the importance of female entrepreneurship within the Conferences of the Parties, as one of the most influential scenarios in global climate decisions, will serve to determine future lines of research or study needs in this regard.

1.1. *Conferences of the Parties (COP) and health*

The climate, and in particular the climate change that society has been facing for decades, has aroused growing interest in the scientific community, especially since the last quarter of the 20th century, as reflected in bibliometric studies published in high-impact journals (Alkhaldi et al., 2023; Bagdi et al., 2023; Costa et al., 2023; Laino&& Terribile, 2023; Setiawan et al., 2023; Singhania et al., 2024). The research that has emerged around the Conferences of the Parties, the supreme body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, since 1995, has in turn generated a large amount of scientific output. In this regard, articles related to the enactment of protocols or pacts, agreements reached at COPs or those that have not been fulfilled over time, and COP announcements and reviews stand out as relevant topics in the Web of Science repository (Bakošová, 2023; Cohen et al., 2022; Cozier, 2015; Welz, 2013).

COPs have become key assessment bodies with regard to climate-related issues and how their evolution affects the health of the planet (Evans-Agnew et al., 2024; Pires, 2017; Wei et al., 2012). Although it had been a latent topic in previous conference debates, it was not until COP28 that the first Health Day was held, focusing on issues such as the impact of climate on human health and good practices for prevention and health adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change (United Nations, 2023b).

The intersection between health issues, women's leadership in business, and the global agendas of the United Nations Climate Change Conferences shows a rapidly expanding field of research. In the case of health, the results of COP29 in Baku confirmed the centrality of this area within climate resilience. The Global Climate Resilience Framework includes human health as one of seven priority areas for adaptation, alongside water, biodiversity, food, infrastructure, poverty

eradication and the protection of cultural heritage. Guidelines were also approved for the development of indicators capable of measuring progress in these areas, with explicit attention to social inclusion, human rights and particularly vulnerable groups such as children, young people and people with disabilities (Secretariat of State for the Environment, 2024). Scientific research in health has also followed this trend: bibliometric analyses conducted on the COVID-19 pandemic show how studies on risk communication, the resilience of health systems and social perceptions of health have intensified dramatically, consolidating an academic space that links health, the environment and global governance (de las Heras-Pedrosa, et al., 2022; Evans-Agnew et al., 2024).

At the same time, the issue of gender and the role of women entrepreneurs has become increasingly important on the international climate agenda. In Baku, the mandate of the gender agenda was renewed, ensuring its continuity until 2034. The importance of female leadership in climate governance processes was emphasised, and the need for disaggregated data and climate financing that incorporates a gender perspective across the board was stressed (Secretaría de Estado de Medio Ambiente, 2024). From a scientific perspective, studies on female entrepreneurship show that women entrepreneurs play a fundamental role in creating organisational environments based on well-being and happiness, which not only promotes job satisfaction and productivity, but also constitutes a factor of resilience in contexts of economic, health and environmental crises (Laino & Iglesias, 2023). More than half of the publications on female entrepreneurship and happiness management have been published since the pandemic, confirming the impetus that the experience of the health crisis has given to this line of research (de las Heras-Pedrosa, et al., 2024).

The convergence of these perspectives highlights how COPs and academic literature agree on placing health and gender at the centre of climate action (Okonofua, 2024). Research highlights that strengthening socio-economic resilience to climate change requires both the incorporation of a gender perspective into health and adaptation policies and support for women entrepreneurs in strategic sectors such as health, sustainable food and energy (de las Heras-Pedrosa, et al., 2020). Thus, the evidence points to the need for an interdisciplinary approach that recognises the interdependence between well-being, equity and sustainability, thereby shaping a research agenda that responds both to the international commitments made at the COPs and to contemporary social and scientific demands (Lieu, et al. 2020).

1.2. Climate summits and female entrepreneurship

However, while health has played a particularly prominent role at COP28, this has been paralleled by aspects related to gender and the emergence of women as entrepreneurs and leaders, as reflected at COP29. Numerous thematic areas of the summit have shown the beneficial effects on the climate of supporting women's economic empowerment, offering this group the same employment opportunities and the possibility of entrepreneurship in different sectors of work (UNFCCC Secretariat, 2023). As leaders of change, women are a vital group for driving effective climate solutions that are also inclusive (Adefare et al., 2024; Shahbaz et al., 2023). This contributes significantly to the growth of innovative and climate-smart business solutions that mitigate the negative evolution of climate change and, therefore, its effects on health.

At COP29, women's representation in specific sessions related to female entrepreneurship and leadership was more prominent than at previous summits. As with COP28 Health Day, gender-sensitive data for climate action was presented for the first time at a special conference on the inclusion of women in the labour market as leaders in climate change (United Nations, 2023a).

However, the growing interest shown by institutions and the media in addressing and disseminating health and climate-related issues around climate summits is not reflected in the scientific literature. For this reason, the objectives of this paper are as follows:

- To analyse the main lines of research that exist on the treatment of both health and female entrepreneurship at COPs.

- To provide a summary of the research activity that has been carried out on health and female entrepreneurship (volume and citation of studies, their evolution over time and trends) as a result of the aforementioned climate summits.

- To identify and graphically represent the predominant themes of the aforementioned topics of study, as well as the most influential authors on the national scene and their affiliations; the prestigious publications that include the largest number of works; and the geographical areas that generate the most scientific output.

