

Family-Owned Business and Sustainability: A Bibliometric and Science Mapping Analysis

Sreerag E.S.^{1*}, Simu Rajendran²

¹ Research scholar

Department of Commerce, Sree Narayana College, Kollam, Kerala

² Assistant Professor

Department of Commerce, Sree Narayana College, Kollam, Kerala

*Email: sreerages123@gmail.com

Abstract

The main focus of this study is to evaluate sustainability in family businesses worldwide using bibliometric approaches. Data from SCOPUS is collected and examined through science mapping and bibliometric analysis. The study identifies key aspects such as leading countries, influential authors, most cited researchers, top journals, co-authorship patterns, bibliographic coupling, citation trends, and popular keywords related to family business and sustainability. The findings provide valuable insights into the topic, making this study a useful resource for researchers interested in the intersection of family business and sustainability.

Keywords: *Family business, Sustainability, Bibliometric analysis, Science mapping*

Introduction

Family-owned businesses are the most common type of business worldwide (Jones & Buame, 2020). The performance, success, and development of these businesses are heavily influenced by the active participation of family members, whether by blood, adoption, or other ties (A. Sharma, 2019). These businesses play a central role in generating wealth and employment around the world (P. Sharma et al., 2003). Some family-run businesses have grown rapidly, going from small local businesses to large publicly traded organizations, while many are still modest or medium-sized (P. Sharma et al., 2000). In the subject of business management research, family enterprises have recently attracted a lot of attention (Letonjaa & Duhb, 2021).

Nowadays, sustainability is now integrated into all facets of organizational and human routines (A. Sharma, 2019). The ability to preserve or enhance the availability and quality of desired materials or circumstances over an extended period of time is known as sustainability (Aladejebi, 2021). It is much broader concept than the sustainable development (De Massis et al., 2015). The idea has caught the interest of influential figures in business, government, and the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The main focus of UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is sustainability. Sustainability is a crucial source of competitive advantage for businesses in the circular economy that want to thrive and add value (Hooi & Chan, 2024). The topic of sustainability has become well-established and pertinent in the literature on family businesses in recent decades (Anwar et al., 2024). The primary goal of this study is to use bibliometric indicators to investigate sustainability in family-run enterprises across the globe. SCOPUS data was analysed using bibliometric analysis and science mapping techniques.

Scope of the study

The idea of this study is to use bibliometric and science mapping tools to analyse SCOPUS data on family businesses and sustainability. In this discipline, it aims to investigate the connections among research organizations, nations, citations, journals, publications, researchers, keywords, and other elements. To find new areas in family business and sustainability study, a variety of analytical techniques were used, such as bibliographic coupling, citation analysis, co-occurrence analysis, co-citation analysis, and co-authorship analysis.

Research questions

1. In the area of family-owned firms and sustainability, which scholars, nations, publications, keywords, and organizations have the greatest sway?
2. In studies on family-owned firms and sustainability, what are the most often used keywords, author collaboration patterns, and bibliographic coupling patterns?

Research objectives

1. Examine the key researchers, nations, studies, and publications in the field of family-owned firms and sustainability.
2. Investigate and illustrate the current status and trends in co-authorship networks, bibliographic coupling, and keyword co-occurrence within family-owned firms and sustainability research.

Materials and Method

This paper summarizes the present understanding of sustainability in family businesses using science mapping. A bibliometric method called "science mapping" is used to examine scholarly works and graphically depict how different ideas relate to one another as they change over time (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Numerous units, including keywords, authors, publications, journals, organizations, and nations, can be used to analyse these connections.

The objective of this research is to analyse and visualize the literature on "family business and sustainability." The study relies on secondary data, with SCOPUS serving as the primary data source. The dataset was extracted from SCOPUS in CSV format and analysed using the VOS viewer software. The study covers the period from 1999 to 2025. An advanced search in the SCOPUS database using the keywords "family business" AND "sustainability" identified 449 relevant documents. After filtering for English-language publications, 431 documents remained, consisting of 326 journal articles, 59 book chapters, 20 conference papers, 19 review papers, and 16 books.

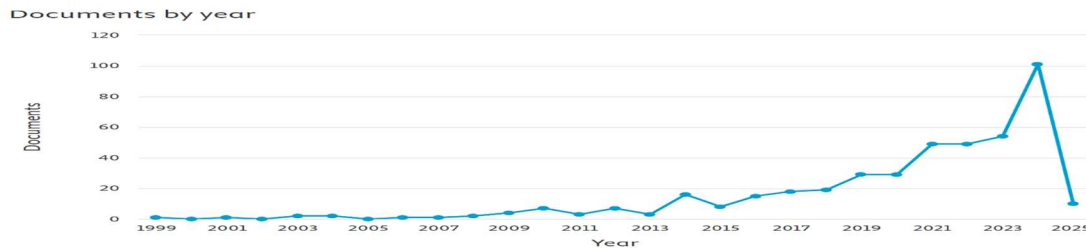
All extracted documents were imported into VOSviewer, which generated visual maps for analysis. The results highlighted key insights, including author contributions, leading journals, citation patterns, collaboration networks, and emerging research trends in family business and sustainability.

