

Mapping Corporate Social Responsibility in Family Firms: A Bibliometric Analysis (1990–2024)

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Abstract: This bibliometric analysis investigates the evolution and current state of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) research within family enterprises. Despite the growing body of literature, gaps remain in understanding how contextual differences shape CSR in family firms, particularly in underrepresented regions such as Asia and Africa. Moreover, limited attention has been given to emerging factors like technological innovation and their implications for CSR implementation. To address these gaps, this study systematically analyzes 275 articles published between 1990 and 2024 in the Scopus database, aiming to answer three key research questions: (1) How has the scholarly discourse on CSR in family businesses evolved over time? (2) What are the dominant theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches in this field? (3) What are the primary collaboration networks and intellectual structures shaping this research domain? For the first research question, the analysis shows that publications on CSR in family businesses have increased substantially over time, with influential works such as Dyer and Whetten (2006) and Campopiano and De Massis (2015) laying the foundation of the field. Much of the early discourse centered on socioemotional wealth (SEW), while more recent studies have expanded to themes of sustainability, legitimacy, and regional contexts. However, contributions from underrepresented regions such as Asia and Africa remain limited. With regard to the second research question, the findings indicate that SEW and stakeholder theory are the dominant theoretical frameworks, reflecting the balance between financial and non-financial goals in family firms. Quantitative methods remain the primary research approach, often supported by bibliometric and secondary data analyses. For the third research question, the analysis highlights well-established collaboration networks concentrated in Europe and North America, particularly among scholars such as De Massis, Campopiano, and García-Sánchez. These networks have contributed significantly to the intellectual structure of the field, but cross-regional collaboration remains weak. Limited contributions from developing economies underline the need to broaden participation to capture more diverse perspectives. These findings offer useful perspectives for scholars and practitioners by identifying research gaps and future directions, particularly regarding technology innovation's impact on CSR and varied socio-cultural contexts of family enterprises.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, Family business, Sustainability, Bibliometric analysis

1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become increasingly integral to business operations in today's interconnected world. As companies face growing accountability to their stakeholders, CSR has evolved into a framework that showcases a company's dedication to ethical practices, environmental sustainability, and social well-being (Campopiano and De Massis, 2015). Within this broader discourse, the socioemotional wealth (SEW) perspective has emerged as a key theoretical lens to explain how family business characteristics influence CSR practices. Studies have shown that family firms' desire to preserve their SEW leads to greater emphasis on local community engagement and long-term stakeholder relationships (Rodríguez-Ariza et al., 2017; García-Sánchez et al., 2021). However, this relationship is not uniform across all contexts. Factors such as firm size, generation in control, and environmental conditions moderate the relationship between family involvement and CSR engagement (Cuadrado-Ballesteros, Rodríguez-Ariza and García-Sánchez, 2015). Family businesses often have a profound emotional connection to the communities they serve. These firms are frequently handed down through generations, focusing not only on financial success but also on upholding a reputation of social responsibility and goodwill (Hernández-Perlines and Cisneros, 2018). These non-financial considerations influence CSR decisions, often prioritizing initiatives that enhance community well-being and strengthen the family's social reputation (García-Sánchez et al., 2021).

Although research on CSR in family firms has expanded, important gaps remain in understanding how these businesses implement and sustain CSR efforts over time (Mariani, Al-Sultan and De Massis, 2023). Family firms

often struggle to balance business goals with ethical responsibilities, particularly during periods of financial stress or leadership transition (López-González, Martínez-Ferrero and García-Meca, 2019). Changes in leadership—especially when non-family CEOs are appointed—can significantly shift CSR priorities (Campopiano et al., 2019; Cordeiro, Profumo and Tutore, 2020). These firms tend to exhibit distinctive CSR behaviors due to their dual role as both business enterprises and family institutions. Studies have shown that family involvement influences CSR through various mechanisms. For example, family ownership can shape decision-making and guide how resources are allocated to CSR initiatives (López-González, Martínez-Ferrero and García-Meca, 2019), while family management plays a key role in the implementation and oversight of CSR programs (Cordeiro, Profumo and Tutore, 2020).

While family firms are recognized for their CSR efforts, the extent and methods of implementation vary widely. Firms in developing economies might allocate fewer resources to CSR, focusing more on survival and growth (Hernández-Perlines and Ibarra Cisneros, 2017), whereas those in developed countries may engage in more comprehensive CSR programs due to greater financial and human resources (García-Sánchez, Rodríguez-Ariza and Granada-Abarzuza, 2021). These variations underscore the complexity of CSR within family firms, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding that considers geographical, cultural, and economic contexts (Cordeiro, Galeazzo and Shaw, 2023).

