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Review

Gender Inclusion in Climate Policy: A Scoping Literature Review

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Abstract

Studies on the climate crisis highlight that gender can play a vital role in successfully achieving climate change targets while simultaneously reducing gender inequality. However, there is still a lack of comprehensive analysis of how gender could be included in climate policy and how this involvement could be assessed. Thus, this paper primarily focuses on the importance of gender in climate policy through the following aspects: gender differences in impacts of climate change, gendered views on responses to climate change, including responsibility and insights. The second part of this paper is based on a scoping review. The literature review covered publications from 2015 to 2025 retrieved using the Web of Science and Google Scholar databases, from which 29 papers were selected. The results demonstrate how research on gender inclusion in climate policy is distributed across different levels. Thus, this paper reviews research on gender inclusion and the assessment of this inclusion, considering layers such as policy documents, leadership, and decision-making. The paper also explores the contributions of non-governmental organisations and gender-focused advisory bodies to promoting equitable participation and the importance of community engagement. Thus, this review provides insights into how to ensure an inclusive, effective, and transformative climate policy, considering gender and, in turn, advancing both equity and sustainability.

Keywords: climate change; gender; decision-making; climate justice; gender inequality; social justice

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1. Introduction

Mitigation and adaptation processes are critical components of climate policy. Guided by the UNFCCC Paris Agreement, multiple actors, including policymakers and researchers, actively seek ways to address the climate crisis [1]. However, mitigating the climate crisis remains a daunting, long-term challenge [2]. One reason identified by many scholars—and increasingly recognised by policymakers, e.g., in the European Green Deal and IPPC reports—is that one-size-fits-all approaches to climate policy are ineffective at solving this problem [3–5]. In recent years, climate governance scholarship has increasingly emphasised the need to include justice-oriented and equality-based approaches in climate policymaking, as these perspectives are essential for addressing differentiated vulnerabilities and ensuring that climate policies do not reproduce existing social inequities. This growing awareness highlights that climate change cannot be framed merely as a natural science issue but must also be treated as a deeply social and political one requiring inclusive frameworks

that consider diverse societal groups. Consequently, gender-sensitive strategies in climate mitigation and adaptation have been identified as crucial for promoting equitable outcomes and enhancing policy effectiveness. By foregrounding these perspectives, scholars seek to challenge the persistent techno-economic dominance—or "stickiness"—of natural science frameworks in climate policymaking and advance more holistic, socially responsive solutions [6–8].

Firstly, there are documented gender differences in climate change vulnerabilities, such as with hazards like droughts and floods, as well as in views on climate change. The gender differences are more substantial in the Global South, where social differences intersecting with gender, such as income and class, are bigger, but are also found in the Global North, where they include not only vulnerabilities intersecting with class, income and location, such as energy poverty and commuting behaviour [9], but also views on climate change [4,10]. Thus, when focusing on these aspects, it is essential not only to resolve different aspects of the climate crisis more effectively but also to address the gender inequality exacerbated by this issue. Furthermore, by ensuring that different groups in society are represented and that their distinct needs are addressed, climate policies can achieve more socially equitable and just outcomes [11,12]. This integration aligns with the broader goals of sustainable development and has in recent years also been further emphasised by the global climate regime, e.g., in the UNFCCC's Sixth Assessment Report, and by the European Union via the European Green Deal, where climate targets and equity are simultaneously highlighted [13–15]. In the Global South it has also been highlighted that effective climate strategies, which acknowledge the complexities of gender dynamics, can lead to more sustainable and inclusive development pathways [16,17]. As climate change continues to pose significant threats globally, the need for gender-informed policies becomes increasingly urgent, underscoring the intertwining pathways of gender equity and climate resilience [3,4,10]. Despite this, climate change has predominantly been framed as a natural science problem requiring technological solutions to persist [18]. Therefore, the first part of this paper focuses on discussing the importance of gender perspectives in the context of climate change. It highlights how different facets of climate change relate to gender, examines the sensitivities surrounding climate change perception and the assumption of responsibility, and provides insights into these gender dynamics. Ultimately, it demonstrates the necessity gender inclusion into climate policies and targets.

Furthermore, the second part of this paper is dedicated to reviewing the literature on gender inclusion in climate policy and the assessment of this involvement. Previous literature reviews addressing gender and climate issues have mainly focused on gender and energy [19,20], gender and transition [21,22], or renewable energy [23]. Additionally, Kataeva et al. [24] employed a bibliometric review approach, revealing how gender is being mainstreamed into climate change pathways. Djoudi et al. [25] reviewed how gender is framed in climate change adaptation through an intersectionality lens. Alonso-Epelde et al. [6] performed a systematic literature review on the impacts of climate policies on gender inequality. However, there is still a lack of comprehensive literature reviews on gender inclusion in climate policy and the assessment of this involvement. Thus, this paper contributes to filling this gap by presenting a scoping review and systematically considering different layers of gender inclusion: policy documents, leadership and decision-making; involvement and contributions of non-governmental organisations and gender-focused advisory bodies; and community engagement. The review presents a comprehensive picture of possible gender inclusion in climate policy, along with assessment of this involvement.

2. The Importance of Gender Inclusion in Climate Policy

Climate change does not impact people equally, and responses to this problem and perceptions also can differ [26]. Thus, in this paper, looking at the role of gender in climate policy, we suggest revising these four aspects: gender differences in vulnerabilities and impact, sensitivity to climate change perception, gender differences regarding assumed responsibility, and insights (foresights) related to climate change mitigation, including psychological theoretical grounding, as presented in Figure 1.

