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BEYOND THE URBAN: EVOLUTION, INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS AND GLOBAL INFLUENCE OF RURAL FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Frende Vega, M.A^{1*}, García, MdC², Arévalo, N.L.M³ and Segura Osuna, J. A⁴

¹Universidad de Panamá Investigadora del SNI (SENACYT). Email: maria.frende@up.ac.pa

²Universidad de Panamá. Email: milagrosdelc.garcia@up.ac.pa

³Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios UNIMINUTO. Email: nelson.montoya@uniminuto.edu

⁴Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios UNIMINUTO. Email: jenny.segura@uniminuto.edu

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Corresponding Author: Frende Vega, M.A
(maria.frende@up.ac.pa)

ABSTRACT

This article presents a bibliometric analysis of rural female entrepreneurship (RFE), based on 1,014 documents indexed in Scopus and Web of Science between 1979 and 2025. Using performance indicators and science mapping techniques (Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny and VOSviewer), the study examines the evolution, intellectual roots, and thematic structure of the field. Findings reveal exponential growth since 2010, with India, the United States, China, and the United Kingdom as leading contributors, and African institutions – particularly in Nigeria and South Africa – emerging as influential hubs. Key journals include Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies, Journal of Enterprising Communities, and Journal of Rural Studies. Thematic mapping identifies entrepreneurship and gender as motor themes, microfinance as a niche domain, and empowerment as a foundational yet underdeveloped concept. From a theoretical standpoint, the study highlights the need to move beyond descriptive approaches toward frameworks that systematically integrate gender, rurality, sustainability, and digitalization. For practice, the results stress the importance of fostering regional engagement – especially in Latin America and the Caribbean – and promoting multilingual dissemination to ensure that locally grounded evidence informs inclusive policy design and entrepreneurial support strategies. By addressing these gaps, the field can strengthen its conceptual foundations while enhancing its contribution to equitable and sustainable rural development.

KEYWORDS: Rural Female Entrepreneurship, Bibliometric Analysis, Gender and Rural Development, Wos, Scopus.

1. INTRODUCTION

Female entrepreneurship in rural contexts (RFE) has consolidated over the past decades as a strategic phenomenon to promote social inclusion, productive diversification, and sustainable development in non-urban territories (Korsgaard et al., 2025). The centrality of this field lies in its simultaneous articulation of two key dimensions of policy and research agendas: on the one hand, rural entrepreneurship as a mechanism for economic revitalization and territorial cohesion; on the other, women's participation in entrepreneurial activities, understood as a means of reducing gender gaps in access to resources, markets, and opportunities (Vuciterna et al., 2024).

In general terms, rural entrepreneurship has been linked to the capacity of non-urban territories to mobilize endogenous resources and generate solutions adapted to structural problems such as depopulation, unemployment, or low connectivity (Gyimah & Lussier, 2021; Pato & Teixeira, 2016). Female entrepreneurship, for its part, has been widely studied in urban and high-tech contexts, where it is recognized as a driver of innovation and resilience, though it continues to face persistent barriers related to gender inequality (Brush & Cooper, 2012; Jennings & Brush, 2013). The intersection of these two domains – RFE – introduces additional specificities: rural women must contend with restricted access to finance, infrastructure, and markets, as well as sociocultural norms that shape roles and expectations (Kulawiak et al., 2022). At the same time, their entrepreneurial activity mobilizes unique assets such as social capital, cultural identity, and the sustainable use of territory.

Academically, studies on RFE have expanded significantly over the last decade, although the literature still shows a considerable degree of fragmentation and limited theoretical accumulation. Recent bibliometric analyses represent a first systematic attempt to approach this field. Parmar & Ghalawat (2020) identified sustained growth in publications between 1989 and 2018, albeit with a strong concentration in India and a predominance of descriptive empirical studies. Aggarwal & Johal (2021), in an analysis of 192 articles in Scopus, confirmed that scientific interest in RFE intensified only after 2010, with three dominant axes: factors conditioning rural women's participation, the impact of support programs, and the role of gender in entrepreneurial trajectories. However, both reviews emphasized gaps regarding digitalization, entrepreneurial education, and sustainability. More recently, Vuciterna et al. (2023) explored RFE in the

agri-food sector, stressing its relevance to the transition toward sustainable production systems, but confirmed the limited representation of Latin America and Africa. Complementarily, Quispe Fernández et al. (2023) developed a metabibliometric review, showing that despite quantitative expansion, the literature remains marked by linguistic biases (English dominance) and insufficient theorization on the intersection of gender, rurality, and digitalization.

These antecedents make it possible to identify persistent gaps in the field: (i) geographical concentration and limited visibility of Latin American and African studies; (ii) low theoretical density and predominance of descriptive approaches; (iii) absence of comparative methodologies and advanced network or intellectual trajectory metrics; and (iv) invisibility of production in languages other than English (Aggarwal & Johal, 2021; Quispe Fernández et al., 2023). Such limitations justify the need for an updated, comprehensive, multi-database bibliometric analysis that can more precisely map the evolution, intellectual roots, and influence of RFE in academic literature.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the theoretical and methodological consolidation of the field through an exhaustive bibliometric analysis of female entrepreneurship in rural contexts. Specifically, the study aims to (i) examine the temporal evolution of scientific production, (ii) identify the most influential authors, institutions, countries, and journals, (iii) analyze collaboration and co-citation networks structuring the field, and (iv) map the main thematic clusters and emerging trajectories. The contribution of this article lies in offering a robust and reproducible methodological framework, integrating multi-database and multilingual coverage with the use of advanced metrics and scoping review approaches. In sum, the objective is not only to provide a radiography of the state of the art in RFE but also to generate useful insights for guiding future research and informing inclusive and sustainable public policies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of rural entrepreneurship (RE) has undergone a remarkable theoretical and empirical evolution over the past thirty years, without yet achieving a unified definition. As noted by Pato and Teixeira (2016), it is a polysemic concept, simultaneously integrating the entrepreneurial function (innovation and value creation), rurality as both context and resource, and the degree of territorial embeddedness. This explanatory

ambiguity has resulted in a mosaic of approaches.

Based on the reviewed literature, this paper proposes a systematic grouping of definitions of rural entrepreneurship into three broad families: (i) functional definitions, which emphasize the entrepreneurial function and innovation regardless of territorial embeddedness (e.g., Wortman, 1990); (ii) territorial-relational definitions, which highlight the interdependence between entrepreneurial initiatives and the socio-spatial milieu (e.g., Stathopoulou et al., 2004; Korsgaard et al., 2015); and (iii) criterial or operational definitions, which establish observable thresholds to distinguish rural entrepreneurship from other forms of business activity in rural areas (e.g., Pato & Teixeira, 2016).

Functional Definitions

Functional or Schumpeterian definitions conceive rural entrepreneurship as the straightforward transfer of classical entrepreneurial logic to a non-urban setting. Wortman (1990, cited in Pato & Teixeira, 2016) defines RE as “the creation of an organization that introduces new products, markets, or technologies in a rural environment.” Under this perspective, the rural acts as a backdrop rather than a constitutive variable. The strength of this approach lies in its conceptual clarity and comparability with urban entrepreneurship. However, its limitation is the risk of “urbanizing” the concept and overlooking the territorial and socio-cultural specificities of rural contexts (Kulawiak et al., 2022).

Territorial-Relational Definitions

A more nuanced perspective emphasizes that rural entrepreneurship is not merely defined by the geographical location of the enterprise but by the nature of the relationship between the entrepreneurial initiative and its territory. From this perspective, rurality is simultaneously a resource, a constraint, and an opportunity. Stathopoulou et al. (2004) introduce the notion of a rural entrepreneurial milieu, in which physical (accessibility, landscape), social (social capital and trust), economic (productive structures and value chains), and institutional (policies and support programs) factors converge. Similarly, Korsgaard et al. (2015) distinguish between entrepreneurship in the rural (activities located in rural areas but with weak embeddedness) and rural entrepreneurship (place-based initiatives whose economic and social value depends on the recombination of local resources and their degree of integration into community networks). This relational turn highlights the need to understand rurality as a specific and dynamic context, while

raising empirical challenges: how much territorial embeddedness is sufficient to classify an initiative as rural?