Despite these advances, the literature remains fragmented across multiple perspectives, theories, and contexts, making it difficult to consolidate knowledge and trace the field's evolution. Moreover, as the volume of studies has grown rapidly in recent decades, a systematic mapping is now necessary to organize existing insights, identify patterns, and guide future research more effectively. Using a bibliometric approach, this study aims to deepen the understanding of CSR in family businesses and provide a roadmap for future research. By identifying gaps in the literature and suggesting areas for further exploration, the research seeks to advance the discourse on CSR in family firms and support the development of more effective strategies that align business objectives with societal expectations (García-Sánchez, Rodríguez-Ariza and Granada-Abarzuza, 2021). Ultimately, the study aspires to bridge the gap between theory and practice by offering actionable insights that help family firms enhance their CSR efforts while preserving their distinctive identity and values.

This research contributes to the literature in several keyways. First, it presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 275 articles on CSR in family firms published between 1990 and 2024. Second, it identifies significant trends in theoretical development and methodological approaches, illustrating the evolution of CSR integration within family business research. Third, it maps the intellectual landscape through co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrences, and citation patterns, revealing both established topics and emerging areas of interest (Campopiano et al., 2019). Additionally, the study explores how family firms implement CSR across diverse contexts, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities involved in aligning family values with social responsibilities (Martínez-Ferrero et al., 2018).

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed bibliometric analysis to explore patterns in publishing, research output, themes, and collaborations related to CSR in family firms. Bibliometric analysis serves as a powerful tool to identify research trends within global, national, or institutional contexts and to position individual researchers within their professional communities (Dixit, Singh and Soni, 2023; Li et al., 2023). This approach provides a comprehensive overview of contributions from authors, countries, organizations, and their collaborations to the global body of knowledge. Additionally, the study examined the conceptual structures (e.g., co-occurrence of authors and keywords, thematic evolution), intellectual structures (e.g., co-citation networks), and social structures (e.g., collaboration networks) within the data.

2.2 Database Selection and Search Queries

The Scopus database was selected for this study due to its comprehensive indexing of peer-reviewed literature and its suitability for bibliometric analysis. A search was conducted on August 18, 2024, using the following query string: `TITLE-ABS-KEY("corporate social responsibility" OR "CSR" OR "social responsibility") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY("family firm" OR "family business" OR "family-owned company" OR "family-owned business" OR "family-owned firm")`. The search was limited to documents published between 1990 and 2024 to capture the development of the topic over time. The initial search yielded 378 documents. To refine the dataset, inclusion criteria were applied: only journal articles and reviews published in English were retained, reducing the dataset to 300 documents. A subsequent manual screening of titles and abstracts was performed to exclude documents

not directly related to CSR in the context of family businesses. This included removing articles that only mentioned relevant terms in passing or were unrelated to the study's objectives. After applying these exclusion criteria, a total of 275 articles were selected for bibliometric analysis.

2.3 Data Analysis

The selected 275 documents were exported as a CSV file from the Scopus database and analyzed using the Biblioshiny application in RStudio. Biblioshiny was chosen for its robust bibliometric analysis capabilities, which enable a detailed examination of publication and citation patterns within the field of CSR in family firms. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the research landscape, an integrated analysis was conducted encompassing conceptual, intellectual, and social dimensions.

The conceptual analysis focused on co-occurrences of authors and keywords, as well as the evolution of key topics over time. This approach helped identify prominent authors and frequently used terms, offering insights into dominant research themes and emerging trends. The method aligns with previous studies that have used similar techniques to map conceptual structures (Fagerberg, Fosaas and Sapprasert, 2012; Xi et al., 2015). In addition, the intellectual analysis employed co-citation network analysis to examine the intellectual foundations of the literature. Drawing from the work of earlier scholars (Randhawa, Wilden and Hohberger, 2016), this analysis revealed the core knowledge base of the field, highlighting seminal works and their interconnections. It helped uncover how influential contributions have shaped the theoretical development of CSR in family firms. Meanwhile, the social analysis involved cooperation network analysis to explore patterns of collaboration among scholars and institutions. Following methodologies used by previous studies (López-Fernández, Serrano-Bedia and Pérez-Pérez, 2016; Kraus et al., 2020), this analysis offered insights into the social dynamics of knowledge production and dissemination. It identified key research networks and collaborative relationships that have significantly advanced CSR research in family business contexts. This approach emphasizes the importance of social interactions in shaping the development of academic fields, consistent with established practices in bibliometric research.

3. Results

3.1 Global Trend of Publications

Figure 1 illustrates the evolution of the number of publications and citations between 1990 and 2024. The blue bar shows the number of publications generated each year, while the orange line depicts the average citations per publication per year. In general, the number of publications fluctuates but tends to increase over time. Since 1990, there has been a significant increase in the number of publications, albeit with varying intensity. From 1990 to 2009, the number of publications remained relatively low with some fluctuations. A significant increase was seen in 2006, where the average citations per publication jumped to 40.26 even though there was only one publication in that year. This shows that publications in this early phase have a substantial impact on the academic community.

