



A Bibliometric Analysis of Social Entrepreneurship Research: Trends, Patterns, and Future Directions

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Abstract

This study conducts a bibliometric analysis of social entrepreneurship academic literature from 1965 to 2024, using VOSviewer to understand and visualise publication trends and keyword co-occurrence patterns. The dataset, retrieved from Scopus, consists of 8,485 documents, categorised into academic articles, books, book chapters, and conference proceedings. The analysis focuses on identifying frequently used keywords, exploring their connections, and observing the development of key topics in the academic social entrepreneurship literature. Through co-occurrence analysis, this study visualises relationships between key concepts and shows trends. By examining the frequency and clusters of keywords, the study may provide a broader and deeper explanation of how the academic literature on social entrepreneurship research has evolved. The analysis of publication trends also shows how interest in social entrepreneurship has grown and how research focus and themes have changed over time. As a result, it can be said that social entrepreneurship as an academic field emerged in the early 2000s. Thus, from 1965 to 2010, research on social entrepreneurship mainly focused on defining key concepts and distinguishing the field from traditional- profit seeking entrepreneurship. In the years between 2011 and 2015, scholars began to explore social enterprises, social entrepreneurs, applications, systems, and their interactions. Between 2016 and 2020, the literature expanded to research interdisciplinary topics such as entrepreneurship education, gender(s), and hybrid organisations. In recent years, from 2021 to 2024, the focus of the social entrepreneurship literature has shifted towards themes like digitalisation, psychological motivations of social entrepreneurs and how they responded in times of crisis.

Keywords

Bibliometric analysis · VOSviewer · co-occurrence analysis · Social entrepreneurship

Jel Codes

L3, M1, M100



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A Bibliometric Analysis of Social Entrepreneurship Research: Trends, Patterns, and Future Directions

Social entrepreneurship has drawn growing interest from researchers in diverse fields such as business, management, economics, and the social sciences in general. Social entrepreneurship refers basically to using entrepreneurial approaches to overcome social problems or to reduce problems caused by social problems. As issues like poverty, inequality, and environmental damage affect people in more serious ways, social entrepreneurs have gained more attention for their role in creating new and innovative solutions. This growing interest has led to a large and still-growing body of research that explores what social entrepreneurship is, how it works, and what kind of impact it can- may have.

Although interest in social entrepreneurship has grown rapidly, the field is still seen as complex and there is little or no agreement on key concepts in the area. Researchers from different disciplines have studied it in diverse ways, which has added valuable perspectives but also caused confusion about creating a certain terminology and scope. Therefore, the literature on social entrepreneurship is rich but somewhat scattered. To better understand where the field stands and where it might be heading, a more organised and focused review of existing studies is needed.

This study uses bibliometric analysis to examine the academic social entrepreneurship literature from 1965 to 2024. Data from the Scopus database will be analysed with the VOSviewer software. The main goal is to identify key themes, trends, and connections in social entrepreneurship studies, providing a clear overview of how this research field has developed over time.

Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is a complex concept with different definitions and approaches from various disciplines, and its widespread use in different contexts reflects this complexity. Its complexity comes from its linkages to many scientific areas such as economics, sociology, and business, leading to different ways of understanding it. This review examines various definitions, highlighting the differences and similarities between various scientific perspectives.

One of the basic definitions of social entrepreneurship is its basic purpose or so-called social vision: social entrepreneurs are individuals, groups or organisations that seek to solve social problems or the effects of social problems through innovative activities, actions, practices, or systematic approaches. Bornstein and Davis define social entrepreneurship as the process of individuals or groups establishing or transforming organisations to overcome social problems such as poverty, environmental problems, lack of medical-financial support, or disabilities- chronic illnesses. In most cases, social entrepreneurship activities, methods, or approaches cannot completely solve the problem itself, but they can reduce its effects to a respectable extent. For example, while eradicating poverty is almost impossible through entrepreneurial activities, actions such as providing microcredit opportunities to the poor who wish to start their own businesses, even on a small scale, or offering education to enable them to create a steady income, although they may seem like very small, negligible steps, have significant importance in terms of their potential to permanently change people's lives for good. As a result, the quality of life of many people is improving directly or indirectly through social entrepreneurial activities (Ijiwole, 2019). This definition also emphasises the transformative potential of social entrepreneurship and labels the concept as a catalyst for social

change. Ghimire states that social entrepreneurship achieves financial sustainability through the income it generates, particularly operating under market conditions, while at the same time seeing the social benefits it strives to create and so draws strength from its stakeholders. (Ghimire, 2020a). This viewpoint highlights the 'dual purpose' of social benefit and financial sustainability, which is frequently emphasised in the social entrepreneurship literature.

The variety of definitions and the conceptual characteristics of social entrepreneurship, especially the lack of consensus on the key features of the social enterprises and their common characteristics, further complicate the clear understanding and make a clear definition of social entrepreneurship. According to Hojnik and Crnogaj (2020), the growing academic interest has intensified the discussions on how social entrepreneurship should be defined and studied. These authors emphasise that the nature and scope of social entrepreneurship activities vary significantly across European countries and cultures, reflecting the important influence of cultural and institutional environments. Although the social problems or their effects are very similar and most of the methods that are effective in one country can be reused in another country. As the authors have mentioned, in most cases country culture, the regulations or the approach of third parties to the social entrepreneurs may cause big differences. Not forgetting that the concept of social entrepreneurship not only exists in small portions of the world- in Europe, which is culturally more homogeneous than other parts of the world. Similarly, Toma (2022) highlights that the lack of clarity in concepts related to social entrepreneurship often leads to confusion, which limits the effective integration of social entrepreneurship into public policy frameworks and development initiatives. In most countries, the fact that social enterprises operate under the umbrella of foundations or NGOs or, since they are making profit, they are unable to benefit from tax exemptions despite their community-focused objectives. One of the reasons why social enterprises are not legally defined as a business or foundation class in most countries is that such enterprises cannot be clearly distinguished or defined, although their work for the social good has a very important nature.

Understanding social entrepreneurship and the motivations of social entrepreneurs is crucial to properly defining and understanding their activities. According to Boluk and Mottiar (2014), unlike conventional entrepreneurs who seek to generate financial profits, social entrepreneurs aim to create social benefits. This social benefit can differ across various areas and have different impacts, such as providing access to financial tools for the poor, solving a clean water problem in a region, or finding a way to conduct health checkups at an affordable cost. Miller et al. (2012) noted that social entrepreneurs are often motivated by internal factors such as empathy and compassion, which help them identify and solve social problems. Based on these definitions, social entrepreneurship prioritises social benefit over financial profit. However, it is also important to understand that no organisation can survive without financial resources. Therefore, social enterprises must generate financial income to be sustainable.