Criterial Or Operational Definitions

In order to resolve this difficulty, criterial or operational approaches establish observable thresholds that distinguish between “firms in rural areas” and “rural entrepreneurship.” Pato and Teixeira (2016) propose that, beyond rural location, RE should be verified through the presence of specific linkages: (i) significant use of local labor, (ii) utilization or provision of local inputs and services, and (iii) supply of products or services with territorial identity. These definitions are particularly useful for empirical research and policy design, as they enable the delimitation of analytical universes and the evaluation of impacts. Nevertheless, they also face limitations related to threshold-setting and sectoral heterogeneity (agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, or services).

Recent reviews confirm this conceptual diversity and highlight a transition from approaches based on administrative location—where all firms situated in low-density municipalities were classified as “rural”—to perspectives that prioritize embeddedness and the creation of socio-territorial value (Kulawiak & Rachwał, 2024). This evolution reflects a broader shift in rural development studies, which increasingly recognize that entrepreneurship pursues not only economic objectives but also goals of social cohesion, cultural preservation, and community resilience (McElwee & Atherton, 2011). As a result, current frameworks tend to integrate functional, territorial, and criterial dimensions simultaneously.

Building on this literature, an integrative and operational definition can be proposed: rural entrepreneurship is the creation and consolidation of economic initiatives in non-urban territories that, in addition to introducing or adapting products, markets, technologies, or organizations, substantially rely on local resources, networks, and institutions (territorial embeddedness) and generate both economic and socio-territorial value for the community. This definition articulates the functional core (innovation and value creation), the territorial approach (rural milieu and embeddedness), and the need for verifiable criteria, as demanded by recent reviews (Kulawiak & Rachwał, 2024; Kulawiak et al., 2022; Pato & Teixeira, 2016; Stathopoulou et al., 2004).

Within the framework of this article, such a definition is particularly relevant for the study of RFE, as it adds gender as a constitutive dimension.

This implies acknowledging both the structural constraints faced by rural women (e.g., access to finance, infrastructure, and markets) and their distinctive assets (e.g., social capital, local knowledge, cultural identity), in line with the emerging literature that emphasizes the need to conceptualize RFE as a subfield with its own logics,

rather than as a mere aggregation of “female entrepreneurship” and “rurality” (Kulawiak & Rachwał, 2024; Pato & Teixeira, 2016).

Table 1 provides a comparative synthesis of the main definitions and approaches to RE, highlighting their strengths, limitations, and implications for RFE.

Table 1: Definitions And Approaches to Rural Entrepreneurship (RE) And Implications For RFE.

Author(s)/Year	Definition/Approach	Strengths	Limitations	Implications for RFE
Wortman (1990)	RE as the creation of new organizations introducing products, markets, or technologies in a rural environment.	Conceptual clarity; continuity with Schumpeterian theory of entrepreneurship.	Reduces the rural to a simple setting; ignores local resources and institutions.	Risk of rendering invisible the gender and territorial specificities of rural women entrepreneurs.
Stathopoulou, Psaltopoulos & Skuras (2004)	RE as part of a rural entrepreneurial milieu with physical (landscape, accessibility), social (social capital), economic (productive structure), and institutional (support policies) dimensions.	Holistic approach; integrates territorial and social factors.	Difficult to operationalize; high empirical complexity.	Enables analysis of how women leverage local resources and community networks.
Korsgaard, Müller & Tanvig (2015)	Distinction between entrepreneurship in the rural (location) and rural entrepreneurship (territorial embeddedness and recombination of local resources).	Clearly distinguishes location vs. embeddedness; relational conceptualization.	Thresholds of 'embeddedness' poorly defined; risk of subjectivity.	Useful to distinguish women-led projects with genuine territorial linkages.
Pato & Teixeira (2016)	Proposes minimum criteria: rural location + local employment + use of local inputs/services + product with territorial identity.	Operationalizable; facilitates case selection and policy evaluation.	Debatable thresholds; sectoral heterogeneity.	Provides a coding framework useful to identify RFE in empirical studies.
McElwee & Atherton (2011)	RE as an activity pursuing economic and socio-cultural goals (family employment, quality of life, cultural preservation).	Acknowledges multifunctionality and non-economic purposes.	Difficulty in measuring 'socio-cultural value'; risk of dispersion.	Highlights invisible contributions of RFE: reconciliation, resilience, and community cohesion.
Kulawiak, Suliborski & Rachwał (2022)	RE as a phenomenon conditioned by structural barriers (infrastructure, market access, human capital).	Makes contextual restrictions visible; updated geographical perspective.	Risk of deficit perspective (rural as limitation).	Explains specific obstacles faced by rural women (land, ICT, credit).
Kulawiak & Rachwał (2024)	RE as a process where the entrepreneur-place relationship is key; need for more refined and measurable definitions.	Updates the debate; proposes integration of theory, measurement, and policy.	Framework still under development; lack of standardization.	Opens the way to define RFE as a subfield with gender- and territory-specific indicators.

In recent years, bibliometric studies have consolidated their position as a key tool for understanding the evolution of emerging research domains. They allow not only for the quantification of scientific production but also for the identification of collaboration dynamics, intellectual roots, and methodological trends (Donthu et al., 2021). In the case of rural female entrepreneurship (RFE), bibliometric analyses acquire particular relevance due to the conceptual dispersion of the field and the need to highlight the contributions of women

scholars and non-urban contexts, which have traditionally been underrepresented in the literature (Quispe Fernández et al., 2023).

The pioneering work of Parmar and Ghalawat (2020) constitutes one of the first systematic syntheses of RFE. Based on 188 Scopus-indexed documents published between 1989 and 2018, the authors identified steady growth in scientific production, with a significant increase during the last decade. Their findings show a field dominated by empirical-descriptive studies and a strong

geographic concentration in India, which reflects both the country's weight in the literature and a limitation in terms of the diversity of analyzed contexts. They also underline the need to strengthen conceptual frameworks and to promote more systematic international comparisons.

Similarly, Aggarwal and Johal (2021) analyzed 192 Scopus-indexed publications between 1990 and 2020, concluding that RFE research only gained real momentum after 2010. Their results highlight three predominant focal areas: (i) factors influencing rural women's participation in entrepreneurship, (ii) the impact of support policies and programs, and (iii) the role of gender in structuring entrepreneurial trajectories. However, the authors also point to significant gaps, such as the limited exploration of entrepreneurial education, ICTs, and microfinance – factors that are particularly critical in rural settings (Aggarwal & Johal, 2021).

More recent studies have broadened the methodological and geographical perspective. Vuciterna et al. (2024) conducted a bibliometric analysis focused on female entrepreneurship in agri-food sectors, showing how rural women entrepreneurs play a strategic role in the transition toward sustainable production systems. Their study highlights an increase in international co-authorships and the use of advanced metrics (bibliographic coupling, co-citation, co-word analysis), although it also reveals that most research remains concentrated in Europe and Asia, with limited representation from Latin America and Africa.

Along the same lines, Quispe Fernández et al. (2023) developed a meta-bibliometric study – i.e., a review of bibliometric studies on RFE – covering publications between 1960 and 2023 across Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Their analysis identified 44 relevant articles, of which only 30 met standards of methodological quality and thematic pertinence. The results indicate that RFE research remains in an incipient phase, characterized by an excessive generalization of female entrepreneurship approaches, with insufficient attention to the intersection of gender, rurality, and digitalization. They also underscore the absence of country-specific studies in Latin America, which limits the ability to build context-sensitive public policy agendas.

Taken together, these works provide a preliminary overview of the field. On the one hand, they show that RFE is an expanding yet fragmented domain, marked by clear geographic and linguistic asymmetries. Most studies are concentrated in India, the United Kingdom, and the United States, while Latin America and Africa are only marginally

represented (Aggarwal & Johal, 2021; Quispe Fernández et al., 2023). On the other hand, there is a predominance of descriptive approaches focusing on individual barriers and motivations, with less development of robust theoretical frameworks that integrate structural dimensions (gender, territory, public policy).

