

# Mapping gendered dimensions of just transition in health: A bibliometric analysis of the female workforce

## Sağlıkta adil geçişin toplumsal cinsiyet haritası: Kadın sağlık işgücüne dair bibliyometrik bir analiz

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction and objective;** This study aims to examine how the concept of just transition is addressed not only in the context of environmental sustainability but also in relation to gender equality and health policy. Particular attention is given to how academic interest in the female health workforce has evolved on a global scale. **Materials and methods;** A systematic search was conducted in the Web of Science database to identify publications focusing on the themes of “female health workforce,” “green jobs,” and “gender equality” (n=415). Bibliometric analysis was performed to map academic collaboration networks and thematic intensity clusters. **Findings and conclusion;** More than 70% of the 415 publications analyzed were produced after 2015. The most prominent research fields were sociology (13.25%), management (13.01%), and women’s studies (11.57%). The United States accounted for the largest share of publications (30.36%), while Turkey was represented with a significantly lower share (1.45%). In the keyword co-occurrence analysis, “gender” emerged as the most central concept, indicating that gender has become the main axis of the literature on just transition. Technological investments or green finance instruments alone are insufficient to implement just transition in the health sector. Rather, holistic and gender-equitable policies must be developed, which center on women’s caregiving labor, leadership roles, and employment security. This approach is not only essential for achieving sustainable development goals but also for constructing a future grounded in human dignity.

### ÖZ

**Giriş ve amaç;** Bu çalışma, adil geçiş kavramının yalnızca çevresel sürdürülebilirlik boyutunda değil, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği ve sağlık politikaları özelinde de nasıl ele alındığını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Özellikle kadın sağlık işgücüne yönelik akademik ilginin küresel ölçekte nasıl şekillendiği ortaya konulmuştur. **Gereç ve yöntem;** Araştırmada, Web of Science veri tabanında gerçekleştirilen sistematik tarama ile “kadın sağlık işgücü”, “yeşil işler” ve “toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği” temalarını içeren yayınlar analiz edilmiştir. (n=415) Bibliyometrik çözümleme ile akademik işbirliği ağları ve tematik yoğunluk alanları incelenmiştir. **Bulgular ve sonuç;** İncelenen 415 yayının %70’inden fazlası 2015 sonrası dönemde üretilmiş; sosyoloji (%13,25), yönetim (%13,01) ve kadın çalışmaları (%11,57) en yoğun alanlar olmuştur. En çok katkı %30,36 oranla ABD’den gelirken, Türkiye yalnızca %1,45’lik payla literatürde düşük düzeyde temsil edilmiştir. Anahtar kelime analizinde “gender” kavramı en merkezi konumda yer almış ve toplumsal cinsiyetin adil geçiş literatürünün ana eksenini oluşturduğu saptanmıştır. Adil geçişin sağlık sektörü özelinde hayata geçirilebilmesi için yalnızca teknolojik yatırımlar veya yeşil finansman araçları yeterli değildir; kadınların bakım emeği, liderlik rolleri ve iş güvencesi temelinde şekillenen bütüncül ve eşitlikçi politikalar geliştirilmelidir. Bu yaklaşım, sürdürülebilir kalkınma hedeflerinin ötesinde, insan onuruna yakışır bir gelecek inşası için zorunludur.

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid deterioration of the global climate system has become a multidimensional crisis that directly threatens not only environmental balances but also the existence of human societies and other species (IPCC, 2023). The increase in average surface temperatures will cause the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets to melt rapidly and the oceans to expand, exposing coastal areas to the

risks of flooding, salinization and infrastructure loss by mid-century (NASA Sea Level Change Team, 202). All these developments have brought about discussions in the academic community within the framework of concepts such as “green transformation”, “just transition”, and “green economy”.