2. Materials and methods

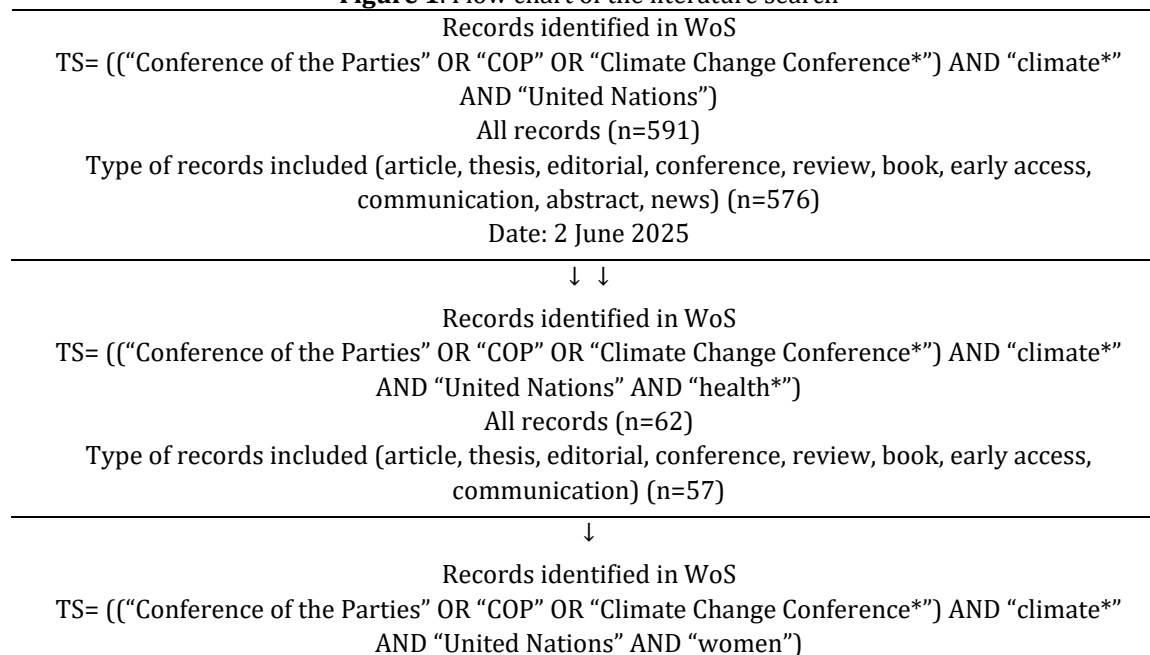
A systematic review of the scientific literature on the subject under study was carried out; a VOSviewer of the more than 500 articles found in the Web of Science database on the topics covered in the POPs; as well as a more exhaustive content analysis of the 50 entries that highlight aspects related to climate change and gender in business initiatives.

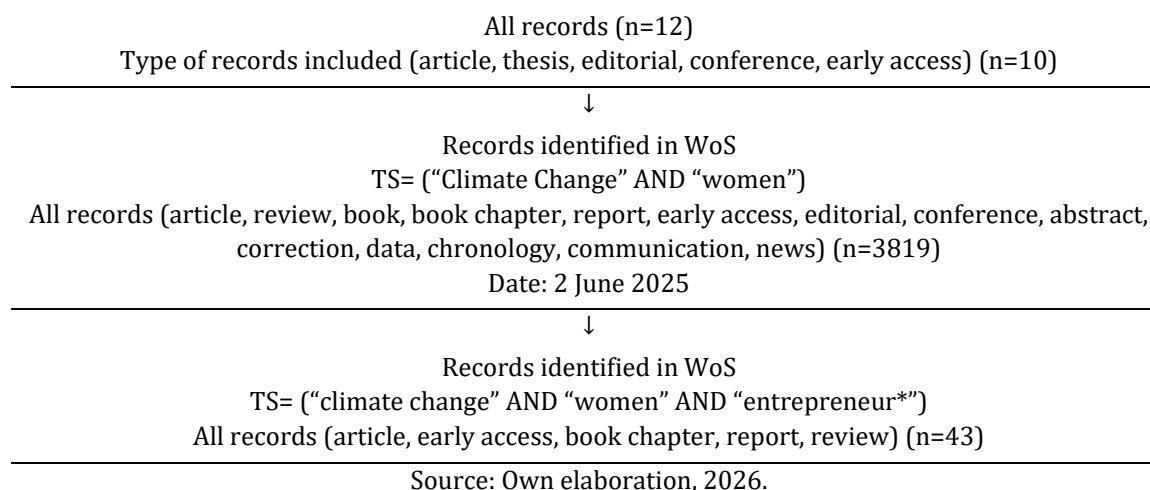
In addition to this existing systematic review on climate and climate change in relation to health and female entrepreneurship in general, the bibliographic analysis focuses on those records that study issues related to COPs. The repository used to extract scientific records to work with is Thomson Reuters' Web of Science (WoS), as it is considered an appropriate and reliable reference source for searching for relevant references (Királ'ová & Šperková, 2024). This repository was selected exclusively in order to be more accurate in the extraction and analysis of bibliometric data (Matsimbe et al., 2022; Ogretmenoglu et al., 2022) using the VOSviewer tool.