The most recurrent gaps can be summarized as follows: (i) the absence of longitudinal studies that assess the field's evolution beyond short timeframes; (ii) the limited incorporation of comparative methodologies and analyses of scientific collaboration networks; and (iii) the invisibility of non-English language production, which reduces the visibility of Latin American, African, and Southern European research (Parmar & Ghalawat, 2020; Quispe Fernández et al., 2023). Additionally, little attention has been paid to the impact of digitalization and sustainability on rural women's entrepreneurial projects, despite both factors being critical today for their resilience and competitiveness (Vuciterna et al., 2024).

Based on this review, there is a strong case for conducting an updated and comprehensive bibliometric analysis that overcomes the methodological and geographical limitations of previous studies. Such an effort should incorporate: (i) multibase coverage (Scopus, WoS, Dimensions, Google Scholar); (ii) a multilingual approach that includes publications in English, Spanish, and Portuguese; (iii) the application of advanced impact and network metrics (e.g., PageRank, betweenness centrality); and (iv) articulation with scoping review approaches to extract practical implications for rural development and gender equity policies. This integration would not only map the state of the art but also make visible the contributions of regions and communities historically marginalized in RFE research.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a bibliometric approach to map, analyze, and synthesize the scientific production on rural female entrepreneurship (RFE). Bibliometrics was chosen because of its usefulness in evaluating the temporal evolution of a field, identifying the most influential authors, institutions, and countries, as well as exploring patterns of scientific collaboration and emerging topics through objective indicators (Donthu et al., 2021).

To ensure the quality and comprehensiveness of records, the analysis relied exclusively on Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), which are considered the most rigorous and complete databases in terms of

indexing high-impact journals (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). The search strategy combined terms related to entrepreneurship, rurality, and gender. After an iterative process of refinement and validation, the query string was applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords.

The time span considered was 1979–2025, thus covering both the earliest studies and the most recent expansion of the field. Only peer-reviewed journal articles and reviews were included, while conference proceedings, book chapters, editorials, and grey

literature were excluded.

Initially, 986 records were retrieved from Scopus and 136 records from WoS. After eliminating duplicates using DOI identifiers and title matching, a consolidated database was obtained. Author, institution, and country names were normalized to reduce biases caused by spelling variants or abbreviations. The final dataset comprised 1,014 scientific documents published in English and across all areas of knowledge.

Table 2: Search Strategy.

Element	Description
Data source	Scopus and Web of Science (WoS)
Search date	may 2025
Periodo de análisis	1979 – 2025
Search fields	Title (TITLE), Abstract (ABS), Keywords (KEY), LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE)
Search equation (with Boolean operators)	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (women AND entrepreneurship) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (female AND entrepreneurs) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (women AND entrepreneurs) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (female AND entrepreneurship) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (rural)) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, "final"))
Inclusion criteria	Indexed and peer-reviewed publications with complete metadata available
Exclusion criteria	Duplicate publications in databases and incomplete records
Number of records retrieved	Scopus (986); WoS (136)
Number of records after cleaning	1014 unique documents after removing duplicates

The bibliometric analysis was conducted at two complementary levels, following the framework of Noyons et al. (1999). The first level corresponds to performance analysis, which examines scientific productivity and impact through indicators such as publication counts, citations, and author- or institution-level indices (e.g., h-index, g-index). This dimension provides a descriptive overview of the most prolific contributors, institutions, countries, and journals in the field. The second level is science mapping analysis, focused on uncovering the intellectual and thematic structures of RFE research. In this study, the mapping component was operationalized through two lenses: (i) thematic analysis, identifying concept clusters and their evolution over time, and (ii) intellectual roots analysis, reconstructing the knowledge base of the field through the most influential authors, co-citation patterns, and intellectual lineages.

Data processing and analysis were conducted using Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny in R (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) and VOSviewer (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). These tools allow the construction of performance indicators, collaboration networks, and thematic maps, as well as the application of clustering algorithms to identify groups of authors and topics. Reproducibility of the analysis was ensured through detailed documentation of search parameters, inclusion criteria, and visualization

techniques.

The exclusive focus on Scopus and WoS guarantees international quality and visibility but introduces limitations in terms of linguistic and regional coverage, since relevant studies published in local journals or in languages other than English may remain underrepresented (Archambault et al., 2009). Additionally, the analysis is constrained by the availability and completeness of metadata in the databases, which may affect the exhaustiveness of indicators.

4. ANÁLISIS DE RESULTADOS

The general data obtained through the Bibliometrix tool provide an overview of the evolution and structure of research on rural female entrepreneurship (RFE). As shown in Table 3, the first publication identified dates back to 1979, when Boissevain examined tourism-related ventures on the island of Gozo (Malta), a rural area where women played a significant role in generating income within a broader process of economic development. Since its publication, this article has received 75 citations, marking the early academic recognition of women's contributions to rural entrepreneurship.

Between 1979 and 2025, a total of 1,014 documents were indexed across 689 sources (including journals, books, and other academic outlets). On average, 7.08 documents were published per year, with each

document receiving approximately 12 citations. The dataset reveals that 772 contributions (76.1%) correspond to journal articles, followed by 46 conference papers and 34 review articles, which reflects the empirical orientation of the field.

In terms of authorship, the corpus includes 2,589 authors, with an average of three co-authors per publication. However, 203 documents were produced by a single author, suggesting that while collaborative research is predominant, individual contributions remain relevant. International

collaboration remains modest: only 5% of publications involved co-authorship with scholars from other countries, pointing to an underdeveloped global research network in RFE.

Overall, these results highlight both the progressive growth and the fragmentation of the field: while RFE research has expanded steadily over the last four decades, it still shows limited international integration and remains highly concentrated in certain regions and outlets.

Table 3: Main Information About the Data Generated by Bibliometrix.

Description	Results
Main information about data	
Timespan	1979:2025
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	689
Documents	1,014
Document Average Age	7,08
Average citations per doc	11,99
Document contents	
Article	772
Conference paper	46
Review	34
Authors	2,589
Authors of single-authored docs	203
Co-Authors per Doc	3
International co-authorships %	5

4.1. Análisis De Desempeño Científico

4.1.1. Evolution Of the Literature on Rural Female Entrepreneurship

The temporal trajectory of research on rural female entrepreneurship (RFE) can be divided into four distinct stages (Figure 1).

The emergent stage (1979–1995) was characterized by a negligible volume of publications, typically ranging from one to three articles per year. During this period, RFE was not yet consolidated as autonomous research domain, but appeared only incidentally within broader discussions of rural development and microenterprise studies.

The early growth phase (1996–2008) shows a modest yet steady increase in output, with annual publications ranging from two to eight. This stage coincides with the first conceptual explorations of rural entrepreneurship, alongside the parallel expansion of research on microfinance and gender – particularly in Asian and African contexts.

The initial consolidation period (2009–2016) reveals sustained growth, with output rising from just over ten publications in 2009 to more than thirty by 2016. This expansion reflects the progressive

institutionalization of RFE as a research field, influenced by international policies promoting female entrepreneurship and by its incorporation into academic agendas on territorial development and gender equity.

The accelerated expansion stage (2017–2024) represents a turning point. From 2017 onwards, publication trends increased exponentially, surpassing fifty annual outputs and peaking at a record 140 documents in 2024. This surge mirrors the consolidation of international research networks, the adoption of bibliometric methodologies, and the alignment of RFE studies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), all of which have contributed to enhancing the visibility of rural women in global academic debates.

The apparent decline in 2025—with only 28 publications indexed—should be interpreted with caution, as it reflects the partial coverage of ongoing publication cycles rather than a substantive contraction of the field.

Overall, the temporal evolution demonstrates that RFE has transitioned from a marginal and fragmented line of inquiry into a vibrant, rapidly expanding research domain with strong potential for

continued consolidation and theoretical advancement in the years ahead.

