

Review

Exploring the Sustainability of Social Enterprises: A Scoping Review

Sameek Ghosh ^{1,*}, Sougata Ray ², Rajiv Nair ¹, Shyam Nath ³, Ram Bishu ⁴

¹ Amrita School of Business, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Kollam 690525, India

² Department of Management, International Management Institute, Bhubaneswar 751003, India

³ Amrita Center for Economics & Governance, Department of Management, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Kollam 690525, India

⁴ College of Engineering, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588, USA

* Correspondence: Sameek Ghosh, Email: sameekghosh@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT

Background: The purpose of this current scoping review was to identify elements of sustainability of the social enterprises and publication patterns, including dominant themes, knowledge frameworks, and future research avenues. This paper hence tried to understand how scholarship guides the development of social entrepreneurship in the face of social and environmental challenges.

Methods: All the data were extracted using SCOPUS, while VoSviewer and Biblioshiny were used for the bibliometric analysis. The present analysis was limited to a thematic cluster that was done by time analysis, assessment of geographical distribution, and keyword-based clustering. The results were then validated by statistical tests to make the results more robust.

Results: The thematic analysis identifies the dominant ten thematic clusters, representative of the current publication patterns and dominant trends in the domain of social entrepreneurship. The given paper underlines the role of entrepreneurial thinking in the context of sustainable development to attain the three factors of economic growth, environmental conservation, and social equity.

Conclusion: The results present the fact that the role of research has to be ongoing with respect to the impact assessment of social enterprises towards poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. The study calls for innovation in the theoretical framework and interdisciplinarity between social enterprises with the engagement of researchers and scholars in the generation and analysis of solutions for the manifold problems of society towards a more just and sustainable world.

KEYWORDS: social enterprises; sustainability; scoping review; bibliometric study; social entrepreneurship; knowledge structures; time analysis

Open Access

Received: 17 February 2024

Accepted: 31 July 2024

Published: 02 August 2024

Copyright © 2024 by the author(s). Licensee Hapres, London, United Kingdom. This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

INTRODUCTION

Social enterprises are organisations that blend the principles of business and social responsibility. Their primary goal is to address societal or environmental challenges while generating positive social impact. Unlike traditional profit-driven businesses, social enterprises reinvest significant profits into their social mission rather than distributing them among shareholders. As Borzaga et al. [1] suggest the role of cooperative and social enterprises in modern market economies has been undervalued due to the inapplicability of orthodox microeconomic theory's assumptions of self-interested individuals and profit maximisation as the sole firm objective, which are not applicable to these enterprises. In the recent past, there has been a global shift towards a market forces approach as the primary mechanism for distributing resources for social change, along with anti-globalisation and alternative globalisation forces that have advocated for a non-corporate vision of the world's future [2]. While corporations are focusing on social and environmental performance to increase company value, social nonprofit organisations are launching market-based businesses pursuing social value. All these have resulted in an increased focus on social enterprises over the last few decades [3].

These social enterprises have emerged as a significant force in addressing societal challenges by integrating social and environmental goals into their business models [4]. They go beyond traditional profit-driven entrepreneurship by emphasizing the creation of social value and positive societal impact [5]. Dart [6] suggests that social enterprise has emerged as a businesslike organisation in contrast to the traditional nonprofit organisation and the origin and evolution of social enterprise is explained through the concept of moral legitimacy.

In emerging economies, social enterprises are crucial in addressing social and environmental challenges while contributing to organizational performance [7]. These enterprises strive to achieve sustainability regarding their impact on society and long-term viability [8]. Understanding the sustainability of social enterprises and developing appropriate measurement frameworks is essential for assessing their effectiveness and guiding their future development. The government views social enterprises as entities providing an impetus to economic regeneration and improving the stability and vibrancy of local communities [3].

These social enterprises and social entrepreneurship have gained scholarly attention as a distinct field of study as they have the potential to develop creative and radical solutions to social needs unfulfilled by either private enterprise or the public sector [9,10]. Therefore, it becomes very critical that these social enterprises are sustainable. A sustainable approach would enable these enterprises to contribute positively to resolving these issues, such as climate change, poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation [11,12]. Sustainable social enterprises would be better equipped to face challenges, adapt to changing circumstances,

and effectively navigate economic, environmental, and social disruptions [13].

In recent times, bibliometric studies have gained prominence in various fields of study, including those related to social enterprises. Arango-Botero and Arias [14] were one of the first to analyse the existing literature using bibliometric methods. They concluded that social enterprises must prioritise innovation, sustainability, and community transformation by increasing their involvement in the educational system and policy-making process, along with businesses. Given that social enterprises are hybrid organisations targeting sustainable development, Salido-Andres et al. [15] explore the interlinkage between social enterprises and sustainable consumption. Further, among some of the recent studies, Hisyam and Lin's [16] bibliometric study highlights that social enterprises must institutionalise to address the triple bottom line; Talukder and Lakner [17] focus on the funding aspect of social enterprises and suggest that crowdfunding can be a viable option while Satar et al. [18] explore the nexus between social entrepreneurship and inclusive development. Therefore, one aspect that has remained unaddressed is the sustainability of social enterprises. In this study, we, therefore, make an attempt to explore the sustainability aspect of social enterprises.

The importance of social enterprises and the need for their sustainability in addressing various social aspects encountered by human societies act as a prima facie motivation in our endeavor to explore the extent of knowledge available in the academic field. Given the dynamic, diverse, and multidisciplinary intellectual base of knowledge, conducting a timely assessment of the progressive literature is imperative [19,20] to enrich the directions for future research. Therefore, the objective of this study is to present “a holistic and comprehensive overview of the extant knowledge in the context of social enterprises and sustainability”. Precisely, we ask the following research questions: What is the scope and trend in publication? (RQ1); What themes and knowledge structure is evident in the research corpora? (RQ2) and finally, what are the possible avenues for future research? (RQ3).

By addressing the above-mentioned research questions, the study tries to explore research trends, identify seminal works and the range of thematic diversity evident from extant research. The study also provides understanding of the theoretical evolution and future research directions. This effort of ours would, therefore, help new and seasoned researchers as well as the policy makers to gain valuable insights for their own future research and identify areas which should be sponsored for future research. The remaining part of the paper is structured as follows:

Section 2 (LITERATURE REVIEW) provides a brief overview of the existing literature related to social enterprises and their sustainability. Section 3 (DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY) explains the data and the research methods followed in the study. Section 4 (RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS) presents and discusses the results related to the

performance and network analyses. Section 5 (THEMATIC EVOLUTION) suggests the evolution of research and possible future research directions, and finally, Section 6 (CONCLUSION) concludes the paper with an overall discussion of the findings and its implication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The capacity and willingness to create, plan, and manage a business venture, along with all kinds of risk and uncertainty, with the goal of making profit, is normally referred to as entrepreneurship. In a way, it involves the identification, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities [21]. Interestingly, in recent times, we are witnessing a new variant of entrepreneurs who possess a keen comprehension of social issues and subsequently address and satisfy these demands by using innovative methods of organisation. These enterprises are therefore distinct from profit oriented private enterprises because of their focus on social values [22]. As Dees [23] suggests, “social entrepreneurs are one species in the genus entrepreneur”. In similar lines, Austin et al. [10] defines social entrepreneurship as innovative, social value-creating activity within the nonprofit, business, or government sectors. Therefore, social entrepreneurs are considered social innovators and change agents in the social sector.

Borzaga and Defourny [24] suggest that these social enterprises operate in various forms, such as cooperatives, mutual organisations, and nonprofit organisations engaging in commercial activities. The authors, through a series of case studies, illustrate that social enterprises address societal challenges, create economic opportunities, and foster community development. Dees and Anderson [25] classified social enterprises into three specific forms: “for-profit social ventures, non-profit business ventures, and socially responsible businesses”. Profit-oriented enterprises are primarily created to serve a social function within the boundaries of the law while simultaneously being allowed to generate financial profits. Non-profit organisations are required to adhere to regulatory restrictions when it comes to the transfer of profits. However, people have the opportunity to offset expenses by making charitable donations. Conversely, the third kind of social company strives to achieve financial success while maintaining ethical and responsible practices without disregarding or violating them [26].

