

# Analysis of Methodologies for Gender Studies

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To identify and analyze methodologies used in gender studies.

**Design/methodology/approach:** To analyze research methodologies applied to gender studies in agroecosystems, a theoretical review of the topic was conducted. A methodological approach was employed that included qualitative and quantitative analyses, as well as intersectionality as a key tool for understanding inequalities in access to resources, labor distribution, and decision-making processes. Various research methodologies for gender studies were identified, including discourse analysis, ethnography, and systematization of experiences.

**Results:** The inclusion of gender indicators in agroecosystem assessments is essential to highlight disparities and propose strategies to overcome them. There is a need for inclusive public policies that strengthen women's participation in agriculture. The intersectional approach examines how gender, ethnicity, social class, and age interact to shape inequalities. The use of digital technologies, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), allows for the mapping of disparities and supports the implementation of inclusive governance models that promote women's participation in decision-making processes.

**Limitations of the study/implications:** The implementation of inclusive policies may be constrained by institutional or sociocultural barriers in rural contexts.

**Findings/conclusions:** The analysis confirms that qualitative methodologies, such as ethnography and the systematization of experiences, allow us to recover the voices and practices of rural women, highlighting inequalities in the distribution of labor and access to resources. Quantitative and mixed methods provide tools for measuring structural gaps and understanding the relationships between gender, ethnicity, social class, and age in production processes.

The incorporation of digital technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the inclusion of gender indicators, and the adoption of participatory governance models have been identified as significant innovations in this field. However, this study demonstrates that their application remains limited and requires further empirical exploration in diverse rural contexts.

**Keywords:** Gender studies, Agroecosystems, Qualitative and quantitative analysis, Gender indicators.

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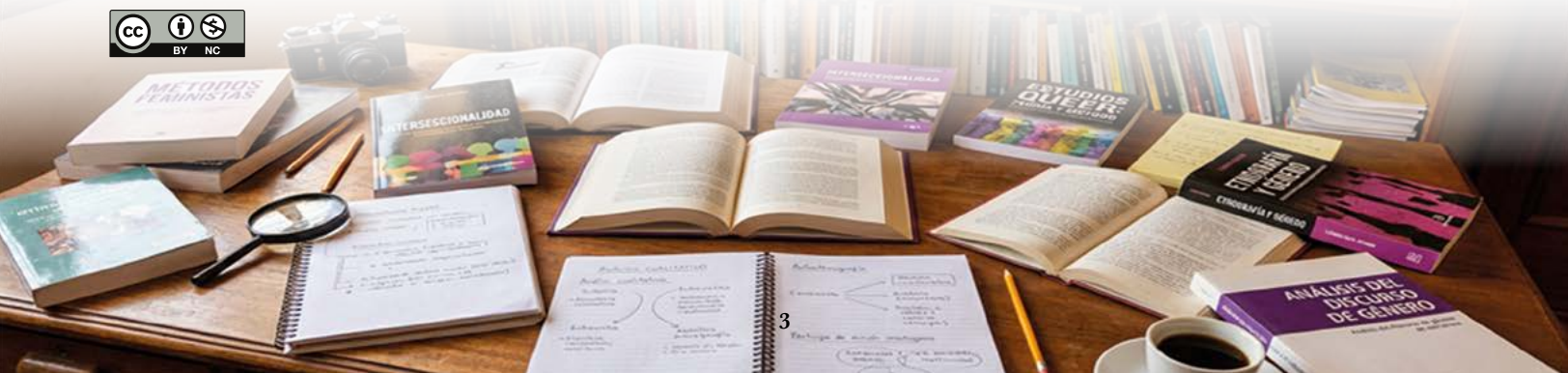
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## INTRODUCTION

Gender studies are essential for understanding and addressing gender inequalities, relationships, and interactions within our society. To approach this concept, it is necessary to conduct a theoretical systematization of gender studies —understood as a sociocultural phenomenon— with the aim of contributing to the improvement of social organization. In this context, the participation of rural women in agroecosystems makes it possible



to identify their role in processes of emancipation and empowerment. Women actively participate in generating income and employment, acting as providers, producers, and marketers of food and related products within these systems.

Considering the above, it becomes necessary to address a central problem: although there are various theoretical and practical approaches within gender studies, there is still an insufficient understanding of which methodologies are most effective for analyzing gender inequalities in agroecosystems. Therefore, the following research question is proposed: Which methodologies are most suitable for analyzing gender inequalities in agroecosystems?