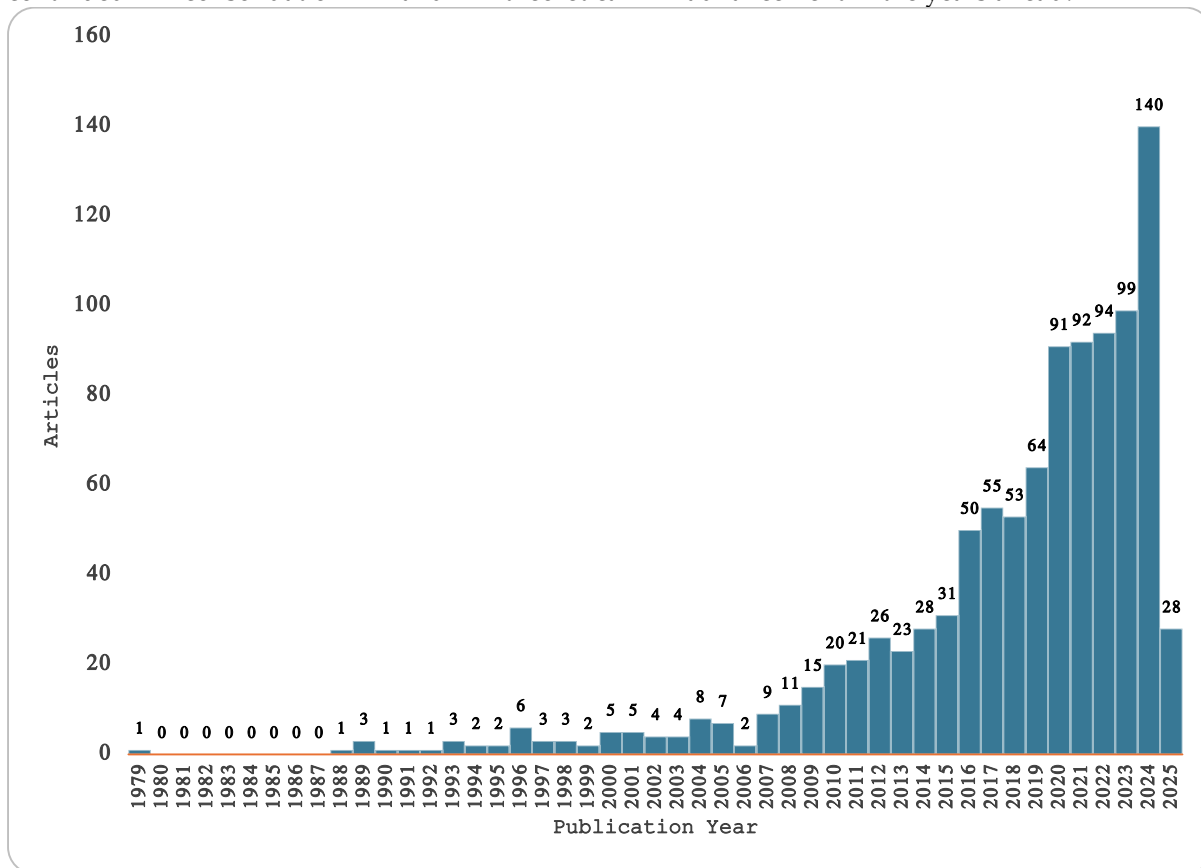


Figure 1: Annual Scientific Production.

4.1.2. Publication By Country

The geographical distribution of research on rural female entrepreneurship (RFE) reveals a marked concentration in a limited set of countries (Figure 2). India stands out as the most prolific contributor, with 224 publications, a result that reflects the country's longstanding academic and policy interest in linking rural development with women's empowerment through entrepreneurship. This predominance is closely connected to the widespread implementation of microfinance schemes and gender-sensitive rural development programs across South Asia, which have created fertile conditions for sustained scholarly production.

The United States (148 documents), China (87), and the United Kingdom (80) constitute a second core cluster of contributors. Despite their contrasting socio-economic contexts, these countries share advanced academic infrastructures and policy frameworks that have supported the systematic development of research on gender, entrepreneurship, and territorial dynamics.

A third tier of contributors includes Sweden (69), Australia (50), South Africa (43), Nigeria (43), and Spain (42). This group illustrates the increasing

geographical diversification of the field, with contributions from both high-income economies and emerging regions. Particularly noteworthy is the presence of African countries such as South Africa and Nigeria, which signals the growing recognition of rural women's entrepreneurship as a driver of socio-economic transformation in the Global South.

Other countries, including Malaysia (34), the Netherlands (27), Bangladesh (23), and Iran (22), show moderate but significant levels of scholarly activity, often reflecting regional priorities such as agricultural modernization, rural poverty alleviation, or community-based approaches to gender empowerment. Similarly, European nations such as Greece (21), France (18), Norway (17), and Italy (17) contribute to the knowledge base, though with comparatively lower outputs.

Overall, the evidence highlights that while RFE research has achieved growing global visibility, its geographical distribution remains highly uneven. The dominance of South Asia, North America, and Western Europe contrasts sharply with the persistent underrepresentation of Latin America and large parts of Africa. This imbalance underscores critical gaps in the literature and calls for more inclusive,

geographically diverse research agendas capable of capturing the heterogeneity of rural female

entrepreneurship worldwide.

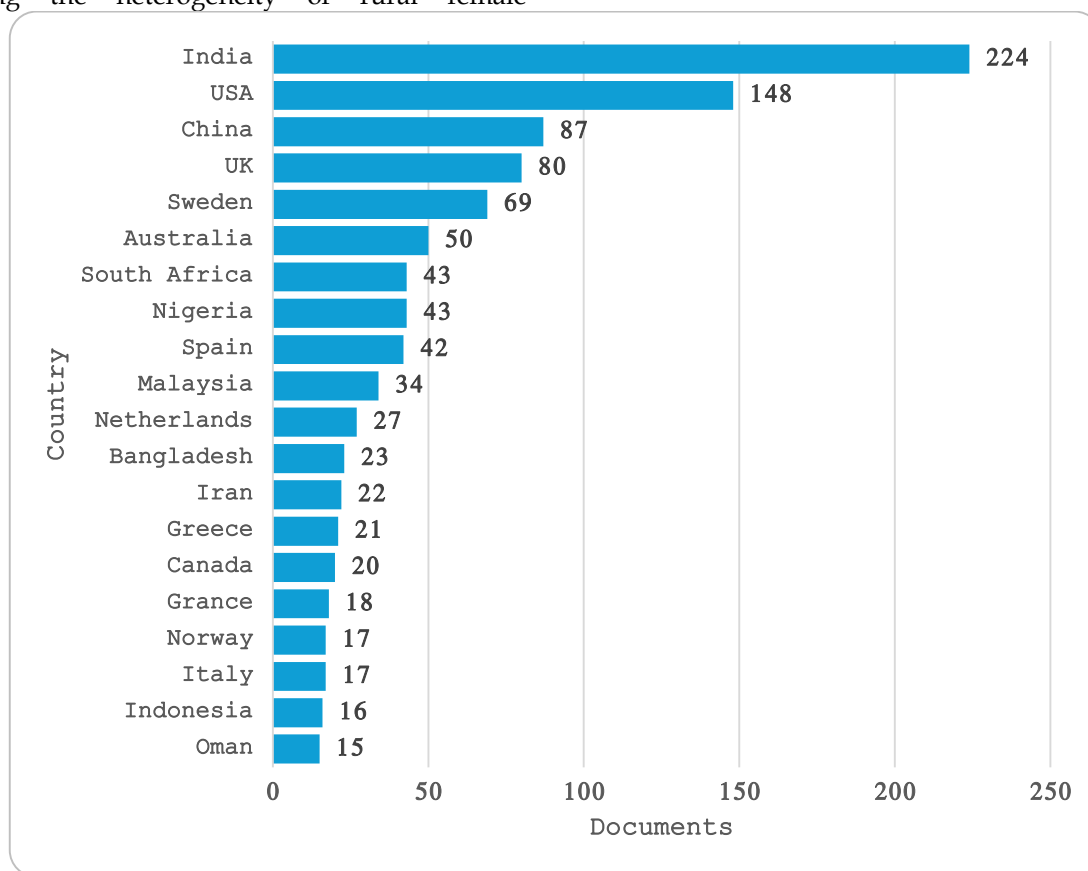


Figure 2: Publication By Country.

4.1.3. Sources Of Publication

The distribution of publication sources shows that research on rural female entrepreneurship (RFE) is spread across a wide range of journals, yet with clear concentrations in a few specialized outlets (Figure 3). The Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies leads the ranking with 16 articles, reflecting the strong linkage between RFE scholarship and case-based evidence from developing economies. This prominence suggests that context-specific empirical studies constitute a cornerstone for the visibility and consolidation of the field.