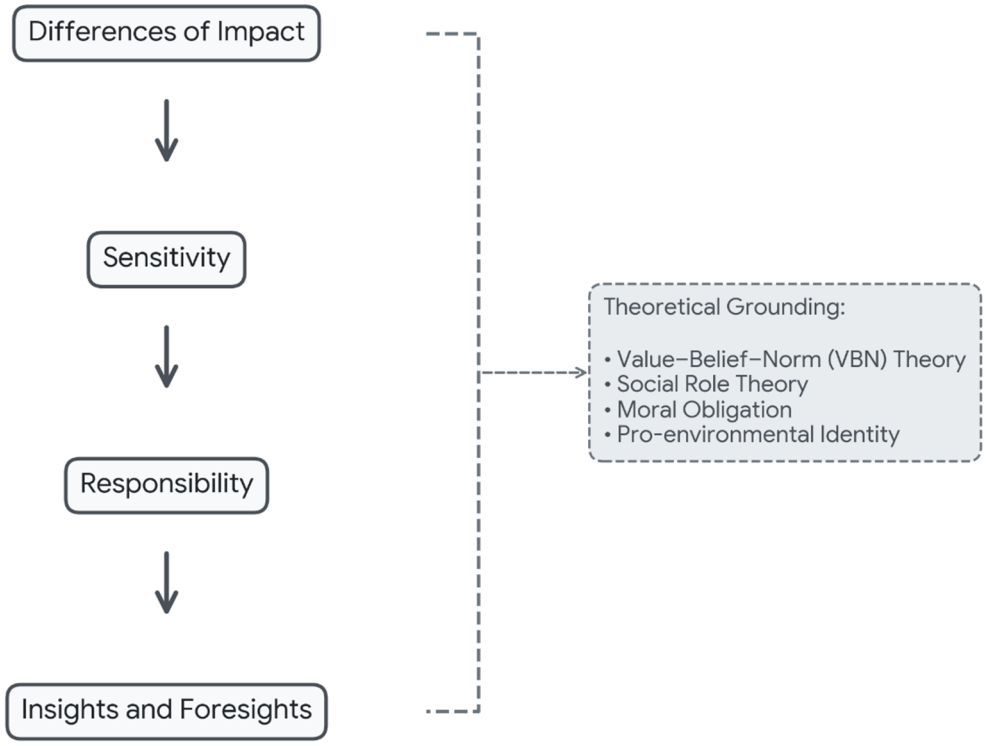


Figure 1. Heuristic conceptual framework focusing on the important aspects of gender inclusion in climate policy.

Taking into account the gendered impacts of climate change o, it is important to emphasise two aspects. Firstly, there tend to be gender-related differences in vulnerabilities to climate change [27–29]. Research indicates that women, especially in the Global South, often bear a heavier burden of climate change impacts due to their traditional roles as caregivers, which might make them less mobile or less able to evacuate in the case of climate-related natural disasters [30]. Furthermore, women frequently constitute a significantly disproportionate share of the population living in poverty, potentially making them more susceptible to climate impacts [16,31]. This situation is more pronounced in the Global South, particularly in Africa and Asia [32,33], and is especially notable in the agricultural sector. In this region, limited access to agricultural resources hampers women's adaptive strategies as climate variability intensifies [34]. Furthermore, limited access to gender-sensitive information targeting different responses to climate change might make it difficult for some women to adapt to climate change [35,36]. Studies also point to cultural factors that can restrict women's access to crucial environmental information, potentially amplifying their vulnerability to climate impacts. Thus, gendered vulnerabilies intersect with other social factors, and are thus a product of socioeconomic structures and power dynamics that shape women-s experiences during climate events [37]. Therefore, it is important to mitigate these social conditions and consequences.

The second aspect is that climate change may reinforce gender inequality [27,38–40]. Climate change can amplify existing gendered inequalities in resource access, particularly in relation to energy, as exemplified by Feenstra and Özerol [41] and Kuşkaya et al. [42]. Furthermore, according to the authors of [43], women in rural regions frequently face challenges in accessing land, finance, and technology, which may significantly impact their ability to adapt to a changing climate. Mortreux et al. [44] stated that increased domestic pressures resulting from climate impacts, combined with existing vulnerabilities, can lead to heightened risks of gender-based violence and amplify other existing socioeconomic inequalities [45]. Thus, it is essential to incorporate gender into climate policy not only to mitigate climate change but also to address the gender inequality exacerbated by this issue.

The differing ways in which individuals experience climate sensitivity or climate views may constitute a critical dimension, which is potentially exacerbated by structural inequalities during environmental crises. Due to the different effects of climate change, the need for gender-sensitive policies is increasingly recognised [46,47]. However, in this paper, the sensitivity aspect is not about exposures among women depending on their livelihood conditions and strategies [48], but rather about gendered views of responses to climate change, which further leads to a higher assumption of responsibility. Existing research highlights a tendency for women to express greater concern regarding climate change [49]. Additionally, they may show a higher propensity for climate engagement alongside less pronounced scepticism compared to their male counterparts [50]. Ampaire et al. [16] highlighted that while women are portrayed as passive victims of climate disasters, they actively contribute to adaptation efforts. Additionally, traditional caregiving roles often mean that women experience a heightened sense of responsibility for family welfare in the event of environmental disruptions [34]. However, it is important to recognise that gender does not operate in isolation, thus intersects with other social categories. The literature demonstrates that risk perception is shaped by demographic and socio-political factors, famously exemplified by the "white male effect," where white men tend to perceive environmental risks as lower than women and non-white men do [51]. Furthermore, sociodemographic research highlights that these gender differences are moderated by political ideology, educational attainment, and distinct national contexts [52]. Therefore, the gendered patterns of climate concern identified in this review should be interpreted not as universal or biological invariants but as socio-politically contingent phenomena.

Finally, the disparities in climate change impacts and responsibilities probably also lead to gender-different insights and foresights about climate change solutions, which need to be recognised by policymakers [53,54]. Tvinnereim et al. [55] highlight distinct gender differences in g conceptualisation of climate change, noting that men often associate solutions with the public sphere and international dimensions, whereas women tend to view climate action as an issue involving individual behaviour and lifestyle choices. Furthermore, men are more likely to raise political rationales, while women are more likely to cite personal costs [50]. Other authors have also noted that women tend to be more inclined to support climate change mitigation efforts, such as demonstrating political backing for geothermal systems [56]. Research by Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi [57] suggests that female parliamentarians often advocate for climate issues more vigorously, echoing broader societal patterns wherein women demonstrate substantial engagement in climate actions and policymaking. Furthermore, Swim et al. [58] observe that arguments focusing on ethics and environmental justice tend to be attributed to women more often than to men.

Therefore, to analyse the intersection of gender and climate change, Figure 1 presents a heuristic framework. When examining variations in impact, research demonstrates that the effects and views on climate change is not gender-neutral. Environmental disruptions can disproportionately burden women, largely due to entrenched institutional and socioeconomic inequalities. According to Social Role Theory, the societal division of labour shapes distinct gender roles, where women have traditionally been socialised to perform communal, caretaking, and nurturing duties within households and communities [59,60]. This socialisation directly shapes the next stage of our framework—sensitivity. Because of this communal orientation and daily reliance on natural resources for family care, women potentially exhibit higher risk awareness and psychological sensitivity to environmental degradation than men [61,62]. This heightened sensitivity, interpreted through the lens of Value–Belief–Norm (VBN) theory, subsequently activates a stronger sense of personal responsibility and moral obligation to act pro-environmentally [63]. Ultimately, navigating this sequence through Social Role Theory provides essential insights and foresights for designing gender-responsive climate adaptation policies that address the distinct vulnerabilities and agency of both genders.