The VOSviewer software allows the creation of bibliometric maps, whose graphical representation "facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the semantic and conceptual structure of the research" (de Las Heras-Pedrosa et al., 2024; Rando-Cueto et al., 2022, p. 667). Based on the data processing obtained with VOSviewer, visual representations related to research on COPs and research on female entrepreneurship from a climate perspective are provided: maps of co-occurrence of authors' keywords, most influential co-authorships and geographical areas where it occurs most, as well as entities that most finance research on the subject (Bao et al., 2023; de las Heras-Pedrosa et al., 2022; Van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

The flow chart in Figure 1 describes the methodological process followed in this study to achieve the results that responded to the objectives set.

Figure 1. Flow chart of the literature search





3. Results

The results first differentiate the scientific output of studies referring to COPs, focusing on those that address two of the main issues in recent years in this scenario: health and gender, and the inclusion of women in climate-related issues.

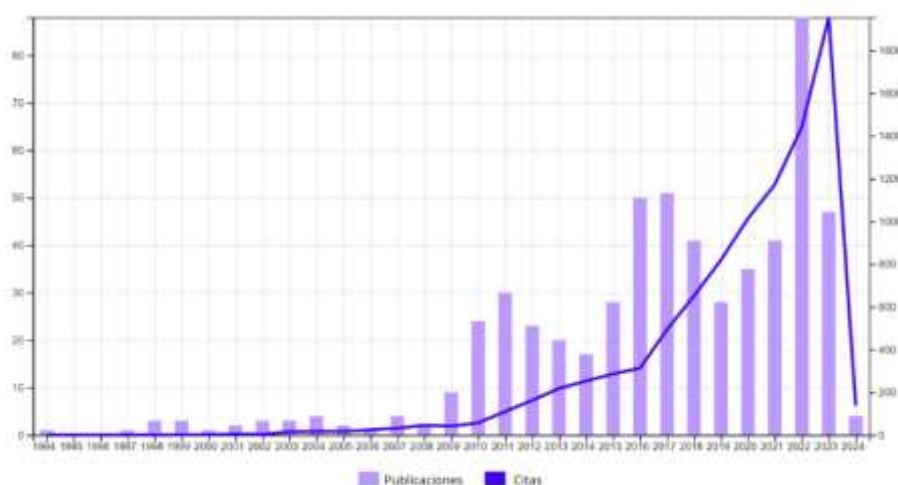
In order to verify the importance of the emerging female business community in the field of climate change, the analysis continues with a second part that studies climate action and female entrepreneurship, concluding with an analysis of the convergence of both phases of the research.

3.1. Conferences of the Parties

According to the records found in the WoS repository, there has been notable interest in the scientific literature, mainly in the last decade (although the first climate summit was held in 1995) (Figure 2).

However, this growth is not progressive but rather declines in certain periods. The drop in the number of records in 2023 and 2024 compared to the previous year, when the highest number of articles was collected, is striking. Nevertheless, the citation index has risen steadily since 2010, with no change in 2023, and the citation curve continues to rise, approaching the vertical coordinate in parallel.

Figure 2. Publications and citations per year



Source: Own elaboration. Web of Science data, 2025.

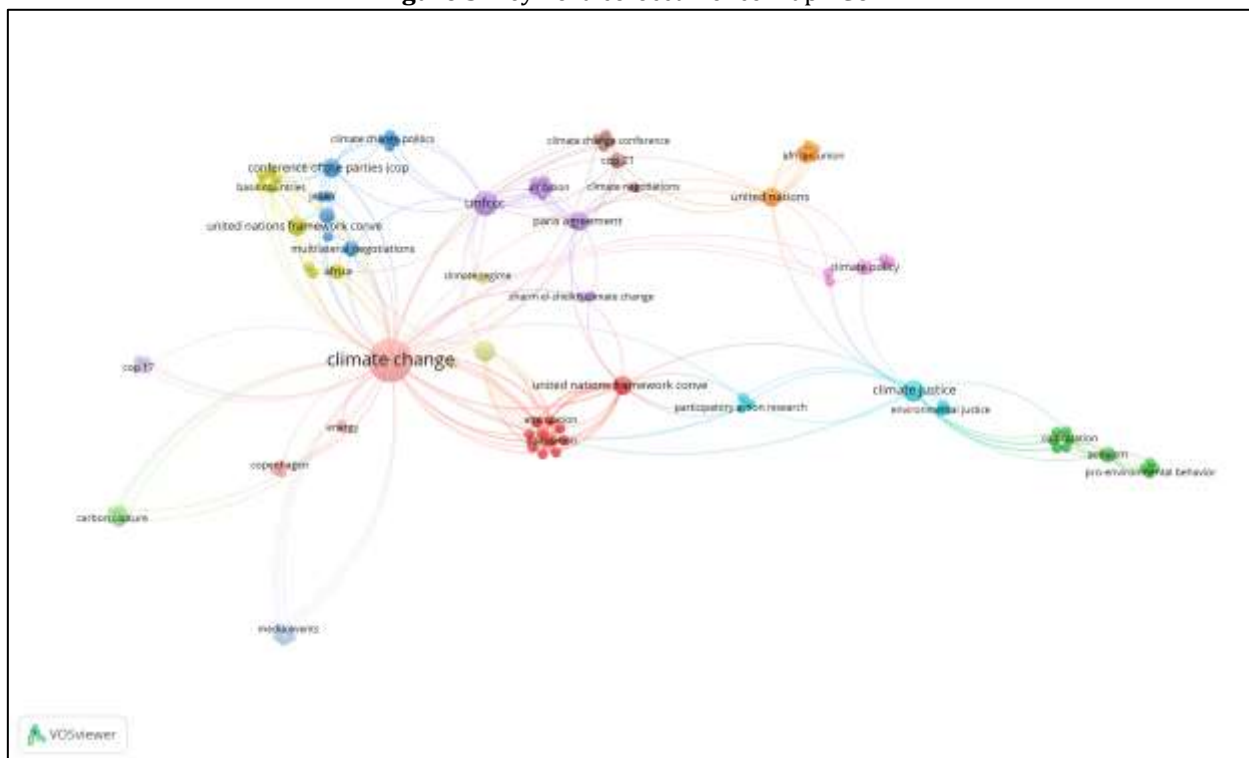
The citation report for the 576 records found reported a total of 9,283 citations, with an average of 16.4 citations per record and an H-index of 47 (at least 47 records have received 47 citations).