Interestingly, Hansmann [27] highlighted that social enterprises, or private nonprofit institutions, account for a sizable and growing share of our nation’s economic activity. The institutions play a crucial role in sectors like education, research, healthcare, media, and archives, which are vital to the modern economy and present pressing public policy issues. However, as Smith et al. [28] suggest, these social organisations pursuing social missions through business ventures face divergent goals, values, norms, and identities, causing tensions, competing demands, and ethical dilemmas. As per the authors, there can be four broad categories of

tension, viz., performing tension, organising tension, belonging tension, and learning tension. When goals, metrics, and takers are different, there are performing tensions; when structures, cultures, practices, and processes are different, there are organising tensions; when identities are different within and between subgroups, there are belonging tensions; and when time horizons are different, there are learning tensions of growth, scale, and change.

Research on social enterprise has developed and moved beyond arguments on the definition and incorporated the need for scrutinising the processes both institutional and organisational related to their formation and administration [29]. An important aspect of social enterprises is their capability for resource mobilisation. Austin et al. [10] suggest that social entrepreneurship differs from commercial enterprises in terms of resource mobilisation, particularly with respect to financial resources. Commercial entrepreneurs have the ability to attract financial resources because they can generate potential returns. Angel investors and venture capitalists lend financial resources to entrepreneurs in the hopes of receiving a higher amount of cash in the future. Further, commercial entrepreneurs are able to hire employees based on potential returns. When individuals decide to work for commercial entrepreneurs, they typically do so based on the premise that their effort will result in financial rewards such as wages, benefits, future windfalls (i.e., stock options), or some combination of these rewards [30]. Without the allure of potential returns, social entrepreneurs may face more difficulties in mobilising financial resources. Therefore, starting a new social venture requires identifying funding sources that prioritise social value over economic value. Interesting, philanthropic venture capital companies like Ashoka, the Acumen Fund, and Venture Philanthropy Partners have transformed the social entrepreneurship landscape by providing the required financial resources along with consulting and organisational relationships for new social ventures. Similarly, many social ventures have to rely on volunteers and employees who prioritise creating social value over earning and building private economic wealth [31].

Therefore, unlike businesses, social enterprises have a rather concentrated financing structure. This is because a diversified financing structure can result in conflicts that either originate from the capital providers' divergent return requirements or the design of financing instruments. In order to mitigate these conflicts, social companies focus on using the most appropriate sources of financing. Further, a reduced number of financing sources implies a more clearly defined set of expectations that the social enterprise has to consider Achleitner et al., [32]. The sustainability of social enterprises and the ways in which they can be measured are important concerns. Burkett [33] highlights the challenges ventures face in managing production and operational costs. Endowments and subsidies can help balance initial costs, but many operate on a low scale with inadequate assets. While these grants may not

cover operational costs, they are realistic for sustainability. The maintenance and expansion of a social enterprise's impact are crucial factors that need consideration. A major challenge to the sustainability of social ventures stems from their inability to balance social and commercial goals. Poledrini et al. [34] argue that public resources can be directed to social enterprises as they can facilitate economic recovery. However, it is equally important to access financial and economic health to ensure that they sustain their objectives.

Studies by Jenner [35] and Sharir et al. [36] argue that identification of resources, organisational competencies, cooperative linkages, and validity are significant factors in making social enterprises sustainable. Measuring sustainability as an activity will entrench this issue as an imperative practice in decision-making and administration. An evaluation of sustainability can be made using a set of indices. Irrespective of the sustainability metric used, the activity will be used to assist decision-makers in evaluating company sustainability performance along with generating information for designing prospective actions [37].

According to Delai and Takahashi's [38] research, no single analysis initiative has proven to be successful in addressing sustainability-related issues, and there is disagreement regarding the essential measurement parameters. The main points of contention are that enterprises classify disputes between dimensions using various criteria, that the same initiative can evaluate similar impacts on the cause-and-effect relationship at various levels, that there is incongruity regarding the stakeholders that an organisation needs to engage with, and that company influences should also be considered. A challenge to sustainability measurement has been the absence of agreement on indices of sustainability [39,40]. This has been a major barrier to the formulation and implementation of sustainability strategies [41], and this, according to Warhurst [42], drives the necessity to "define common methodological standards and indicator sets" [38]. The possibility of a bias in the measurement scheme at the time of implementing one or another initiative or the struggle to equate performances among establishments arises from this lacuna [43].

Given the fact that the sustainability of social enterprises is critical not just for their survival but also for their ability to achieve the social objectives that they have set, this study tries to dig into this aspect by conducting a bibliometric study of the existing literature related to the topic.

DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY

This paper uses bibliometric methodology, which applies quantitative tools to analyse bibliometric and bibliographic information. The data for the present study has been obtained from the Scopus database, the widest abstract and citation database provided by Elsevier [44–46]. The criteria used for the corpus of articles used for the study are provided in Table 1. The objective was to include all articles related to, or those that discussed

issues related to, “social enterprises” and “sustainability”. Therefore, the relevant search string included words like “social enterprises”, “social entrepreneurs”, “social entrepreneurship”, “sustainability” and “sustainable”. To include all such possible words, we set our search string as (“social enterp*” and “sustainab*”).

The search resulted in 1190 articles, further subjected to a selection process as indicated in Table 1. The final result of the screening and cleaning process resulted in 796 articles, which were used to conduct the scoping review using bibliometric analysis.

Table 1. Search criteria and article selection.

Filtering criteria	Accept	Reject
Search date: 26-07-2023		
Search engine: Scopus		
Search string: (“social enterp*” and “sustainab*”)	1190	
Document type: Articles and Review only	836	354
Language filter: Only English	806	30
Content screening: If title, abstract, and keywords indicate relevance to scope of study	796	10

Source: Authors' compilation.

Scoping reviews are a type of evidence synthesis that aims to systematically identify and map the breadth of evidence available on a particular topic, field, concept, or issue, often irrespective of source within or across particular contexts [47]. Scoping reviews cover a broader area than systematic reviews and are extremely useful in providing much information regarding coverage, definitions, methodologies, etc. This allows the researcher a large amount of freedom to identify types of evidence in a given field, to examine how research is being conducted in a particular field, to identify and analyse knowledge gaps, etc. Given such a wide level of freedom in conducting scoping reviews, some bias may creep in. After deliberating on our research question and the desired objectives, we decided that the scoping review fits our procedure, and as such, we decided to proceed with it.

Bibliometric analysis is suitable for dealing with large volumes of data and provides constructive outputs. In line with the study by Donthu et al. [20], we try to uncover journal performance patterns, collaborations, explore research components, and identify emerging trends in the domain of our study. The study uses VOSviewer software along with Biblioshiny. VOSviewer is one of the most popular software used to analyse and

visualise bibliometric networks and has wide application in social science and business literature [20]. Similarly, Biblioshiny or Bibliometrix package developed by Aria and Cuccurullo [48] has all the features of performing bibliometric analysis and building data matrices for co-citation, coupling, scientific collaboration analysis and co-word analysis.

In accordance with the object of the study, the study investigates numerous performance analyses, such as publication over time, geographical distribution of documents and authors, identifying major sources, top authors, top cited publications, and contributing institutions. For identifying the country of origin of a particular article, the affiliation of the author has been considered. Further, the study also provides an overview of the major themes using keyword co-occurrence analysis. Finally, we provide an understanding of the thematic evolution of the time span of the study and provide insights about the future direction of research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the results of the bibliometric analysis on the topic of social enterprises and sustainability using a dataset of published literature recovered from the Scopus database. The first part of the results focuses on publication over time, geographical distribution of documents and authors, identifying major sources, top authors, top cited publications, and contributing institutions, while the second part considers knowledge formation and evolution. The detailed results are discussed in the following sub-sections:

Time Analysis of Documents

Figure 1 provides an overview of the growth of publications on the theme of sustainability and social enterprises. Generally, there appears to be a gradual increase in the number of articles published over time. Discussion related to the theme started in 2000, when we had two publications. As mentioned in the literature review section, Dees [23] was perhaps the first detailed study on social enterprises, but the discussion on social enterprises and sustainability started in 2000 with the work of Cannan [49] and Dunford [50]. However, there was no publication for the next few years (2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004). This publication surge from 2010 onward indicates a growing interest in and focus on the theme. The notable spike in article counts during specific years, such as 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2022, signify significant interest among the academic community in sustainability and social enterprises. In 2023, till the time considered in the paper, 62 papers have already been published.