To understand social entrepreneurship correctly, it is necessary to pay attention to its operational models and fundamental motivations. Prabawanti (2023) argues that social entrepreneurship can be approached through different models that emphasise its motivations, types, and outcomes. These models help to understand the various strategies used by social entrepreneurs in different sectors. From microfinance tools, which are now globally recognised social entrepreneurship products, to providing a place for homeless people in a specific area to meet their food and hygiene needs; from solving the psychological problems of children who have been pushed into crime to raising the social profile of women fishermen, social entrepreneurs operate on a wide scale with a variety of objectives. Naturally, the tools used to solve different social problems,

the challenges encountered, and the support provided will also vary. Similarly, Urban and Kujinga (2017) emphasise the importance of the institutional environment in shaping entrepreneurial intentions and noted that local actors play a key role in defining and implementing social entrepreneurship.

Another pillar of social entrepreneurship is innovation. From a Schumpeterian perspective, an activity must involve innovation to be defined as entrepreneurship in the true sense of the word. Ghimire (2020b) defines social entrepreneurship as the process of using scarce resources as creatively as possible to solve social problems. This focus on innovation distinguishes social entrepreneurship from traditional charity work and charitable organisations, as the outcome of a social enterprise should prioritise long-term, sustainable solutions. Social capital is also one of the key factors in the success of a social enterprise. According to Coker et al. (2017), trust and cooperation among stakeholders are also necessary for the success of a social enterprise, as they help build strong networks and ensure relevant and sustained community participation. This aspect shows that social entrepreneurship is not only about solving problems but also about doing so through collaboration and shared responsibility. The literature also emphasises the empowering effect of social entrepreneurship on local communities. Suharto et al. (2021) argued that social entrepreneurship can support development in disadvantaged areas by addressing specific needs and creating economic opportunities. Similarly, Ijiwole (2019) notes that social entrepreneurship plays a vital role in reducing poverty and creating employment, which can lead to lasting improvements in people's lives.

In conclusion, social entrepreneurship is a broad and complex field shaped by various motivations, models, and outcomes. To provide a simple definition, social entrepreneurship is: A process in which an individual or group, referred to as a social entrepreneur, uses scarce resources in an innovative way to sustainably solve or reduce the impact of a social problem they have identified in society, while also generating their own financial returns. Its focus on innovation, sustainability, and social connections makes it a dynamic tool for addressing social problems. Unlike traditional charitable organisations, social entrepreneurship stands out for its sustainability, as it generates its own financial returns, thereby ensuring its long-term viability.

Literature Review

In recent years, academic interest in social entrepreneurship has grown significantly. Social entrepreneurship is increasingly recognised as structures and activities that create social change through innovation and provide both social and economic benefits. Since the early 2000s, the number of studies on social entrepreneurship conducted by academics from various disciplines has been steadily increasing (Granados et al., 2011; Ferreira et al., 2019; Dionisio, 2019). This growing interest stems from the nature of the field, which intersects with many academic disciplines such as business, economics, and sociology. Academics argue that more empirical studies using quantitative and mixed methods are needed to better understand the subject, going beyond qualitative and case-based research (Short et al., 2009; Saebi et al., 2019; Miah et al., 2024). Another point emphasised in the studies is the need for stronger interdisciplinary collaboration, as social entrepreneurship research is often spread across different academic fields and traditions (Rey-Martí et al., 2016; Sottini et al., 2024).

Many studies agree that the core components of social entrepreneurship are particularly social innovation and sustainable development (Farinha et al., 2020; Dunggio et al., 2024; Satar et al., 2023). These studies argue that social entrepreneurship not only creates economic value but also promotes social transformation through innovative solutions. Additionally, many studies acknowledge the importance of government

policies and institutional support in promoting social entrepreneurship (Trabskaia et al., 2023; Ahmad and Bajwa, 2023; Miah et al., 2024). The role of technology and digital platforms in scaling social impact is another common theme highlighted in studies examining the integration of artificial intelligence, digital finance mechanisms, and online collaboration tools in social entrepreneurship activities (De Bernardi et al., 2021; Kaushik et al., 2023).

Despite these similarities, differences emerge between the theoretical frameworks and regional approaches of various studies. For example, Kaneko (2013) offers a historical perspective and understanding specific to Japan, explaining how social entrepreneurship in the country differs from other social entrepreneurship models due to its strong community-based traditions. The differences between the Japanese and Western cultures highlighted in this study also influence the approaches to activities. Similarly, Teasdale et al. (2023) analyse historical changes in social entrepreneurship paradigms, noting that the field has shifted from an individualistic, heroic narrative to a more collective and systematic approach.

A very crucial difference between social entrepreneurship and traditional philanthropy is that social entrepreneurship values financial sustainability through organisational activities as much as achieving social goals. Yesmin (2021) and Kumuda et al. (2024) emphasise the importance of generating income and market-oriented approaches to ensure the longevity of social enterprises. Other researchers, such as Iskandar et al. (2021) and Sottini et al. (2024), prioritise a broader vision of social benefit and argue that financial models should not overshadow the core mission of social enterprises. Additionally, while some studies advocate for a more integrated collaboration between corporate social responsibility projects and social entrepreneurship (Ferreira et al., 2019; Trabskaia et al., 2023), other researchers view these two concepts as distinct fields with different objectives, applications, and outcomes (Saebi et al., 2019).

The relationship between social entrepreneurship and poverty alleviation is another area where the results of the studies differ. While Miah et al. (2024) and Ahmad and Bajwa (2023) consider social entrepreneurship as a crucial tool for poverty reduction and economic inclusion, De Bernardi et al. (2021) argue that this relationship should not be oversimplified and that structural inequalities and institutional barriers should be carefully considered in this context. Similarly, while some research focuses on the potential of social entrepreneurship in emerging markets and underdeveloped regions (Miah et al., 2024; Satar et al., 2023), other studies examine the work of social entrepreneurs in developed economies (Short et al., 2009; Granados et al., 2011).

There are also significant differences in the research methodologies applied in social entrepreneurship studies. While bibliometric analyses and systematic literature reviews stand out in the literature (Rey-Martí et al., 2016; Hota et al., 2020; Satar et al., 2023), other studies use historical-developmental analyses (Teasdale et al., 2023; Kaneko, 2013) or case study analyses (De Bernardi et al., 2021). This diversity reflects, to a great extent, the evolving nature of social entrepreneurship as an advancing academic field in both conceptual and empirical research. As a result, while there is a broad consensus on the importance of the innovativeness of social entrepreneurship in promoting sustainable development and social transformation, there are different perspectives on theoretical frameworks, financial sustainability, and methodological approaches. All these determining factors also help to understand the emerging differences and trends in the academic literature on social entrepreneurship. It can be predicted that future studies in this field can be conducted in fields such as science, medicine and engineering, where intensive collaborations have not been observed before, and the effects of organisations that have been operating as social enterprises for a relatively long time can be examined over time. In addition, studies on the role of social entrepreneurship in macroeco-

nomic indicators may inform future research, and exploring the effectiveness of various social enterprises in promoting economic development can also be a valuable area of investigation.