Close behind, the Journal of Enterprising Communities (14 articles) and the Journal of Rural Studies (13) stand out as pivotal publication platforms. While the former focuses on community-based entrepreneurship and grassroots development initiatives, the latter integrates perspectives from rural sociology, geography, and public policy, reinforcing the territorial and interdisciplinary dimension of RFE.

Specialized outlets such as the International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship (12 articles) play a crucial role in positioning gender as an explicit

analytical category, thereby bridging mainstream entrepreneurship research with feminist and development-oriented perspectives. Similarly, the presence of Sustainability (Switzerland) (11 articles) illustrates the growing integration of RFE into sustainability discourses, particularly in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the promotion of resilient rural livelihoods.

Other journals make significant but comparatively smaller contributions. The Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship (10 articles) focuses on entrepreneurship in resource-constrained and marginalized contexts, while the Journal of Agricultural Extension (9) emphasizes the intersections between rural livelihoods, training, and innovation. The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business (9) provides a broader small business and policy perspective, and the International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research (8), a mainstream outlet in entrepreneurship studies, evidences the progressive incorporation of RFE into the wider entrepreneurship discourse.

Taken together, the distribution of publication

sources confirms that the RFE literature is anchored in a plural and multidisciplinary ecosystem, spanning journals in entrepreneurship, rural development, gender studies, and sustainability. This diversity reflects the cross-cutting nature of the

field; however, it also highlights a degree of fragmentation, as no single journal has yet consolidated itself as the primary reference point for RFE research.

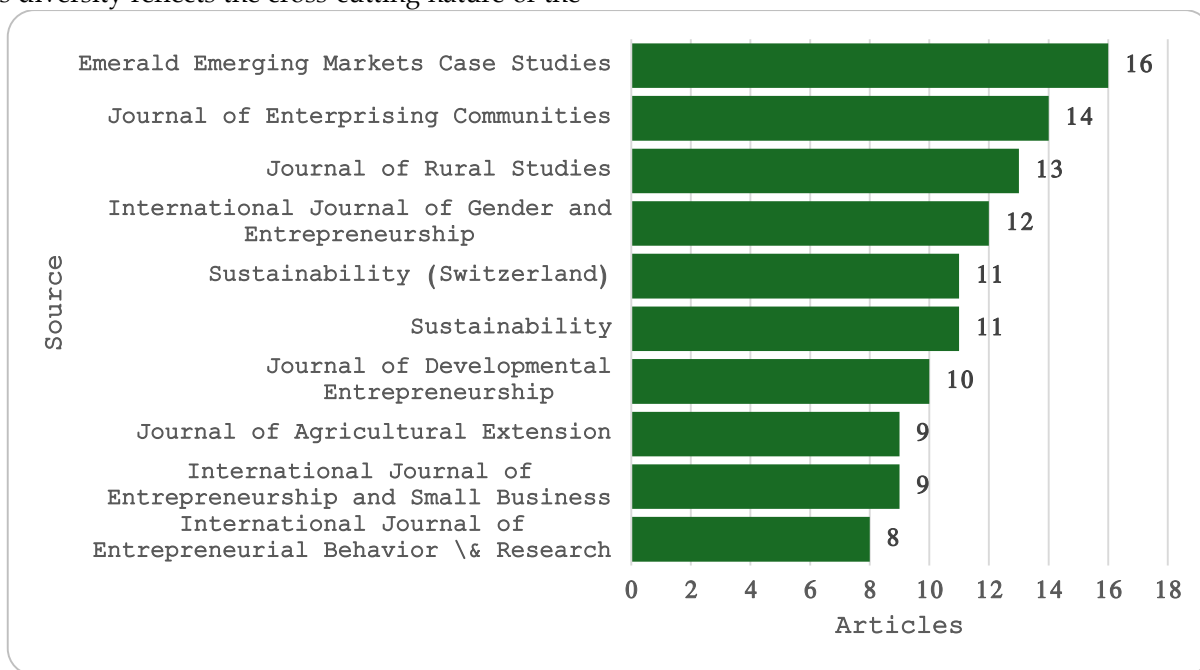


Figure 3: Most Relevant Sources.

An evaluation of journals by their H-index within the dataset provides insights into the relative influence and citation performance of publication outlets in rural female entrepreneurship (RFE) research (Table 4). Two journals emerge as the most influential: the International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship and the Journal of Enterprising Communities, both with an H-index of 9. Their leading position reflects their alignment with the core thematic axes of RFE—namely, gendered perspectives in entrepreneurship and community-based approaches to local development.

The Journal of Rural Studies follows with an H-index of 8, consolidating its role as a pivotal platform for interdisciplinary contributions. Its integration of rural sociology, geography, and policy studies with entrepreneurship research underscores its centrality in advancing the territorial dimension of RFE.

A second cluster of journals—including Gender in Management, the Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship, Sustainability (Switzerland), and World Development—register H-indices of 6. These

outlets contribute consistently, though often from specialized vantage points: gender and management studies, entrepreneurship in resource-constrained contexts, sustainability transitions, and global development policy. Their presence confirms the plural and multidisciplinary character of the field.

Finally, Gender and Development and the International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research record H-indices of 5. While comparatively lower, these values highlight their emerging yet significant role in connecting feminist development approaches and mainstream entrepreneurship scholarship with the RFE agenda.

Overall, the distribution of H-index values reveals that no single journal dominates the field, but rather a consolidated core of outlets anchors the visibility and legitimacy of RFE. The relatively modest citation metrics reinforce the interpretation of RFE as an emergent and still consolidating domain, while the diversity of contributing journals indicates its cross-cutting and interdisciplinary appeal.

Table 4: Journal Impact.

Sources	H-index
International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship	9
Journal of Enterprising Communities	9
Journal of Rural Studies	8

Gender in Management	6
Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship	6
Sustainability (Switzerland)	6
World Development	6
Gender and Development	5
International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research	5

Figure 4 depicts the temporal evolution of publications on rural female entrepreneurship (RFE) across the five most active journals. The trajectory shows that research output was virtually absent until the late 2000s, after which a gradual yet sustained increase became evident. The Journal of Rural Studies was among the first outlets to incorporate RFE contributions, with initial publications appearing around 2010, consistent with its longstanding focus on rural sociology, geography, and territorial development. Similarly, Sustainability (Switzerland) began featuring articles on RFE in the early 2010s, although its expansion remained limited until the mid-2010s, when sustainability transitions and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) gained greater prominence in academic discourse.

From 2015 onwards, both the International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship and the Journal of Enterprising Communities emerged as key outlets, registering steady growth in publications. Their upward trajectories underscore the consolidation of RFE as a distinct research theme situated at the intersection of gender studies,

entrepreneurship, and community-based development.

The most pronounced surge, however, is observed in the Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies, which experienced a sharp expansion beginning in 2020 and reached 16 contributions by 2024. This trend highlights the increasing relevance of case-based, context-specific research, particularly from developing countries—a pattern that aligns closely with the geographical concentration of publications in South Asia and Africa.

Overall, the figure confirms that the post-2015 period marks a decisive acceleration in RFE research, reflecting both the rapid institutionalization of the field and its diversification across disciplinary outlets. The spread of publications from journals rooted in rural studies to those specializing in gender, entrepreneurship, and sustainability demonstrates the inherently multidisciplinary character of RFE. At the same time, this dispersion indicates a certain degree of fragmentation, as no single journal has consolidated itself as the central or dominant reference for the field.

