

## MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

*Discipline: Commerce*

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Received: 05.03.2026 | Revised Submission: 20.06.2026 | Accepted: 10.07.2026 | Available Online: 31.07.2026

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### Abstract

Social entrepreneurship is thought to be the most pertinent remedy to the numerous social and environmental problems facing the world today by utilizing a sustainable economic model, particularly for developing countries with little assistance from the government (Fazal et al., 2023; Chavesta et al., 2025). It has emerged as a significant field of study, that helps to address social challenges by providing innovative and sustainable business models. The objective of social entrepreneurship is different from that of other models of entrepreneurship as this combines social benefits along with economic benefits (Suhashini et al., 2021). Bibliometric analysis techniques can be used for quantitatively analyzing written documents (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015b). The study uses bibliometric analysis to investigate the intellectual structure, research trends as well as the thematic evolution of social entrepreneurship (Khairy et al., 2025) during the last 16 years by using information taken from the Scopus database. Using the data, a comprehensive analysis of publication trends, most relevant authors, key journals, co-citation networks, and thematic clusters is conducted. Key research hotspots, developing theoretical frameworks, and significant cooperation networks are shown by the findings, which demonstrate the exponential rise of the literature in this field. The study also highlights new topics and areas for future investigation, which advances our knowledge of the field's evolution.

**Keywords:** Social entrepreneurship, social needs, bibliometric analysis, Scopus, sustainability, research trends.

### Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a vital component of a nation's economic growth, as it creates employment opportunities, contributes to a nation's national income, aids in rural development and industrialization, facilitates technological advancement, and promotes exports (Jayanathi, 2019). Social entrepreneurship is a mixture of social service and entrepreneurship that helps in serving society in a meaningful manner by focusing on the needs of a community (Suhashini et al., 2021). Over the last twenty

years, social entrepreneurship has drawn more recognition as a revolutionary strategy for tackling environmental, social, and economic issues. Social entrepreneurs create innovative solutions that contribute to sustainable development. Bibliometric analysis is a well-liked and exacting technique for looking through and evaluating vast amounts of scientific data (Donthu et al., 2021). It helps us to analyze the subtleties of a particular topic's evolution while illuminating new directions in that field (Donthu et al., 2021). The bibliometric methodology captures the application of quantitative techniques on bibliometric data ((Broadus, 1987; Pritchard, 1969; Donthu et al., 2021). Bibliometric studies offer important insights into the growth and future direction of a study field by examining publication trends, citation networks, and topic progression. By using this approach to social entrepreneurship, important concepts, significant writers, prestigious journals, and cooperative networks that have influenced the field can be evaluated empirically. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify publication trends and the growth trajectory of social entrepreneurship research.
2. Map influential authors, institutions, and journals contributing to the field.
3. Analyze co-citation networks and thematic clusters to understand knowledge structures.
4. Highlight emerging research themes and potential future directions.

This study adds to a better understanding of the development of the field and lays the groundwork for further research by methodically mapping the conceptual structure of social entrepreneurship. The results will be helpful to scholars, decision-makers, and practitioners who want to improve the sustainability and effect of social entrepreneurship projects.

## Social Entrepreneurship

For the last several years, social entrepreneurship went through considerable transformations and is now recognized as an important area within the domain of entrepreneurship and social innovation. Many studies emphasized the significance of social entrepreneurship in resolving environmental and social problems while generating sustainable benefits for communities. Social entrepreneurship as a combination of business as well as social service abilities which identifies social problems and has the capacity to innovate socially. These inventions are the precise and original solution to the societal difficulties and concerns that India is currently facing (Suhashini et al., 2021). A social entrepreneur seeks innovative applications which has potential to address community-based issues and they are also willing to take risk and put in necessary efforts to alter society for the better (Monsang, 2024). One of the foundational theoretical perspectives of social entrepreneurship was introduced by J. Gregory Dees (1998), who described social entrepreneurs as change agents who pursue innovative solutions to social problems while maintaining financial sustainability. According to this perspective, social entrepreneurship combines the mission-driven orientation of nonprofit organizations with the efficiency and innovation typically associated with traditional entrepreneurship. The main purpose of a social entrepreneurship is not to generate any

profit but to aid finance to their social impact. A social entrepreneurship should always balance between social impact and sustainability (Mthembu et al., 2019).