The concept of just transition is a set of principles that aim to carry out environmental and economic

transformations in a socially inclusive manner (ILO, 2015). Although the concept was first shaped within the framework of climate policies, it has also begun to be widely used in the context of the health sector in recent years. In particular, women, despite constituting approximately 70% of the global health workforce, occupy only less than a quarter of decision-making positions (WHO, 2021). These structural imbalances bring to the agenda not only the environmental but also the social dimension of just transition in health. The visibility of women in the healthcare system is increasingly being studied in relation to themes such as remuneration, leadership, and burnout. However, it is observed that these studies are mostly scattered, conceptually unintegrated and far from systematic analysis. At this point, bibliometric analysis provides an important tool for revealing trends, gaps and collaborations by mapping the structure of the academic literature (Donthu et al., 2021).

This study aims to map the development of this thematic area by analysing academic publications produced at the intersection of the concepts of “health,” “female labour,” and “just transition” using bibliometric methods. The study sought answers to the following four basic questions:

- How has the literature developed over time?
- Who are the most influential academic, institutional, and geographical actors?
- Which thematic clusters stand out?
- Which gaps are visible for future research?

### The Concept of Just Transition in Health

Just transition is based on the principle of protecting the rights of workers and communities in the transition to environmentally friendly economies (ILO, 2015). According to ITUC (2017), “Just transition is an economy-wide process that produces plans, policies and investments that pave the way for a future that includes green and dignified employment, where emissions are net zero, poverty is eradicated, and communities are strong and resilient”. Although this concept was initially implemented in the energy and industrial sectors, it has also begun to be addressed in sectors with high female employment, such as healthcare (Watts et al., 2021). Health institutions are both substantial employers and in need of transformation in terms of their energy consumption and carbon footprint. However, the gender dimension of just transition in the health sector is still underrepresented in the literature (Biggerstaff et al., 2023).

The most comprehensive study among the developments related to climate change is the European Green Deal

announced by the European Union on December 11, 2019 (The European Commission, 2019). With this deal, the EU announced its strategy to become a carbon-neutral continent by 2050 with the goal of a sustainable and inclusive global economy (The European Commission, 2019). This strategy directly affects not only sectors such as energy, transportation, and agriculture but also public health and healthcare systems. Due to factors such as air pollution caused by the climate crisis, the spread of infectious diseases, extreme weather events, and food safety problems, the burden on the health sector increases. Following the European Green Deal, climate adaptation in the field of health and the establishment of low-carbon health infrastructures were brought to the agenda with the publication of the “Health and Environment Action Plan for Sustainability” in 2020. These policies, developed in collaboration with the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the World Health Organisation (WHO-Europe), aim to make health systems more resilient to climate change, reduce environmental risks, and eliminate health inequalities. Thus, within the framework of the European Green Deal, the health sector is considered both a victim of climate change and a part of the solution; in line with the principles of a just transition, the need to support health workers in this transformation comes to the fore.

Approximately 70% of those working in the health and care sector worldwide are women (WHO, 2019). In Turkey, this rate is around 65% (TÜİK, 2023). However, women are primarily employed in positions with low status, high workload and outside of decision-making mechanisms (OECD, 2022). Transformations such as digitalisation, automation and green infrastructure investments in the health system may lead to the exclusion of women in this process unless they carry gender awareness (McKie et al., 2020).

### METHOD

A quantitative research design was adopted in this study, which aimed to measure trends, structural relationships, and scientific productivity in the field of research (Creswell, 2014). To create a comprehensive map of the literature within the research scope, techniques for visualising scientific knowledge networks were employed, along with performance measurement based on the analysis of publications. In this direction, relevant academic publications were accessed through purposeful sampling during the study process, and the selected documents were analysed based on various bibliometric criteria.

In the performance analysis, indicators such as journal and country publication outputs, citation counts, and productivity levels were evaluated. Additionally,

network-based visualisation techniques were employed to reveal the structural characteristics of the scientific field. In this context, co-citation, keyword matches, country-based evaluations of publications, and bibliographic match analyses were employed; the findings were interpreted through visual maps that provide a graphical representation of conceptual and social relationships. During the analysis process, relational matrices were created based on the similarity degrees between information clusters and network structures were built on these matrices. Thus, the study aimed to present a comprehensive picture of the scientific field, incorporating both quantitative indicators and visual-analytical methods.