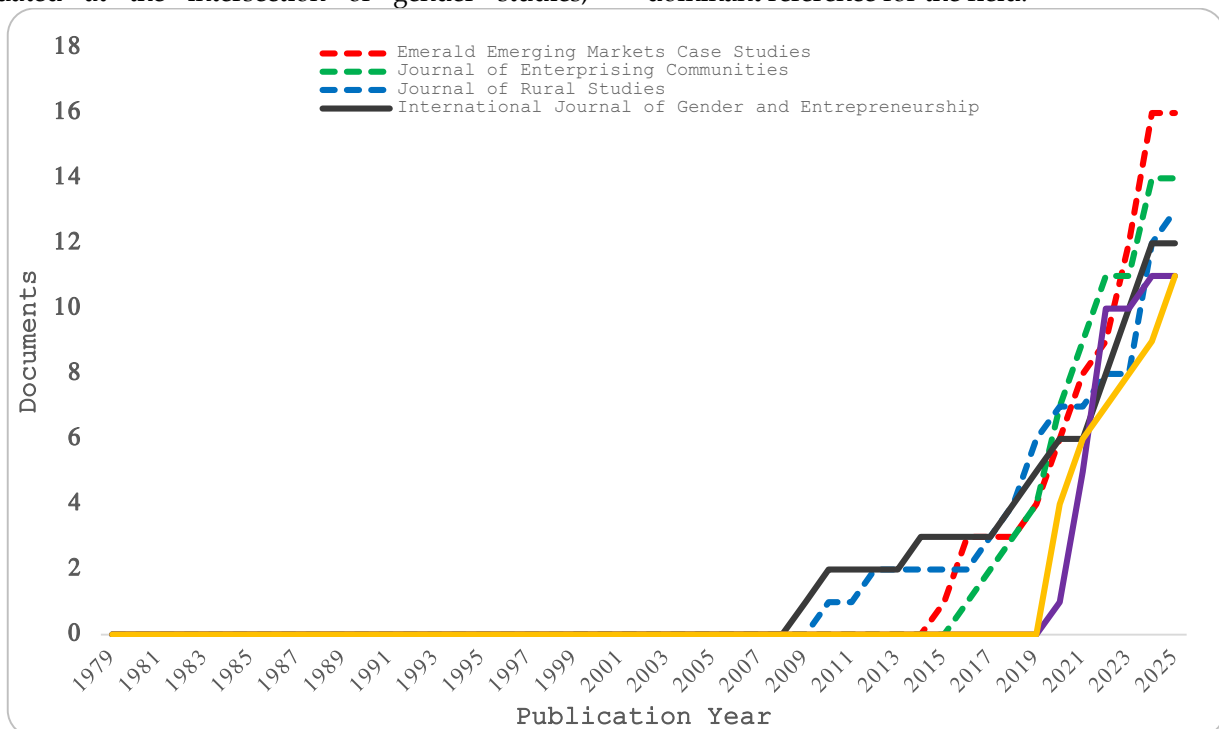


Figure 4: Publication Trends by Journal.

4.1.4. Most Influential Works

The analysis of the most influential works (Table

5) reveals that the intellectual landscape of RFE research is shaped by a heterogeneous set of contributions, spanning meta-analyses of entrepreneurship, microfinance interventions, gender and rural development, agri-tourism, and food systems. At the top of the list, Van der Sluis et al. (2005) provides a meta-analysis on the relationship between education and entrepreneurial performance in developing economies (236 citations). Although not exclusively focused on gender, this work serves as a critical methodological benchmark for evaluating the structural determinants of entrepreneurial success in resource-constrained settings.

Haugh and Talwar (2016) (198 citations) emphasize the mediating role of empowerment in linking social entrepreneurship and social change. Their influence lies in positioning empowerment as a theoretical bridge highly relevant to rural women's entrepreneurship, where empowerment is both a process and an outcome. In parallel, Attanasio et al. (2015) (196 citations) and Banerjee & Jackson (2017) (173 citations) reflect the strong connection between RFE research and the microfinance literature, with evidence from Mongolia and Bangladesh respectively. These studies highlight the mixed impacts of joint-liability lending and the critique of microfinance as a poverty-reduction mechanism, shaping debates on financial inclusion of rural women.

The relevance of gender and rural livelihoods is illustrated by McGehee et al. (2007) (192 citations) on agri-tourism motivation, and Bock (2004) (141 citations), who explored farm women's strategies in rural entrepreneurship in the Netherlands. These contributions anchor the field in the lived experiences of rural women and demonstrate the

multifunctionality of their roles. More recent works, such as Dias et al. (2019) (151 citations) on agricultural entrepreneurship, and Ge et al. (2022) (109 citations) on the adoption of innovative technologies by women during COVID-19, highlight the emergence of agriculture and digital innovation as dominant themes in the last decade.

Policy-oriented and structural analyses are represented by Nagler & Naudé (2017) (115 citations) on non-farm entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa, and Rijkers & Costa (2012) (96 citations) on gender and rural non-farm entrepreneurship, both of which emphasize the structural barriers and labor market dynamics shaping entrepreneurial opportunities.

Collectively, these influential works demonstrate that the intellectual foundations of RFE research rest upon three interconnected streams:

- Structural and human capital approaches: e.g., Van der Sluis et al. (2005); Berge et al. (2015); Nagler & Naudé (2017).
- Microfinance and empowerment debates: e.g., Attanasio et al. (2015); Banerjee & Jackson, (2017) Bhuiyan & Ivlevs (2019).
- Gendered rural practices and sectoral perspectives: e.g., Bock (2004); McGehee et al. (2007); Dias et al. (2019); Ge et al. (2022).

This tripartite pattern illustrates both the multidisciplinary character and the applied orientation of the field, while also highlighting its relative fragmentation. The fact that highly cited works often originate in adjacent domains (development economics, microfinance, rural sociology) suggests that RFE research continues to borrow conceptual legitimacy from broader disciplines, underscoring the need for greater theoretical consolidation.

Table 5: Most Influential Works.

Autors	Title	DOI	Year	Total, of Citations
Van der Sluis, J., Van Praag, M., & Vijverberg, W.	Entrepreneurship selection and performance: a meta-analysis of the impact of education in developing economies	10.1596/16477	2005	236
Haugh, H. M., & Talwar, A.	Linking social entrepreneurship and social change: the mediating role of empowerment	10.1007/s10551-014-2449-4	2016	198

Attanasio, O., Augsburg, B., De Haas, R., Fitzsimons, E., & Harmgart, H.	The impacts of microfinance: evidence from joint-liability lending in Mongolia	10.1257/app.20130489	2015	196
McGehee, N. G., Kim, K., & Jennings, G. R.	Gender and motivation for agri-tourism entrepreneurship	10.1177/0047287504268245	2007	192
Banerjee, S. B., & Jackson, L.	Microfinance and the business of poverty reduction: critical perspectives from rural Bangladesh	doi.org/10.1177/0018726716640865	2017	173
Dias, M. C., Rodrigues, P., & Ferreira, F. A. F.	What's new in the research on agricultural entrepreneurship?	10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.11.003	2019	151
Ray, M., Ghosh, K., Singh, S., & Mondal, K. C.	Folk to functional: an explorative overview of rice-based fermented foods and beverages in India	10.1016/j.jef.2016.02.002	2016	147
Bock, B. B.	Fitting in and multi-tasking: dutch farm women's strategies in rural entrepreneurship	10.1111/j.1467-9523.2004.00274.x	2004	141
Venkatesh, V., Shaw, J. D., Sykes, T. A., Wamba, S. F., & Macharia, M.	Networks, technology, and entrepreneurship: a field quasi-experiment among women in rural India	10.5465/amj.2015.0849	2017	134
Berge, L. I. O., Bjorvatn, K., & Tungodden, B.	Human and financial capital for microenterprise development: evidence from a field and lab experiment	10.2139/ssrn.1750026	2015	118
Nagler, P., & Naudé, W.	Non-farm entrepreneurship in rural Sub-Saharan Africa: new empirical evidence	10.1016/j.foodpol.2016.09.019	2017	115
Ge, T., Jaffar, A., Raza, U., Azhar, A., Sadiq, I., & Zhang, R.	Women's entrepreneurial contribution to family income: innovative technologies promote females' entrepreneurship amid COVID-19 crisis	10.3389/fpsyg.2022.828040	2022	109
Ghouse, S. M., McElwee, G., Meaton, J., Durrah, O., & Weis, T.	Barriers to rural women entrepreneurs in oman industrial livestock and the ecological hoofprint: inequality, degradation and violence	10.1108/IJEBR-02-2017-0070 10.4324/9781315753041-30	2017	103

Bhuiyan, M. F., & Ivlevs, A.	Micro-entrepreneurship and subjective well-being: evidence from rural Bangladesh	10.1016/j.jbusvent.2018.09.005	2019	97
Anthopoulou, T.	Rural women in local agrofood production: between entrepreneurial initiatives and family strategies. A case study in Greece	10.1016/j.jrurstud.2010.03.004	2010	97
Rijkers, B., & Costa, R.	Gender and rural non-farm entrepreneurship	10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.05.017	2012	96
Jaafar, M., Rasoolimanesh, S. M., & Tuan, K. A. L.	Tourism growth and entrepreneurship: empirical analysis of development of rural highlands	10.1016/j.tmp.2015.02.001	2015	94

4.1.6. Institutional Contributions to Rural Female Entrepreneurship Research

The institutional distribution of publications reveals a geographically dispersed and thematically diverse set of research hubs contributing to the advancement of rural female entrepreneurship (RFE). As shown in Table 6, the University of Nigeria leads with twelve publications, underscoring Sub-Saharan Africa—particularly Nigeria—as a key locus of scholarly production. This prominence reflects the region’s dual positioning: RFE is simultaneously a socio-economic necessity and a policy priority, aligned with development-oriented research agendas in the Global South.