Results and Discussion

Evaluation of Publication Output and Its Growth Patterns

Figure 1

Publications pertaining to sustainability and family businesses



Note. Figure 1 shows that since 1999, publications on family business and sustainability have gained popularity. Since 2014, there has been an increase in publications on family business and sustainability, totalling 14 documents. 29 documents were released in 2020, with 49 issued in 2021. By 2023, it will have reached 54 publications in this area. The highest publishing in the area occurred in 2024, with 101 publications. It represents an emerging trend in the world of family business and sustainability studies.

Prominent Authors, Countries, and Journals

Top-Contributing Authors

Table 1

Leading 10 Authors in Family Business and Sustainability Research

Sl. No	Author	Documents	Citation
1	Valeri, M.	6	282
2	Stafford, K.	5	1193
3	Danes, S.M	5	888
4	Ratten, V.	5	55
5	Badolica, V	5	27
6	Spraggon, M	4	27
7	Glowka, G	4	24
8	Lusnakova, Z	4	20
9	Sharma, S	4	20
10	Sharma, P	4	18

Note. It is identified from the table 1 that; family business and sustainability have 420 writers. The most productive authors are Valeri, M., and Stafford, K., who have written 6 and 5 papers with 282 and 1193 citations, respectively. Danes,S.M., Ratten, V., Badolica, V. have published 5 documents each with 888, 55, 27 citations respectively. Other popular authors in this field are Spraggon, M, Glowka, G, Lusnakova, Z, Sharma, S, Sharma, P with 4 published documents each.

Leading Countries

Table 2

The ten most productive nations in terms of sustainability and family businesses

Sl. No	Country	Documents	Citations
1	United States	55	2591
2	Italy	44	988
3	Spain	35	424
4	United Kingdom	34	709
5	Malaysia	30	186
6	France	23	553
7	China	22	338
8	Indonesia	22	125
9	India	22	118
10	Australia	21	304

Note. Table 2 highlights the ten most productive countries in family business and sustainability research. The United States leads the field with 55 publications and 2,591 citations, making it the most influential nation in this area. Italy follows in second place with 44 publications and 988 citations, while Spain ranks third with 35 publications and 424 citations. The United Kingdom holds the fourth position, contributing 34 documents and receiving 709 citations. Malaysia ranks fifth with 30 papers and 186 citations. Other notable countries in this field include France, China, Indonesia, India, and Australia.

Leading Journal

Table 3

The Ten Best Journals for Research on Family Business and Sustainability

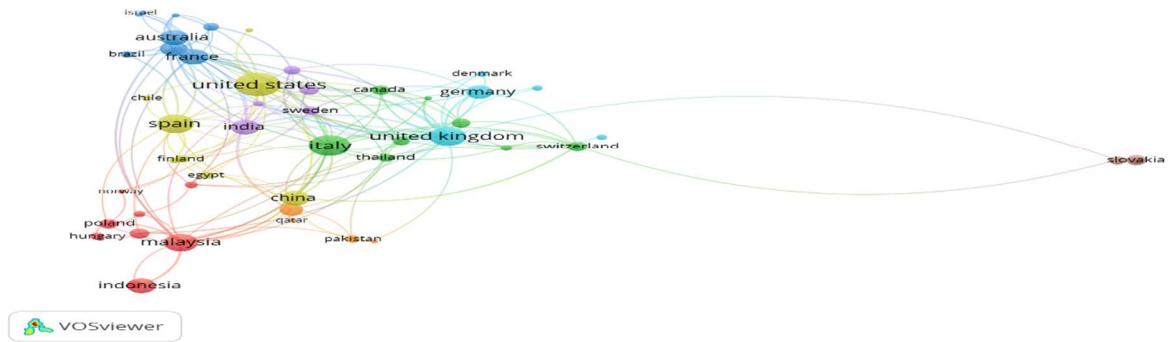
Sl. No	Journal	Documents	Citations
1	Sustainability Switzerland	47	667
2	Journal of family business and management	38	525
3	Emerald emerging markets case studies	12	32
4	Journal of family and economic issue	8	43
5	European journal of family business	6	9
6	Family business review	6	1080
7	Technological forecasting and social change	6	307
8	Business strategies and the environment	5	249
9	Entrepreneurship and regional development	5	37
10	Journal of small business management	5	338

Note. The leading journals for family firms and sustainability studies are shown in Table 3. Sustainability (Switzerland) is the most prominent journal in this area, featuring 47 articles and accumulating 667 citations. The Journal of Family Business and Management ranks second, with 38 publications and 525 citations. Other notable journals in this field include Emerald Emerging Market Case Studies and the Journal of Family and Economic Issues, which have 12 and 8 articles, respectively, with 32 and 43 citations. Among all, Family Business Review holds the highest number of citations.