### Data Collection

In this study, 415 results were obtained as a result of the search conducted by selecting the “subject” field using the keywords “just transition in health”, “female workforce”, “gender and work”, “gender equality”, “eco-social policy” in the Web of Science database. 411 journal articles from various disciplines were identified according to the year, and four editorial content works were also identified. In terms of disciplines, the majority of the studies were in the fields of sociology (55), management (54), women’s studies (48), public, environmental and occupational health (43), and interdisciplinary social sciences (23). The obtained data were examined through keyword analyses, author citations and country citations.

The analyses reveal which countries and researchers are most intensive in their research on just transition

in health, which keywords are prominent, and the distribution of citation numbers. Such analyses help to comprehensively understand the existing literature in the field of just transition in health and the female workforce and to determine future research directions.

### Data Analysis Method

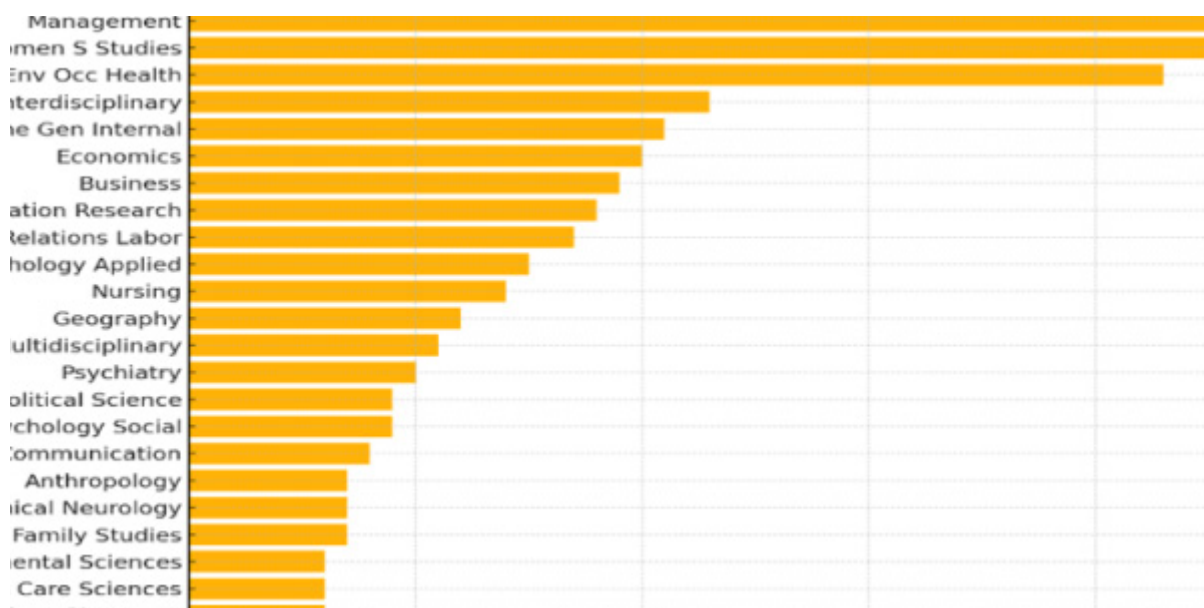
In the study, keyword co-occurrence, author collaboration, and citation analysis were performed using VOSviewer software (version 1.6.20). Additionally, the R-based Bibliometrix package was utilised. Modularity Q index and average silhouette value were calculated to evaluate the quality of the clusters (Chen, 2006).

## FINDING

### Literature Trends

The field distribution of studies on the subject in the literature between 1984 and 2025 is shown in the graph below.

When the distribution of 415 publications analysed within the scope of the study is examined according to their subject headings, it is seen that the studies exhibit an interdisciplinary structure. A significant portion of the publications is concentrated in the fields of Sociology (13.25%), Management (13.01%), Women’s Studies (11.57%) and Public Health (10.36%). This situation shows that the intersectional themes of the study bridge the social sciences and health sciences. In addition, significant representation is observed



Graph 1. Publication Distribution by Web of Science Categories

in fields such as Social Sciences (Interdisciplinary), Internal Medicine, Economics, Business, Education and Industrial Relations.