Methodology

The bibliometric pre-study conducted through Scopus involved a systematic search of the academic literature on social entrepreneurship. The search query included key terms "social entrepreneurship," "social entrepreneur," "social enterprise," and "social business," applied to the title, abstract, and keywords of the indexed documents. The retrieved dataset consists of 8,485 documents, spanning a variety of publication types including journal articles, book chapters, conference papers, and full books, all limited to the English language.

The study filtered the results by subject areas, focusing on Business, Management and Accounting, Social Sciences, Economics, Econometrics, and Finance, indicating a cross-disciplinary approach. The distribution of results by document type shows that journal articles make up the largest portion, followed by book chapters and conference papers, reflecting both theoretical and empirical contributions in the field.

The bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer was carried out to systematically examine the intellectual structure of the selected dataset. Co-occurrence analysis was used in the methodology. Co-occurrence analysis was performed by extracting and visualising frequently used keywords from the dataset. This method identifies the main themes and their interrelationships by matching terms that appear together in the same documents. The results are displayed as a network graph where the size of each node represents the frequency of a keyword and the proximity between nodes indicates the strength of co-occurrence. Cluster formation was observed, showing thematic groupings within the dataset. The VOSviewer tool was used for data processing and visualisation, and network diagrams and clustering maps were generated based on the co-occurrence matrices. The use of threshold settings allowed the selection of important nodes, ensuring that the most relevant keywords, references, and citations were included in the analysis.

Keyword co-occurrence analysis in bibliometric research plays a crucial role in identifying thematic structures and emerging trends within a given field. In VOSviewer, co-occurrence analysis examines how frequently two or more keywords appear together within the same body of academic literature, providing insights into conceptual linkages and dominant research themes (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). The link strength in this analysis represents the frequency with which two keywords co-occur across the dataset, with a higher link strength indicating a strong thematic association between concepts and a lower link strength suggesting a weaker or more sporadic relationship (Chen et al., 2017). The size of nodes in a VOSviewer-generated network visualisation reflects the frequency of keyword appearances, while the distance between nodes signifies their relative association; keywords that frequently co-occur are positioned closer together, forming clusters that represent subfields or major research topics within the literature (Cobo et al., 2011).

Interpreting keyword co-occurrence networks enables researchers to map the intellectual landscape of a discipline and identify areas of interest, trends and potential research gaps (Donthu et al., 2021). Thicker connections between keywords indicate stronger thematic relationships, which can highlight well-established research areas, while isolated nodes or weakly connected keywords may indicate less-studied topics that could offer opportunities for further research (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Moreover, the visualisation of keyword networks facilitates interdisciplinary research by revealing connections between concepts in different fields, thereby promoting cross-domain knowledge integration (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Therefore,

the systematic application of keyword co-occurrence analysis serves as a powerful tool for understanding the evolution, structure, and trajectory of interdisciplinary academic research.

In this study, the phases were determined based on the evolution of social entrepreneurship research and literature, considering significant developments in academic interest and thematic trends. Additionally, to increase comparability and maintain analytical integrity, a balanced segmentation was performed in terms of both time intervals and publication volume. This segmentation allows for a systematic examination of research trends while also capturing conceptual and methodological transformations in the field over time.

Findings

The findings table provides an overview of the publication trends in social entrepreneurship research between 1965 and 2024, categorised by academic papers, books, book chapters, and conference proceedings. The data reveal a clear trajectory of exponential growth in scholarly output, reflecting the increasing academic attention to social entrepreneurship over time.

Between 1965 and 2010, the total number of publications was relatively low (567), with 376 academic papers constituting most of the output. The number of books (26) and conference proceedings (51) suggest that the field was still emerging, with fewer dedicated research venues and limited interdisciplinary engagement. The relatively small number of book chapters (114) indicates that social entrepreneurship had not yet become a widely integrated topic within broader academic discussions.

The 2011-2015 period marks a significant increase in scholarly output, with 1,518 publications, nearly three times the total of the previous period. The sharp rise in academic papers (940) reflects the growing research interest and institutional recognition of social entrepreneurship as an academic discipline. The increase in books (80) and book chapters (401) suggests an expansion of conceptual frameworks and theoretical discourse. The rise in conference proceedings (97) indicates a growing number of academic conferences and workshops focused on social entrepreneurship, facilitating knowledge exchange and interdisciplinary collaboration.

During 2016-2020, the number of publications more than doubled, reaching 3,185. The strong increase in academic papers (2,066) highlights a shift towards empirical studies and methodological diversification. The rise in book chapters (821) suggests that social entrepreneurship has become a well-established research topic, frequently integrated into broader discussions on business, sustainability, and innovation. The increase in conference proceedings (179) indicates sustained academic engagement, with research findings being presented at specialised conferences. The 119 books published during this period suggest that more comprehensive theoretical frameworks and case studies were being developed.

The 2021-2024 period continues the upward trend, with 3,215 total publications, slightly exceeding the previous period. While the number of academic papers (2,282) continues to grow, the decrease in book chapters (693) and conference proceedings (131) suggests a stabilisation in interdisciplinary integration and conference activity. The decline in books (109) may indicate that major foundational theories have already been established, shifting research efforts towards journal publications, which are often more influential in academic rankings.

The cumulative total from 1965 to 2024 amounts to 8,485 publications, with academic papers (5,664) accounting for 66.8% of the total output. The substantial number of book chapters (2,029) indicates widespread interdisciplinary integration, while the relatively lower number of books (334) and conference

proceedings (458) suggest that journal publications remain the primary dissemination channel for research in this field.

Overall, the data illustrate an accelerating growth trend in social entrepreneurship research, particularly after 2010. The field has evolved from an emerging discipline with limited scholarly attention to a well-established area of study with diverse research outputs. The shift towards peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters suggests increasing academic rigour and specialisation, while the steady volume of conference proceedings reflects continued scholarly engagement and collaboration.