Thus, incorporating gender perspectives into climate policies is seen as an important step for addressing inequalities and potentially enhancing the overall efficacy of climate interventions [17,64]. Gaard [18], Jerneck [65] and Guedes et al. [66] emphasise the importance of feminism, hence proactively advocating for gender equality in climate policy. Regarding gender inclusion in climate policymaking, Magnusdottir and Kronsell [4,67] argued that gender equality in climate policy extends beyond nominal representation and the mere inclusion of women in decision-making roles. It involves transforming the dominant narratives around climate change to make room for diverse perspectives and new knowledge (see also [3,68]). A robust examination of the recognition of gender in climate policies is therefore fundamental to achieving sustainable and resilient climate responses. Furthermore, this paper presents a scoping review to examine the ways in which gender can be incorporated into climate policy at various levels and how this inclusion can be evaluated.

3. Methodology

This study employs a scoping review approach to comprehensively analyse how gender is included and evaluated in climate policy. This type of scoping literature review is used to reveal knowledge gaps, scope a body of literature, and investigate research conduct [69]. The literature search was executed in January 2026. The primary search was conducted in the Web of Science database. To ensure literature saturation, a supplementary manual search was subsequently performed in Google Scholar. The publication period spanned from 2015 to 2025. The year 2015 was chosen as the starting point for the analysis because the Paris Agreement, which explicitly recognised the necessity of integrating gender perspectives into climate-related legislation and programming, was passed in this year. Furthermore, in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals, including targets related to climate change and inequality, were adopted [15,70].

In the search for articles and reviews, the primary search was conducted in the Web of Science database across all fields using the following Boolean search string: "climate change policy" AND "gender" AND "evaluation/inclusion". Furthermore, a manual search was subsequently performed in Google Scholar using the same keywords, yielding 1000 relevant records. These keywords were selected to align with the research objective: to analyse how gender is included in climate policy and how this inclusion can be evaluated. Consequently, the initial electronic search yielded 12,000 records. To ensure an objective selection process in the first stage, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were established

prior to the screening phase. Studies were included if they met the following criteria: (1) were peer-reviewed journal articles from reputable publishers; (2) were published in English; and (3) focused on either environmental or social sciences. Document types such as conference abstracts, editorial letters, and grey literature were excluded. Through this screening, the number of papers was reduced to 5000.

In the second stage, which focused on explicitly evaluating gender dimensions within climate change policies, the remaining papers were screened against the eligibility criteria, leaving 343 papers. This stage focused broadly on identifying papers containing both "climate change" and "gender" within the text. In the third stage, a full-text review of these papers was performed. Papers were excluded during this final phase for two specific reasons: (1) the paper addressed gender and climate policy merely "in passing" without analysing or conceptualising their mutual, interlocking relationship; (2) the study did not maintain a dedicated focus on policy frameworks, governance structures, or strategic policy implementation (e.g., studies focusing strictly on purely technical adaptation measures or physical science data without a clear link to institutional policy frameworks). This rigorous process resulted in a final selection of 29 articles that constituted the ultimate evidence base for this scoping review. The formal PRISMA-ScR flow diagram is presented in Figure 2. In terms of screeners and disagreement resolution, the records were independently reviewed by the co-authors, and any disagreements were resolved through mutual discussion and consensus. The literature screening and duplicate removal were performed manually. Since Web of Science was utilised as our primary database, the initial record pool was established from it. When we subsequently conducted the supplementary search in Google Scholar, overlapping records that had already been captured by Web of Science were manually identified and excluded as duplicates. All retrieved records from the electronic databases were compiled into a unified database using Microsoft Excel. Duplicate records were identified and removed manually by sorting the rows alphabetically by title and author names, followed by a meticulous line-by-line visual inspection. The individual record counts for both databases, along with the number of removed duplicates, are visually presented in the updated PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1). All identified records were exported into Microsoft Excel for manual data management. The extracted data categories included the author(s), year of publication, geographical context, and various analytical aspects presented in Figure 3. Therefore, the articles were systematically coded as follows: documents—papers were coded under this category if they presented gender inclusion at the climate policy document level; leadership—papers were coded under this category if their primary analytical focus was on representation, positions of authority, individual agency, or institutional roles (e.g., the presence or ratio of women in climate governance positions); decision-making—papers were coded under this category if their primary focus was on the procedural mechanics of policy formulation, governance outputs, or inclusive processes; stakeholders and NGOs—papers were coded under this category if they analysed the roles of NGOs and advisers related to gender in climate policy; society—papers were coded under this category if the roles of society (voters) were discussed in terms of gender inclusion in climate change policy. A formal protocol for this scoping review was not registered in international registries.

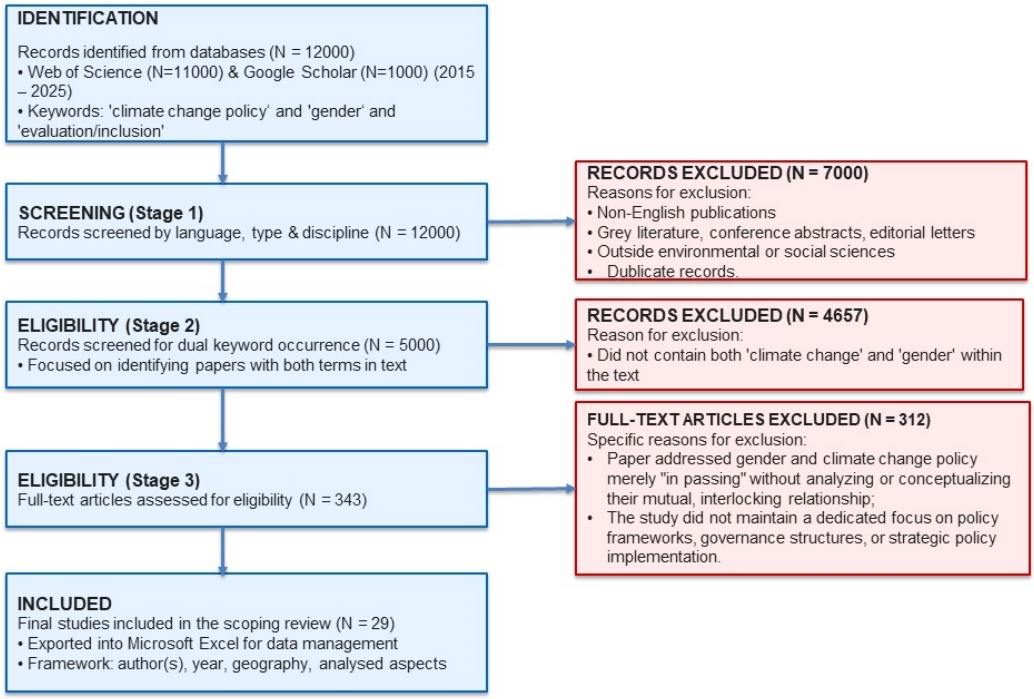


Figure 2. Diagram of the scoping review process.