The objective of this article was to discuss the different research methods used for gender analysis.

To better understand this analysis, it is necessary to review the main trends and conceptual developments in gender studies. Various authors, such as Lamas (1986), Amorós (1994), Ochoa (2002), and Valcárcel (2008), have analyzed the current of feminist thought known as feminism or gender equality, which remains central to contemporary gender debates. Specifically, they propose reflecting on the structural conditions that result in the systematic exclusion of women from traditionally spheres considered as “male domains.”

Gender studies have developed diverse methodologies and approaches to characterize policies and women’s participation in social processes. According to Lagarde (1996), the gender perspective provides the ability to “focus on, analyze, and understand the specific characteristics that define women and men, as well as their similarities and differences.” From this perspective, “the life possibilities of both are analyzed —the meaning of their lives, their expectations and opportunities, as well as the institutional and everyday conflicts they must face, and the multiple ways in which they do so.”

Gender as a concept arises from the distinction made in relation to sex, originating from research on several cases of children who were assigned to a sex that did not correspond to their genetic, anatomical, and/or hormonal characteristics. This distinction was first explored within feminist theory through Stoller’s book *Sex and Gender* (1968), which demonstrated that gender refers to domains encompassing human behavior, emotions, thoughts, and fantasies —areas that do not necessarily have a biological basis.

Similarly, within the history of Western feminism, the currents that embrace enlightenment principles of human beings as free and autonomous are known as feminisms of equality or egalitarian feminisms. These schools of thought rest on a logical assertion: if the rights of man are truly universal, they must also include women. Any individual, whether identified as female or male, is coherent and rational, capable of deciding and acting according to the common sense inherent to all human beings.

In this regard, the gender movement enables an understanding of the complexities and challenges of feminism in the global context, while also providing tools for the processes of social change initiated by modernity. These contributions foster the construction of a fairer and more egalitarian world for all people, regardless of gender (Valcárcel, 2008; Ortega, 2013).

In this regard, several authors, such as Gayle Rubin, define a sex-gender system as a set of arrangements through which a society transforms biological sexuality into human

products (Rubin, 1975). Therefore, Cobo (2005) explains, “it represents the transition from biological sexuality to human sexuality, from sex to gender.”

According to the INSTRAW or International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (2017), “Gender refers to the range of socially constructed roles, relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, relative power, and influence that society assigns differently to men and women. While biological sex is determined by genetic and anatomical characteristics, gender is an acquired and learned identity that widely varies both within and across cultures”.

According to Cirillo (2005), gender is a principle of order that reveals the existence and effects of power relations, difference, and unequal encounters. Throughout his life, every man experiences, to some extent, situations in which he exercises a certain degree of power—however minimal or even illusory it may be. Despite being democratic, rational, and sincerely convinced of the equal dignity of men and women, traces of an unconscious childhood fantasy often persist—one that sustains the belief in possessing something women do not, or in having a kind of natural right to power.

Gender is relational, as it does not refer exclusively to women or men but rather to the relationships between them (INSTRAW, 2017). The current value of these studies lies in their contribution to the social reflection on human relationships.

The analysis of the concept of gender defines it as the “set of characteristics and behaviors, as well as the roles, functions, and evaluations assigned dichotomously to each sex through socialization processes, sustained and reinforced by patriarchal ideologies and institutions.” This concept is adapted to the context of each society and is redefined according to various factors, such as social class, ethnicity, age, and nationality, among others.

Currently, research on gender contributes to an epistemological intersection, “constituting a meeting point between social and political demands and contributions to the field of scientific and academic knowledge” (Jiménez, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary to systematize gender as a multidisciplinary field of knowledge within a diversity of pathways and alternatives yet to be explored. This article was developed with the aim of examining and analyzing gender assessment methodologies.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Various methodologies applied in gender studies are described, with a particular emphasis on their application in agroecosystems. The information analyzed was obtained through a theoretical and methodological review of the approaches used in gender research, drawing from reference databases such as Web of Science<sup>®</sup> and Google Scholar<sup>®</sup>, using the keywords “Gender Methodologies” and “Gender and Agroecosystems.” Documents were reviewed, including articles reporting research conducted in Latin American and European countries. The selected methods address the need to examine gender inequalities in agroecosystems from different levels of analysis. Qualitative methods allow for the understanding of human experiences, perceptions, and narratives (Ciencia Latina, 2023). While, quantitative methods enable the objective measurement of inequality indicators, while an intersectional approach provides a framework to understand the interaction between gender, ethnicity, age, and social class. The choice of methods offers a more