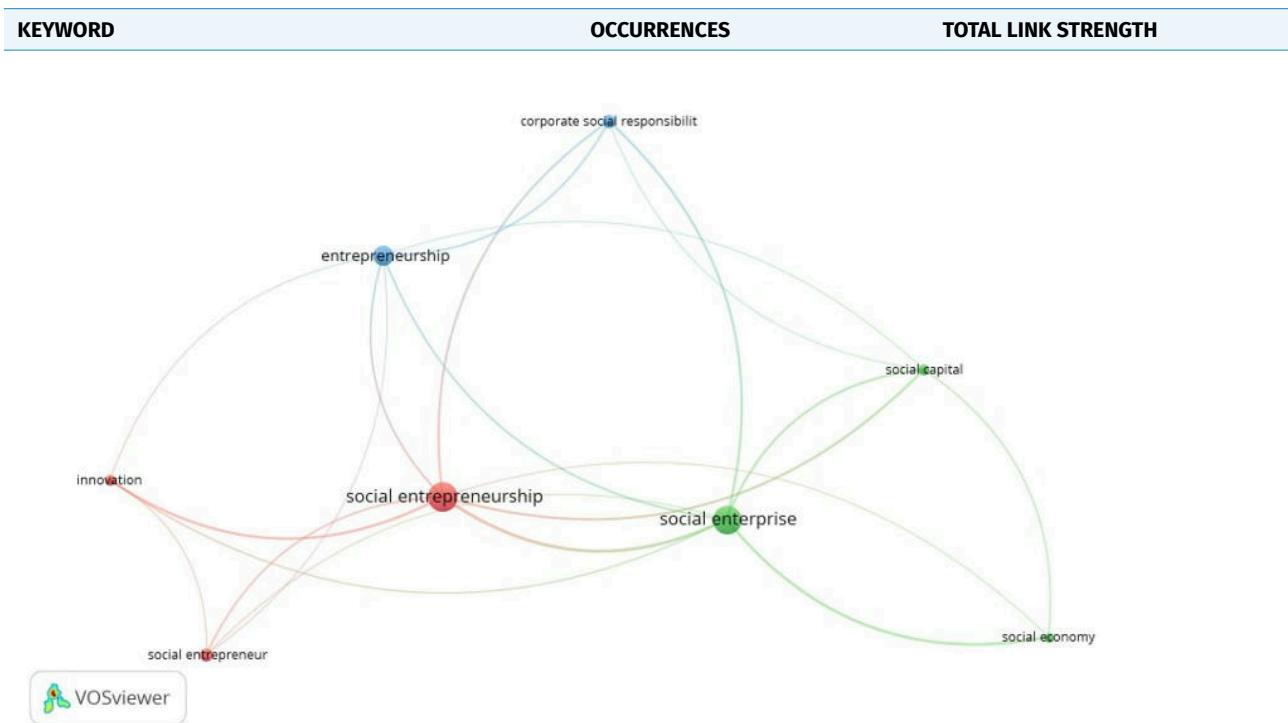
Table 1
Social Entrepreneurship Publications between 1965 and 210

Years	Academic Papers	Books	Book Chapters	Proceedings	Total Number of Publications
1965-2010	376	26	114	51	567
2011-2015	940	80	401	97	1518
2016-2020	2066	119	821	179	3185
2021-2024	2282	109	693	131	3215
1965-2024	5664	334	2029	458	8485

Social entrepreneurship research from 1965 to 2010 has focused on defining and conceptualising the field, emphasising its distinct characteristics compared to traditional entrepreneurship. As shown in Table 2 the dataset extracted from VOSviewer highlights key themes and their interconnections, providing insight into the evolution of academic discourse on the topic. Social entrepreneurship, as the most frequently mentioned term, signifies the central focus of the research domain. Its high total link strength indicates a strong interdisciplinary nature, suggesting that studies often discuss it in relation to various economic and organisational frameworks. The frequent occurrence of this term around analysing the mechanisms, challenges, and potential of social entrepreneurship in addressing societal issues.

Table 2
Publications between 1965 and 2010

KEYWORD	OCCURRENCES	TOTAL LINK STRENGTH
social entrepreneurship	85	37
social enterprise	77	37
entrepreneurship	39	15
social entrepreneur	18	6
corporate social responsibility	17	16
innovation	13	11
social capital	11	15
social economy	10	11



Source: Scopus keyword co-occurrence data for 1965–2024 (analysed with VOSviewer by the author, 2025).

Closely associated with social entrepreneurship, the term social enterprise reflects the organisational structures through which social impact is generated. The similarity in link strength between social entrepreneurship and social enterprise indicates that these concepts are often explored together in academic discourse, particularly in discussions about models, operational strategies, and legal frameworks governing such entities. The presence of entrepreneurship as a distinct keyword suggests that social entrepreneurship is often examined in relation to broader entrepreneurial theories, albeit with a primary focus on the social rather than for-profit dimension. However, the relatively lower link strength of this term compared to social entrepreneurship highlights the differentiation that scholars make between these two domains.

The term “social entrepreneur” appears far less frequently in the dataset, with significantly lower occurrences and link strength, implying that while research acknowledges the role of individuals in driving social change, greater emphasis is placed on systemic, organisational, and policy-related aspects. This suggests that the academic community prioritises understanding social entrepreneurship as a structural phenomenon rather than focusing extensively on the personal attributes or leadership qualities of individual social entrepreneurs.

Several interconnected themes emerge in addition to the core keywords. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) features prominently, reflecting the intersection between social entrepreneurship and corporate initiatives aimed at generating social impact. The relatively high link strength of CSR suggests that scholars often explore it as a complementary or alternative approach to social entrepreneurship, particularly within the context of business ethics and sustainable development (Carroll, 1999). The presence of innovation as a key term highlights the extent to which social entrepreneurship research considers novel solutions to societal challenges. The strong link strength of innovation suggests that academic studies often discuss their

role in relation to both social entrepreneurship and social enterprises, reinforcing the idea that innovative approaches are crucial in addressing social problems (Phills et al, 2008).

Social capital appears as another significant concept, emphasising the role of networks, trust, and community engagement in the success of social enterprises. The relatively high link strength of social capital implies that scholars consider it a fundamental resource that enables social enterprises to mobilise support, secure funding, and scale their impact (Putnam, 2000). Research on social economy also reflects an ongoing effort to place social entrepreneurship within broader economic structures that prioritise social value creation over profit maximisation. While relevant, the moderate link strength of this theme suggests that, although social economy is acknowledged, it does not dominate discussions as much as CSR or innovation.

The structural and thematic implications of the VOSviewer-generated dataset indicate distinct patterns in the evolution of social entrepreneurship research. Terms with high occurrence and link strength, such as social entrepreneurship and social enterprise, form the backbone of the field, indicating a consistent focus on defining and categorising these concepts while exploring their theoretical underpinnings and operational models. Terms with moderate occurrence and link strength, including corporate social responsibility, innovation, and social capital, represent secondary but highly relevant themes. Their strong connectivity suggests that researchers frequently examine how social enterprises interact with corporate initiatives, leverage innovative solutions, and utilize social capital as key mechanisms for achieving success.

Conversely, terms with lower occurrences and weaker link strength, such as social entrepreneur and social economy, suggest that while these aspects are acknowledged, they do not constitute the primary focal points of the research during this period. The relative lack of emphasis on individual social entrepreneurs implies a research tendency towards systemic and structural approaches rather than case studies focusing on specific individuals. The limited discussion of social economy further suggests that, although alternative economic models are recognised, they have not yet become central themes within the literature of this time frame.

The analysis of academic studies on social entrepreneurship from 1965 to 2010 indicates a period of conceptualisation, with scholars working to define and differentiate the field. As research progressed, greater emphasis was placed on organisational structures, corporate partnerships, and the role of innovation in achieving social impact. The evolution of these themes set the stage for later research periods, where applied studies, governance mechanisms, and sustainability models would take on greater significance. Future research directions emerging from this period suggest a need for a deeper exploration of individual agencies within social entrepreneurship, the long-term sustainability of social enterprises, and the policy environments that shape their development. This period represents the foundation upon which the modern discourse on social entrepreneurship was built, transitioning from theoretical exploration to practical implementation in subsequent years.