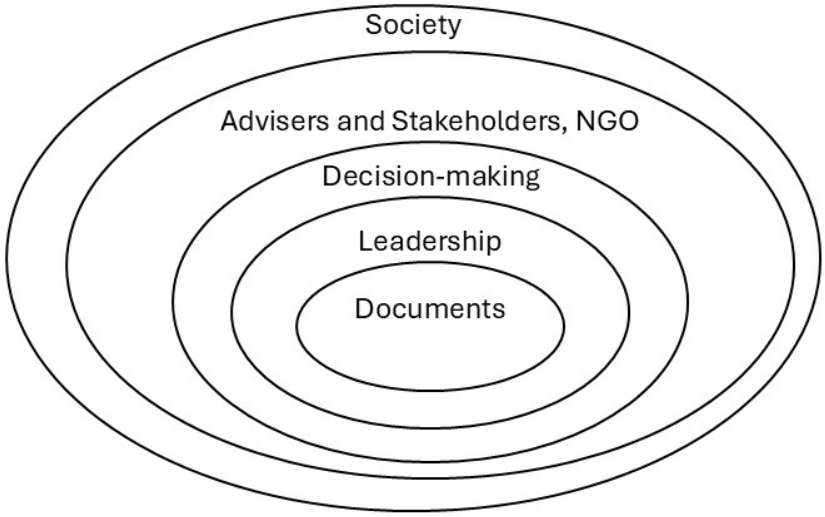


Figure 3. Layers of gender inclusion in climate policy considered in the review.

4. Gender Inclusion and Evaluation in Climate Policy

The multifaceted nature of gender inclusion in climate policy suggests that integrating gender perspectives into policy frameworks benefits from systematic attention to gender-differentiated data collection, operational commitments to gender mainstreaming, and inclusive decision-making processes. The literature indicates that such interventions tend to be more effective when tailored to specific contexts and informed by ongoing analysis to avoid unintended consequences [21]. Consequently, analysing women's representation in climate governance extends beyond numeric participation to consider the qualitative transformation of processes, agendas, and power relations. Furthermore, there is a growing consensus in the literature that gender-just transitions should ideally be institutionalised as integral to addressing the complexity of climate change [6].

Therefore, based on the literature review and considering how different authors consider gender aspects within climate policy, the authors developed an original assessment framework (Figure 3) to serve as the analytical tool for this scoping review. This framework evaluates how the selected literature addresses gender inclusion in climate policy by analysing the distinct layers presented in Figure 3: policy documents, leadership, decision-making, advisers, stakeholders, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and society. While presented as nested circles to illustrate contextual embedding, these domains operate dynamically and non-hierarchically, with continuous reciprocal interactions among all layers. The first three layers encompass climate policy through internal policy formation and implementation, where gender considerations were taken into account. The last two layers encompass external forces that influence the formation and implementation of policy, which are caused by external factors. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that these layers are not mutually exclusive. They are intertwined: for example, at the document level, the roles of society or NGOs could be observed, or society could promote women's participation in climate policy leadership or decision-making positions.

In Table 1, a summary of papers included in the scoping review is presented. Among the papers considering gender inclusion in climate policy, the largest share of authors explored policy documents, narratives, facets, targets, and implementation tools (N = 17 of 29) (Table 1). The importance of gender inclusion in decision-making processes was also widely discussed in the papers included in our review (N = 17 of 29). Half of the papers emphasised society's role in gender inclusion in climate policy (N = 15 of 29). Meanwhile, the inclusion of gender in climate policy through stakeholders, NGO (N = 4 of 29), and leadership roles was less explored in the selected papers (N = 2 of 29) (Table 1). In the following sections we discuss how gender aspects were considered in relation to the already presented separate layers and how this involvement could be assessed.

4.1. Inclusion of Gender in Climate Policy Documents

Rai et al. [71] suggest that all implemented policies should be documented to form a pathway, outlining what should be implemented, how it should be done, which targets to set, and what the necessary tools are. In the context of gender inclusion in climate policy, research and policy documents tend to distinguish between gender-specific and gender-transformative approaches. Increasingly, the latter has gained traction, as it not only addresses differentiated needs but also seeks to challenge and transform the structural conditions that reproduce gendered inequalities [71]. Early climate policy frameworks often assumed a gender-neutral approach, neglecting the distinct roles, needs, and impacts experienced by women, even though scientific and policy discussions acknowledged the differentiated vulnerabilities generated by social structures [72]. In recent years the inclusion of gender and other intersecting social factors has been further highlighted in global climate governance. This was catalysed by Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement, which explicitly recognised the necessity of integrating gender perspectives into climate-related legislation and programming [16].

Over the past decade, research indicates that despite high-level commitments, initial efforts dedicated to gender mainstreaming frequently focused on highlighting women's vulnerabilities, portraying them predominantly as passive victims of climate impacts and rarely as active agents within policymaking arenas [72]. Furthermore, policy documents either lack a gender perspective or address gender as a separate, rather than integrated, element [67,71]. This is also the case in states in the Global North, such as Sweden, which has for decades been committed to gender equality, but policy documents are often gender-blind, despite the availability of relevant knowledge [73]. Westholm and Arora-Jonsson [74] highlight the challenges of mainstreaming climate policy into a largely technical discourse.

Magnusdottir and Kronsell have also stated that technocratic discourse prevails in the documents, neglecting social dimensions [75]. Thus, formal legal and strategic frameworks on gender and social inclusion should be strengthened in climate policy documents. Furthermore, it is essential to analyse gender commitments not only in terms of climate adoption aspects but also in relation to climate mitigation policies [76].

Reviewing gender inclusion in climate policy documents, Devonald et al. [77] show how these documents address gender issues in the African region. Pham and Saner [78] quantitatively evaluated how many documents focused on gender. Lagi et al. [79] examined Fijian national climate change plans from 2010, identifying the ways in which these policies frame and discuss the connections between climate and gender and consider different narratives, including inclusivity, equity, equality, gender responsiveness, and women's human rights. Gender narratives were also considered in the documents of the conferences of the parties (COPs) under the Climate Change Convention [80]. Despite the different narratives, Walk [81] and Zhang et al. [82], findings indicate gender inequality in climate policy. Markkanen and Anger-Kraavi [39] revealed that results can be achieved when potential inequality impacts are taken into consideration in all stages of policymaking: planning, development and implementation.