In terms of the most prominent subject areas, those addressed in more than 20 records, the category with the highest number of entries corresponds to the field of Environmental Sciences - Ecology, present in almost half of the works compiled in WoS (279 records, representing 49.293% of total scientific output). This category is followed by: Atmospheric Sciences - Meteorology (with 166 articles published); Public Law (158); Business Economics (123); Engineering (119); Energy Fuels (116); Geography (102); Technological Sciences (85); Public Administration (78); Biodiversity Conservation (39); International Relations (37); Physical Sciences (33); Computer Science (27); Social Problems (26); Agriculture (25); Communication (25); Forestry (24); and Sociology (21).

Analysis of the records using VOSviewer software allows us to explore in depth those aspects that are the focus of scientific studies that have addressed the issue of climate summits. Thus, taking into account the keywords chosen by the authors to define their work, Figure 4 shows a graphical representation provided by VOSviewer of the most significant term groupings or clusters, which are most frequently addressed in research and establish the most relationships with each other. Thus, the clusters with the highest co-occurrence in this case are those headed by "climate change" and "conference of the parties", among which other terms such as "globalisation", "journalism" or "sustainability" and "international environment", "climate regime", "diplomacy", "internal negotiation", "Kyoto Protocol", "multilateral negotiations", "non-state actors", "side events" and "Japan", respectively.

Figure 3 also highlights other clusters, such as those referring to the United Nations or activism, which include concepts such as "intersectional exclusion," "pro-environmental behaviour," "colonisation," "decolonisation," "social change," "youth" and "collective." The names of some of the climate summits are repeated, such as COP17, COP21, COP22 and COP25. It is in the group mentioning COP17 that the concept of gender also appears.

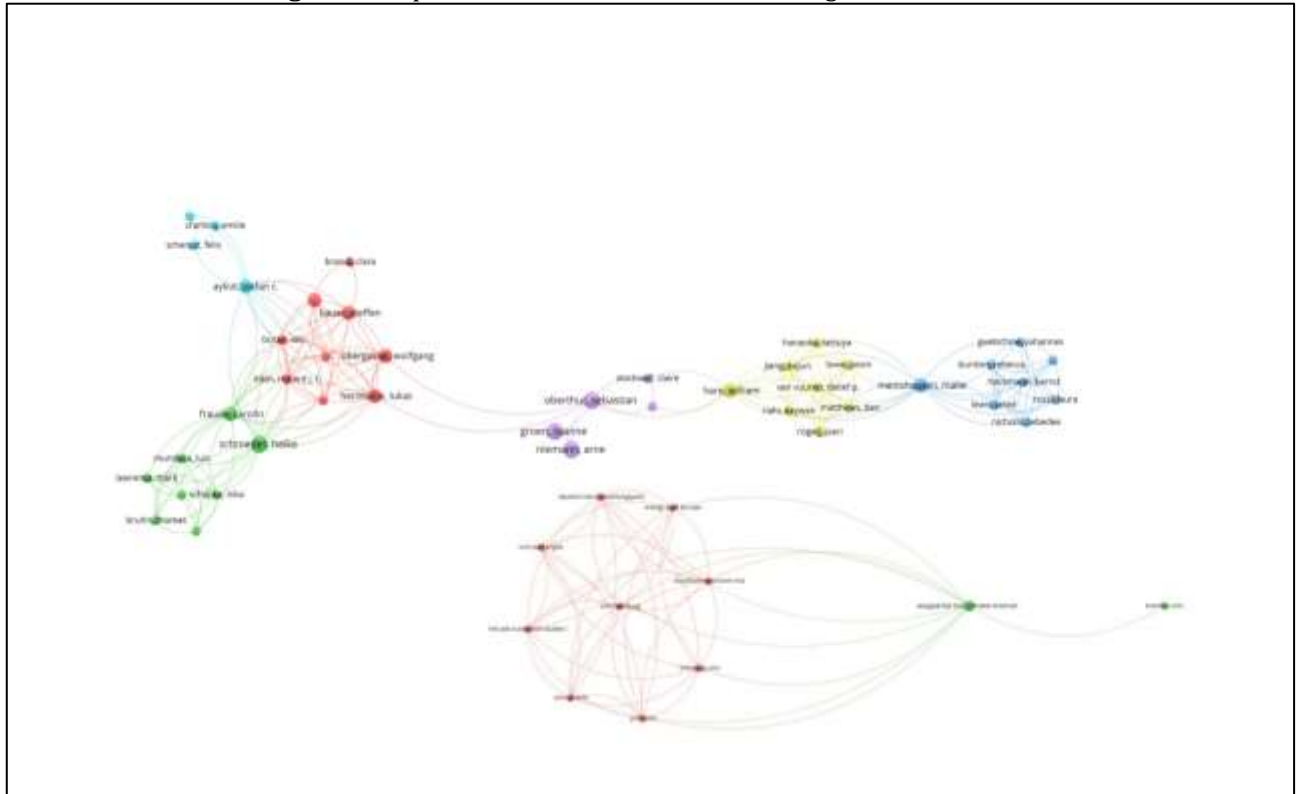
Figure 3. Keyword co-occurrence map - COP