Social Entrepreneurship Publications between 2011 and 2015

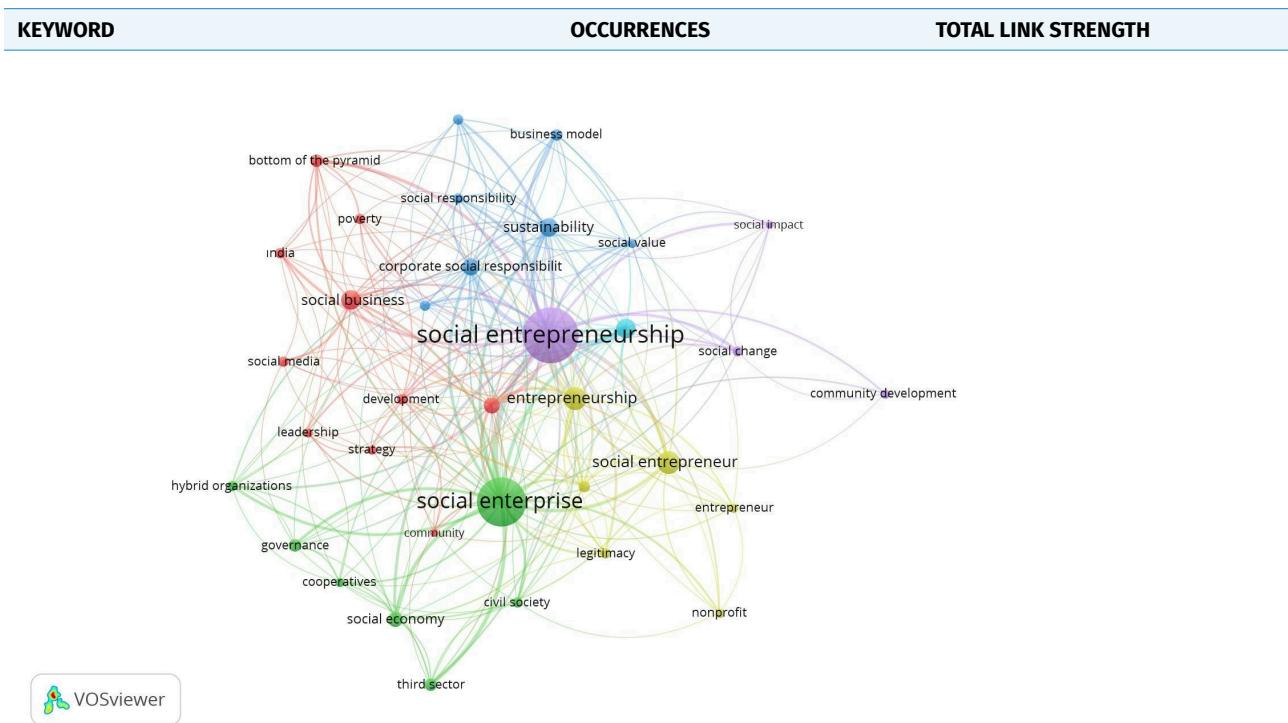
As shown in Table 3, the keyword analysis from VOSviewer for the period 2011-2015 provides a crucial perspective on the evolving landscape of social entrepreneurship research. Compared to the 1965-2010 period, there is a notable increase in the frequency and complexity of key terms, reflecting a maturing field with broader interdisciplinary engagement. Social entrepreneurship remains the dominant keyword, underscoring its central role in academic discourse. The substantial rise in occurrences from the previous period indicates exponential growth in research interest, with high link strength suggesting deep intercon-

nectedness with a wide range of topics, reinforcing the multidisciplinary nature of the field. The prominence of social enterprises reflects a growing emphasis on the structural and organisational aspects of social entrepreneurship. Compared to the earlier dataset, this term has seen significant growth, indicating increased scholarly focus on the operationalisation, management, and impact measurement of social enterprises. While traditional entrepreneurship remains a relevant framework, its proportionally lower frequency compared to social entrepreneurship suggests that researchers are increasingly differentiating social entrepreneurship as a distinct field with its own theories, challenges, and methodologies.

The increased frequency of the term “social entrepreneur” compared to the earlier period indicates a renewed academic interest in individual agency within social entrepreneurship. This could be attributed to case studies, biographical research, and psychological analyses exploring the motivations, leadership styles, and impact of social entrepreneurs. The expanded list of keywords reflects an evolving research landscape, integrating new perspectives and interdisciplinary linkages. The introduction of social innovation as a prominent keyword marks a conceptual evolution in the field. While innovation was previously acknowledged, its redefinition as social innovation underscores an increased focus on novel solutions to societal challenges. High link strength suggests that social innovation is now a key theoretical and practical framework within social entrepreneurship. The emergence of social business as a standalone keyword indicates an academic shift towards differentiating various models of social entrepreneurship. This term, popularised by figures like Muhammad Yunus, signifies enterprises that prioritise social impact while achieving financial sustainability (Yunus & Weber 2010).

Table 3
Publications between 2011 and 2015

KEYWORD	OCCURRENCES	TOTAL LINK STRENGTH
social entrepreneurship	392	359
social enterprise	301	251
entrepreneurship	68	89
social entrepreneur	68	71
social innovation	51	82
social business	50	54
sustainability	42	71
corporate social responsibility	40	82
innovation	36	61
social economy	31	42
third sector	22	32
bottom of the pyramid	21	38
governance	20	21
business model	19	30
social capital	19	37
development	16	25
sustainable development	16	26



Source: Scopus keyword co-occurrence data for 1965–2024 (analysed with VOSviewer by the author, 2025).

The growing presence of sustainability-related terms reflects the strengthening link between social entrepreneurship and environmental concerns. This shows that researchers are now examining how social enterprises contribute to broader sustainability goals, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Sachs et al., 2019). The continuation of corporate social responsibility with greater frequency and a stronger connection compared to previous periods demonstrates that corporate social entrepreneurship is being studied more intensively in an academic context. This may indicate a trend towards hybrid business models emerging as conventional companies engage in social entrepreneurial activities through collaborations, impact investing, or intrapreneurship. Several new keywords indicate increased interest in the corporate and public policy dimensions. The inclusion of governance as a key term indicates that research is increasingly focusing on regulatory frameworks, accountability mechanisms, and the role of governments in supporting social entrepreneurship. The introduction of the term “business model” shows that academics are analysing how social enterprises creatively generate, deliver, and capture value in a financially sustainable manner.