## Methodology

This study maps and assesses the body of knowledge in social entrepreneurship research published in the past 16 years using bibliometric analysis. It involves quantitative analysis of existing literature, which helps to identify research trends, influential authors and journals, citation patterns, thematic clusters and also future directions of the research theme. Research studies were identified and collected from Scopus database which is most widely used and more reliable databases for quantitative analyses (Talwar, 2021) for its multidisciplinary coverage and high-quality articles. The keyword used to search in Scopus database is “Social entrepreneurship”. The time frame selected is from 2010 to 2025 (16 years). Only articles published in English language with subject areas Business, Management and Accounting and Social sciences were taken under the study. The search key used to search relevant papers are as follows:

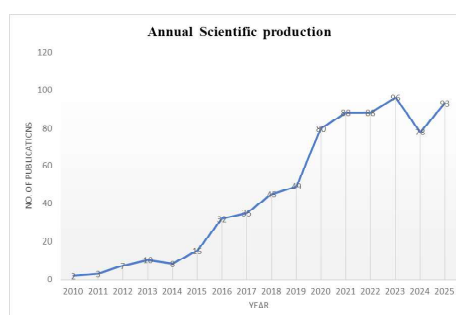
TITLE-ABS-KEY (“social entrepreneurship”) AND PUBYEAR > 2009 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , “Social Entrepreneurship” ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , “BUSI” ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , “SOCI” ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , “ar” ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , “English” ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SRCTYPE , “j” ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( PUBSTAGE , “final” ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( OA , “all” ) )

At initial stage 6224 articles were retrieved. After completing filtering process finally arrived at 729 articles for bibliometric study.

## Results and Discussions

### Annual Scientific Production

Fig 1: Annual Scientific production



Source: (Author's analysis)

The above figure (Figure 1) shows the annual scientific production of social entrepreneurship research for a period of 16 years (2010-2025). The graph accurately shows a gradual ascension in the number of publications from 2010 to 2025. For the first 5 years, the number of publications was

relatively low, which indicates a beginning stage of research development. From the year 2015 onwards, it shows a significant increase and reached at a peak of 96 in the year 2023. A minor slackening was seen in the year 2024 but again it was increased in the year 2025. Overall, research in the field of social entrepreneurship shows a strong upward trend along with an average annual growth rate of 29.17%.

### Most relevant authors

Table 1: Most relevant authors

| Sl. No. | Author               | Number of Publications |
|---------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1       | Muñoz, P.            | 8                      |
| 2       | Vázquez-Parra, J. C. | 7                      |
| 3       | Drencheva, A.        | 6                      |
| 4       | Cruz-Sandoval, M.    | 5                      |
| 5       | Agrawal, A.          | 4                      |
| 6       | Guerrero, M.         | 4                      |
| 7       | Kibler, E.           | 4                      |
| 8       | Kimmitt, J.          | 4                      |
| 9       | Kruse, P.            | 4                      |

*Source: (Author's analysis)*

Table 1 represents the most influential authors in the field of social entrepreneurship for the past 16 years. The results show that P. Muñoz is the most productive author in the field of social entrepreneurship, with the largest volume of publications, followed by J. C. Vázquez-Parra and A. Drencheva. Other notable contributors include M. Cruz Sandoval and A. Agrawal, who have also profoundly impacted the field of Social entrepreneurship.

### Most influential institutions

Table 2: Most influential institutions

| Sl. No. | Institution                  | Number of Publications |
|---------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1       | Universidad del Desarrollo   | 12                     |
| 2       | Loughborough University      | 9                      |
| 3       | University of Birmingham     | 9                      |
| 4       | Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam | 9                      |
| 5       | Durham University            | 8                      |
| 6       | Erasmus University Rotterdam | 8                      |

|    |                                       |   |
|----|---------------------------------------|---|
| 7  | Institute for the Future of Education | 8 |
| 8  | Copenhagen Business School            | 8 |
| 9  | Newcastle University                  | 7 |
| 10 | Stockholm School of Economics         | 7 |
| 11 | University of Essex                   | 7 |
| 12 | University of Valencia                | 7 |
| 13 | Wageningen University                 | 7 |
| 14 | Indiana University                    | 6 |
| 15 | University of Castilla-La Mancha      | 6 |
| 16 | University of Liverpool               | 6 |
| 17 | University of Surrey                  | 6 |

*Source: (Author's analysis)*

Universidad del Desarrollo is the most influential institution in the field of social entrepreneurship with an aggregate of 12 publications. This is followed by University of Birmingham, Loughborough University and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, with 9 publications each. Also the institutions like Durham University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and the Institute for the Future of Education contributed 8 each in the field of social entrepreneurship research. Overall, the results indicate that European universities and other global academic centers play a significant role in advancing social entrepreneurship research.

### **Most relevant sources**

Table 3: Most relevant sources

| Sl. No. | Source                                    | Number of Publications |
|---------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1       | Sustainability (Switzerland)              | 77                     |
| 2       | Journal of Social Entrepreneurship        | 20                     |
| 3       | Journal of Business Research              | 17                     |
| 4       | Journal of Business Ethics                | 16                     |
| 5       | Administrative Sciences                   | 15                     |
| 6       | Entrepreneurship and Regional Development | 12                     |
| 7       | Journal of Business Venturing             | 11                     |
| 8       | Journal of Business Venturing Insights    | 11                     |