Other African institutions also play a prominent role. Obafemi Awolowo University (Nigeria, nine articles), the Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences (Zimbabwe, eight), and North-West University (South Africa, eight) highlight the continent’s growing academic engagement with RFE, particularly in contexts shaped by agrarian transformation, gender inclusion, and rural innovation. The clustering of Nigerian universities at the top of the ranking signals not only the scale of the challenge but also the vitality of academic responses emerging from Africa.

Significant contributions also emerge from Asia and the Middle East. Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (Malaysia, ten articles) illustrates Malaysia’s emphasis on gender and rural development, while Dhofar University (Oman, nine) reflects the Gulf region’s engagement with diversification strategies and women’s empowerment agendas. Zhengzhou University

(China, eight) and Amity University (India, seven) further consolidate Asia’s footprint, though with differing emphases: state-led rural revitalization in China versus community-based empowerment strategies in India.

Europe is represented most prominently by Sweden. The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences—listed under two slightly different names (nine articles each)—and Stockholm University (seven) together point to Sweden’s consolidation as one of the leading European hubs of expertise. Research from this context frequently addresses agricultural systems, sustainability, and gender equality, while Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece, six articles) provides complementary insights from Mediterranean rural contexts.

From the Global North, Iowa State University (United States, seven) and the University of Southern Queensland (Australia, eight) reflect established traditions in rural studies that increasingly integrate gender-sensitive perspectives. Their contributions are particularly relevant for introducing comparative frameworks and methodological rigor, which often shape the broader scholarly agenda.

A noteworthy finding is the absence of Latin American and Caribbean universities among the most productive institutions. Considering the structural importance of RFE for the socio-economic development of this region—characterized by high rurality, strong agricultural bases, and persistent gender inequalities—this absence highlights a critical research gap. Strengthening the participation of universities from Latin America and the Caribbean is essential to enrich the global debate with region-specific insights and to ensure that local policies and

organized along two axes: (i) degree of development (density), and (ii) degree of relevance (centrality) (Callon et al., 1991). This mapping enables the classification of themes into niche, motor, basic, and emerging/declining clusters within the RFE literature.

- Niche themes (upper left quadrant): Clusters such as microfinance and female entrepreneurship are highly developed internally but weakly connected to other themes. This indicates that, although extensively studied as mechanisms of women's economic inclusion, these areas remain somewhat isolated from broader theoretical debates in rural entrepreneurship. In particular, "female entrepreneurship" appears as a self-contained domain, reflecting earlier research phases that analyzed women entrepreneurs as a separate category rather than embedded within rural contexts.
- Motor themes (upper right quadrant): The clusters of entrepreneurship, gender, women entrepreneurs, and rural entrepreneurship occupy central positions, combining high density and high centrality. Their prominence underscores the consolidation of RFE around the gender-entrepreneurship nexus, with rural entrepreneurship and women entrepreneurs forming a thematic intersection that directly aligns with the focus of this study.
- Basic themes (lower right quadrant): Topics such as social entrepreneurship and women empowerment are highly relevant but comparatively underdeveloped. These clusters provide essential conceptual foundations for RFE research but lack the theoretical and empirical refinement to stand as mature, specialized areas. Their positioning highlights the need for further elaboration to transform them into fully consolidated research streams.

- Emerging or declining themes (lower left quadrant): Employment and rurality show low density and centrality, positioning them at the margins of the field. This suggests either declining scholarly interest or, more plausibly, nascent research areas yet to be fully integrated. Given the socio-economic salience of rural employment, their peripheral positioning indicates a potential disconnect between policy relevance and academic attention, pointing to an opportunity for future contributions.

In addition to the four canonical quadrants of the strategic diagram (niche, motor, basic, and emerging/declining themes), certain clusters may appear close to the center of the map, with moderate values of density and centrality. These "bridging themes" represent transversal connectors that do not yet operate as fully specialized or dominant clusters, but nonetheless perform a crucial function in linking established research lines with emergent areas of inquiry (Callon, Courtial, & Laville, 1991; Cobo et al., 2011). In the present analysis, rural development and women entrepreneurship exemplify this role. Their position indicates that they are not peripheral or marginal topics, but rather integrative axes that contribute to the cohesion of the intellectual structure of rural female entrepreneurship research.

In summary, the thematic evolution captured in Figure 6 reveals a field consolidating around the intersection of gender and entrepreneurship, while maintaining active yet isolated niches (e.g., microfinance) and foundational but underdeveloped themes (e.g., social entrepreneurship, women empowerment). The relative marginality of employment and rurality underscores areas where academic engagement lags behind socio-economic concerns, highlighting a clear agenda for future research.

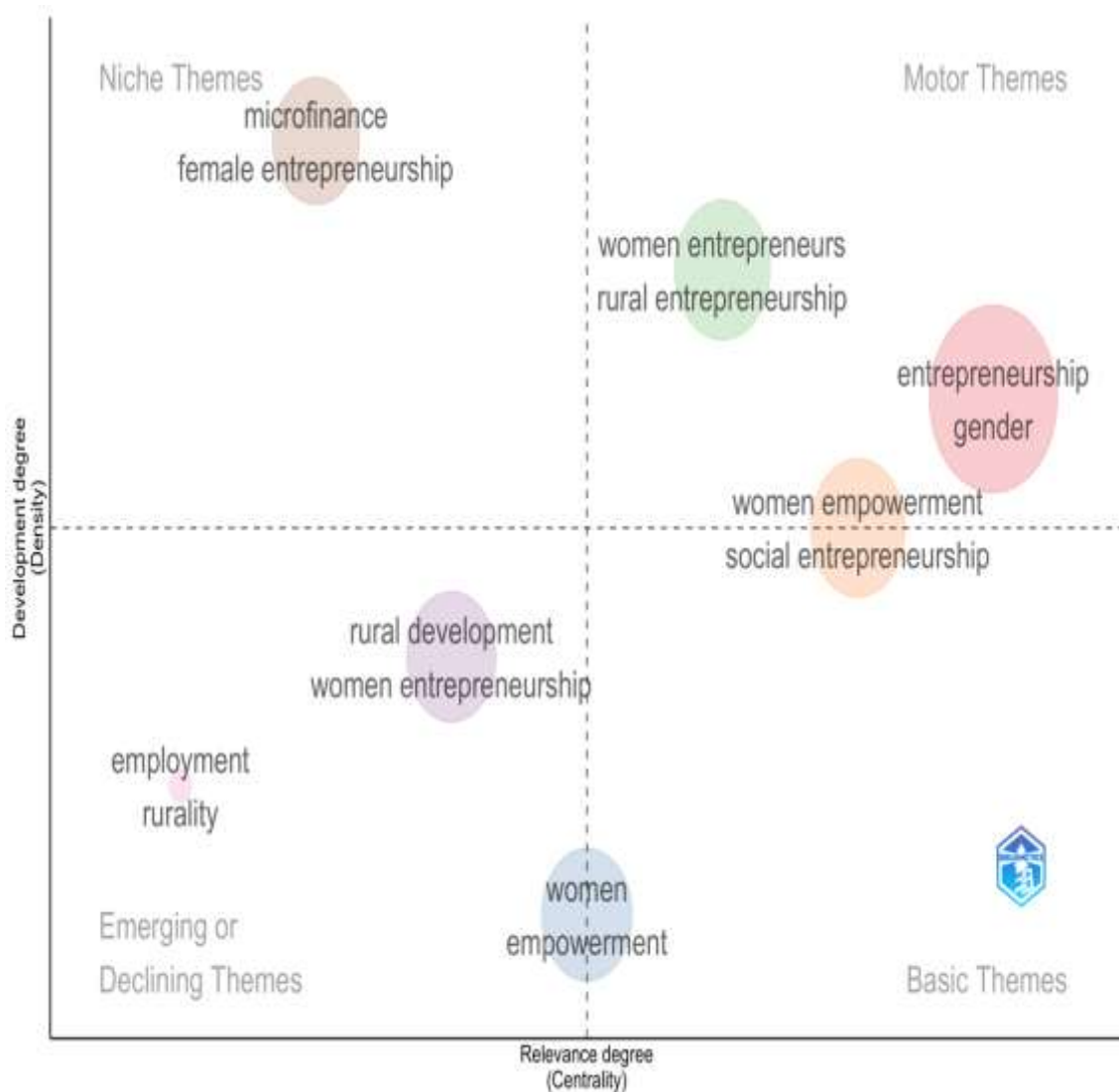


Figure 6: Thematic Evolution In RFE.