The other aspect analysed regarding gender is policy instruments or actions. These included gender mainstreaming instruments in policy documents, such as the establishment of gender quotas for participation in policymaking or targets in decision-making bodies, and the tracking of gender-disaggregated data to monitor progress and impact [71]. Therefore, when examining gender inclusion in policy documents, it is essential to determine whether gender is acknowledged as one of the aspects affected by climate change (i.e., emphasising vulnerability), or whether there is a commitment to gender inclusion in policymaking [72]. Lam et al. [83], reviewing 57 documents of United Nations agencies, identified gaps in climate mainstreaming efforts and derived lessons from gender mainstreaming to bridge these gaps.

Policy documents can also serve as a tool for enforcing gender inclusion policies. Thus, it is also important to consider policy documents that include NGOs or raise societal awareness not only about the climate change problem but also about the different roles of women and men, as well as discrimination. Lam et al. [83] stated that climate mainstreaming documents often make less explicit commitments to stakeholder inclusion. Accordingly, the analysed policy documents indicate that gender inclusion encompasses several intertwined dimensions, including institutional decision-making, the involvement of NGOs, and society. These insights suggest that formal commitments within climate policy could benefit from a comprehensive review to align more effectively with these diverse operational layers.

Drawing upon insights from the scoping review, this paper proposes a structured approach to assessing gender inclusion, primarily focusing on the policy document layer. We argue that the employed indicators can be qualitative, quantitative, or a combination of both. In general, affirmative action strategies, introduced through quotas, monitoring bodies, targeted funding for participation and training, and methodical tools, have been proposed as initial measures to remediate gender imbalances in climate policy discourses and practice. Therefore, the gender inclusion aspects in policy documents can be evaluated qualitatively, considering the gender narratives used or whether gender was considered when presenting the tools for climate policy implementation, among other factors. The quantitative assessment could encompass the evaluation of the number of gender references included in documents or the number of documents related to gender issues. Defined quantitative targets, such as gender quotas and budget allocations, could also be included in the quantitative analysis of gender inclusion within climate policy documents.

Table 1. The summary of the scoping literature review.

Reference	Year	Geographical Scope	Study Design/Evaluation Approach	Key Findings Regarding Gender Integration	Documents	Leadership	Decision-Making	Advisers, Stakeholders, NGOs	Society
Magnusdottirand Kronsell [84]	2024	Global North	Conceptual framework & institutional review	Examines how climate institutional structures create inertia, often treating gender as a technical checklist or completely invisible within core policy frameworks.	X		X	X	X
Fawad et al. [76]	2023	Canada	Feminist policy discourse analysis	Identifies a significant disconnect between domestic climate strategies and high-level feminist commitments, highlighting gender as a rhetorical add-on rather than an active structural driver.	X		X		X
Andrijevic et al. [37]	2020	Global	Quantitative scenario modelling	Demonstrates a robust correlation between lower gender inequality and enhanced national adaptive capacities and climate resilience pathways.					X
Ensor and Harvey [85]	2015	General	Literature review & synthesis	Highlights the role of social learning frameworks in fostering bottom-up, community-led adaptation that addresses marginalised groups' socio-environmental needs.					X
Fonjong et al. [33]	2024	Africa	Qualitative policy analysis & review	Traces structural barriers in national adaptation strategies that continue to restrict African women's formal representation in centralised resource governance.			X		
Markkanen and Anger-Kraavi [39]	2019	Global	Evidence synthesis & social impact review	Illustrates the unequal distribution of mitigation policy co-impacts, showing that without targeted gender provisions, green transitions risk worsening local disparities.	X			X	X

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Year	Geographical Scope	Study Design/Evaluation Approach	Key Findings Regarding Gender Integration	Documents	Leadership	Decision-Making	Advisers, Stakeholders, NGOs	Society
Lagi et al. [79]	2023	Fijian	Qualitative case study & educational analysis	Explores indigenous "Curui" concepts to weave climate justice and structural gender parity directly into regional educational guidelines and sustainable practice.	X				
Devonald et al. [77]	2024	Ethiopia	Mixed-methods longitudinal study	Adopts an intersectional lens combining gender and adolescence to uncover age-specific climate vulnerabilities and limits to youth adaptive capacity.	X	X	X		X
Pham and Saner [78]	2021	Global	Systematic literature review (SLR)	Synthesises international adaptation research to chart systemic gaps in operationalising truly inclusive, gender-responsive climate adaptation indicators.	X		X		
Rai et al. [71]	2021		Qualitative document analysis & interviews	Exposes a pronounced gap between progressive national gender mandates and their practical execution due to local resource deficits and deeply entrenched norms.	X				
Walk [81]	2024	Global	Narrative policy analysis	Critically unpacks competing political agendas in the green transition, moving from basic numeric parity arguments toward a structural degrowth framework.	X		X		X
Arora-Jonsson and Wahlström [73]	2023	Sweden	Decolonial feminist discourse analysis	Examines the strategic production of "ignorance" in climate policy spaces, emphasising the immediate need for decolonial interventions to enable meaningful change.	X				X

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Year	Geographical Scope	Study Design/Evaluation Approach	Key Findings Regarding Gender Integration	Documents	Leadership	Decision-Making	Advisers, Stakeholders, NGOs	Society
Gonda [86]	2019	Nicaragua	Feminist political ecology	Critiques top-down intervention designs that simplify gender into universalised victim stereotypes, bypassing local power dynamics.			X		X
Mayrhofer [87]	2024	Global	Legal & human rights analysis	Deconstructs the standard framing of "vulnerability" in human rights and climate law, arguing for rights-bearing agency rather than passive victimhood status.	X				X
Zhang et al. [82]	2021	China	Statistical & institutional evaluation	Evaluates gender inclusion trends within regional environmental governance frameworks, showing rising symbolic inclusion but slow structural decision-making shifts.	X		X		X
van Daalen et al. [88]	2024	Global	Policy synthesis & health nexus review	Maps out the interconnected crises of gender disparities, climate stability, and public health infrastructure.			X		
Westholm and Arora-Jonsson [74]	2018	Global	Comparative institutional discourse analysis	Uncovers how global market mechanisms (e.g., REDD+) use co-benefits and technical safeguards to depoliticise gender, stripping it of its radical, transformative intent.	X		X		
Lam et al. [83]	2024	Global	Comparative policy review & evaluation	Distils three decades of lessons from gender mainstreaming to prevent climate mainstreaming initiatives from repeating historical institutional failures.	X				