Co-authorship of Countries

Figure 2

The country-by-country network visualization map of family business co-authorship and sustainability

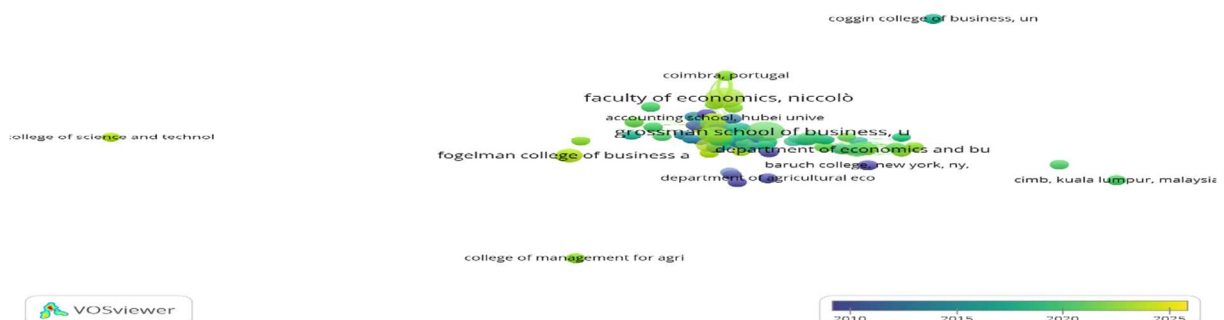


Note. The strength of the relationship between two authors can be determined by analysing the number of publications they have co-authored (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). This approach is useful for studying collaborations among researchers, institutions, and countries in scientific research. National co-authorship analysis demonstrates the interactions and collaborations between the most prolific or leading nations in the areas of sustainability and family business. Figure 2 presents the co-authorship network among countries, considering a minimum of two publications per country and at least ten citations. Out of 88 countries, 62 met these criteria. The most productive countries in this field of study were found to be the US, the UK, and Italy. While the UK had a strong research relationship with Germany, the United States showed strong collaboration with China and Spain.

Organizations' Bibliographic Coupling

Figure 3

The bibliographic coupling map of family business and sustainability organizations is a network visualization.



Note. The relationship between two referencing papers when two works cite the same works is known as bibliographic coupling (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). The bibliographic coupling of organizations with at least one document and eleven citations is displayed in Figure 3. Out of 907 organisations only 284 meet the threshold. Faculty of economics, Niccolò Cusano University, Free university of bozen-bolzano, Italy, Henley business school, UK are the top organisations in this field of study.

The Network visualization map of co-occurrence of keyword in the field of family business and sustainability.



Note. The purpose of this study is to pinpoint important ideas in the fields of family business and sustainability. Co-occurrence analysis of keywords was used to accomplish this. The co-occurrence of terms in the fields of sustainability and family business is depicted in Figure 4. For analysis, only terms that appeared at least twice were taken into account. 305 keywords out of 1,634 satisfied this requirement. The most common terms among them were "sustainability" (157 occurrences), "family business" (148 occurrences), and "sustainable development" (46 occurrences).

Conclusion

This study used bibliometric analysis and science mapping approaches to investigate the topic of family business and sustainability. The data was extracted from the SCOPUS database and analysed using VOSviewer. The analysis focused on publication trends, leading authors in terms of productivity and citations, top contributing countries and journals, as well as country-level co-authorship, bibliographic coupling, and keyword co-occurrence related to sustainability and family business.

The findings reveal a growing research interest in family business and sustainability since 2014. Valeri, M. emerged as the most prolific author, while Stafford, K. was identified as the most cited. The United States led in research output, with Sustainability (Switzerland) being the most productive journal and Family Business Review the most cited journal in this field. Co-authorship analysis indicated strong collaboration between the US, Spain, and China. Bibliographic coupling analysis identified Niccolò Cusano University as the most productive institution. Keyword co-occurrence analysis showed that "family business" and "sustainability" were the most frequently used terms in this research area.

Through bibliometric and science mapping techniques, this study has provided significant insights into family business and sustainability research. The findings can serve as a valuable resource for scholars seeking a deeper understanding of this field.

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