comprehensive perspective on gender-related issues in agroecosystems, in contrast to traditional approaches that sometimes overlook social dimensions. A systematic document analysis method or systematic literature review was employed to search databases and select studies. The information collected was organized according to the methodological approaches used in gender studies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The incorporation of a gender perspective in society has generated significant debate in recent times. It is understood both as an epistemological starting point and as a critical/reflexive lens that provides valuable insights in the production of any scientific knowledge, humanistic understanding, or aesthetic proposal. The gender perspective challenges language, categories, methods, and assumptions that, by definition, render women and other feminized individuals invisible within social imaginaries, thereby erasing voices, actions, spaces, and worldviews of a substantial portion of humanity. Through a gender perspective, categorical tools are constructed that allow for the representation of human realities that would otherwise go unnoticed (Serret, 2008). Gender can be expressed in terms of identity, expression, sexual orientation, and sex assigned at birth, but not in a univocal or necessary manner.

According to Butler (2002), identity is understood as a relationship among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire, viewed as the effect of a regulatory practice that can be defined as compulsory heterosexuality. This author further explains that expression can be a performative act that either reinforces or subverts gender norms, with its coherence produced in daily life and shaped by regulatory practices.

**Table 1.** Methodological Process for Gender Studies.

Stages	Description	
Bibliography search	Identification of the reviewed literature on gender methodologies in agroecosystems	Consultation of reference databases: Web of Science <sup>®</sup> and Google Scholar <sup>®</sup> , using the keywords “Gender Methodologies”, “Gender and Agroecosystems ”
Selection of documents	Definition of inclusion/exclusion criteria	Selection of articles with references to research in Latin American and European contexts
Classification of methodologies	Organization of the information collected according to methodological approaches	Qualitative: They seek to understand phenomena through the exploration of experiences (Discourse analysis, ethnography and systematization of experiences) Quantitative: They provide statistical indicators (wage gap, access to resources and political participation) Intersections/mixed: Social variables (gender, ethnicity, age, social class) are included
Analysis of Methodologies	Evaluation of the relevance and applicability of the methodologies	Identification of strengths, limitations and possibilities for innovation in gender studies of agroecosystems

The approaches to gender studies—from feminist, equity, and inclusion perspectives—are addressed by various researchers and theorists who draw on diverse social and political elements. Ortega (2013) asserts that the universality of rights necessarily includes both women and men. Complementarily, Valcárcel (2008) provides insights into the current complexities and challenges of feminism in the global context, as well as tools for the social change process initiated by modernity, contributing to the construction of a more just and equitable world for all individuals, regardless of gender.

Gender inequity is understood not only as an inequality between men and women but also as a complex system of power relations that is reproduced through social structures and hierarchies of masculinities. According to Connell (1995), these inequalities result from a gender structure that legitimizes male hegemony—a dominant cultural model that privileges certain ways of being a man (strong, heterosexual, competitive) while subordinating other masculinities and femininities. From another perspective, Butler (2007) argues that identities are neither natural nor universal but are social constructs that can be challenged through performative acts.

In the analysis and development of gender studies methods, researchers Osborne and Molina Petit (2008) highlight “feminist theory as a new perspective of study, such as a category for analyzing the relationships between the sexes, the differences in socio-sexual roles and characteristics of men and women, and, ultimately, as a critique of the ‘natural’ foundations of these differences.”

Various authors have conducted research on gender methodology studies. Butler (1990) introduces the notion of gender performativity, implying that studies should analyze not only biological differences but also the social processes that construct gender identity. Similarly, Crenshaw (1991) defines terms such as gender, equity, intersectionality, and inequality, as well as their relationship with other factors like race and social class. DeVault (1999) proposes that qualitative methodologies, such as in-depth interviews and ethnographic studies, can better capture gendered experiences than exclusively quantitative methods. Walby (2005) emphasizes that studies should apply appropriate gender indicators to measure inequalities in access to resources, education, employment, and political power. Likewise, Sen (2000) argues that development should be assessed in terms of freedoms and opportunities, implying that a good gender study should offer recommendations to improve equity.