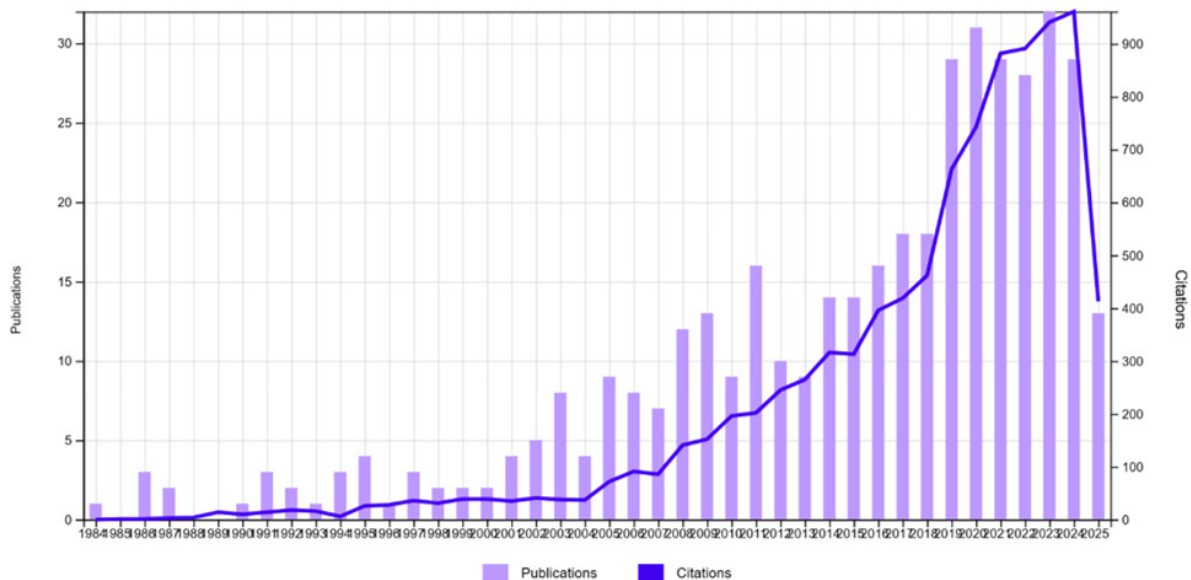
This diversity reveals that themes such as gender, labour, health policies and institutional structures are addressed in different scientific disciplines. In addition, the fact that research is included in fields such as Psychology, Nursing, Geography, Political Science, and Communication shows that interest and contribution to the subject are spread across a broad academic spectrum. In this context, the results obtained provide a strong basis for the bibliometric orientation of the study, making it a suitable foundation for interdisciplinary analyses.

Notably, there has been a significant increase in the number of publications on the subject. A minimal number of publications were produced in the 1980s and 1990s, and it is observed that the publications of this

period generally changed between 0 and 5 per year. This situation demonstrates that the relevant theme still has a limited standing in the academic agenda and that the research infrastructure is not mature. The number of publications began to increase from the 2000s onwards, gaining remarkable momentum, particularly after 2015. While the number of publications reached its peak in 2022, this increase can be attributed to both academic interest and the prominence of gender, work-family balance, and labour themes during times of crisis. The decrease in 2025 is most likely due to the fact that the year is not yet over.

### Effective Field Categories

The tree map graphic strikingly reveals the disciplinary distribution of green jobs and sustainability-focused studies in the Web of Science (WoS) database.



Graph 2. Distribution of Articles on Just Transition in Health and Female Labour Force in Web of Science Database by Year



Graph 3. Field Distribution of Articles on Just Transition in Health and Women's Workforce in the Web of Science Database

The field with the most publications is sociology, with 55 studies. This indicates that environmental transformation processes are not only ecological or technological but also a profound social transformation issue. Management has the most publications, with 54, and women's studies has 48. The fact that the field of management is so prominent indicates that topics such as green organisational strategies, sustainable leadership, and corporate environmental responsibility are intensively addressed in the academy.