Source: Own elaboration. Web of Science data, 2025.

The graphs representing the authors and affiliations with the greatest interest in this type of publication, as well as their interrelationship in terms of research, are shown in Figure 4. The authors with the highest co-occurrence are Hare et al. (2010) and Meinshausen et al. (2022).

Figure 4. Map of co-occurrence of authors and organisations

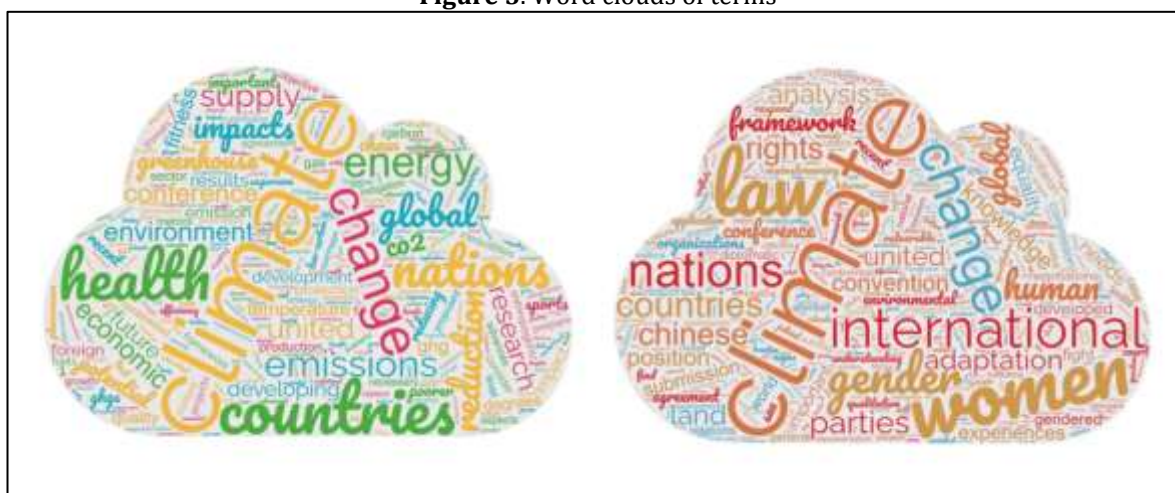


Source: Own elaboration. Web of Science data, 2025.

In terms of the co-occurrence map of geographical areas provided by VOSviewer, Germany and England stand out as the countries with the highest scientific output and interrelation. The United States is also included among the geographical areas producing more than a hundred papers, according to WoS.

Although the terms "health" and "women" do not stand out among the predominant terms, they underlie the scientific literature on the aforementioned climate summits. Thus, among the articles analysed, 47 records (of which 35 are articles published in high-impact journals included in the WoS repository) deal with the topic of health. As for the term "women," ten records deal with issues related to women. Figure 5 visually represents the most frequently repeated terms in the indicated works, whether they deal with health issues (left) or content related to women (right). In both cases, the content of the abstracts of the ten most relevant scientific articles (with the highest number of citations and references) has been analysed.