The critical contribution of this research is grounded in the participation and contributions of feminist thought to the development of gender theories, where the feminist perspective is validated as a category that describes and makes visible the situations of discrimination faced by women. Furthermore, it calls the government to integrate this perspective into all policies, programs, and legislative frameworks. The incorporation of a gender perspective is proposed as a key strategy to ensure that the interests and experiences of both women and men are considered equitably in the design, implementation, monitoring, and assessment of policies and programs across all sectors. Its main objective is to achieve equal benefits for all individuals and to prevent the perpetuation of inequality between the feminine and masculine, thereby promoting full equality between women and men.

According to research on gender studies, these are approached through various theoretical discussions that frame the methodology within two types of methodological orientations:

- It analyzes the method based on the theoretical discussion context, reflecting a marked difference determined by the epistemological framework in which it addresses gender research procedures and techniques as a field of activity.
- It understands the role of feminism in research and acknowledges the existence of specifically feminist research methods, thereby rejecting research from a traditional epistemology.

In relation to the above, in gender studies, as in social research, the choice of an appropriate method depends on various factors, with the object of study—that is, the problem to be analyzed—and the theoretical framework being the most decisive. These elements guide the methodological approach and ensure coherence between the research objectives and the tools used to address them.

In gender studies, various methods are employed, some of which have been used in research on equality-focused feminism. These methods have served as a reference for current studies and for addressing gender issues across different areas of society (Valcárcel, 2008).

The bibliographic review identifies seven methods, techniques, and instruments used in gender studies, including the non-statistical descriptive method, experimental method, ethnographic method, narrative method, projective method, discourse analysis, historical-documentary method, and systematization of experiences.

The assessment of gender requires a suitable methodology (Table 1) that allows for the analysis of its theoretical approach, research methodology, and its impact on understanding gender inequalities and interactions.

### **Definition of the Evaluation Objective**

The objective of the gender analysis is to determine its quality, relevance, and contribution to the understanding of gender inequalities. To achieve this, various aspects of the study are analyzed, including its theoretical framework, methodology, data analysis, and impact on society or public policy formulation. Definition of the Conceptual Framework The evaluation involves reviewing the theoretical framework (Figure 1) used in the study. According to Scott (1986), gender should be understood as an analytical category that structures social and power relations.

An appropriate analysis must identify whether the study incorporates these perspectives and whether it avoids essentialist approaches that reinforce gender stereotypes.

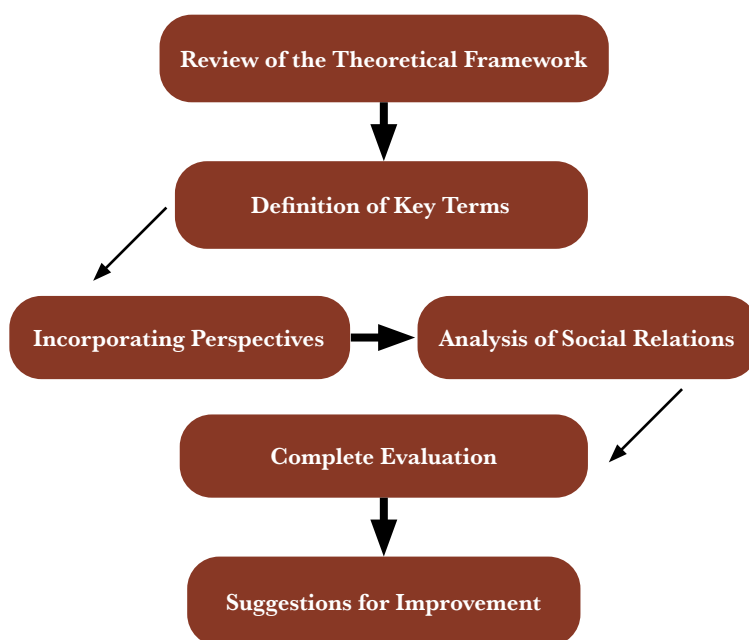
### **Methodological Analysis of the Study**

The choice of methodology in gender studies is key to ensuring an adequate analysis. According to Harding (1987), feminist methodologies should consider the experiences of the study subjects and avoid androcentric biases. When evaluating the study's methodology, it