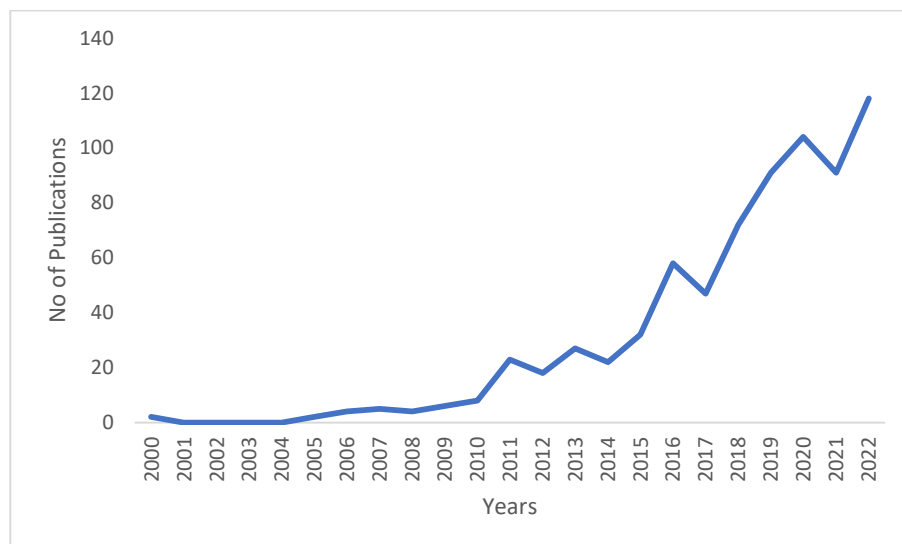


Figure 1. Trend of publication. Source: Authors' representation of data from SCOPUS.

In Cannan's [49] article titled "The Environmental Crisis, Greens, and Community Development", social enterprises are discussed as a solution to address the environmental crisis and promote community development. The climate change crisis has disproportionately affected the poor, making it a social issue. Therefore, Cannan [49] suggests that community development should engage with green social thought and practice to broaden their understanding of the environment and community wellbeing. This approach can include a natural environment, promoting a sustainable economy and convivial communities. By incorporating community development's expertise in building socially just communities, a holistic approach to sustainability can be fostered, enhancing understanding of social, economic, and environmental factors. This approach is likely to promote ecological integrity and community well-being. Dunford [50], in his article titled "The Holy Grail of Microfinance: Helping the Poor and Sustainable?" discusses social enterprises and their sustainability in the context of microfinance institutions and argues that social enterprises, like microfinance institutions, should focus on delivering affordable services to impoverished individuals over an extended period, including the repayment of the initial investment made by the donor to establish the institution.

The next set of discussions started in 2005, where we have two papers, Wheeler et al. [51] and Tracey et al. [52]. Both these papers substantiate the fact that by 2005, social enterprises had become an important and integral part of economic and business activities in different parts of the world. Wheeler et al. [51] in their paper analysed 50 cases of successful sustainable enterprises from developing countries and further suggested that these enterprises often engage in building informal networks of businesses, not-for-profit organisations, local communities, and other

actors to ensure sustainability. These networks further result in virtuous cycles of reinvestment in an area's financial, social, human, and ecological capital. The authors also observed that successful networks needed at least one business enterprise to anchor these social enterprises' financial sustainability. The anchor can either be a cooperative or a profitable social enterprise launched by a non-governmental organisation. The other paper published by Tracey et al. [52] discussed the emergence of a new form of social entrepreneurship, which they refer to as "community enterprises". The authors suggest that these social enterprises are characterised by their generation of income through trading rather than philanthropy and/or government subsidies to finance their social goals and they aim to create sustainable solutions for social issues. The democratic governance structures of these organisations allow members of the community to participate in the management of the organisation and build partnerships between corporations and community enterprises. This substantially changes the nature of collaboration by allowing relationships to proceed based on mutual advantage, thereby broadening their appeal and scope and acting as sources of valuable assets, knowledge, and expertise rather than recipients of patronage or charity.

Geographical Distribution of Documents and Analysis of Authors

The country analysis suggests that 84 countries have contributed to the theme of sustainability and social enterprises as shown in Figure 2. Table 2 provides the details of the contributions of the top 10 countries. The United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (USA) have the highest number of documents, citations, and total link strength, indicating their significant role in shaping the research themes related to sustainability and social enterprises. The UK has 124 documents with a total citation count of 4655. The USA has the second highest document count, at 95 with a citation count of 1797. The total link strength suggests that the USA has the most collaborative work with other countries. Further, the top 10 countries contribute 58.43% of the total research output.

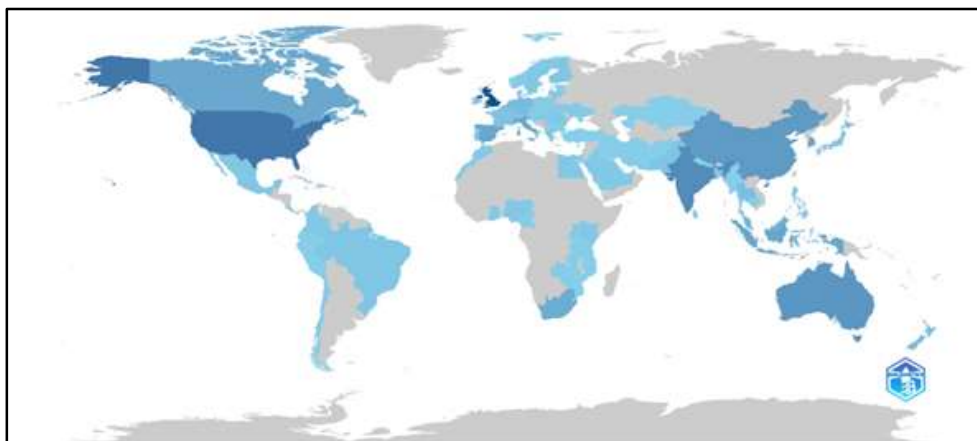


Figure 2. Country distribution of documents. Source: Authors compilation using Biblioshiny.

Table 2. List of top 10 Countries and their output.

Country	Documents	Contribution (%)	Citations	Total link strength
United Kingdom	124	13.75	4655	30
United States	95	10.53	1797	48
India	63	6.98	287	17
Australia	48	5.32	881	19
South Korea	41	4.55	303	6
South Africa	35	3.88	193	10
Italy	33	3.66	409	10
Canada	32	3.55	616	15
Spain	32	3.55	492	10
Indonesia	24	2.66	79	6

Source: Authors compilation.

Analysis of Sources

The documents are spread across 416 journals. The list of top 10 journals as provided in Table 3 accounts for 214 (26.88%) of the total articles. There are only 6 journals that have more than 10 articles; on the other hand, 306 journals contribute just 1 article each. Among the journals, Sustainability (Switzerland) has the highest contribution with 71 articles which account for 8.92 percent of the total documents. This is followed by the following journals: Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies, Social Enterprise Journal, Journal of Social Entrepreneurship, and Journal of Cleaner Production.

Table 3. Top 10 Journals.

Sources	Documents	Contribution (%)
SUSTAINABILITY (SWITZERLAND)	71	8.92
EMERALD EMERGING MARKETS CASE STUDIES	50	6.28
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE JOURNAL	19	2.39
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP	18	2.26
JOURNAL OF CLEANER PRODUCTION	16	2.01
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS	11	1.38
VOLUNTAS	9	1.13
JOURNAL OF ENTERPRISING COMMUNITIES	7	0.88
LOCAL ECONOMY	7	0.88
BUSINESS AND SOCIETY	6	0.75

Source: Authors' compilation.