The field of public environmental health and occupational health, which stands out with 43 studies, points to the public health dimension of environmental impacts. In contrast, the category of interdisciplinary social sciences, comprising 23 studies, indicates that research in this field is often based on multi-field collaborations. Fields such as internal medicine, with 21 studies; economics, with 20 studies; business, with 19 studies; and educational research, with 18 studies, demonstrate that green transformation is also comprehensively addressed in terms of health, economy, and human capital. The existence of fields such as nursing, with 14 studies; geography, with 12 studies; multidisciplinary psychology, with 11 studies; and psychiatry, with 10 studies, reveals that environmental problems are also linked to individual psychological effects and geographical inequalities.

This distribution reveals that for social policymakers, green transformation requires intersectional strategies not only in the environmental and economic domains but also in various areas, including social inequalities,

health, gender, psychology, and governance.

Studies conducted by Craig and Mullan (2010), Cinamon and Rich (2002), and Shockley et al. (2017) examine the effects of gender on work and family life using different methods, and they collectively reveal that work-family conflicts experienced by women are more intense than those experienced by men. These three most cited studies show that gender-based role distribution is discussed at both individual and structural levels.

Schag et al. (1994), Emslie and Hunt (2009), and Gill and Orgad (2015) examine the impact of gender on quality of life and social expectations in various contexts. These three studies aimed to reveal the oppression of women, ranging from individual psychological effects to social discourses.

Studies by Schilt (2006), Carli (2020), Rosenfeld et al. (2004), and Schilt and Connell (2007) analyse the visibility of gender in business life and its effects in historical and global contexts. These four studies show that gender is not only intertwined with individuals but also institutional, historical, and global dynamics.

### Keyword Analysis and Thematic Clusters

The keyword co-occurrence network created within the scope of the study reveals the conceptual densities and trends in the literature on gender and working life. Common word analysis is used to access the conceptual network, that is, to reveal the conceptual structure within the field of research examined. The full count option was preferred among the calculation methods.

**Table 1.** Top 10 Most Cited Articles on Just Transition in Health and Women's Workforce in Web of Science Database

No	Title	Authors	Journal	Year	Citations
1	Parenthood, Gender and Work-Family Time	Craig & Mullan (2010)	Journal of Marriage and Family	2010	307
2	Gender Differences in Work and Family Roles	Cinamon & Rich (2002)	Sex Roles	2002	284
3	Disentangling Gender and Work-Family Conflict	Shockley et al. (2017)	Journal of Applied Psychology	2017	245
4	Quality-of-Life in Cancer Survivors	Schag et al. (1994)	Quality of Life Research	1994	241
5	Live to Work or Work to Live?	Emslie & Hunt (2009)	Gender, Work and Organization	2009	237
6	The Confidence Cult(ure)	Gill & Orgad (2015)	Australian Feminist Studies	2015	218
7	How Transmen Make Gender Visible at Work	Schilt (2006)	Gender & Society	2006	208
8	Women, Gender Equality and COVID-19	Carli (2020)	Gender in Management	2020	205
9	Gender and Work in Germany	Rosenfeld et al. (2004)	Annual Review of Sociology	2004	197
10	Do Workplace Gender Transitions Make Trouble?	Schilt & Connell (2007)	Gender, Work and Organization	2007	155