The period between 2010 and 2024 represents a phase of significant expansion, peaking in 2023 when the number of publications reached its highest level. During this period, the general trend showed an increase in the number of publications, although there was an occasional decline, as seen in 2022 compared to 2021, and a decline again in 2024. Overall, this trend reflects a growing interest and an increasing volume of research in the field of CSR in family businesses.

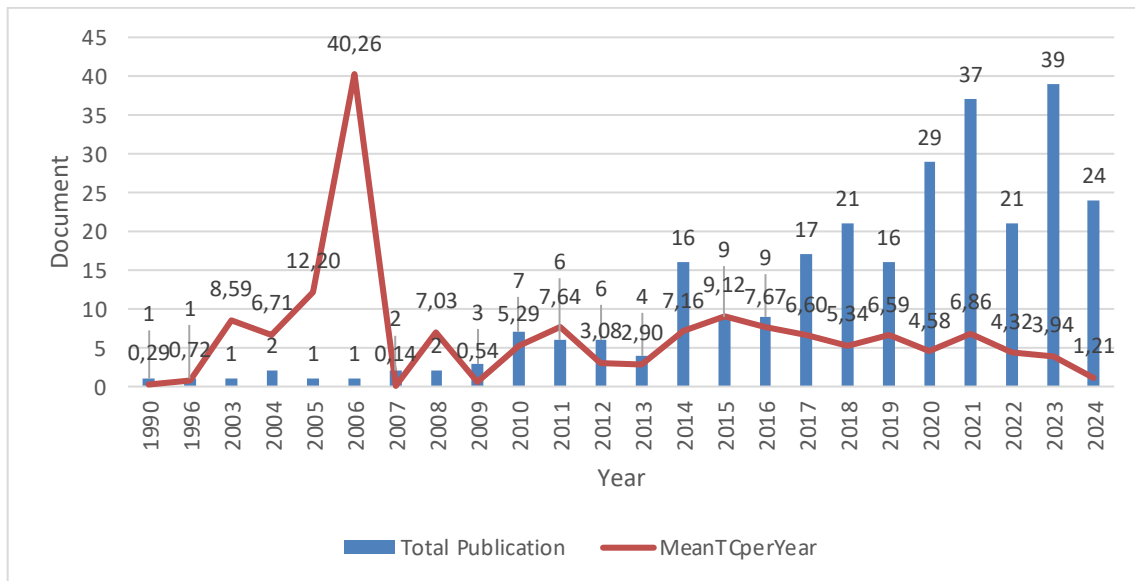


Figure 1: Total publication per year and mean total citation per year

It is important to note that while the number of publications in the field of CSR in family businesses has steadily increased, the average citations per year have shown a decline since peaking in 2006. This trend may reflect the expanding breadth of the research field, where newer publications have not yet achieved the same citation impact as earlier, more influential works. Although the data indicates a consistent rise in publication volume over time, it is accompanied by intermittent fluctuations in citation impact. A deeper understanding of the factors contributing to this pattern—such as the influence of global events like the COVID-19 pandemic—warrants further investigation. In summary, this analysis underscores that while research output in CSR and family business has grown, the influence of individual publications has varied, with earlier studies continuing to exert significant impact on the field.

Table 1 presents the breakdown of the 275 publications included in this research dataset. The vast majority—266 documents, or 96.73%—are academic articles, while reviews account for only 9 documents, representing 3.27% of the total. This indicates that academic articles are the predominant form of scholarly output in the field, reflecting a strong emphasis on original research. No other types of publications were identified in the dataset, confirming that articles and reviews are the two primary categories contributing to the literature on CSR in family businesses.

Table 1: Document type

Document Type	Total Publication (N=275)	Percentage (%)
Article	266	96.73
Reviews	9	3.27

3.2 Most Relevant Journals

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of articles on CSR in family businesses across various academic journals. The *Journal of Business Ethics* emerges as the most prominent source, contributing 26 articles and establishing itself as a leading journal in the field. This is followed by *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, which published 23 articles, highlighting the growing importance of sustainability issues in the context of CSR and family businesses. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* also plays a significant role, with 12 published articles that underscore the intersection of CSR and environmental concerns in family firms. The *Journal of Family Business Management* contributed 10 articles, positioning itself as a key platform for scholarly dialogue on this topic.