Analysis of Authors

The analysis suggests that a total of 1929 authors have contributed to this area of research. However, most of the authors (1763 i.e., 91.39%), have contributed only one article. Among the remaining, 126 authors have contributed 2 articles, 21 authors have contributed 3 articles, 12 authors have contributed 4 articles each, 4 authors have contributed 5 articles each, and the highest is 3 authors with 6 articles each. This agrees with Lotka's law, which suggests that "the number of authors who have published a certain number of articles is inversely proportional to the number of authors who have published a greater number of articles". In other words, as per the law, relatively few highly productive authors publish a significant number of papers, while the majority of authors are less productive and contribute fewer papers. Table 4 provides the details of 20 top authors in this field of study.

Table 4. Top 20 authors.

Author's Name	h_index	g_index	Total Citations	No of Publications	Publication Start Year
DOHERTY B	6	6	1549	6	2006
HAUGH H	2	2	1074	2	2005
LYON F	3	3	1038	3	2014
TRACEY P	3	3	303	3	2005
BIRKHOLZ C	1	1	281	1	2015
PACHE A-C	1	1	281	1	2015
SANTOS F	1	1	281	1	2015
HOLT D	3	3	253	3	2011
PHILLIPS N	3	3	248	3	2005
THOMPSON J	1	1	239	1	2006
CLIFFORD A	1	1	216	1	2007
DIXON SEA	1	1	216	1	2007
LITTLEWOOD D	2	2	204	2	2015
TEASDALE S	4	4	198	4	2012
BESHAROV ML	1	1	188	1	2012
CHERTOK M	1	1	188	1	2012
SMITH WK	1	2	188	2	2012
WESSELS AK	1	1	188	1	2012
O'NEIL I	1	1	183	1	2016
SARASVATHY SD	1	1	183	1	2016

Source: Authors' analysis.

Citation Analysis

Table 5 lists the top 10 most impactful documents in terms of citations. The article “Social Enterprises as Hybrid Organizations: A Review and research agenda” by Doherty B., Haugh H., and Lyon F. published in 2014 in the *International Journal of Management Reviews*, is the top-most cited paper. It has a total of 923 citations. When the paper was published, the scholarly interest in social enterprise (SE) had progressed beyond the early focus definitions. Therefore, it allowed the authors to investigate their management and performance. The authors suggest that pursuing the dual mission of financial sustainability and social purpose, which they refer to as hybridity, is the defining characteristic of social enterprises. They also provide a framework for understanding the tensions and trade-offs resulting from this hybridity. The next article in the list, titled “Making Hybrids Work: Aligning Business Models and Organisational Design for Social Enterprises”, by Santos et al. [53], in the *California Management Review*, make a similar argument by profiling 11 different social enterprises from around the world. The citation count for this paper is 281. The article discusses several key success parameters for social enterprises and concludes that the “one-size-fits-all” idea certainly cannot describe social enterprises.

Thompson and Doherty’s [11] article titled “The Diverse World of Social Enterprise: A Collection of Social Enterprise Stories” has 239 citations. Published in 2006, this paper suggests a strong link between entrepreneurialism and environmentalism. This linkage or connection between social enterprises and the environment is also explored by Dixon and Clifford [54]; York, O’Neil, and Sarasvathy [55], and Littlewood and Holt [56]. These articles have citation counts of 216, 183 and 139, respectively. The other four articles by Smith et al. [57], Tracey et al. [52], Ruebottom [58] and Rahdari et al. [59] with citation counts of 188, 181, 169 and 141, respectively. These articles provide valuable input about social enterprises’ success parameters and sustainability. Apart from these ten articles, another eight have more than 100 citations. All these articles explore various aspects of sustainability and help shape our understanding of social enterprise.

Table 5. Top 10 documents.

Author	Paper Title	Journal	Year	Total Citations
Bob Doherty, Helen Haugh & Ferguson Lyon	Social Enterprises as Hybrid Organizations: A Review and Research Agenda	International journal of management reviews	2014	923
Filipe Santos, Anne-Claire Pache & Christoph Birkholz	Making hybrids work: Aligning business models and organizational design for social enterprises	California management review	2015	281

Table 5. *Cont.*

Author	Paper Title	Journal	Year	Total Citations
John Thompson & Bob Doherty	The diverse world of social enterprise: A collection of social enterprise stories	International Journal of Social Economics	2006	239
Sarah E.A. Dixon & Anne Clifford	Ecopreneurship—a new approach to managing the triple bottom line	Journal of Organizational Change Management	2007	216
Wendy K. Smith, Marya L. Besharov, Anke K. Wessels & Michael Chertok	A Paradoxical Leadership Model for Social Entrepreneurs: Challenges, Leadership Skills, and Pedagogical Tools for Managing Social and Commercial Demands	Academy of Management Learning & Education	2012	188
Jeffrey G. York, Isobel O’Neil & Saras D. Sarasvathy	Exploring Environmental Entrepreneurship: Identity Coupling, Venture Goals, and Stakeholder Incentives	Journal of Management Studies	2016	183
Trish Ruebottom	The microstructures of rhetorical strategy in social entrepreneurship: Building legitimacy through heroes and villains	Journal of Business Venturing	2013	169
Paul Tracey, Nelson Phillips & Helen Haugh	Beyond Philanthropy: Community Enterprise as a Basis for Corporate Citizenship	Journal of Business Ethics	2015	151
Amir Rahdari, Sahar Sepasi & Mohammad Moradi	Achieving sustainability through Schumpeterian social entrepreneurship: The role of social enterprises	Journal of Cleaner Production	2016	141
David Littlewood & Diane Holt	Social Entrepreneurship in South Africa: Exploring the Influence of Environment	Business & Society	2018	139

Source: Authors’ compilation.

Institution Analysis

The analysis for institutions indicates that a total of 823 institutions have contributed 1696 articles to the topic of interest. The top contributor is Glasgow Caledonian University, located in Scotland. This institute has 35 documents, which account for 2.06% of the total. Next on the list are two institutes from Indonesia: Pelita Harapan University, with 16 documents, and Universitas Padjadjaran, with 13 documents. Table 6 contains the representative list of the top 24 institutions. These 24 institutes contribute 243 articles, which is 14.33% of the total 1696 documents available. Interestingly, 451 institutes contribute one document each, totaling 26.59%

of the total documents. This analysis highlights that many institutes are involved in research on social enterprises and sustainability, and no one institute dominates the research activity. Therefore, there is ample scope for collaboration among these institutes.

Table 6. Top 24 institutions out of 1696 institutions in terms of contribution.

Affiliation	Articles	Contribution	Country
GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY	35	2.06	United Kingdom
PELITA HARAPAN UNIVERSITY	16	0.94	Indonesia
UNIVERSITAS PADJADJARAN	13	0.77	Indonesia
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY	12	0.71	Thailand
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND	12	0.71	South Africa
UNIVERSITY OF TRENTO	11	0.65	Italy
YORK UNIVERSITY	11	0.65	Canada
UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE	10	0.59	South Africa
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA	10	0.59	South Africa
EWHA WOMANS UNIVERSITY	9	0.53	South Korea
NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY	8	0.47	Taiwan
THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO	8	0.47	Egypt
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM	8	0.47	United Kingdom
AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY	7	0.41	New Zealand
HAZARA UNIVERSITY	7	0.41	Pakistan
OPEN UNIVERSITY OF THE NETHERLANDS	7	0.41	Netherlands
QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY	7	0.41	Australia
SIDI MOHAMED BEN ABDELLAH UNIVERSITY	7	0.41	Morocco
STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY	7	0.41	South Africa
UNIVERSIDAD INTERNACIONAL DE LA RIOJA	7	0.41	Spain
UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH	7	0.41	United Kingdom
UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF SCOTLAND	7	0.41	United Kingdom
UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE DE LOUVAIN	7	0.41	Belgium

Source: Authors' compilation.

Analysis of Keywords

The analysis of words provides a list of 87 keywords that have at least five or more occurrences. The details of the top 20 key words other than the key search words (i.e., social enterprise and sustainability) are provided in Table 7. "Sustainable development", "social innovation", and

“entrepreneurship” have more than 50 occurrences. Among the top 20, there are 16 keywords with at least 10 or more occurrences. Interestingly, “India” is the only country keyword that features in this list. It is also evident that the “case study” methodology is a very popular method used in this area of research.