The new keywords also highlight the intersection of social entrepreneurship with economic development. The growing focus on social economy suggests an academic effort to place social entrepreneurship within alternative economic paradigms that prioritise collective welfare over profit maximisation. The inclusion of the bottom of the pyramid, popularised by C.K. Prahalad, indicates a rising interest in how social enterprises serve low-income populations through innovative business models and inclusive market strategies (Prahalad, 2005). The broader term development further reinforces the field’s expansion into policy-oriented discussions on poverty alleviation, economic empowerment, and capacity building. A comparison with the previous dataset highlights key trends, including significant growth in research output. The number of occurrences for core terms has dramatically increased, indicating a rapid expansion of the field. While

early research focused on defining social entrepreneurship, the 2011-2015 period reflects a transition towards applied research, including governance, business models, and economic impact. The presence of sustainability, corporate social responsibility, governance, and social innovation suggests that social entrepreneurship is now studied across disciplines including business, policy, economics, and environmental studies.

This period represents a shift from conceptual exploration to an applied research approach, focusing on impact measurement, governance mechanisms, and business models. Future research should continue to examine the role of social entrepreneurship in addressing global challenges, with particular attention to sustainability, hybrid business models, and the institutional frameworks that support their development. The evolution of social entrepreneurship research during this period reflects a deeper integration with broader economic and policy-oriented discussions, further cementing its status as a distinct field of study.

Social Entrepreneurship Publications between 2016 and 2020

The keyword analysis for social entrepreneurship research from 2016 to 2020, generated by VOSviewer, reveals a continuation of the field's rapid expansion and increasing interdisciplinary focus, as shown in table 4. The significant rise in occurrences and link strengths across core and emerging themes suggests that social entrepreneurship has firmly established itself as a critical subject within academic discourse. Compared to previous periods, the landscape has evolved with greater emphasis on social innovation, sustainability, hybrid organisations, and new thematic areas such as gender, education, and collaboration. Social entrepreneurship has seen an exponential increase in frequency from 392 occurrences in the previous period to 881, highlighting its growing prominence. The deep interconnectedness of this term with various subthemes reflects the increasing complexity and breadth of the field. Social enterprise remains nearly as prevalent as social entrepreneurship, with a comparable link strength, suggesting that scholars are paying closer attention to organisational structures, business models, and governance strategies that define socially driven enterprises. The increased presence of social innovation signals a shift towards understanding how novel solutions drive social change. Its strong link strength indicates that it is highly integrated with broader social entrepreneurship discourse, underscoring its role in problem-solving and systemic change (Phills et al., 2008). While entrepreneurship remains a relevant framework, the continued predominance of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise suggests that research has fully distinguished social entrepreneurship as a separate domain with unique challenges, models, and success factors.

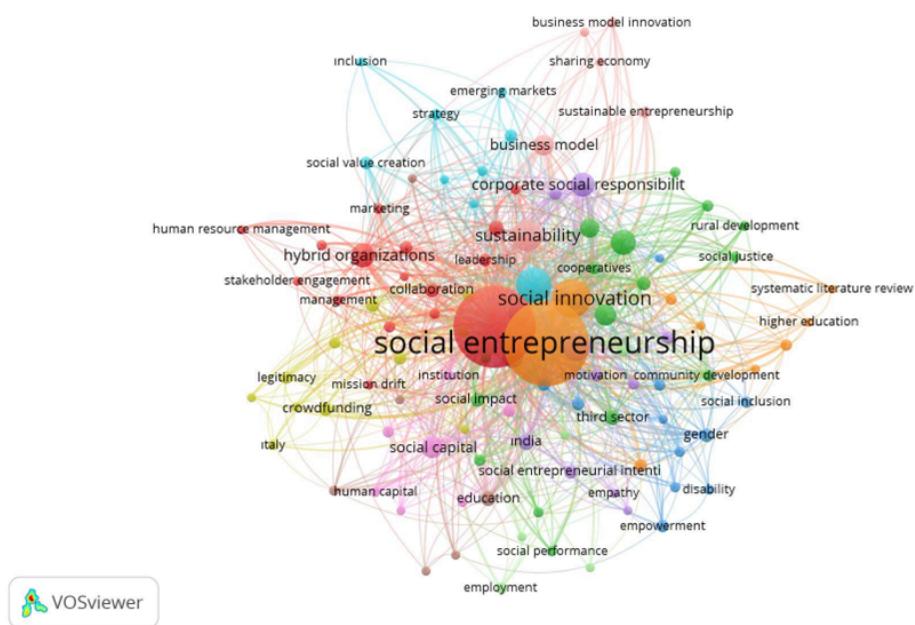
Table 4

Publications between 2016 and 2020

KEYWORD	OCCURRENCES	TOTAL LINK STRENGTH
social entrepreneurship	881	1090
social enterprise	822	1036
social innovation	183	307
Entrepreneurship	154	301
Sustainability	120	280
social entrepreneur	96	139
sustainable development	78	159
corporate social responsibility	74	155
hybrid organizations	73	135



KEYWORD	OCCURRENCES	TOTAL LINK STRENGTH
Innovation	67	147
social capital	59	112
social economy	57	96
social business	56	62
business model	52	87
social value	45	85
india	33	69
third sector	28	61
Education	27	54
Governance	27	52
Gender	26	55
Collaboration	25	49
social entrepreneurial intention	25	22



Source: Scopus keyword co-occurrence data for 1965–2024 (analysed with VOSviewer by the author, 2025).

The increased visibility of sustainability and sustainable development suggests that social entrepreneurship is now widely recognised as a tool for achieving long-term environmental, economic, and social goals. The strong link strengths of these terms indicate that sustainability is a deeply embedded theme in the social entrepreneurship literature. Although social entrepreneurs appear less frequently than broader organisational concepts, their steady increase in occurrences compared to previous periods reflects ongoing interest in the role of individuals in driving social change. Several newly prominent keywords indicate an evolving research agenda that integrates governance, business models, hybrid organisations, and social impact assessment. Corporate social responsibility continues to be a significant theme, maintaining its

relevance from previous periods. The steady increase in link strength suggests an ongoing exploration of how corporate initiatives intersect with social entrepreneurship (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Hybrid organisations reflect the growing visibility of companies operating at the intersection of the for-profit and non-profit sectors. These organisations demonstrate an academic shift towards the analysis of innovative legislative structures, governance mechanisms, and financial sustainability by embedding social change within commercial strategies. In the context of social innovation, the sustainability of innovation highlights the growing focus on creativity, technology, and new approaches in addressing societal challenges.

The growing interest in social capital has led researchers to examine how networks, trust, and social engagement contribute to the effectiveness and measurability of social enterprises or social entrepreneurial activities (Putnam, 2000). The growing popularity of the social economy reflects continued interest in alternative economic models that prioritise social well-being over profit maximisation. This indicates that the concept of social entrepreneurship is expanding beyond individual initiatives to more systemic approaches. The inclusion of social work alongside social enterprises demonstrates ongoing efforts to distinguish between diverse types of social impact-oriented organisations. The presence of the keyword "business model" highlights the academic interest in understanding how social enterprises create, sustain, and scale their impact through innovative organisational structures. The emergence of the concept of "social value" as a separate keyword indicates a growing interest in measuring and defining the social benefits created by social enterprises. The specific mention of India suggests a growing geographical focus, likely due to the country's dynamic social entrepreneurship ecosystem. Research in this area may explore government policies, grassroots innovations, and scalable business models within developing economies.