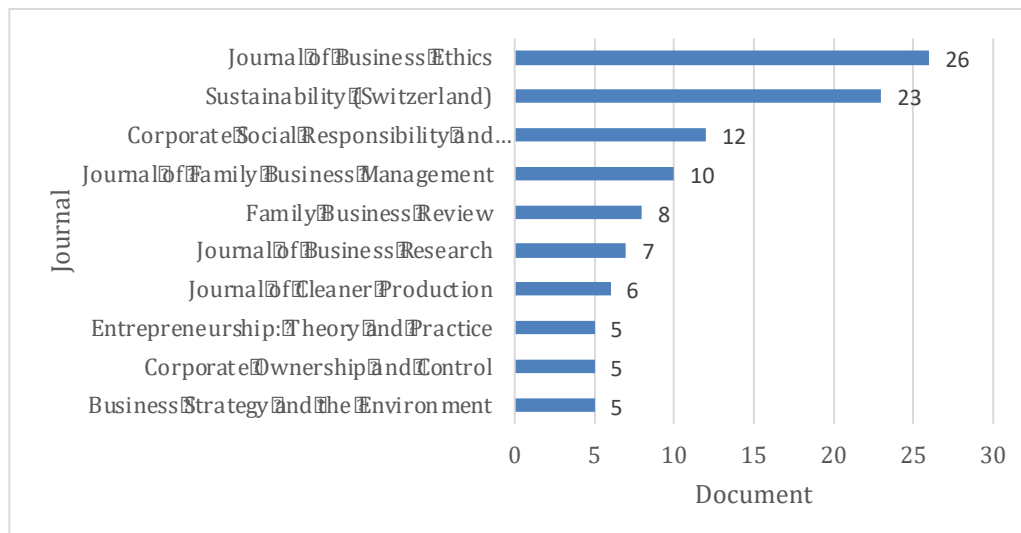


Figure 2: Most relevant journals

Other notable journals include *Family Business Review*, *Journal of Business Research*, and *Journal of Cleaner Production*, each of which has published several relevant articles that further enrich the literature. Collectively, these journals serve as primary outlets for research in CSR and family business, reflecting increasing academic interest and engagement in this field. The variety of journals also demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of CSR research, with perspectives drawn from ethics, sustainability, business strategy, and family enterprise studies.

3.3 Prominent Affiliations

To investigate prominent affiliations and academic contributions related to CSR in family businesses, the study highlighted universities and research centers where research groups operate on this topic. However, the number of publications is not the only measure to assess the impact of an affiliate in this research domain. Additional factors, such as the quality of the research and the reputation of the authors, also have a significant influence. Based on the data shown in Figure 3, the University of Salamanca emerged as a major contributor with 13 publications related to CSR in family businesses. This suggests that the University of Salamanca may place a high priority on research in this area, making it one of the leading universities in the discipline. In addition, Universidad de Granada and the University of Turin are also important contributors with ten publications each. Other universities that are also significant in their contributions include Universidad de Málaga and Universidade de Vigo, with eight and seven publications, respectively. Universities such as Johannes Kepler University Linz, University of Calabria, University of Manitoba, University of Otago, and University of Ottawa each contributed six publications on this topic. Although the number of publications provides an idea of affiliate productivity, for a more comprehensive understanding of intellectual influence, the number of citations received from other academic works can be a more appropriate indicator.

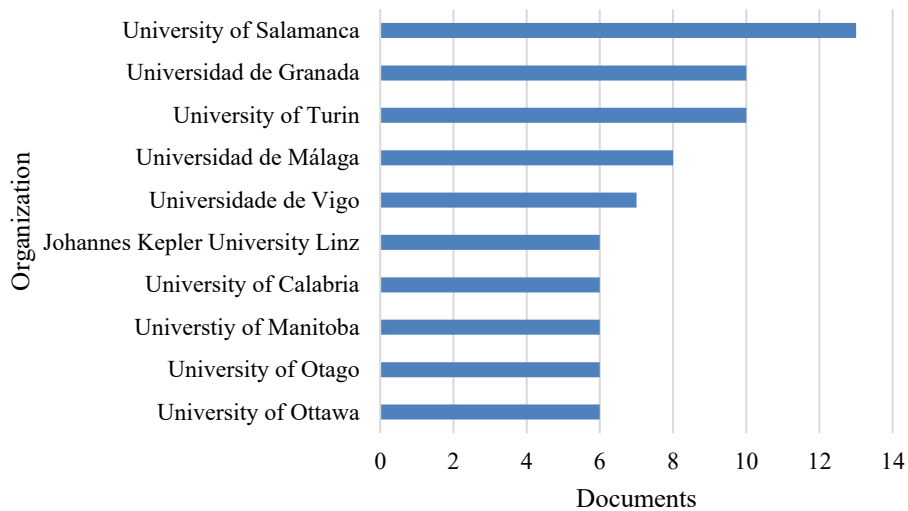


Figure 3: Most productive organizations

3.4 Author's Production Over Time

Table 2 presents data on total citations (TC) and total publications (Freq) for each author, offering detailed insights into individual impact of contributors in the field of CSR in family businesses. The most productive and highly cited author is De Massis A, with six publications that have received a total of 467 citations. García-Sánchez I-M and Rodríguez-Ariza L, each with six publications and more than 350 citations. Similarly, Martínez-Ferrero J (six publications, 338 citations) and Campopiano G (four publications, 396 citations) demonstrate significant impact through both volume and recognition.

Other notable contributors include Block J (three publications, 304 citations) and Cuadrado-Ballesteros B (three publications, 273 citations). Cordeiro JJ, with four publications and 183 citations, and García-Meca E (three publications, 120 citations) also hold meaningful positions in the scholarly network, while Hernández-Perlines F completes the top ten with 101 citations from three publications.