**Table 2.** Methodology for Conducting Gender Studies.

Steps	Methodology
Definition of objectives and conceptual framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up the key concepts: gender, equality, equity, roles, stereotypes, intersectionality, etc. and delimit the focus of the study (academic, social, political, institutional).</li> <li>• Determine the specific objectives of the analysis.</li> </ul>
Methodological analysis of the study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methodology used: qualitative, quantitative or mixed.</li> <li>• Data collection: interview, survey, documentary analysis, observation.</li> <li>• Sample and representativeness: gender diversity, vulnerable groups, intersectionality.</li> <li>• Gender indicators: wage gap, access to education, gender violence, political participation, among others.</li> </ul>
Data evaluation, analysis and presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine whether the study specifically incorporates the gender perspective.</li> <li>• Analyze the differences among men, women, and other gender identities.</li> <li>• Avoid the use of sexist language and stereotypes.</li> <li>• Include diverse voices and different experiences.</li> </ul>
Impact and applicability of the analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the findings if they can influence public policies or institutional practices.</li> <li>• Intervention strategies or corrective measures are proposed.</li> <li>• Investigate whether the study has limitations in terms of bias or lack of data.</li> </ul>
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of strengths and weaknesses of the study.</li> <li>• Suggestions for innovating the methodology in future research.</li> <li>• Possible applications and areas for improvement in gender analysis.</li> </ul>

Source: Author's own work.



**Figure 1.** Definition of the Theoretical Framework. Source: Author's own work.

is important to review whether the data collection instruments are designed with a gender perspective. Additionally, it should be verified whether the sample is diverse and includes intersectional variables that allow for a more in-depth analysis of structural inequalities (Lugones, 2008).

### **Evaluation of Data Analysis and Presentation**

Data analysis in gender studies must go beyond a simple comparison between men and women. Authors such as Connell (1995) emphasize the importance of examining hegemonic masculinities and their impact on gender relations.

It is important that the analyzed study disaggregates data by sex and other categories such as ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status. Additionally, it should be evaluated whether the study avoids using sexist or stereotypical language in the interpretation of results (Hooks, 1984).

### **Evaluation of Impact and Applicability**

A comprehensive assessment of a gender study should also consider its impact on society and public policy formulation. A key criterion is determining whether the study provides evidence to support decision-making in areas such as education, health, or employment. Additionally, it is relevant to analyze whether the study mentions its limitations and suggests future research directions to further explore the issue.

The applicability of gender studies within agroecosystems allows for the identification of inequalities and opportunities in the participation of men and women in the agricultural sector. Therefore, it is important to:

- **Analyze access to resources:** Assess equity in access to land, water, seeds, and technology.
- **Identify inequalities in decision-making:** Examine the participation of women and men in agricultural management and organization.
- **Evaluate the impact of public policies:** Determine how agricultural regulations affect women and men differently.
- **Improve sustainability and equity:** Design production strategies that promote fairer and more sustainable participation.

Gender analyses should synthesize the findings regarding the conceptual and methodological rigor of the study. A gender study must integrate updated theoretical approaches, apply a relevant and appropriate methodology, and provide a data analysis that reflects the complexity of disparities. Additionally, it should have a clear impact on knowledge generation and social transformation.

Methodologies for gender analysis, such as those proposed by Butler (1990), Crenshaw (1991), and Connell (1995), allow for the evaluation of gender studies and their contribution to the field of social studies.

Studies in agroecosystems are important for understanding the distribution of labor, access to resources, and participation in decision-making within the agricultural

sector. Methodological and technological innovations can improve gender equity in rural contexts. According to the research conducted, in the review of studies applied to agroecosystems, it was identified that there is a limited presence of research on this topic.

### **Intersectional Approach in Agroecosystems**

Gender cannot be analyzed in isolation, but in relation to other factors such as ethnicity, social class, generation, and age (Crenshaw, 1991). In agroecosystems, intersectionality allows for the identification of inequalities in access to land, technology, and financing. Innovations in this area are reflected in the use of mixed methodologies to capture differences in opportunities and barriers faced by rural women, as well as in the application of ethnographic studies (DeVault, 1999) to document the experiences of Indigenous and peasant women in agroecological production. In this regard, there are studies that help contextualize this category. The analysis of seasonal agricultural work from an intersectional perspective demonstrates how gender, social class, and migration intersect to produce the exclusion of women, revealing dynamics of inequality that are often overlooked (Güell, 2022).