The continued presence of the third sector reinforces the importance of non-profit organisations, cooperatives, and civil society groups in the broader landscape of social entrepreneurship. The emergence of education as a keyword indicates an increasing interest in how social entrepreneurship is integrated into academic curricula and training programs. The inclusion of governance suggests a focus on accountability, transparency, and institutional frameworks that support social enterprises. The introduction of gender as a keyword reflects a growing research agenda on gender dynamics in social entrepreneurship, including the role of women entrepreneurs and gender-inclusive business models. The presence of collaboration highlights an academic interest in partnerships among social enterprises, governments, corporations, and civil society organisations. A newly emerging term, social entrepreneurial intention, signifies an increasing focus on the psychological and motivational factors that drive individuals to engage in social entrepreneurship.

A comparison with previous data sets reveals several different trends. A significant increase in the use of basic terms indicates that social entrepreneurship is no longer an emerging and developing field of research but has become an established academic discipline. While previous studies focused on defining social entrepreneurship, the 2016-2020 period saw practical aspects such as business models, governance, and impact measurement come to the fore. The presence of terms such as hybrid organisations, collaboration, and the third sector indicates a shift towards examining complex, multi-stakeholder social entrepreneurship models. The inclusion of India and gender has also led to a diversification of research on the effects of geographical and demographic differences in social entrepreneurship and the unique challenges encountered in this regard.

This period represents a transition from theoretical exploration to applied research, focusing on social entrepreneurship's intersection with governance, sustainability, and economic models. The continued expansion into interdisciplinary studies suggests that future research should further explore the role of

digital transformation, financial mechanisms, and policy interventions in scaling social enterprises. With the growing focus on impact measurement and hybrid models, the field is likely to deepen its engagement with empirical methodologies to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of social entrepreneurship initiatives. This phase marks a pivotal moment in social entrepreneurship research, bridging foundational theories with real-world applications.

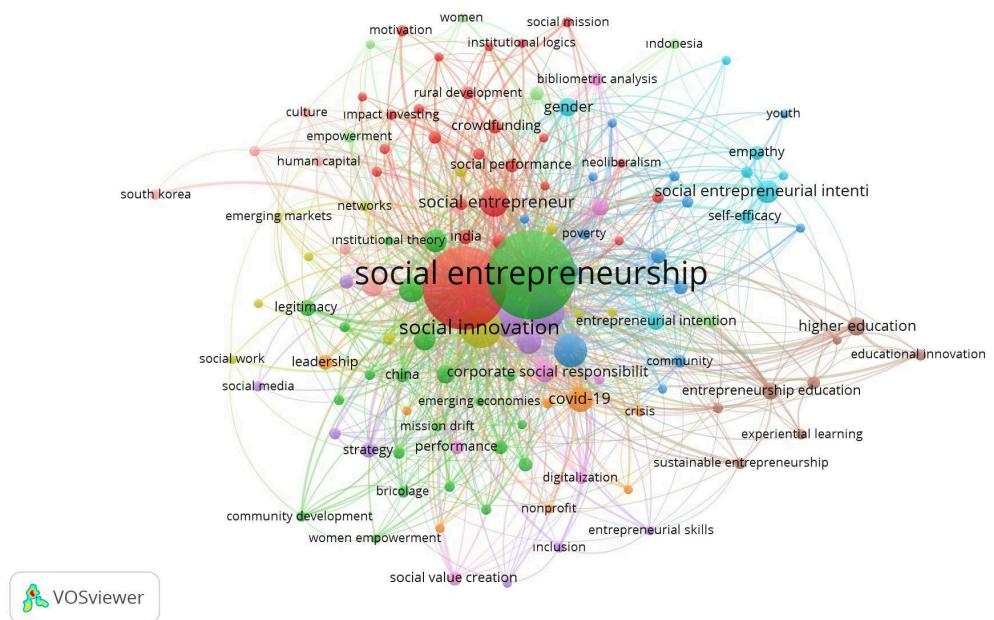
Social Entrepreneurship Publications between 2021 and 2024

The VOSviewer-generated keyword analysis for social entrepreneurship research from 2021 to 2024 in table 5 presents a significant expansion in thematic depth and interdisciplinary integration. Compared to previous periods, this dataset reveals new conceptual frameworks, the growing role of digital and financial mechanisms, and an increased emphasis on global crises such as COVID-19. The rise in occurrences and total link strength of core terms such as social entrepreneurship and social enterprise indicate sustained scholarly interest, while emerging themes such as circular economy, crowdfunding, self-efficacy, and legitimacy suggest new directions for research. Social entrepreneurship remains the dominant keyword, with a sharp increase in occurrences from 881 in the previous period to 947. This increased strength suggests that social entrepreneurship continues to be a highly relevant research topic with expanding interdisciplinary connections, particularly in the context of addressing global challenges through socially driven entrepreneurial solutions. Social enterprises maintain a strong presence, emphasising the field's continued focus on organisational structures, business models, and sustainable operations. Its strong link strength indicates an ongoing exploration of governance mechanisms, financial viability, and impact measurement of social enterprises. The consistent growth of social innovation suggests that researchers are increasingly examining how innovative approaches drive systemic change. This term remains closely integrated with other key themes, highlighting its role in problem-solving and sustainability (Phills et al., 2008). The increase in occurrences and link strength of entrepreneurship indicates a continued emphasis on connecting social entrepreneurship with broader entrepreneurial theories, particularly in opportunity recognition, business development, and ecosystem interactions.

Table 5
Publications between 2021 and 2024

KEYWORD	OCCURRENCES	TOTAL LINK STRENGTH
social entrepreneurship	947	1288
social enterprise	817	1073
social innovation	202	359
entrepreneurship	164	325
sustainability	144	288
sustainable development	133	259
social entrepreneur	100	151
innovation	80	160
hybrid organizations	75	128
covid-19	74	123
social entrepreneurial intention	63	73
social impact	62	130
social business	58	93

KEYWORD	OCCURRENCES	TOTAL LINK STRENGTH
corporate social responsibility	53	92
social capital	53	96
social economy	44	66
higher education	43	81
business model	41	81
gender	41	68
entrepreneurship education	37	66
systematic literature review	35	74



Source: Scopus keyword co-occurrence data for 1965–2024 (analysed with VOSviewer by the author, 2025).