The variation in total citations and publication frequency indicates different pathways to influence: some authors achieve recognition through a high number of consistently cited works, while others gain visibility from fewer but highly impactful publications. This diversity underscores the evolving nature of academic contributions in CSR and family business studies.

Table 2: Author production over time

Rank	Author	Freq.	TC
1	De Massis A	6	467
2	García-Sánchez I-M	6	405
3	Campopiano G	4	396
4	Rodríguez-Ariza L	6	365
5	Martínez-Ferrero J	6	338
6	Block J	3	304
7	Cuadrado-Ballesteros B	3	273
8	Cordeiro JJ	4	183
9	García-Meca E	3	120
10	Hernández-Perlines F	3	101

3.5 Most Influential Publications

Table 3 identifies the most influential publications based on total citations (TC) and average citations per year (TCpY), which reflect the enduring and recent impact of each work. The most cited article is Dyer and Whetten (2006), with 777 citations and a TCpY of 40.9, marking it as a foundational study in the field. Campopiano and

De Massis (2015) follow with 315 citations and a TCpY of 31.5, underscoring its continuing relevance almost a decade after publication. More recently, Mariani, Al-Sultan and De Massis (2023) have emerged with 66 citations and an impressive TCpY of 33.0, highlighting its rapid uptake and significance in shaping current research agendas.

Other influential works include Nekhili et al. (2017) with 211 citations (TCpY 26.4) and Block and Wagner (2014) with 209 citations, which provide evidence of the impact of family ownership on CSR dimensions. Emerging contributions such as Stock et al. (2024), though newer with 14 citations, demonstrate strong potential with a TCpY of 14.0, suggesting likely future influence. Earlier but still relevant publications, including Niehm, Swinney and Miller (2008) (230 citations), Déniz and Suárez (2005) (246 citations), and Uhlaner, van Goor-Balk and Masurel (2004) (194 citations), remain important reference points for ongoing debates. Kumala and Siregar (2021) represent a growing regional perspective, particularly in the Indonesian context, with 40 citations and a TCpY of 10.0.

Table 3: Most influential publications

Rank	Title	Author(s), Year	TC	TCpY
1	Family firms and social responsibility: Preliminary evidence from the S & P 500	(Dyer and Whetten, 2006)	777	40.9
2	Corporate social responsibility reporting: A content analysis in family and non-family firms	(Campopiano and De Massis, 2015)	315	31.5
3	Corporate social responsibility in family firms: A systematic literature review	(Mariani, Al-Sultan and De Massis, 2023)	66	33.0
4	Corporate social responsibility disclosure and market value: Family versus nonfamily firms	(Nekhili et al., 2017)	211	26.4
5	The effect of family ownership on different dimensions of corporate social responsibility: Evidence from large US firms	(Block and Wagner, 2014)	209	19.0
6	Corporate social responsibility in family firms: Status and future directions of a research field	(Stock et al., 2024)	14	14.0
7	Community social responsibility and its consequences for family business performance	(Niehm, Swinney and Miller, 2008)	230	13.5
8	Corporate social responsibility and family business in Spain	(Déniz and Suárez, 2005)	246	12.3
9	Corporate social responsibility, family ownership and earnings management: The case of Indonesia	(Kumala and Siregar, 2021)	40	10.0
10	Family business and corporate social responsibility in a sample of Dutch firms	(Uhlaner, van Goor-Balk and Masurel, 2004)	194	9.2

3.6 Most Productive Countries

Table 4 highlights international contributions to CSR research in family businesses. The United States and China lead with 96 publications each, reflecting their strong academic engagement in this area. Spain closely follows with 95 publications, while Italy contributes 68, indicating strong interest in Europe. Germany (35), the United Kingdom (34), and France (32) also show notable involvement. In Asia, India (21), Malaysia (21), and Pakistan (20) demonstrate growing interest. These figures illustrate a broad global commitment to advancing research on CSR in family businesses.

Table 4: Most productive countries

Region	Frequency	Region	Frequency	Region	Frequency
China	96	Türkiye	12	Iran	2
USA	96	Portugal	10	Japan	2
Spain	95	New Zealand	9	Kazakhstan	2
Italy	68	Saudi Arabia	7	Lebanon	2
Germany	35	Slovakia	6	Norway	2
UK	34	Switzerland	6	Poland	2

Region	Frequency	Region	Frequency	Region	Frequency
France	32	Cyprus	5	Venezuela	2
Canada	30	Morocco	5	Bulgaria	1
India	21	United Arab Emirates	5	Denmark	1
Malaysia	21	Belgium	4	Ethiopia	1
Pakistan	20	Mexico	4	Jordan	1
Czech Republic	17	Sweden	4	Thailand	1
Austria	16	Egypt	3	Uzbekistan	1
Indonesia	16	Ghana	3	Yemen	1
Netherlands	16	Romania	3		
Australia	13	Tunisia	3		
Republic of Korea	12	Brazil	2		