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Year	Geographical Scope	Study Design/Evaluation Approach	Key Findings Regarding Gender Integration	Documents	Leadership	Decision-Making	Advisers, Stakeholders, NGOs	Society
Jerneck [65]	2018	Global	Feminist synthesis & conceptual review	Formulates twelve foundational feminist lessons derived from development research to challenge cross-cutting institutional blindness in current climate action.			X		
Magnusdottir and Kronsell [67]	2015	Scandinavia	Critical discourse analysis of state policies	Exposes the persistent invisibility of gender issues within advanced Scandinavian climate spaces, where tech-centric frameworks crowd out social equity.			X		
Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi [57]	2019	Global	Cross-national econometric modelling	Establishes a rigorous causal link demonstrating that higher female parliamentary representation directly leads to the adoption of more stringent national climate policies.			X		
Gay-Antaki [80]	2020	Global	Feminist political geography & ethnography	Documents the micro-politics and structural barriers faced by female scientists and state delegates inside high-level UNFCCC negotiation spaces.	X				
Ampaire et al. [16]	2020	East Africa	Multi-level qualitative content analysis	Reveals that gender is consistently conflated with "women's issues" across scales, plagued by low local budget execution and scale disharmony.	X				
Makina and Moyo [72]	2016	Sub-Saharan Africa	Institutional evaluation & review	Identifies capacity deficits and structural bottlenecks preventing sub-Saharan environmental ministries from implementing cross-sectoral gender action plans.	X		X		

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Year	Geographical Scope	Study Design/Evaluation Approach	Key Findings Regarding Gender Integration	Documents	Leadership	Decision-Making	Advisers, Stakeholders, NGOs	Society
Grillos [89]	2018	Kenya	Behavioural field experiments & group analysis	Tests how local institutional designs and gender representation targets alter community resource management, collective choice, and social outcomes.			X	X	X
Cook et al. [90]	2019	Indonesia, Peru, Tanzania	Comparative multi-country qualitative study	Examines how local forestry and adaptation initiatives engage women in structural decisions, identifying cross-regional barriers to authentic resource control.		X	X		
Devroe [91]	2022	Belgium	Qualitative sociological analysis	Explores localised public perceptions of climate equity and green transit initiatives, outlining gendered differences in resource use and community expectations.					X
Escayola et al. [75]	2025	Spain	Feminist discourse analysis	Investigates the framing of regional climate risks and solutions in Spain/Catalonia, revealing how patriarchal narratives continue to sideline eco-feminist alternatives.	X				X
Acosta et al. [17]	2020	Uganda	Qualitative policy process analysis	Exposes the strategic deployment of institutional narratives by key policy actors to rationalise and normalise prolonged inaction on gender mainstreaming mandates.			X	X	X

4.2. Gender Inclusion in Climate Policy via Leadership

The second layer to be considered is gender inclusion within climate change leadership. Leadership in climate policy is about the ability to inspire and organise collective action toward climate goals, while decision-making encompasses the formal processes by which policies are created and executed. Together, they create a complex yet synergistic relationship in addressing climate change challenges. However, there is limited research available on the importance of leadership for gender inclusion [90]. Rahmania et al. [92] emphasise the importance of actively promoting gender equality and encouraging women's leadership participation in environmental policy. Such measures not only contribute directly to closing gender gaps but also offer wide-reaching benefits for climate mitigation and environmental sustainability. This underscores the importance of embedding gender considerations in leadership pathways, ensuring that the notion of equal gender representation informs not just the content but the very structure and processes of policy development.

Moreover, the resulting leadership style is thus shaped not by the nominal inclusion of women but by the underlying governance practices and power relationships that either enable or inhibit genuine participation. Tsagkari [93] suggests that the increased participation of women may positively shape transition processes, primarily due to heightened risk perception and stronger environmental awareness among women leaders. Accordingly, the risk-averse and long-term orientation typically associated with women's leadership could guide more precautionary and sustainable policy pathways [90]. Addressing these omissions through gender-balanced leadership ensures that both men's and women's unique concerns are reflected in climate policies, thereby reducing disparities and augmenting resilience. The inclusion of women in leadership and policy formulation is not merely symbolic. This inclusivity extends to acknowledging that universal, one-size-fits-all policy solutions are insufficient and that collective decision-making, encompassing both men and women, results in more just and contextually relevant adaptation measures [92].

Based on the findings of the scoping review, we extended the framework designed to evaluate gender inclusion within/at the leadership layer/level. When assessing gender inclusion in climate policy through a leadership lens, the primary evaluation could be quantitative, focusing solely on the representation of women and men in leadership positions [90]. Furthermore, quantitative and qualitative evaluations can be applied to assess the success or stringency of implemented climate policies, ambition targets, or the austerity of proposed tools, for example, the level of taxes depending on whether a man or a woman holds a leading position. In terms of leadership, qualitative evaluation could be used to recognise gender norms when different communities are considered and whether it is easy for everyone in these communities to take up/exercise leadership [77]. Thus, it is essential to explore not only the inclusion aspect but also the possibility for everyone to take the lead on climate policy. The recognition of women's leadership and the acceptance of ideas should be evaluated as well.

4.3. Gender Inclusion in Climate Policy via Decision-Making

The decision-making process is an important aspect and has been analysed in several studies in regard to gender inclusion (Table 1). The mainstreaming of gender ensures that women's presence, labour, and voices are included, particularly in decision-making and market-oriented roles, rather than fundamentally transforming how gender relations and diversities are addressed within climate governance. There remains a tendency to equate gender equity with numeric representation, a move that risks homogenising women's experiences and neglecting deeper questions of power, intersectionality, and agency [80].

The literature suggests that women in decision-making roles often bring differentiated perspectives to environmental governance. Findings outlined by Makina and Moyo [72] sug-

gest that women's increased representation can lead to alternative approaches in problem-solving and policy solutions, reflecting distinct priorities or knowledge bases compared to those of their male counterparts. Walk [81] outlines that empowering women as influential actors and securing gender parity in climate policymaking structures are essential conditions for achieving a truly gender-just transition. Efforts to intentionally raise the share of women in decision-making positions, via mentoring, gender quotas, and support networks, are highlighted as proven mechanisms to secure a more nuanced and representative policy agenda, one that is better equipped to address emerging sustainability challenges. Furthermore, our framework highlights that it is essential to consider how gender can influence access to, use of, and control over resources, particularly in terms of labour, land, and strategic decision-making power [65]. However, studies on Scandinavian decision-making and the European Commission indicate that techno-economic institutional practices and natural science stickiness can outweigh high representation of women in decision-making and result in continued gender-blindness or invisibility in climate decision-making [67,84].