Figure 5. Word clouds of terms

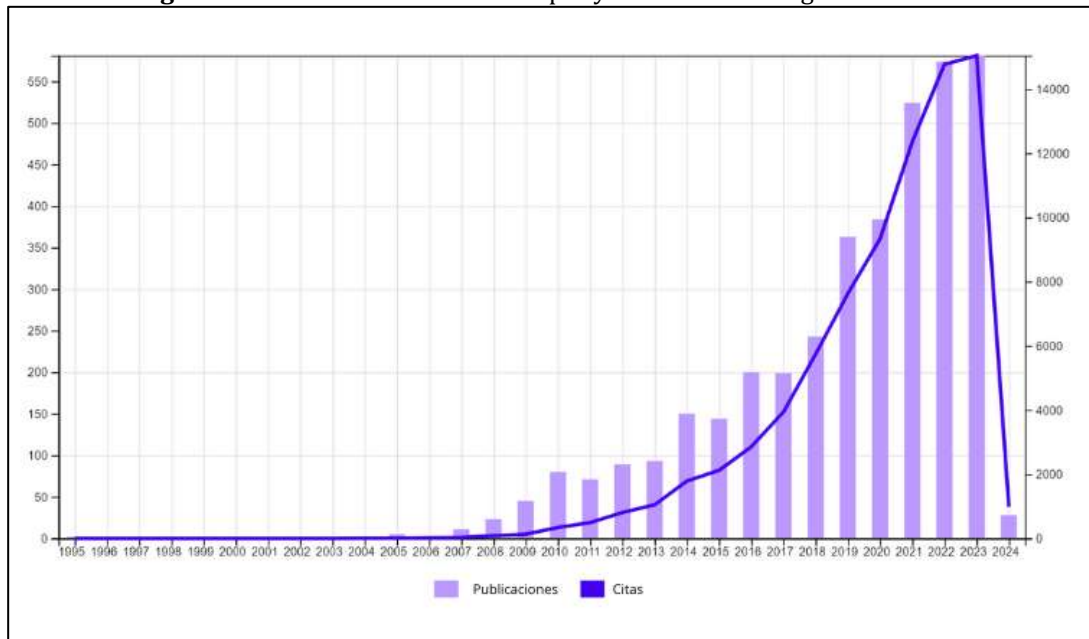


Source: Own elaboration. Web of Science data, 2025.

Terms such as "impacts", "sustainability," "environmental," "policies," "inequalities," "efficiency," "drawbacks," "carbon," and "policies" stand out in studies that highlight the impact that climate change is having on global health in the case of works on climate summits that analyse different aspects of health. Women are associated in this area with terms such as "vulnerable," "safety," "differences," "understanding," "needs," "submission," "equality," "rights," and "law." Climate, health and women are closely related, as reflected in specific studies on this topic when analysing published research on COPs (Okonofua, 2024).

3.2. Climate action and female entrepreneurship

Beyond climate summits, research addressing issues related to climate change and women is more numerous and is attracting growing interest in the scientific community. In a search conducted in the same repository, the number of records found is close to 4,000 (3,819 on the date of the search, February 2024), with no decrease in scientific output in any year, either in terms of volume of articles or citations (Figure 6). With 79,513 citations, the average number of citations per publication was 20.82 and the H-index was 110.

Figure 6. Publications and citations per year: climate change and women

Source: Own elaboration. Web of Science data, 2025.

With regard to women as entrepreneurs in climate change-related activities, not only does the number of global publications decrease considerably, but it was not until 2013 that researchers began to disseminate their studies on this topic. Although scientific output in this area has not been consolidated, the years with the highest volume of published works are 2017, 2020 and 2023.

Interest in this type of research is reflected in the increase in the number of citations of articles related to female entrepreneurship in the climate field (with a slight decrease in 2023 compared to the previous year of 8 citations, which does not seem significant). The average number of citations per article is 11.7 and the H-index stands at 12.

The ten most cited articles compiled by WoS are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Most cited articles - Climate change and female entrepreneurship

Author - Year	Article	Journal	Citations
(Zaman et al., 2021)	Investigating the nexus between education expenditure, female employers, renewable energy consumption and CO2 emission: Evidence from China. DOI10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.127824	Journal of Cleaner Production	75
(Lieu et al., 2020)	Three sides to every story: Gender perspectives in energy transition pathways in Canada, Kenya and Spain. DOI10.1016/j.erss.2020.101550	Energy Research & Social Science	66
(Gray et al., 2014)	Encouraging sustainable entrepreneurship in climate-threatened communities: a Samoan case study. DOI10.1080/08985626.2014.922622	Entrepreneur. and Reg. Development	54
(Jerneck & Olsson, 2013)	A smoke-free kitchen: initiating community-based co-production for cleaner cooking and cuts in carbon emissions. DOI10.1016/j.jclepro.2012.09.026	Journal of Cleaner Production	46