3.7 Collaboration Network

Figure 4 presents a collaboration network map of authors publishing on CSR in family enterprises. Each node represents an author, with its size reflecting productivity (number of publications), while links indicate co-authorship relationships and their thickness shows the strength of collaboration. Different colors denote clusters of researchers who collaborate more frequently within their group. The most central and influential cluster is led by Martínez-Ferrero J, García-Meca E, and López-González E, forming a strong European research core that shapes much of the discourse in CSR and family business studies. Other notable groups include Zheng M and Ren G (China), Lamb NH and Butler FC (North America), and De Massis A and Cossin D (Europe), the latter reflecting foundational but less interconnected contributions. Smaller but active collaborations are also visible, such as Fait M and Cavallo F (Italy), Mitter C and Duller C (Austria), Borralho J and Choban de Sousa Paiva I (Portugal), as well as Brahmana RK and Asrihapsari A (Asia), and Saeed A and Awais MN (Middle East/South Asia).

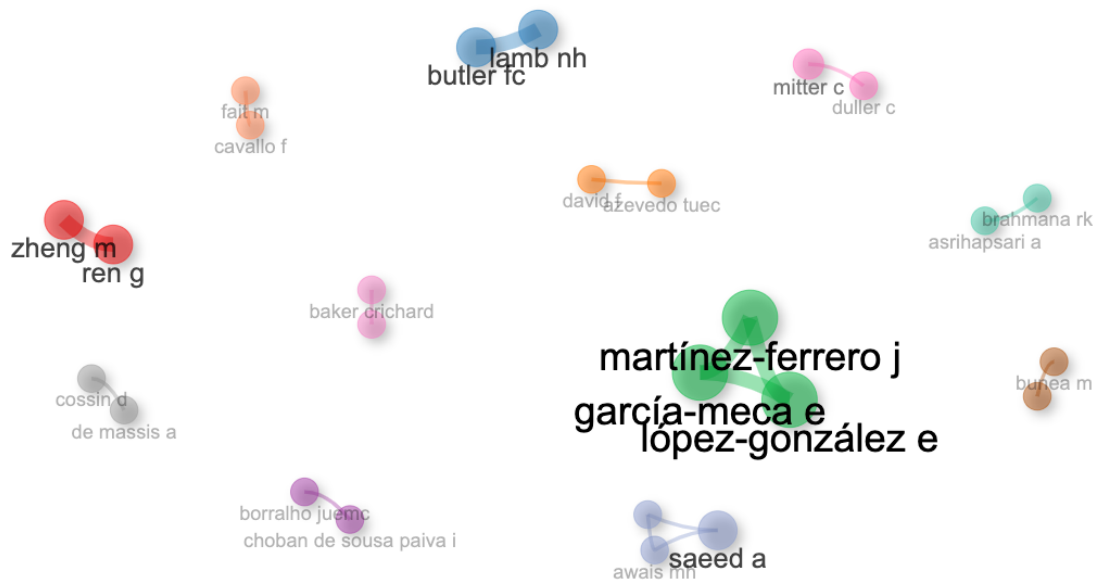


Figure 4: Collaboration by authors

3.8 Co-Occurrence Networks

A co-occurrence network illustrates how concepts are linked, with each node representing a concept and the lines between nodes indicating the frequency of their association within a specific context. As shown in Figure 5, three central nodes play a key role in connecting the network: corporate social responsibility (CSR), family firms, and family ownership. CSR acts as a major hub, facilitating the flow of information between smaller nodes such as firm performance, corporate governance, stakeholders, board of directors, sustainability, and