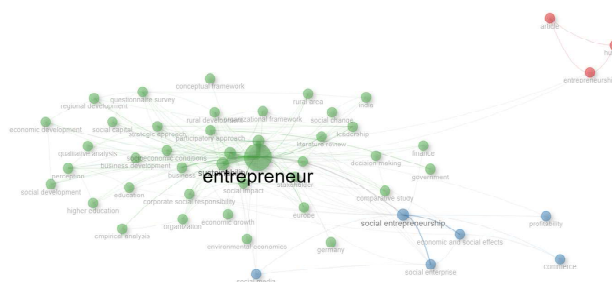
|    |                                                                 |    |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 9  | Voluntas                                                        | 11 |
| 10 | Cogent Business and Management                                  | 10 |
| 11 | International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research | 10 |
| 12 | Technological Forecasting and Social Change                     | 10 |

Source: (Author's analysis)

The above table shows most relevant sources of social entrepreneurship research. From the results it is identified that Sustainability (Switzerland) is the main source of publications related to social entrepreneurship with a publication of 77. This is followed by Journal of Social entrepreneurship with 20 publications and Journal of Business Research with about 17 publications. Journal of Business ethics, administrative sciences, Entrepreneurship and regional development are also leading contributions in the field of social entrepreneurship.

### Co-citation network

Fig 2: Co-Citation network



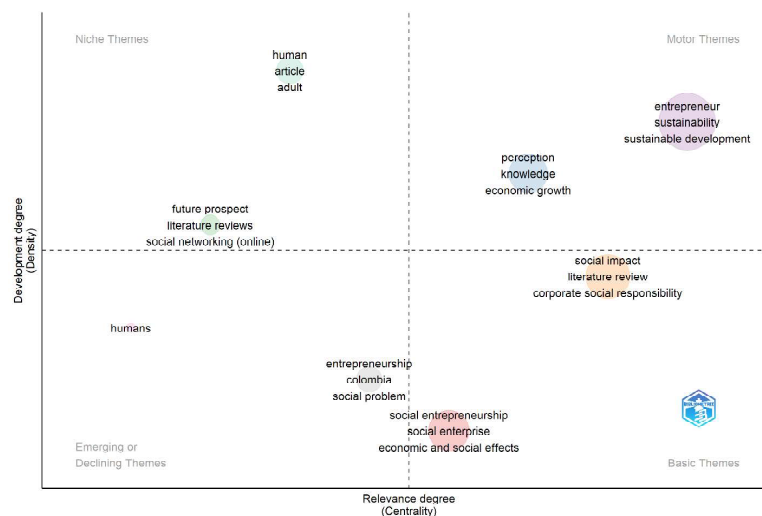
Source: (Author's analysis)

The above figure depicts co-citation network which illustrates the knowledge structure of social entrepreneurship research. Each node in the figure connects cited references or any authors and the link indicates the frequency of citations. Several clusters represented by different colors indicate the thematic areas within the field of social entrepreneurship. The green cluster, which appears as the largest and most densely connected group, represents the core body of literature in social entrepreneurship. More central and relatively large nodes represent highly influential works in the area and form the core of the research. The blue cluster represents another thematic group focusing on related research areas connected to the core literature. Although smaller than the central cluster, the links between the blue and green nodes indicate that these studies contribute to the development and extension of social entrepreneurship research. The red cluster, located on the

periphery of the network, appears to represent a more specialized or emerging group of studies. The relatively fewer connections suggest that these works are more narrowly focused but still connected to the broader research domain through citation links. This pattern indicates a developing but increasingly integrated body of knowledge, where foundational theories are complemented by emerging and specialized research streams.

### Thematic map

Fig.3 Thematic map



Source: (Author's analysis)

Thematic map helps to classify theses related to the study according to centrality or relevance to the field and density which means the level of development. In this study, themes such as social entrepreneurship, social enterprise, economic and social effects, entrepreneurship, and social problem appear in the lower-left quadrant, indicating that these areas remain underdeveloped and require further scholarly attention. Themes like “social impact”, “corporate social responsibility” comes under basic theme quadrant which are highly relevant and frequently discussed topics. “Sustainability” and “sustainable development” themes, which appear in the top right quadrant comes under motor themes identified as the most influential themes in this field and they have become a major focus in social entrepreneurship research.

### Conclusion

This study used bibliometric analysis of academic articles from the Scopus database to map the research landscape of social entrepreneurship for the past 16 years. From this, it is identified that there is a significant increase in research output, which indicates an increasing scholarly interest in the

area of social entrepreneurship as a means of solving social and economic problems. It shows a strong upward trend along with an average annual growth rate of 29.17%. The study also identified key authors, institutions and journals that have significantly contributed to the research area. P. Muñoz is the most productive author in the field of social entrepreneurship, with the highest number of publications and Universidad del Desarrollo is the most influential institution with an aggregate of 12 publications. Sustainability (Switzerland) is the main source of publications related to social entrepreneurship. From co-citation network it is identified a well-established knowledge structure featured by connected thematic clusters, reveals the progression of social entrepreneurship related research. Sustainability and sustainable development are identified as the central research themes under this area of study. The study also identified certain emerging and future trends in this area, such as socio-economic impact, sustainability orientation and problem-solving role of social entrepreneurship.

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