Source: Web of Science



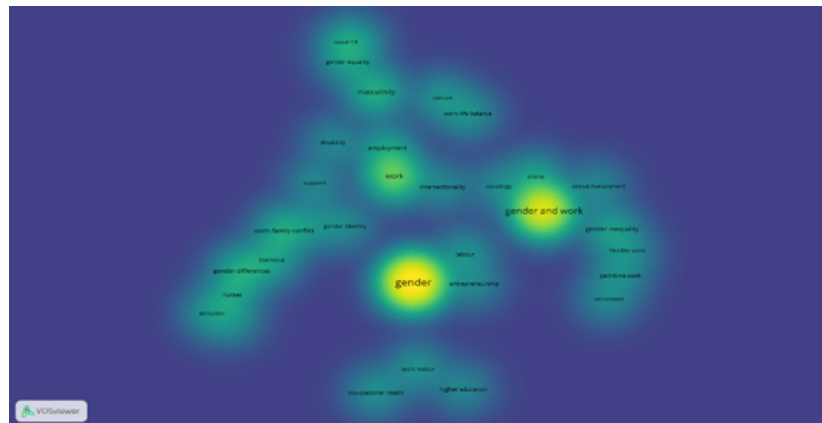
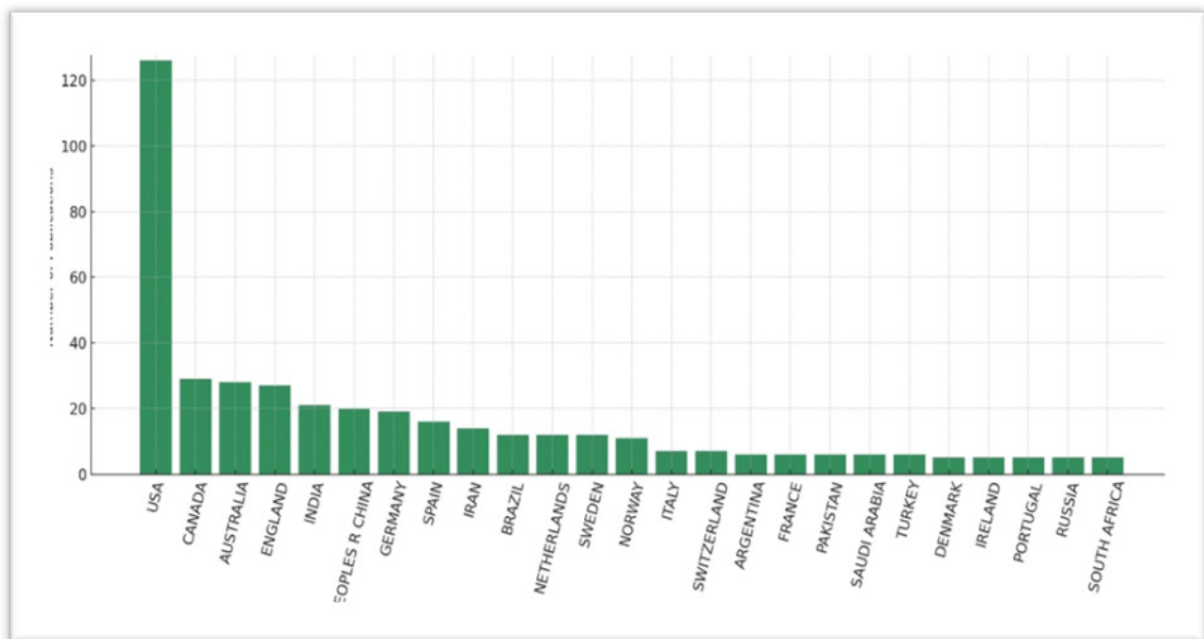


Figure 1. VOSviewer Concept Density

The keyword “gender”, which is in the most central position on the map, has the highest repetition and connection power in the literature and is directly related to many concepts such as “employment”, “work”, “gender identity”, “gender inequality” and “intersectionality”. This situation shows that gender is becoming an increasingly central conceptual axis in the social sciences (Connell, 2005; Ridgeway, 2011). The concept of “gender and work”, which is located in the upper right part of the map, establishes strong connections with keywords such as “sexual harassment”, “flexible work”, “part-time work”, and “retirement”, indicating the formation of a subset of recent literature, especially shaped around gender inequalities in work life (Acker, 2006; Williams et al., 2012).

On the other hand, the clustering of concepts such as “masculinity”, “gender equality”, “COVID-19,” and “culture” in the upper section reflects research trends focusing on gender roles in the post-pandemic period (Kantamneni, 2020; Scambor et al., 2014). The presence of themes such as “burnout”, “work-family conflict”, “nurses”, and “gender differences” in the lower section of the map indicates that research from the earlier period (2014–2016) focused on gender-based burnout and role conflicts in the healthcare sector (McMullan et al., 2016; Purvanova & Muros, 2010). Temporal analysis based on colour scale reveals that concepts such as “intersectionality”, “entrepreneurship”, and “sociology” have become more prominent in recent years, and the literature has increasingly opened up to multi-layered,

Table 2. Countries by Number of Publications (All Countries)



cultural and socio-political contexts (Crenshaw, 1989; Cho et al., 2013).