Several studies focusing on the Global South still emphasise the importance of women's participation in decision-making, where gender inequalities are greater [33,78,86,89]. For example, Acosta et al. [17] showed that in Uganda, gender mainstreaming largely stopped at the discursive level, often paradoxically depoliticising gender. Makina and Moyo [72] also highlighted marginalised women's role in decision-making, as they are unable to influence programmes and policy choices. Zhang et al. [82] and Devonald et al. [77] argued that gender inclusion in the decision-making process can be restricted due to the prevalence of gender norms in culture, which can lead to girls or women facing substantial barriers to active participation in decision-making platforms, resulting in their repression and exclusion. Hence, it is crucial to enhance women's capacity to participate in decision-making [76].

Other studies examining the decision-making process have explored how gender quotas contribute to climate change mitigation [90]. For instance, in a large cross-national study, Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi [57] found that higher female parliamentary representation leads countries to adopt more stringent climate policies, ultimately resulting in lower carbon dioxide emissions. Meanwhile, van Daalen et al. [88] demonstrate that a critical mass of women does not necessarily, by itself, guarantee the development and implementation of more gender-responsive or effective climate policymaking. Similarly, Magnusdottir and Kronsell [67,84] argue that a critical mass of female experts in Scandinavian climate governance has not automatically led to "critical acts" or formal gender recognition, primarily due to deeply institutionalised masculine or gender-blind norms within climate institutions. This divergence in the literature highlights a critical distinction between the types of outcomes being measured. While increased female representation can foster a broader political commitment to overall climate mitigation (thereby influencing macro-level metrics like emissions), transforming the substantive, equity-focused content of climate programming requires breaking down deeply embedded institutional norms—a shift that a mere numerical presence cannot inherently guarantee.

Regarding the decision-making layer/level, our framework proposes a combined qualitative and quantitative evaluation of gender inclusion in climate policy. From a quantitative perspective, the analysis captures the proportion of women in the policy process, the enforcement of gender quotas, and the resources specifically allocated to support women's participation. Concurrently, qualitative analysis can be used to evaluate the impact of gender norms and practices in policy and communities, as well as how these norms are reflected in decision-making on climate policy.

4.4. Gender Inclusion in Climate Policy via Advisory Bodies, Stakeholders and NGOs

Gender-focused advisory committees have emerged as instrumental actors in steering climate policy towards a more inclusive and equitable orientation. Their influence is evident in the way they highlight gender considerations at every stage they are involved in, from initial agenda-setting to the final evaluation and monitoring phases. Furthermore, gender-focused advisory committees act as platforms for amplifying the voices of women in decision-making processes that have traditionally been dominated by men [84]. An important aspect of the advisory committee's influence is its capacity to connect grassroots perspectives with policy-level interventions. Nevertheless, the cumulative impact of their advocacy, technical guidance, and capacity-building assistance is evident in the progression of gender-sensitive climate policy frameworks in numerous countries. Gender advisory committees and NGOs, by design and through their sustained engagement, can constitute a crucial mechanism for achieving greater equity and resilience in climate policy and transition [39].

One of the most persistent challenges, however, in maintaining gender-inclusive advisory bodies in climate policy is the tension between formal commitments to gender equality and their tangible operationalisation. However, these processes often suffer from under-investment, inconsistent methodological rigour, and insufficient integration with broader policy evaluation mechanisms. Without a commitment to continuous gender-disaggregated data gathering and reflection, advisory structures risk reverting to superficial forms of inclusion or tokenism, lacking the capacity to adapt to evolving social landscapes [17]. Finally, the challenge of translating the insights and recommendations of gender-inclusive advisory bodies into concrete, actionable climate actions is exacerbated by both the complexity of policy processes and the ambiguity around the value that gender perspectives add in highly technical domains. The nuanced understanding offered by gendered intermediaries or advisers may not always be fully utilised or understood in actual policy design or implementation, leaving a gap between advisory input and policy outcome. These obstacles collectively illustrate the ongoing struggle to not only create, but also sustain, advisory mechanisms that meaningfully embed gender inclusion within the trajectory of climate policy and transition [89].

NGOs play a major role in advancing gender equity within climate policy and action processes. Their involvement is especially significant in contexts where state actors either lack capacity, have political constraints, or do not adequately prioritise gender-sensitive approaches. NGOs bring expertise, resources, and advocacy power to the table, functioning both as watchdogs and as partners in the policy formulation and implementation process. By generating and disseminating gender-disaggregated data, NGOs enable policymakers to better understand the differentiated impacts of climate change and thus design interventions that reflect the realities of both women and men. NGOs, particularly in developing countries, such as Kenya, are also found to enhance women's participation in decision-making [89]. The strengthening of local and national stakeholder capacities is another avenue through which NGOs enhance gender equity in climate governance. These organisations often run training, awareness campaigns, and skills development programmes, particularly targeting marginalised groups such as women and youth. This kind of capacity-building is essential, as it addresses both knowledge gaps and social barriers that limit the effective participation of women in climate initiatives [84].

Regarding the institutional layer (advisers and NGOs), we suggest that gender inclusion in climate policy be evaluated quantitatively by assessing the number of institutions or groups involved in policymaking. The amount of budget allocated for these stakeholders' involvement could also serve as a quantitative indicator. Furthermore, evaluating the impact of these institutions involves a mutual relationship: they both influence policy formulation and, in turn, affect broader society. Thus, it is important to qualitatively analyse these

institutions' impacts on policymaking and other societal spheres, such as educational programmes. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for examining the influence of these institutions on climate policy, as a quantitative assessment of gender representation offers limited insight into which perspectives are prioritised and whether—and in what ways—gender-sensitive and socially inclusive policies are being formulated.

4.5. Gender Inclusion in Climate Policy via Society Engagement

Public perceptions of gender and climate action are influenced by both societal constructions of gender and existing inequalities, shaping the effectiveness and acceptance of climate policies [17]. Socio-cultural expectations surrounding gender not only influence how individuals interact with their environments but also impact perceptions of responsibility and agency in climate action. Public perceptions are not static; they are shaped by policy, advocacy, media framing, and the degree of visible female leadership and representation in climate negotiations and institutions [82]. The current literature emphasises the urgent need to interrogate how perceptions about gender and climate action are formed, the ways in which these perceptions influence societal support for policy measures, and the consequences for the lived experiences of those underrepresented in climate debates [87].