Table 7. Top 20 keywords.

Serial number	Keyword	Occurrences
1	Sustainable development	69
2	Social innovation	55
3	Entrepreneurship	54
4	Corporate social responsibility	28
5	Innovation	23
6	Social economy	20
7	Hybrid organizations	14
8	Social capital	14
9	Community development	12
10	Development	12
11	Social impact	12
12	Gender	11
13	Social business	11
14	Social responsibility	11
15	Sustainable development goals	11
16	Social sustainability	10
17	Business model	9
18	Case study	9
19	India	9
20	Social mission	9

Source: Authors' compilation.

Keyword and Thematic Analysis

Next, we present the cluster analysis results using the author's keywords. The network diagram based on the keywords is provided in Figure 3. The results indicate 10 distinct clusters. The first cluster is the biggest, with 15 words, while the tenth cluster is the smallest, with 5 words. The word count for the other clusters is as follows: Cluster Two has 11

to reach out to a large section of the poor population using sustainable joint liability and group lending mechanisms [64].

An important research theme that is emerging out of this cluster is “performance evaluation”. With the rise in interest in social enterprises and their impact on society at large, evaluating the performance of these firms would become critical so that resources could be used efficiently utilised.

Cluster 2: environmental sustainability

As an important area of work where social enterprises have actively engaged in the environment sustainably. It basically refers to making our planet liveable for a very long time and making sensible use of resources to ensure that we never run out. Persistent poverty and environmental changes have drawn attention to businesses that integrate social responsibility into their operations [29]. Moreover, social enterprises focusing on issues such as “recycling”, “renewable energy”, and “sanitation” use clean energy sources like wind and solar and maintain a hygienic and clean atmosphere for the benefit of our own health [65,66]. These aspects suggest the importance of social enterprises, as they are directly involved in achieving the “sustainable development goals” (SDGs), thereby ensuring that people and nature live together peacefully [67]). All these aspects have been of interest to various researchers, and this is likely to continue as it works towards long-term prosperity. Interesting, there is significant research interest in “hybrid organisations”, which try to address social or environmental objectives along with business objectives to remain sustainable [68].

Cluster 3: international development and corporate responsibility

The discussion in this cluster focuses on the convergence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and international development, emphasising the “social responsibility”. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a sign of a company’s dedication to upholding moral principles and ecological responsibility in its operations [54,69]. Companies are responsible for societal improvement and global growth, emphasising ethical and responsible operations. They can contribute to global problems by addressing poverty, improving education, providing healthcare, and protecting the environment [70]. Adopting corporate responsibility in foreign development is crucial for creating strong, fair societies that balance economic growth with people’s and environmental health.

The importance of social sustainability, financial sustainable and social mission are also highlighted in this cluster. The discussion revolving around the different business models is an interesting new theme emerging out of this cluster.

Cluster 4: entrepreneurship and innovation cluster

Innovation and business creation are the two overall driving factors that enhance economic development and keep changing things. Entrepreneurship involves taking risks, seeking new trade opportunities, and improving existing ones. It addresses market issues and develops new solutions. Technology propels businesses forward by developing new products, services, concepts, or processes [71,72]. Entrepreneurs' zeal and commitment to making their businesses great contribute to economic development, job creation, and social welfare in any country. The discussion within the cluster also provides an understanding of the processes and conceptual tools for understanding value creation in social enterprises [73]. It is further observed that the case study mode is a widely used method among the studies within this cluster.

Cluster 5: community development and social impact

The discussions in this cluster revolve around the theme of community development. Community development involves activities like job creation, poverty eradication, environmental conservation, and access to essential services. These are programmes aimed at addressing immediate social problems and uplifting communities. In summary, together with social impact initiatives, community development helps create stronger, more resilient communities [49]. By supporting projects that promote economic empowerment, social inclusivity, and environmental sustainability, we can move closer to creating more equitable societies that benefit all citizens uniformly. The appearance of Vietnam indicates the prevalence of such institutions in those countries [74].

Cluster 6: culture of social entrepreneurship

Two important aspects being discussed in this cluster are "culture" and "leadership" in the context of social enterprises. By encouraging innovation, collaboration, and a focus on social impact, social enterprises are driving positive change in the world. Therefore, leadership has become a critical factor in their success [75,76]. A leader's passion is a key element for gaining people's trust in the social enterprise and the social mission. By leading by example and demonstrating a commitment to making a difference, leaders help to cultivate a culture where social entrepreneurship is not only encouraged but celebrated. Through their guidance and support, members of this cluster are able to tackle challenges head-on and create lasting impact in their communities [77].

Cluster 7: resilience of social enterprises

Social enterprises' resilience is crucial for their ability to adapt to market conditions, funding uncertainties, and disruptions, ensuring long-term sustainability. Similarly, social enterprises are also instrumental in building a resilient society [78,79]. The discussions in the cluster suggest

that social enterprises in countries like India [77] and South Korea [80] have shown remarkable resilience in the face of challenges, particularly in the area of sanitation. By focusing on sustainable development goals (SDGs), these entrepreneurs have been able to adapt and thrive in the ever-changing landscape of social entrepreneurship. Their innovative approaches and commitment to creating lasting impact have set them apart as leaders in the field.

Cluster 8: circular economy and social enterprises

The goal of the Circular Economy plan is to reduce trash by promoting recycling, reuse, and renewing. As opposed to “take, make, dispose”, the focus is on creating closed loop processes that make materials and goods last longer [81,82]. This helps build a clean climate by lowering greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring resources last longer. Social enterprises are playing a critical role in promoting the circular economy by creating positive social and environmental impacts and prioritising people and the planet over profit. Combining circular economy and sustainability, we build a society that is efficient, fair, and caring of the environment. By following these basic rules, businesses, governments, and people can help make the world a better place for everyone.

Another important theme discussed in this cluster pertains to social inclusion. Social inclusion is a key aspect of building a cohesive community and an equitable society [83]. The various aspects by which social enterprises are ensuring this is by focusing on education as well as employment. Both the aspects of circular economy and social inclusion thereby foster a sustainable transition with society.

Cluster 9: entrepreneurial skills and strategy

This cluster highlights the importance of “entrepreneurial skills” and the “strategy” of social enterprises in ensuring their sustainability. Entrepreneurial qualities include the amalgamation of innovation, risk appetite, leadership, and flexibility, which eventually facilitate individuals in achieving commercial success. Innovation refers to the process of developing novel ideas, products, or techniques that are both practical and meet the demands of the market [84]. One of the most important strategies is the promotion of the innovation culture within organisations, which is an important aspect of gaining continuous improvement and sustained success [85,86].

The main point is that the people and organisations that embrace these skills and qualities will be the ones who will be able to succeed despite the ever-changing circumstances and possibilities, therefore, educational systems have a great role to play in the sustainability of social enterprises.

Cluster 10: gender and social impact

The last cluster focuses on the gender aspect in the context of sustainability for social enterprises. Gender is a key factor in influencing the availability of resources and opportunities, making it essential to consider when addressing social impact [87,88]. Financial inclusion and health are two important aspects on which social enterprises have been working. One form of such organisation is the microfinance institution. Microfinance organisations have been crucial in offering financial services to women who may lack access to conventional banking systems [89]. Social businesses may effectively tackle structural inequities and enhance the general well-being of women and girls worldwide by providing them with economic empowerment. These organisations are striving for a more sustainable and fair future for everyone by implementing projects that prioritise education and financial inclusion.

THEMATIC EVOLUTION

The thematic study of different focus areas from 2000 to 2023 has been done by breaking down each period's themes and analysing how they relate to sustainability and related topics, as compiled in Figure 4. During 2000–2006, the primary focus appeared to be on sustainability, encompassing various aspects like environmental, social, and economic sustainability. It is a broad and foundational concept that gained momentum during this time. The next phase, from 2007 to 2012, focused on a more diversified set of themes. Sustainability continued to be a central theme, indicating its enduring importance. However, we also find discussions on waste management, economic conditions, and economics. Waste management suggests a growing concern for environmental issues and the need for efficient waste disposal methods. Economic conditions and economics indicate a broader focus on economic aspects, possibly driven by the global financial crisis in 2008. It may imply efforts to balance economic growth with sustainability.