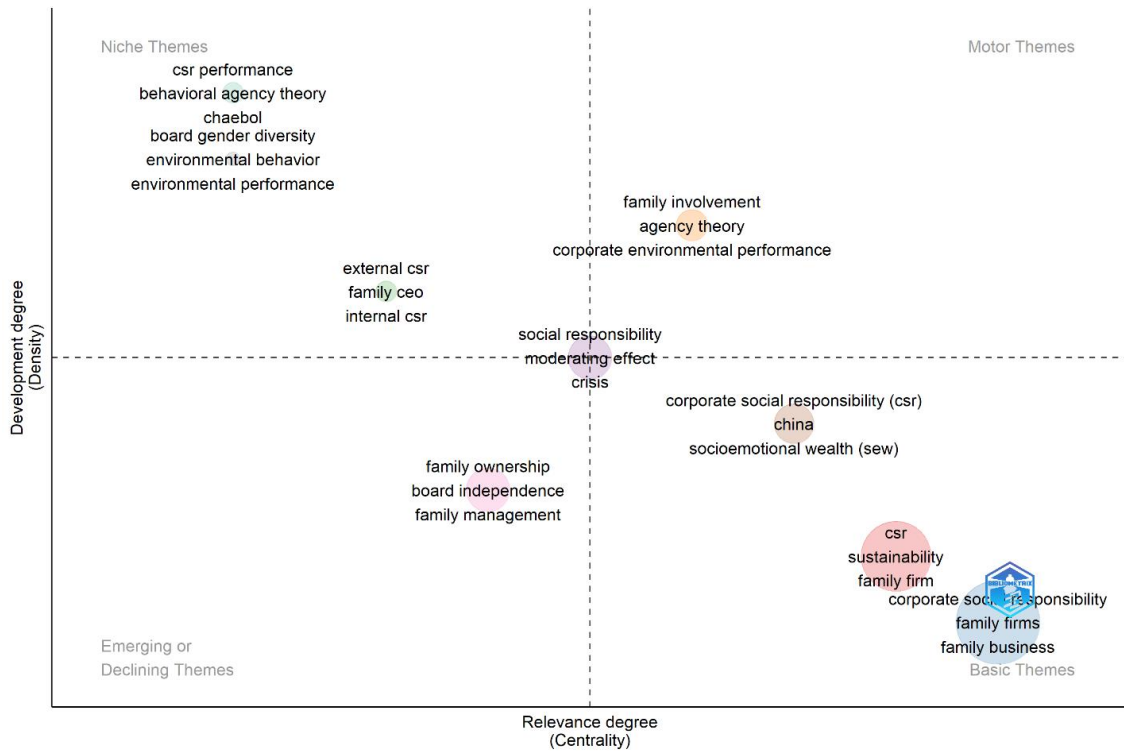


Figure 6: Thematic map

3.10 Conceptual Structure Map

Figure 7 illustrates the conceptual structure of CSR in family business research, derived from Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA). This two-dimensional bibliometric map visualizes relationships between key terms, where the proximity of terms indicates their similarity. The goal is to uncover patterns and categorize terms based on shared characteristics. Along the horizontal axis (Dimension 1), the map distinguishes between family-centered CSR themes on the right— most notably the separation between internal CSR (e.g., employee welfare, human resource practices, and organizational culture) and external CSR (e.g., community engagement, philanthropy, and stakeholder relations) —and broader corporate governance, sustainability, and firm performance issues on the left, including entrepreneurship, disclosure, and crisis management. This separation reflects common theoretical perspectives: internal CSR highlights family firms’ responsibility toward employees and organizational culture, often tied to socioemotional wealth preservation, while external CSR emphasizes the pursuit of legitimacy and reputation among broader stakeholders, aligning with stakeholder theory. The vertical axis (Dimension 2) separates theoretical and methodological approaches at the bottom, such as agency theory, signaling theory, board independence, gender diversity, and content analysis, from more practical and strategic outcomes at the top, such as firm value, entrepreneurship, succession, innovation, COVID-19, and sustainable development. The triangular clustering pattern highlights three conceptual poles: family CSR orientation (right), theoretical-methodological foundations (bottom-left), and performance and innovation outcomes (top-left).



Figure 7: Conceptual structure map

4. Discussion

The intersection of CSR and family business research has developed considerably over the past three decades. Early research predominantly sought to differentiate CSR practices in family firms from those in non-family enterprises (Cruz et al., 2014). Over time, scholars have increasingly recognized that family firms’ distinctive characteristics—such as long-term orientation, community embeddedness, and concern for SEW—fundamentally shape their CSR strategies. This growing convergence has led to a richer, more nuanced understanding of CSR within the unique context of family enterprises. Stakeholder theory offers valuable insight into how family firms manage their relationships, shaped not only by financial goals but also by the pursuit of SEW. Unlike non-family firms, family businesses often view stakeholder engagement through the lens of emotional attachment and legacy preservation. The concept of stakeholder salience, as discussed by Mitchell et al. (2011), highlights how family firms assign priority to certain stakeholders based on non-economic considerations. As a result, family firms often build stronger, more loyal stakeholder relationships through proactive engagement aimed at preserving both financial and emotional capital (Dou, Zhang and Su, 2014; Signori and Fassin, 2023).

The thematic evolution identified in this study underscores CSR’s central role in family business research, particularly in relation to SEW and firm performance. SEW continues to serve as a critical explanatory lens, as family firms often prioritize long-term relational and reputational capital over short-term financial outcomes (García-Sánchez, Rodríguez-Ariza and Granada-Abarzuza, 2021). The relationship between SEW and financial performance in family firms is marked by inherent tensions. While SEW emphasizes non-financial goals such as family control, legacy preservation, and emotional well-being, these priorities can sometimes conflict with financial objectives. Family firms may accept suboptimal performance if it helps maintain family cohesion, reflecting unique thresholds of satisfaction influenced by SEW (DeTienne and Chirico, 2013). However, the impact of SEW on financial outcomes is not uniform. Naldi et al. (2013) argue that the alignment between SEW priorities and external conditions—such as market dynamics—determines whether SEW enhances or hinders financial performance. This suggests that the SEW-performance relationship is highly context-dependent.