Community-level engagement and mobilisation are essential mechanisms for ensuring that gender is effectively integrated into climate policy and transition processes. Across various societal contexts, the capacity of communities to address climate challenges is profoundly shaped by existing gender norms and socio-cultural structures. Efforts by NGOs, advisers, and local advocacy groups can be instrumental in this context, as they frequently act as intermediaries, translating local gendered experiences into actionable insights for policymakers [39]. Society engagements have demonstrated that actively involving women and marginalised groups in consultation and decision-making can enrich perspectives, improve the legitimacy of climate policies, and enhance the sustainability of outcomes. Such approaches advocate for incorporating gendered perspectives into community consultations, ensuring that women's voices not only are heard but also have a significant influence in shaping adaptation and mitigation strategies. The necessity for community-level engagement and mobilisation that is sensitive to gender dynamics is therefore evident at multiple scales. Meeting these demands requires intentional strategies to amplify marginalised voices, dismantle institutional barriers, and recognise the differentiated impacts and contributions associated with gender [76]. When institutions work collaboratively with community leaders, they have the capacity to challenge and transform the traditional gender norms that often marginalise women's participation in environmental management. For instance, increasing the visibility of women experts, decision-makers, and practitioners in media stories and educational materials contributes to a more inclusive and representative narrative of climate change. Gender-sensitive education also plays a crucial role in shaping climate narratives, both by empowering individuals and by influencing collective attitudes. Expanding training and capacity-building programmes geared toward women not only equips future leaders with technical and managerial skills but also encourages them to participate actively in sustainability fields. Walk [81] suggested that increasing women's percentage in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields could also be a great solution. Furthermore, social learning approaches in the context of climate change should be implemented [85].

Some authors also emphasised the importance of considering culture and focusing on context-specific solutions rather than universal climate policies [75]. In particular, this transformation could also help reduce the gender inequality problem [37]. Gonda [86], Devonald et al. [77], and Walk [81] also emphasised the importance of society's role. Magnusdottir and Kronsell [84] made a similar assertion. According to Devroe [91] climate policy func-

tions as a gender-neutral domain where traditional gender-competency stereotypes do not influence voter evaluations. However, Grillos [89] revealed that at the community level in Kenya, there was an increase in women's participation in formal decision-making processes; however, this participation did not translate into meaningful outcomes. Zhang et al. [82] also demonstrated that, due to cultural peculiarities in China, deficiencies persist in the field of women's decision-making. Thus, the cultural feminist transformation is important [73].

Considering the scoping review and addressing the societal layer, our analysis acknowledges that quantitative evaluations of community-based gender strategies remain limited and complex. However, we propose that it is possible to quantitatively evaluate gender norms (the level of masculinity in the country) or attitudes towards women's participation in policy- and decision-making. The expenditure on education programmes or mass media that promote gender roles could also be evaluated quantitatively. Meanwhile, qualitative analysis can be applied to evaluate the societal forces influencing gender roles in climate policy.

5. Limitations of the Scoping Literature Review

Several methodological limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this scoping review. First, the final corpus consists of a relatively small sample size of 29 articles, which may limit the generalizability of the synthesised trends. Second, the search protocol was restricted to publications in the English language, potentially omitting relevant insights from the regional or non-English literature. Third, while Google Scholar was used as a supplementary tool, the primary auditable and reproducible search relies on a single database (Web of Science), which could introduce indexation bias. Fourth, the reviewed literature exhibited a potential geographical bias, as the majority of the studies were concentrated in specific socio-political contexts or regions. Finally, this review is constrained by the binary treatment of gender (male/female) adopted by the vast majority of the included primary studies.

6. Conclusions

Gender-inclusive climate policies and actions can contribute to achieving climate change targets more successfully and simultaneously reduce gender inequality, as emphasised in the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, a comprehensive analysis is still lacking regarding the current state of knowledge on how to effectively integrate gender into climate policy and systematically assess stakeholder involvement. Thus, the aim of this paper was to discuss the importance of gender roles in climate policy via these aspects: gender differences in impacts of climate change, gendered views on responses to climate change, including responsibility and insights. Furthermore, by performing a scoping review and considering different layers, such as policy documents, leadership and decision-making, involvement and contributions of non-governmental organisations and gender-focused advisory bodies and community engagement, the ways in which gender is included in climate change policy and how this involvement is evaluated were discussed.

This paper suggests that disparities in climate change impact, sensitivity to this problem, and assumptions of responsibility may lead to different insights and foresight about climate change solutions between genders. Thus, integrating a gender perspective into climate policies can be an important part of addressing inequalities and may be essential for enhancing the overall effectiveness of climate action. As discussions around climate adaptation and mitigation evolve, the examination of gender roles becomes essential for achieving sustainable, equitable, and resilient environmental policies. Nevertheless, inclusion of gender aspects in climate policy is not straightforward, and gender needs to be considered at all

layers of inclusion: society, NGOs, decision-making, leadership and documents. Although the previously mentioned spheres of inclusion require different approaches to gender inclusion, they overlap or are interdependent. From a qualitative perspective, research typically encompasses gender narratives and examines whether and how gender aspects are incorporated into climate policy measures. Meanwhile, gender references, gender quotas and budget scope can be covered by quantitative analysis of gender inclusion in climate change documents. However, a quantitative evaluation that focuses only on the number of participants reveals the situation, but not its content. Hence, quantitative and qualitative evaluations should be applied simultaneously to assess the success or stringency of implemented climate policy via decision-making and policy documents themselves. Additionally, analysing gender norms is important not only for exploring the inclusion aspect but also for ensuring that everyone is included in climate policy. Though gender inclusion in climate policy via advisers and NGO institutions is less analysed, quantitative assessment (how many institutions or groups are included in policymaking, or what their budget is) could be considered. Meanwhile, qualitative analysis is more suitable for exploring the voices that are being heard and for determining whether and how gender-sensitive and socially inclusive policies are being developed. Last but not least is society engagement, as it paves the way for all other layers of inclusion. Social perceptions of gender, trust, and support for women, especially in leadership positions and decision-making roles, are crucial for not only quantitative but also qualitative changes regarding policy formation and implementation. Societal engagement can be quantitatively evaluated by assessing gender norms (the level of masculinity in the country) or attitudes toward women's participation in policy. The expenditure on education programmes or mass media that promote gender roles could also serve as quantitative indicators. Meanwhile, qualitative analysis can be applied to evaluate the societal forces influencing gender roles in climate policy.

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