The next phase, 2013–2018, focuses on sustainable development, ecotourism, decision-making, and education. The discussions on sustainable development became more comprehensive and holistic, considering social, environmental, and economic factors. Ecotourism highlights a growing interest in sustainable tourism practices, where economic benefits are sought while preserving natural environments. While decision-making emphasises informed and sustainable decision-making processes, education could indicate efforts to promote awareness and knowledge about sustainability and its importance. Finally, in the last phase, i.e., 2019–2023, the focus is more on sustainability and social enterprise. Sustainability remains a consistent theme, underscoring its continued significance. The inclusion of social enterprise suggests a focus on business models and initiatives that prioritise social and environmental impact alongside profitability.

Sustainability has evolved, encompassing waste management, economic conditions, ecotourism, decision-making, and education. The most recent period has focused on social enterprise, highlighting the growing interest in profit-driven business models promoting social and environmental impact.

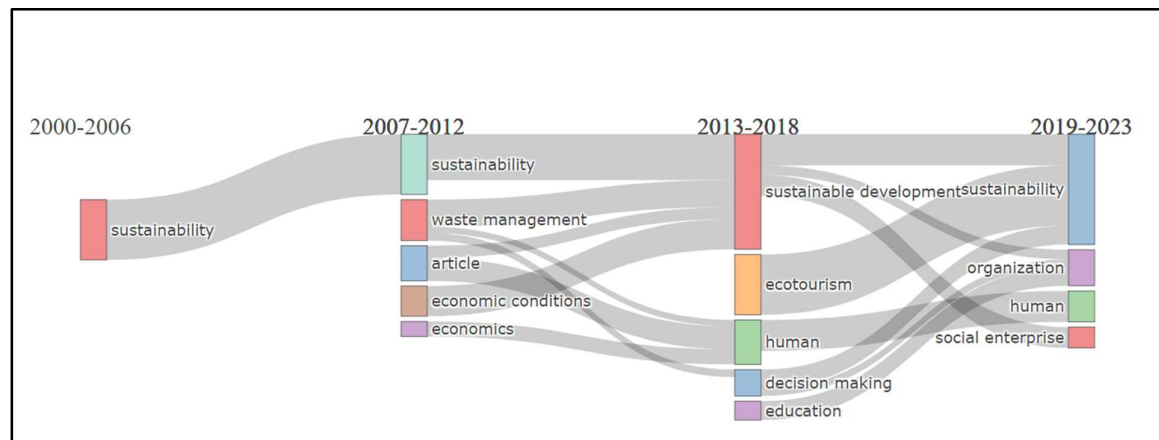


Figure 4. Thematic evolution. Source: Authors' compilation using Biblioshiny.

Further, the network analysis provides some useful insights about the future research direction. The average publication year (APY) figure for “circular economy” is 2022.2. This is the last theme emerging from the dataset. Similarly, other themes that have (APY) greater than 2021 are “hybridity”, “sdgs”, and “sustainability”. Among the methodologies used by researchers, case study and bibliometric analysis have an APY greater than 2021, suggesting that these methods are likely to be widely used in the coming days.

Another interesting and serious issue related to social enterprises is the issue of “greenwashing” [90]. An authentic social enterprise should provide clear and verifiable information on its social and environmental impact. Greenwashing happens when these enterprises intentionally obfuscate or present vague information. Greenwashing of social enterprises, therefore, refers to the practice where a social enterprise, or a business claiming to have social and environmental goals, deceptively markets itself as more environmentally or socially responsible than it actually is. This can involve exaggerating, fabricating, or selectively highlighting certain aspects of their operations to mislead stakeholders, customers, or investors about the true impact of their activities [91–93].

CONCLUSION

In today’s rapidly changing world, research and scholarship are critical to illuminating the path forward. By exploring and understanding the pivotal facets of our interconnected world, we can identify and develop solutions to our complex challenges. This study provides a comprehensive

overview of current research on social entrepreneurship and sustainability topics using bibliometric analysis.

Social entrepreneurship harnesses the power of business to address complex social and environmental challenges. Innovative social enterprises are developing new solutions to poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability, demonstrating the potential of entrepreneurial thinking to drive positive social impact. RQ1 delves into the publication trends, revealing a significant increase in the number of publications focused on social entrepreneurship and sustainability over the past decade. This surge underscores the growing research interest and the importance of these fields in addressing global challenges.

Sustainable development calls for a harmonious balance between economic growth, environmental preservation, and social equity. Sustainable development initiatives are essential for fostering a future where prosperity is synonymous with environmental stewardship and social progress. Social business requires new theories and models to address growing research and real-world issues. Researchers should explore the integration of social business and sustainability, combining ideas from economics, natural science, sociology, and business. This will enable a comprehensive approach to social and environmental problems, reducing poverty, addressing inequality, and protecting the environment.

The field of social entrepreneurship is rapidly growing, requiring theories to adapt to new information and discoveries. The study highlights the complexity and nonlinear nature of social entrepreneurship and emphasises the importance of resilience and adaptability. Future research should focus on long-term effects on poverty and survival and review measures.

RQ2 meticulously examines the thematic structure, identifying key themes such as poverty alleviation, inequality, and environmental sustainability. Innovative social enterprises are developing new solutions to these challenges, demonstrating the potential of entrepreneurial thinking to drive positive social impact.

As we move forward, it is important to remember that the path to a better future is not linear.

Or straightforward. There will be setbacks and challenges along the way. However, remaining committed to these core values and working together can help create a more just and sustainable world for all. RQ3 identifies the evolution of research in the area and possible avenues for future research, offering valuable opportunities for scholars. Researchers can further explore the impact of social enterprises on poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability, while scholars can develop new theoretical frameworks for social entrepreneurship.

The study highlights the importance of social businesses in planning and decision-making, focusing on trends and main themes. It emphasises the need for collaboration among different fields and industries, such as lawmakers, colleges, and social businesses, to solve social and

environmental problems. The study also emphasises the need for effective measurement and evaluation of social businesses' impact, demonstrating their value to partners, and securing funding. It also emphasises the need for capacity building and giving people the power to make long-lasting changes in society. The study also highlights the importance of encouraging creativity and adapting plans to new information. Overall, the study contributes to academic knowledge on social business and sustainability, urging collaboration between scholars and practitioners to create a more sustainable and equitable future.

Researchers can explore the impact of social enterprises on poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability, while scholars can create new theoretical frameworks for social entrepreneurship. Social enterprises can collaborate with researchers and scholars to develop and evaluate solutions to complex social problems. Investing in these areas can accelerate progress and make a real difference. Collaboration across sectors and disciplines is key to developing effective and sustainable solutions. Empowering individuals and Communities taking action can create a more just and equitable world.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The dataset of the study is available from the authors on request.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Sameek Ghosh and Sougata Ray designed the study. Shyam Nath, Rajiv Nair and Ram Bishu validated the concept and methodology. Sameek Ghosh and Sougata Ray collected, cleaned and analysed the data. Sameek Ghosh, Sougata Ray, and Rajiv Nair prepared the original draft. Rajiv Nair, Shyam Nath and Ram Bishu did the supervision and review. All authors worked on the final revision of the manuscript.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES

1. Borzaga C, Depedri S, Tortia EC. The Role of Cooperative and Social Enterprises: A Multifaceted Approach for an Economic Pluralism. Available from: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1622143. Accessed 2024 Jul 31.
2. Emerson J. The Blended Value Proposition: integrating social and financial returns. *Calif Manage Rev.* 2003;45(4):35-51.
3. Phillips M. Growing pains: the sustainability of social enterprises. *Int J Entrep Innov.* 2006;7(4):221-30.
4. Mair J, Marti I. Social entrepreneurship research: A source of explanation, prediction, and delight. *J World Bus.* 2006;41(1):36-44.