A notable observation from this analysis is the geographic variation in CSR practices. Firms in developed economies such as Spain and the United States often exhibit more structured and strategic CSR approaches, including environmental sustainability and stakeholder engagement. In contrast, family firms in developing regions may adopt CSR primarily as a means of securing legitimacy or ensuring survival, given limited resources

and regulatory frameworks (e.g., Hernández-Perlines, Ariza-Montes and Araya-Castillo, 2020). This underscores the significance of local institutional and economic contexts in shaping how CSR is conceptualized and implemented. Government regulation plays a pivotal role in shaping CSR practices, particularly in developing economies where voluntary self-regulation often proves insufficient. This shift from self-regulation to structured oversight ensures that CSR initiatives go beyond symbolic actions and contribute meaningfully to societal welfare. In regions with emerging institutional structures, government intervention is crucial to fostering accountability and embedding CSR into core business strategies.

Collaboration networks within the literature reveal the formation of intellectual hubs around leading scholars and institutions. Highly cited authors, often affiliated with research centers such as the University of Salamanca, play a pivotal role in shaping the field's development, particularly on topics related to governance and SEW. Despite these robust intra-regional collaborations, the field still lacks sufficient cross-regional and interdisciplinary engagement. Research from underrepresented regions—such as Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia—remains sparse, limiting the generalizability of current frameworks. Broader inclusion of these perspectives would enhance the theoretical and practical relevance of CSR research in family business contexts globally. Citation bias can occur when certain authors, institutions, or geographic regions receive disproportionate attention due to greater visibility, access to high-impact journals, or dominant publication languages—primarily English. This may marginalize equally valuable research from developing countries or non-English-speaking contexts. As a result, the global understanding of CSR in family firms may be skewed toward Western contexts, reinforcing existing academic hierarchies and overlooking locally relevant insights.

Beyond established themes, emerging areas such as digital transformation, ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) reporting, and intergenerational dynamics warrant closer attention. Younger generations in family firms may champion more progressive CSR agendas, especially those linked to sustainability, technological innovation, and social equity. However, generational shifts can also produce tension when values and priorities diverge across leadership cohorts. Succession planning is vital for ensuring the continuity and sustainability of family businesses, especially in maintaining CSR commitments across generations. Effective succession planning helps prevent operational disruptions that could threaten CSR efforts. Porfirio, Felício and Carrilho (2020) emphasize that well-prepared successors are more likely to uphold the family's legacy and associated CSR values, enabling a smoother transition aligned with both business operations and social responsibilities.

This study is subject to certain limitations that should be acknowledged. As the analysis relies on bibliometric data drawn primarily from Scopus and Web of Science, the coverage is inherently limited to journals indexed in these databases. Consequently, relevant contributions published in local outlets, non-English journals, or emerging regional platforms may be underrepresented. This database reliance may also reinforce citation bias, favoring authors and institutions with greater visibility in high-impact international journals. As a result, the findings provide a valuable but partial view of the global landscape of CSR in family business research, and future studies could address these gaps by incorporating additional sources and qualitative insights.

Finally, while most studies to date rely on bibliometric or quantitative methods, future research could benefit from incorporating qualitative approaches such as case studies, ethnography, or mixed-method designs. These methods can reveal the internal processes, conflicts, and motivations that drive CSR behavior in family firms—insights that bibliometric analysis alone cannot capture.

5. Conclusion

This study offers a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 275 articles on CSR in family firms published between 1990 and 2024. It highlights the field's evolution, with increasing focus on SEW, governance, and community impact. While research output has grown significantly, foundational studies from earlier periods remain the most cited, signaling a need for new theoretical contributions. The findings underscore the role of contextual factors—especially geographic and economic conditions—in shaping CSR strategies. Family firms in developed regions often emphasize environmental and social initiatives, whereas those in developing regions prioritize economic survival. This suggests that CSR practices are closely tied to socio-economic environments. Intellectual and social network analyses indicate a maturing field, yet reveal opportunities for further development—particularly in fostering international collaboration and studying underexplored regions. Future research should focus on diverse family firm contexts in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, where unique socio-cultural factors may shape CSR differently. The role of technological innovation in CSR, especially in relation to digital transformation, also warrants further exploration.

From an academic perspective, this study provides a systematic roadmap of the field, helping scholars identify influential themes, methodological trends, and underexplored areas for future investigation. It also highlights opportunities for cross-regional and interdisciplinary collaboration, offering a basis for more integrative theoretical advancements. For family firm managers, the findings underline the importance of aligning CSR strategies with both socio-economic contexts and evolving stakeholder expectations. Managers can draw on these insights to design CSR initiatives that not only strengthen firm reputation and stakeholder trust but also balance long-term sustainability with business performance.

Ethical statement: This research did not involve human participants and therefore did not require ethics approval.

AI statement: Artificial intelligence tools (ChatGPT) were used solely for language refinement and editing. No AI tool was used for data analysis, interpretation, or drawing scientific conclusions.

Competing interests: The authors declare that there are no competing interests associated with this publication.

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