### **Digital Technologies and Gender in Agroecosystems**

Digital tools can enhance the collection and analysis of gender-related data in the rural sector. This includes the implementation of innovations such as geographic information systems (GIS) to map access to land and crop distribution from a gender perspective (FAO, 2019), as well as the use of mobile platforms for training in sustainable agricultural techniques targeted at women. Based on studies conducted in a rural laboratory, the analysis of impact and social appropriation of knowledge in science, technology, and innovation for food security among rural women reflects a reduction in gender gaps (Trivino *et al.*, 2023).

### **Gender Indicators of Agroecological Sustainability**

The evaluation of the sustainability of agroecosystems must include gender-specific indicators (Walby, 2005). Innovations are aimed at developing indicators that measure women's participation in agroecological practices such as agroforestry and seed conservation, as well as assessing the traditional knowledge of indigenous women in enhancing the resilience of agroecosystems. According to the above, in Mexico, case studies such as Vida, a coffee-growing peasant organization in Veracruz, show that women's participation not only improves access to resources and technical assistance but also strengthens community networks and food security (Severiano *et al.*, 2024).

### **Inclusive Governance and Decision-Making Models**

Historically, women have had lower participation in governance, limiting their access to opportunities such as land ownership, technical assistance, and decision-making processes (Flores, 2015; IICA & ETGJ, 2019). In this regard, innovations are focused on the creation of community councils with gender parity for territorial planning and management (Sen, 2000). In line with the above, some studies address the analysis of fair and equitable

distribution for women engaged in agriculture, including generating household income, attending to family needs, and contributing to food security (Marín & Ivanova, 2024).

### **Care Economy and Agroecosystems**

Women's work in agriculture is often invisible, as it includes unpaid care activities (Federici, 2012). Innovations in this area involve integrating the care economy into agroecological studies, accounting for women's unpaid labor in the sustainability of agroecosystems, as well as developing policies that facilitate rural childcare, access to healthcare, and financing for women farmers. In relation to the above, studies in rural communities in Mexico indicate that the lack of recognition particularly affects racialized women, who perform domestic and care work under conditions of exploitation and vulnerability (Espinal *et al.*, 2020).

The use of qualitative methodologies for gender studies in agroecosystems demonstrates that ethnography and the systematization of experiences provide concrete evidence of the livelihoods of rural women, enabling governments to design public policies that are better contextualized to the socio-cultural diversity of rural communities. In this sense, gender research in agroecosystems in Mexico has a practical impact on public policy, showing that social cohesion in all communities promotes the integration of their members with equity and equal opportunities (Reyes & Caro, 2022).

Regarding quantitative methodologies in these contexts, key indicators such as wage gaps, access to land, and political participation are used. Therefore, the FAO (2019) recommends incorporating these indicators into the formulation of policies with a gender perspective to ensure access to credit and productive resources that benefit both women and men.

Meanwhile, methodologies oriented toward intersectionality make use of key social variables such as gender, ethnicity, age, and social class. It is also important to understand that intersectionality should not be treated as a secondary approach or something subject to variability; rather, it must be coherent and consistent at every stage of public policy design (Venegas & Riquelme, 2024).

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The present research contributes to the methodological debate in gender studies within agroecosystems by systematizing qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches and evaluating their scope. The analysis confirms that qualitative methodologies, such as ethnography and the systematization of experiences, allow for the recovery of rural women's voices and practices, highlighting inequalities in the distribution of labor and access to resources. Likewise, quantitative and mixed methods provide tools to measure structural gaps and understand the relationships between gender, ethnicity, social class, and age in productive processes. These findings constitute a specific contribution of this work, highlighting the need to integrate different methodological levels in gender analysis applied to agroecosystems. The incorporation of digital technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the inclusion of gender indicators, and participatory governance models have been identified as significant innovations in this field. However, this study

shows that their application remains limited and requires further empirical investigation across diverse rural contexts and gender approaches.

Therefore, based on this study, three lines of action are proposed for future research. First, to advance toward mixed methodologies that combine statistical evidence with situated narratives, in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of inequalities. In public policy, to incorporate gender indicators in the evaluation of agroecological programs and to design mechanisms for equitable participation in the governance of natural resources. At the community level, to strengthen initiatives that recognize and value the care work carried out by rural women, integrating it as an essential component of agroecosystem sustainability.

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