5. Nicholls A. The legitimacy of social entrepreneurship: Reflexive isomorphism in a pre-paradigmatic field. *Entrep Theory Pract.* 2010;34(4):611-33.
6. Dart R. The Legitimacy of Social Enterprise. *Nonprofit Manag Lead.* 2004;14(4):411-24.
7. Rettab B, Brik AB, Mellahi K. A study of management perceptions of the impact of corporate social responsibility on organizational performance in emerging economies: The case of Dubai. *J Bus Ethics.* 2009;89(3):371-90.
8. Dacin PA, Dacin MT, Tracey P. Social entrepreneurship: A critique and future directions. *Organ Sci.* 2011;22(5):12-13.
9. Campos JM. Contributions of the social economy to the general interest. *Ann Public Coop Econ.* 1997;68(3):397-408.
10. Austin J, Stevenson H, Wei-Skillern J. Social and commercial entrepreneurship: Same, different, or both? *Entrep Theory Pract.* 2006;30(1):1-22.
11. Thompson J, Doherty B. The diverse world of social enterprise: A collection of social enterprise stories. *Int J Soc Econ.* 2006;33(5/6):361-75.
12. Hockerts K. Determinants of social entrepreneurial intentions. *Entrep Theory Pract.* 2017;41(1):105-30.
13. Bugg-Levine A, Kogut B, Kulatilaka N. A new approach to funding social enterprises. *Harvard Bus Rev.* 2012;90(1/2):118-23.
14. Arango-Botero D, Arias MLB. Social Entrepreneurship: Dynamics and Current Trends. *SCMS J Indian Manage.* 2020;17(2):94-110.
15. Salido-Andres N, Garcia-Rodriguez N, Cachero-Martinez S. Connecting social enterprises and sustainable consumption: systematic review, bibliometric analysis, and conceptual framework. *Sustainability.* 2022;14(20):13428.
16. Lin SW. Bibliometric analysis of social enterprise literature: Revisit to regroup. *J Innov Knowl.* 2023;8(3):100411.
17. Talukder SC, Lakner Z. Exploring the Landscape of Social Entrepreneurship and Crowdfunding: A Bibliometric Analysis. *Sustainability.* 2023;15(12):9411.
18. Satar MS, Aggarwal D, Bansal R, Alarifi G. Mapping the Knowledge Structure and Unveiling the Research Trends in Social Entrepreneurship and Inclusive Development: A Bibliometric Analysis. *Sustainability.* 2023;15(7):5626.
19. Khan MA, Pattnaik D, Ashraf R, Ali I, Kumar S, Donthu N. Value of special issues in the journal of business research: A bibliometric analysis. *J Bus Res.* 2021;125:295-313.
20. Donthu N, Kumar S, Mukherjee D, Pandey N, Lim WM. How to conduct a bibliometric analysis: An overview and guidelines. *J Bus Res.* 2021;133:285-96.
21. Shane S, Venkataraman S. The promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research. *J Manage.* 2000;25(1):217-26.
22. Shaw E, Carter S. Social entrepreneurship: Theoretical antecedents and empirical analysis of entrepreneurial processes and outcomes. *J Small Bus Enterp Dev.* 2007;14(3):418-34.
23. Dees JG. Enterprising nonprofits: What do you do when traditional sources of funding fall short. *Harvard Bus Rev.* 1998;76(1):55-67.
24. Borzaga C, Defourny J. *The emergence of social enterprise.* London (UK): Routledge; 2001.

25. Dees JG, Anderson B. For-Profit Social Ventures. Available from: https://centers.fuqua.duke.edu/case-new/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/02/Article_Dees_ForprofitSocialVentures_2003.pdf. Accessed 2024 May 20.
26. Jamburia G. Sustainability of Social Enterprises: A Case Study of Sweden. Available from: https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:632746/FULLTEXT01.pdf?utm_source=summari. Accessed 2023 Dec 29.
27. Hansmann H. The role of nonprofit enterprise. *Yale Law J.* 1980;89(5):835-901.
28. Smith WK, Gonin M, Besharov ML. Managing Social-Business Tensions: A Review and Research Agenda for Social Enterprise. *Bus Ethics Q.* 2013;23(3):407-42.
29. Doherty B, Haugh H, Lyon F. Social Enterprises as Hybrid Organisations: A Review and Research. *Int J Manag Rev.* 2014;16(4):417-36.
30. Peredo AM, McLean M. Social entrepreneurship: A critical review of the concept. *J World Bus.* 2006;41(1):56-65.
31. Certo ST, Miller T. Social entrepreneurship: Key issues and concepts. *Bus Horizons.* 2008;51(4):267-71.
32. Achleitner AK, Knafl WS, Volk S. The financing structure of social enterprises: conflicts and implications. *Int J Entrep Ventur.* 2014;6(1):85-99.
33. Burkett H. Models, methods, and metaphors for the performance improvement professional. *Perform Improv.* 2010;49(6):2.
34. Poledrini S, Searing EA, Montrone A. A Model for Directing and Modulating Public Interventions in Social Enterprises. *Nonprofit Policy For.* 2022;13(4):307-32.
35. Jenner P. Social enterprise sustainability revisited: an international perspective. *Soc Enterp J.* 2016;12(1):42-60.
36. Sharir M, Lerner M, Yitshaki R. Long-term survivability of social ventures: qualitative analysis of external and internal explanations. Available from: <https://www.econbiz.de/Record/long-term-survivability-of-social-ventures-qualitative-analysis-of-external-and-internal-explanations-sharir-moshe/10003782274>. Accessed 2024 Jul 31.
37. Moldan B, Billharz S, Matravers R. Sustainability Indicators, A report on the projection on indicators of sustainable development. Chichester (UK): John Wiley & Sons; 1997.
38. Delai I, Takahashi S. Sustainability measurement system: a reference model proposal. *Soc Responsib J.* 2011;7(3):438-71.
39. Sikdar S. Sustainable development and sustainability metrics. *Am Inst Chem Eng J.* 2003;49(8):1928-32.
40. Searcy CK. Designing sustainable development indicators: analysis for a case utility. *Meas Bus Excell.* 2005;9(2):33-41.
41. Veleva V, Ellenbecker M. Indicators of sustainable development: framework and methodology. *J Clean Prod.* 2001;9(6):519-49.
42. Warhurst A. Sustainability indicators and sustainability performance management. Available from: <https://www.ied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/G01026.pdf?>. Accessed 2023 Dec 29.
43. Adams C, Frost G. Integrating sustainability reporting into management practices. *Account Forum.* 2008;32:288-302.

44. Pritchard A. *Statistical Bibliography; An Interim Bibliography*. London (UK): Springfield; 1969.
45. Valtakoski A. The evolution and impact of qualitative research in *Journal of Services Marketing*. *J Serv Mark*. 2020;34(1):8-23.
46. Pattnaik D, Kumar S, Burton B, Lim WM. Economic Modelling at Thirty Five: A Retrospective bibliometric survey. *Econ Model*. 2022;107:105712.
47. Munn Z, Danielle P, Hanan K, Lyndsay A, Patricia M, Godfrey CM, et al. What are scoping reviews? Providing a formal definition of scoping reviews as a type of evidence synthesis. *JBIEvid Synth*. 2022;20(4):950-2.
48. Aria M, Cuccurullo C. bibliometrix: An R-tool for comprehensive science mapping analysis. *J Informetr*. 2017;11(4):959-75.
49. Cannan C. The environmental crisis, greens and community development. *Community Dev J*. 2000;35(4):365-76.
50. Dunford C. The holy grail of microfinance: Helping the poor and sustainable? *Small Enterp Dev*. 2000;11(1):40-4.
51. Wheeler D, McKague K, Thomson J, Davies R, Medalye J, Prada M. Creating Sustainable local enterprise networks. Available from: <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/creating-sustainable-local-enterprise-networks/>. Accessed 2024 Jul 31.
52. Tracey P, Phillips N, Haugh H. Beyond Philanthropy: Community enterprise as a basis for corporate citizenship. *J Bus Ethics*. 2005;58:327-44.
53. Santos F, Pache AC, Birkholz C. Making hybrids work: Aligning business models and organizational design for social enterprises. *Calif Manage Rev*. 2015;57(3):36-58.
54. Dixon SE, Clifford A. Ecopreneurship—a new approach to managing the triple bottom line. *J Organ Change Manag*. 2007;20(3):326-45.
55. York JG, O'Neil I, Sarasvathy SD. Exploring environmental entrepreneurship: Identity coupling, venture goals, and stakeholder incentives. *J Manage Stud*. 2016;53(5):695-737.
56. Littlewood D, Holt D. Social entrepreneurship in South Africa: Exploring the influence of environment. *Bus Soc*. 2018;57(3):525-61.
57. Smith WK, Besharov ML, Wessels AK, Chertok M. A paradoxical leadership model for social entrepreneurs: Challenges, leadership skills, and pedagogical tools for managing social and commercial demands. *Acad Manage Learn Edu*. 2012;11(3):463-78.
58. Ruebottom T. The microstructures of rhetorical strategy in social entrepreneurship: Building legitimacy through heroes and villains. *J Bus Ventur*. 2013;28(1):98-116.
59. Rahdari A, Sepasi S, Moradi M. Achieving sustainability through Schumpeterian social entrepreneurship: The role of social enterprises. *J Clean Prod*. 2016;137:347-60.
60. Blowfield M. Business and development: making sense of business as a development agent. *Corp Gov Int J Bus Soc*. 2012;12(4):414-26.
61. Lawson-Lartego L, Mathiassen L. Microfranchising to Alleviate Poverty: An Innovation Network Perspective. *J Bus Ethics*. 2021;171(9):545-63.