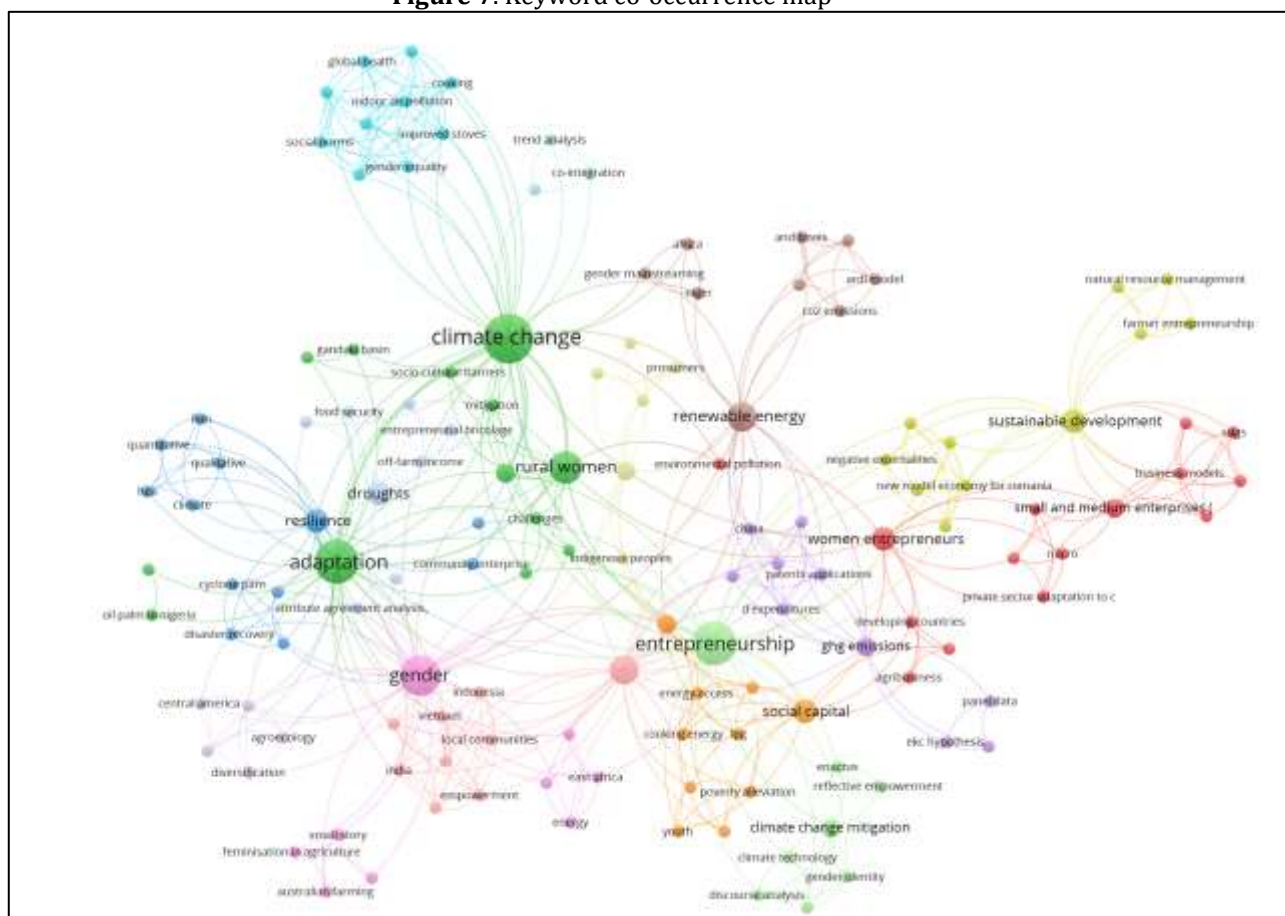
(Clissold et al., 2020)	Women as recovery enablers in the face of disasters in Vanuatu. DOI10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.05.003	Geoforum	29
(Macqueen et al., 2020)	Innovations towards prosperity emerging in locally controlled forest business models and prospects for scaling up. DOI10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.08.004	World Development	27
(Ado et al., 2019)	Livelihood strategies and household resilience to food insecurity: insight from a farming community in Aguié district of Niger. DOI10.1007/s10460-019-09951-0	Agriculture and Human Values	24
(Ruiz-Mallén et al., 2017)	Unravelling local adaptive capacity to climate change in the Bolivian Amazon: the interlinkages between assets, conservation and markets. DOI10.1007/s10584-016-1831-x	Climate Change	21
(Popescu et al., 2018)	Researching the Main Causes of the Romanian Shadow Economy at the Micro and Macro Levels: Implications for Sustainable Development. DOI10.3390/su10103518	Sustainability	20
(Marshall et al., 2017)	Sustainable energy for all or sustainable energy for men? Gender and the construction of identity within climate technology entrepreneurship in Kenya. DOI10.1177/1464993416688830	Progress in Development Studies	14

Source: Own elaboration. Web of Science data, 2025.

In general, these articles report on specific experiences in certain geographical areas and specific economic sectors. However, they highlight the increase in the presence of women in emerging business initiatives in the fields of agriculture and the energy industry, for example, despite a tradition dominated by men and social gender inequalities. Most articles agree on reinforcing the idea of a sustainable energy transition driven by women entrepreneurs.

Looking at the most prominent subject areas in fifty articles analysing climate change in relation to women entrepreneurs, the categories of Science and Environmental Studies stand out. In addition to these categories, the areas of Ecology, Sustainable Science and Technology, Development Studies, Economics and Regional Urban Planning are also noteworthy. Using VOSviewer, Figure 7 shows the most relevant author keywords related to the highest co-occurrence strength.