When we examine the distribution of publications covering topics such as green jobs, sustainability, and environmental transformation by country, it is evident that the United States makes the most considerable contribution, accounting for 30.36% of the total. The USA is followed by Canada, with 6.99%, and Australia, with 6.75%. Both of these countries are among the developed social welfare states that prioritise environmental regulations in the field of social policy.

The significant contributions of European countries, such as the UK (6.51%), Germany (4.58%), Spain (3.85%), and Sweden (2.89%), demonstrate that the green agreement policies implemented at the EU level are also reflected in academic production. The fact that emerging economies, such as China (4.82%) and India (5.06%), are at the top of the rankings indicates that academic interest in environmental sustainability issues on a global scale is also increasing in developing countries. Turkey is on this list with only six publications (1.45%) and is positioned lower, together with four other countries that have the same number. This situation suggests that stronger ties should be established between Turkey's academic production capacity and social policy development in the fields of environment and sustainability.

## DISCUSSION

Just transition is a multi-layered transformation process that addresses not only environmental sustainability but also structural inequalities such as gender equality. The findings obtained within the scope of this study reveal that any green transformation policy that will be implemented without increasing the visibility of women's labour and leadership, especially in the health sector, will be incomplete.

Bibliometric network analyses reveal that key themes, such as "green jobs," "gender equality," and "health workforce," are interwoven not only with quantitative but also with qualitative relationships. The burnout syndrome, unequal distribution of home workload, and lack of institutional representation that female health workers face, particularly in the post-pandemic period, reveal that just transition has not only economic and environmental but also ethical and social dimensions (Purvanova & Muros, 2010; Ridgeway, 2011).

The upward trend in the female health workforce identified in this study is consistent with the findings of Donthu et al. (2021). In both studies, a sharp increase in publications after 2015 has been observed. However, in our analysis, the concept of 'green work engagement'

has been positioned more centrally, whereas in the study by Watts et al. (2021), it remained of secondary importance. This divergence may be attributed to a thematic shift toward the health sector. In terms of country distribution, the dominance of the United States is consistent with earlier studies such as Craig and Mullan (2010); however, the rise of China and India has not been adequately captured in the analysis by Shockley et al. (2017), which highlights a shift in global interest. Furthermore, the recent prominence of the term 'intersectionality' in the keyword network suggests that the multi-layered gender analysis proposed by Cho et al. (2013) has been reflected in the literature.

Thematic clusters that stand out in the dataset analysis suggest that, alongside the gender-based segregation of the healthcare sector, the normative structures surrounding green work should also be questioned. For example, the intense mention of the concepts of "green economy" and "green work engagement" together suggests that these areas have become integral to social structures rather than just environmental dimensions (Donthu et al., 2021). In this respect, it is imperative that green policies do not remain gender-blind, not only in terms of equality but also in terms of policy effectiveness (McKie, Hogg, & Miller, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals the need to reconsider the concept of just transition—positioned at the intersection of sustainability, equity, and ethics in the field of health—from a gender perspective. The detailed mapping of thematic clusters at an interdisciplinary level has enabled the identification of existing gaps in the literature. Women's leadership, care work and resistance to burnout are of critical importance not only for health systems but also for the social sustainability of the green economy. Policies implemented in line with environmental sustainability goals can either have an effect that strengthens equal opportunities for women or deepens existing inequalities. The literature reveals that green health policies often overlook women's labour when a gender-based approach is not adopted (Newman et al., 2022). Therefore, when designing just transition processes in health, egalitarian strategies should be developed that will strengthen women's employment conditions, care work and leadership roles.

Future research should develop more in-depth analyses by combining bibliometric findings with qualitative field data. Overall, the data suggest that environmentally based social policy studies have gained global prevalence, but the intensity of production remains largely Western-centric. This suggests that scientific production and international collaborations in this field should be

supported in underrepresented countries in order to make the “just transition” and sustainable development goals more inclusive.

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