62. Ahmed JU, Gazi MA, Iqbal R, Islam QT, Talukder N. Value co-creation through social innovation in healthcare: a case of WE CARE Solar. *World J Entrep Manag Sustain Dev.* 2020;16(4):341-57.
63. Suriyankietkaew S, Krittayaruangroj K, Iamsawan N. Sustainable Leadership Practices and Competencies of SMEs for Sustainability and Resilience: A Community-Based Social Enterprise Study. *Sustainability.* 2022;14(10):5762.
64. Wry T, Zhao EY. Taking Trade-offs Seriously: Examining the Contextually Contingent Relationship Between Social Outreach Intensity and Financial Sustainability in Global Microfinance. *Organ Sci.* 2018;29(3):507-28.
65. Gutberlet J. Informal and cooperative recycling as a poverty eradication strategy. *Geogr Compass.* 2012;6(1):19-34.
66. Picciotti A. Towards sustainability: the innovation paths of social enterprise. *Ann Public Coop Econ.* 2017;88(2):233-56.
67. Lehoux P, Pacifico Silva H, Pozelli Sabio R, Roncarolo F. The Unexplored Contribution of Responsible Innovation in Health to Sustainable Development Goals. *Sustainability.* 2018;10(11):4015.
68. Cheah J, Amran A, Yahya S. Internal oriented resources and social enterprises' performance: How can social enterprises help themselves before helping others? *J Clean Prod.* 2019;211:607-19.
69. Mahfuz Ashraf M, Razzaque MA, Liaw ST, Ray PK, Hasan MR. Social business as an entrepreneurship model in emerging economy: Systematic review and case study. *Manage Decis.* 2019;57(5):1145-61.
70. Jeong BG, Compion S. Characteristics of women's leadership in African social enterprises: The Heartfelt Project, Bright Kids Uganda and Chikumbuso. *Emerald Emergi Mark Case Stud.* 2021;11(2):1-22.
71. Van Rensburg J, Veldsman A, Jenkins M. From technologists to social enterprise developers: Our journey as 'ICT for development' practitioners in Southern Africa. *Inform Technol Dev.* 2008;14(1):76-89.
72. Baskaran S, Mehta K. What is innovation anyway? Youth perspectives from resource-constrained environments. *Technovation.* 2016;52:4-17.
73. Fowler EAR, Coffey BS, Dixon-Fowler HR. Transforming Good Intentions into Social Impact: A Case on the Creation and Evolution of a Social Enterprise. *J Bus Ethics.* 2019;159(3):665-78.
74. Truong A, Barraket J. Engaging workers in resource-poor environments: the case of social enterprise in Vietnam. *Int J Hum Resour Man.* 2018;29(20):2949-70.
75. Kantabutra S. Sustainable leadership in a Thai healthcare services provider. *Int J Health Care Q.* 2011;24(1):67-80.
76. Thorgren S, Omorede A. Passionate leaders in social entrepreneurship: Exploring an African context. *Bus Soc.* 2018;57(3):481-524.
77. Gupta P, Srivastava R. Research on Social Enterprises from an Emerging Economy—Systematic Literature Review and Future Research Directions. *J Soc Entrep.* 2021;15(2):458-93.
78. Morrison C, Ramsey E, Bond D. The role of social entrepreneurs in developing community resilience in remote areas. *J Enterp Communities.* 2017;11(1):95-112.

79. Ketprapakorn N, Kantabutra S. Sustainable Social Enterprise Model: Relationships and Consequences. *Sustainability*. 2019;11(14):3772.
80. Doh S. Social Entrepreneurship and Regional Economic Development: The Case of Social Enterprise in South Korea. *Sustainability*. 2020;12(21):8843.
81. Staicu D. Characteristics of textile and clothing sector social entrepreneurs in the transition to the circular economy. *Ind Textila*. 2021;72(1):81-8.
82. Dezi L, Hysa X, Calabrese M, Mercuri F. Open Total Quality Management in the Circular Economy age: a social enterprise perspective through the case of Patagonia. *Total Qual Manag Bus*. 2022:1-15. doi: 10.1080/14783363.2022.2051698
83. Baskaran A, Chandran V, Ng BK. Inclusive Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Sustainable Growth: Role of Business Incubators, Academia and Social Enterprises in Asia. *Sci Technol Soc*. 2019;24(3):385-400.
84. Powell J. The university role in the innovative leadership of small to medium sized enterprises: Towards “universities for a modern renaissance”(UMR). *Int J Entrep Behav Res*. 2012;18(4):396-416.
85. Moizer J, Tracey P. Strategy making in social enterprise: The role of resource allocation and its effects on organizational sustainability. *Syst Res Behav Sci*. 2010;27(3):252-66.
86. Ramani SV, SadreGhazi S, Gupta S. Catalysing innovation for social impact: The role of social enterprises in the Indian sanitation sector. *Technol Forecast Soc*. 2017;121:216-27.
87. Williams A, Fossey E, Harvey C. Social firms: Sustainable employment for people with mental illness. *Work*. 2012;43(1):53-62.
88. Smith V, Changoor A, McDonald C, Barash D, Olayo B, Adudans S, et al. A Comprehensive Approach to Medical Oxygen Ecosystem Building: An Implementation Case Study in Kenya, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. Available from: [https://www.ghspjournal.org/content/10/6/e2100781?utm_source=TrendMD&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=Global Health%253A Science and Practice TrendMD 0](https://www.ghspjournal.org/content/10/6/e2100781?utm_source=TrendMD&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=Global%253A%20Science%20and%20Practice%20TrendMD%20). Accessed 2024 Jul 31.
89. Lam SS, Zhang W, Ang AX, Jacob GH. Reciprocity Between Financial and Social Performance in Microfinance Institutions. *Public Perform Manag*. 2020;43(1):206-31.
90. Stecker MJ. Awash in a sea of confusion: Benefit corporations, social enterprise, and the fear of “greenwashing”. *J Econ Issues*. 2016;50(2):373-81.
91. Mu H, Lee Y. Greenwashing in Corporate Social Responsibility: A Dual-Faceted Analysis of Its Impact on Employee Trust and Identification. *Sustainability*. 2023;15(22):15693.
92. da Silva RO, de Oliveira EL, da Silva LM, da Silva Simões C, Júnior JCL, Júnior LHC, et al. The practice of greenwashing in the context of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. *Rev Gest Secr*. 2024;15(5):e3787.

93. Munn Z, Stern C, Aromataris E, Lockwood C, Jordan Z. What kind of systematic review should I conduct? A proposed typology and guidance for systematic reviewers in the medical and health sciences. *BMC Med Res Methodol.* 2018;18(5):1-9.

How to cite this article:

Ghosh S, Ray S, Nair R, Nath S, Bishu R. Exploring the Sustainability of Social Enterprises: A Scoping Review. *J Sustain Res.* 2024;6(3):e240044. <https://doi.org/10.20900/jsr20240044>