4.2.3. Intellectual Roots: Leading Authors In RFE

The intellectual foundations of rural female entrepreneurship (RFE) can be traced through the most productive and influential authors (Table 7). A combined evaluation of productivity (NP), impact (total citations, h-index, g-index), and consistency (m-index) offers insights into both the longevity and dynamism of individual scholarly trajectories.

Established Intellectual Leaders

Among the leading figures, Gerard McElwee stands out with an h-index of 6, g-index of 7, and 345 citations across seven publications since 2011. His work exemplifies the consolidation of rural entrepreneurship research, bridging agricultural contexts with discourses on innovation and gender. Similarly, Said Ghouse and Omar Durrah – with over

300 citations each—demonstrate high m-index values (0.778 and 0.667, respectively), reflecting their relatively recent yet impactful entry into the field (from 2017 onwards). Their prominence illustrates the increasing contribution of Middle Eastern and Gulf-based perspectives to the global debate on gender and entrepreneurship.

Nordic And European Perspectives

The Scandinavian cluster—including Karin Pettersson (8 publications, 198 citations, h-index 6), Helene Ahl (7 publications, 143 citations, h-index 5), Karin Berglund (7 publications, 143 citations, h-index 5), and Malin Tillmar (4 publications, 121 citations, h-index 4)—is critical in advancing gender-sensitive theoretical frameworks, feminist critiques, and policy-oriented analyses. Their collective output underscores the strong role of Nordic academia in shaping the conceptual and theoretical core of RFE,

particularly through reflexive and critical approaches.

Southern European and Lusophone Contributions

Scholars such as João Ferreira (196 citations, 4 publications since 2018) and Carlos Marques (52 citations, 4 publications since 2011) represent the Portuguese-speaking and Mediterranean traditions. Ferreira's high citation-per-article average highlights the strategic relevance of his contributions, despite his recent entry into the field. These works expand the disciplinary base by integrating perspectives from strategic management and regional development into RFE debates.

Global South Engagement

Contributions from South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are increasingly visible. Mohammad Rahman (8 publications, 109 citations since 2018), Md. Islam (9 publications, 73 citations since 2014), and Chinyere Akinbami (5 publications, 41 citations since 2013) focus on rural livelihoods, empowerment, and sustainability, providing empirical depth and aligning the field with global development challenges. Maria Partalidou (4 publications, 53

citations since 2009) also brings Mediterranean perspectives on rural development, reinforcing the thematic plurality of the field.

Patterns Of Influence and Intellectual Structure

This author network reveals the coexistence of long-term contributors with moderate but consistent impact (e.g., McElwee; Pettersson; Ahl; Berglund; Tillmar) and emerging scholars with rapid growth trajectories (e.g., Ghouse; Durrah; Ferreira; Rahman). The Scandinavian cluster provides the theoretical backbone of RFE, while African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian scholars enrich the field with contextualized, empirically grounded insights.

From a bibliometric perspective, the intellectual roots of RFE are not confined to a single academic tradition but rather emerge from cross-regional and cross-disciplinary contributions. European scholars provide conceptual and critical frameworks, while authors from the Global South offer contextual legitimacy and practical relevance. This plurality reflects a field in active consolidation, where theoretical debates intersect with applied concerns such as empowerment, microfinance, and sustainable rural development.

Table 7: Most Productive Authors.

Autor	H_index	G_index	M_index	TC	NP	PY_star
McElwee, G.	6	7	0,4	345	7	2011
Ghouse, S.	7	7	0,778	318	7	2017
Durrah, O.	6	6	0,667	307	6	2017
Pettersson, K.	6	8	0,545	198	8	2015
Ferreira, J.	4	4	0,5	196	4	2018
Ahl, H.	5	7	0,556	143	7	2017
Berglund, K.	5	7	0,556	143	7	2017
Malin, M.	4	4	0,444	121	4	2017
Tillmar.	4	4	0,444	121	4	2017
Rahman, M.	4	8	0,5	109	8	2018
Islam, M.	5	8	0,417	73	9	2014
Partalidou, M.	4	4	0,235	53	4	2009
Marques, C.	4	4	0,267	52	4	2011
Warren-Smith, I.	4	4	0,182	48	4	2004
Akinbami, C.	3	5	0,231	41	5	2013

5. CONCLUSIONS

This bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the evolution, intellectual foundations, and global distribution of research on rural female entrepreneurship (RFE). The results reveal a field that has moved from marginal and fragmented beginnings to a dynamic and increasingly institutionalized research domain. Four decades of scientific production demonstrate both the resilience of the topic and its ability to align with broader agendas such as gender equity, sustainable

development, and rural revitalization.

From a performance perspective, the exponential growth of publications since 2010 underscores the consolidation of RFE as a distinct area of inquiry. India, the United States, China, and the United Kingdom emerge as dominant contributors, while Africa—particularly Nigeria and South Africa—shows significant visibility through institutional hubs. The leading journals and most influential works confirm the multidisciplinary nature of the field, bridging entrepreneurship, gender studies, rural sociology, and development economics. Science

mapping further indicates that RFE research is structured around motor themes such as entrepreneurship, gender, and rural entrepreneurship, while microfinance remains an isolated niche and empowerment a foundational but underdeveloped theme. The intellectual roots of the field are anchored in European theoretical contributions, complemented by empirical insights from Asia and Africa.

Despite this progress, the analysis also highlights critical limitations. The global distribution of research remains highly uneven: Latin America and the Caribbean, regions with strong agricultural traditions, high levels of rurality, and persistent gender inequalities, are strikingly underrepresented in the corpus. Similarly, the predominance of English-language publications reduces the visibility of valuable research conducted in Spanish and Portuguese. These asymmetries risk narrowing theoretical debates and policy frameworks to a limited set of contexts while overlooking region-specific dynamics essential for inclusive and sustainable development.

A further challenge is the limited degree of theoretical consolidation. Much of the literature remains descriptive, emphasizing barriers and motivations without integrating structural factors such as digitalization, institutional capacity, or intersectional gender analysis. This lack of robust frameworks hinders the capacity of RFE research to inform policy with actionable, comparative, and generalizable insights. Moreover, the weak

incorporation of longitudinal and network-based approaches prevents scholars from capturing the temporal evolution of entrepreneurial ecosystems and the complex interdependencies between actors, policies, and local contexts.

To address these gaps, future research must move beyond documenting entrepreneurial activity to critically interrogating the socio-political and institutional structures that shape women's opportunities in rural economies. Strengthening the participation of Latin American and Caribbean institutions in the global RFE debate is particularly urgent, not only to enrich theoretical diversity but also to ensure that policies and programs are informed by locally generated evidence. Expanding multilingual dissemination—particularly in Spanish and Portuguese—would broaden the visibility of regionally produced knowledge and counterbalance the current dominance of English-language publications.

Finally, advancing theoretical consolidation remains a priority. RFE studies should move toward frameworks that systematically integrate gender, rurality, sustainability, and digitalization, supported by comparative and longitudinal designs as well as advanced bibliometric and network methods. These measures would not only diversify and strengthen the intellectual foundations of RFE but also enhance its practical relevance, equipping policymakers and development practitioners with context-sensitive evidence to promote inclusive, sustainable, and gender-equitable rural transformations.

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