Figure 7. Keyword co-occurrence map

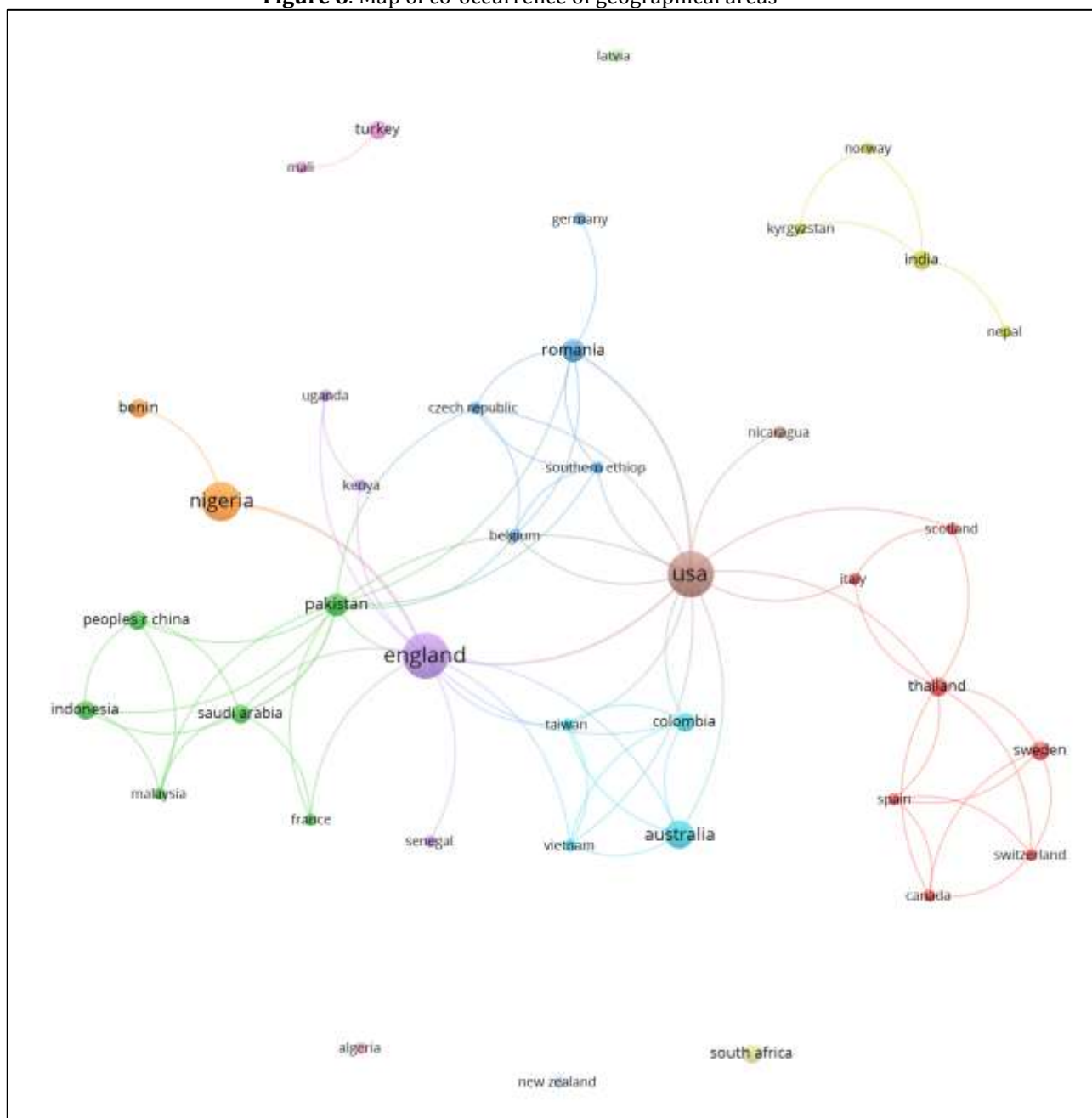


Source: Own elaboration. Web of Science data, 2025.

In this representation, along with the terms used in the bibliographic search and the names of the geographical areas, other groups of concepts appear, headed by the words: "adaptation", in relation to "resilience"; "rural women," together with "challenges" or "indigenous peoples"; "renewable energies"; "sustainable development"; and "small and medium-sized enterprises," among others.

The geographical areas where most of the scientific production related to climate change and female entrepreneurship is concentrated are shown in Figure 8. Nigeria, England and the United States of America lead the areas around which other countries are grouped and related.

Figure 8. Map of co-occurrence of geographical areas



Source: Own elaboration. Web of Science data, 2025.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Within the framework of the United Nations, the climate summits known as Conferences of the Parties (COP) have become the global epicentres of debate and consensus on everything related to climate change (causes, consequences, agreements to be reached, measures to be taken, etc.). At the last COP held in 2023 in Dubai, two topics took centre stage: health and gender. For the first time, specific events related to health were held, highlighting the pathologies caused by the increase in adverse weather effects and how they affect the population, with special attention to the most vulnerable sectors, among which women stand out (Okonofua, 2024). Women, beyond being a sector of the population particularly affected by climate change, are beginning to be seen

as drivers and promoters of business in European decision-making circles (Clissold et al., 2020; Macqueen et al., 2020).

The results revealed that the scientific community's interest in the problems arising from the effects of climate change has declined over the last year, with the United Kingdom being the country with the highest scientific output. Furthermore, there are few studies related to the agreements adopted at the COPs and the adoption of measures in favour of gender equality and female entrepreneurship in the context of climate change. In this regard, greater commitment is needed from the scientific community to promote research on the consequences that climate management strategies have on health, especially those led by women.

With regard to COP-related topics, in the last year of the study (2024), the scientific community's interest has halved (in terms of production volume, but not in terms of citations). Breaches of agreements by partners, disagreements between participating countries, or the lack of effective solutions to the climate problems reported, for example, may have influenced researchers.

However, the same trend has not been observed in research addressing the two issues that are now gaining greater relevance: health and the inclusion of women as leaders of start-ups in decisions related to climate change.

The treatment of health at COPs is attracting increasing scientific interest, as is female entrepreneurship, which, although more recent, is taking off in this field. Traditionally, women were not taken into account in COP issues, let alone as leaders of business entities (scientific output on climate change and women did not begin until 2013). However, their inclusion in the scientific sphere has brought about a significant change that is already being reflected in research trends.

In scientific literature, alongside aspects of vulnerability, gender differences and resilience in relation to women, adaptation, development and projects are also highlighted, which, at the very least, suggests that women are playing a greater role in this field. The bibliometric study identifies the geographical areas with the highest scientific output on the subject under study: England and the United States.

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