The increasing frequency of sustainability-related terms reflects the growing recognition of social entrepreneurship as a key driver of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This trend indicates that social enterprises are now widely viewed as critical factors contributing to economic, environmental, and social sustainability (Sachs et al., 2019). Although social entrepreneurs remain less frequent than broader organisational concepts, their steady presence suggests an ongoing interest in understanding the characteristics, motivations, and leadership styles of individuals who drive social change. New and reinforced keywords indicate the evolving research priorities in social entrepreneurship, highlighting governance, digital transformation, and financial mechanisms. The enduring presence of innovation suggests that technological and business model innovations are increasingly intertwined with social entrepreneurship research. The continued focus on hybrid organisations highlights their growing importance in balancing social and financial objectives. Research in this area likely explores how these organisations navigate legitimacy, governance, and sustainability challenges. The inclusion of COVID-19 as a keyword underscores the pandemic's profound impact on social entrepreneurship, ranging from resilience strategies to accelerated

digital transformation. Studies likely explore how social enterprises adapted to crises, developed innovative solutions, and contributed to public health responses.

Social entrepreneurial intention reflects an increasing focus on psychological and behavioural factors influencing individuals' motivations to engage in social entrepreneurship. Its intersection with self-efficacy and empathy suggests a deeper investigation into how individuals develop a social entrepreneurial mindset. The rise of social impact suggests an academic shift towards impact measurement and assessment frameworks, emphasising how social enterprises create value beyond financial returns. The consistent presence of social business highlights ongoing efforts to distinguish various models within the social entrepreneurship spectrum, particularly those prioritising financial sustainability (Yunus & Weber, 2010). Corporate social responsibility remains integral to discussions, reflecting the growing involvement of traditional businesses in social entrepreneurship through partnerships, impact investing, and sustainable business practices (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Several keywords reveal newly emerging focus areas in social entrepreneurship research. The increasing presence of higher education and entrepreneurship education in keyword analyses suggests that more scholars are examining the integration of social entrepreneurship into university curricula and training programs designed to cultivate entrepreneurial skills for social impact. The presence of legitimacy suggests a growing interest in how social enterprises gain and maintain credibility within different institutional and regulatory environments. The emergence of the circular economy highlights an increasing focus on sustainable business models, particularly those that reduce waste, optimise resource use, and promote environmental sustainability.

The inclusion of the ecosystem points to a shift towards studying the interdependencies among social enterprises, governments, corporations, and non-profits. The increasing presence of crowdfunding signals the growing role of alternative financing mechanisms in supporting social enterprises, particularly in the context of digital platforms. The inclusion of empathy and self-efficacy as keywords reflects an increasing psychological focus, particularly on how these factors influence social entrepreneurial behaviour and decision-making. The presence of China and India in keyword analyses suggests a rise in regional comparative studies, likely examining how different socio-economic and regulatory environments shape social entrepreneurship. A comparison with earlier datasets reveals several key trends. The inclusion of COVID-19 suggests that research has expanded to include crisis management and resilience strategies within social enterprises. The rise of social impact, social value, and performance indicates a growing demand for measuring the effectiveness of social enterprises. The emergence of the circular economy and the continued prominence of sustainability indicate that environmental sustainability is becoming a central concern in social entrepreneurship. The increasing presence of social entrepreneurial intention, self-efficacy, and empathy suggests that research is increasingly exploring what motivates individuals to engage in social entrepreneurship. The inclusion of China and India suggests that social entrepreneurship research is expanding beyond Western-centric perspectives, highlighting the need for regional and comparative studies.

This period demonstrates a further shift from conceptual discussions to applied and impact-driven research, with a stronger focus on measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship initiatives. The increased focus on digital transformation, financial mechanisms, and psychological dimensions suggests that future research should further explore the role of technology, alternative financing, and human behaviour in shaping social enterprises. With the growing need for innovative solutions to global challenges, social entrepreneurship research is expected to expand further into interdisciplinary areas, integrating insights from technology, behavioural science, and policymaking. The field has matured into an

essential component of broader discussions on sustainable development, crisis adaptation, and financial inclusion, positioning social enterprises as key agents of systemic change. ÜstüFormun Altı

Conclusion and Discussion

Social entrepreneurship has evolved significantly over the last 50 years, reflecting changes in societal needs, economic structures, and technological advances. This comparative analysis examines VOSviewer-generated keyword data from four different periods (1965-2010, 2011-2015, 2016-2020 and 2021-2024), highlighting the commonalities, differences, and emerging research directions in the field of social entrepreneurship.

In all four periods, the terms 'social entrepreneurship' and 'social enterprise' consistently stand out as the most frequently used keywords. The steady increase in the frequency and relevance of these terms indicates that the field is increasingly recognised as an independent discipline distinct from traditional entrepreneurship. The predominant focus of the literature on social entrepreneurship has shifted from establishing the basic concepts of social entrepreneurship (1965-2010) to exploring its operational models, practices, and case studies (2011-2024). The role of innovation in social entrepreneurship has been a theme that initially emerged as 'innovation' (1965-2010) and then evolved into 'social innovation' (2011-2024). This shift reflects a growing emphasis on the role of creativity and innovative solutions in addressing social challenges. Social innovation became a particularly dominant research theme between 2016 and 2024, reflecting the role that social enterprises play in driving systemic change.

While "entrepreneurship" remains an important keyword in all analysed periods, its overall link strength is consistently lower than "social entrepreneurship" and "social enterprise". This indicates that while traditional theories of entrepreneurship form the foundations, the field of social entrepreneurship is increasingly differentiating towards its own distinct theoretical and practical terminology. Sustainability emerged as a key theme from the period 2011-2015 and becomes more prominent in the later years (2016-2024). This shift can also be considered in line with the global adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasise the role of social enterprises and entrepreneurs in promoting economic, social, and environmental sustainability. CSR has been a recurring theme since the first studies and demonstrates a continuing interest in how businesses integrate their social vision into their organisational structures. Similarly, business models emerged as a keyword in later periods (2011-2024), reflecting the growing interest in how social enterprises operate in a sustainable manner.

Research on social entrepreneurship began relatively recently during the period from 1965 to 2010, focusing on defining the field and distinguishing it from traditional entrepreneurship. Key terms included "social entrepreneurship," "social enterprise," "entrepreneurship," "corporate social responsibility," "social capital," and "social economy." The studies were primarily theoretical, exploring organisational structures, ethical issues, and the role of social capital. Between 2011 and 2015, there was a significant increase in the number of studies, with new themes such as "social innovation," "social enterprise," "the base of the pyramid," "the third sector," and "management" emerging. Research began to address how social enterprises interacted with broader economic and governance systems, leading to an increased focus on impact measurement and organisational sustainability.

Between 2016 and 2020, the literature on social entrepreneurship significantly expanded both qualitatively and quantitatively, and it has begun to include interdisciplinary themes such as "hybrid organisations," "education," "gender," "collaboration," and "social entrepreneurial intention." It can also be said that there

was an increase in geographical focus during this period; the emergence of "India" as a keyword particularly attracted academic interest due to the country being noticeable for its population and poverty. The inclusion of "social economy" and "third sector" in studies suggests that research has started to explore the systematic frameworks within which social enterprises operate.

The latest period (2021-2024) introduces new keywords such as "COVID-19," "higher education," "entrepreneurship education," "systematic literature review," "legitimacy," "China," "circular economy," "crowdfunding," "self-efficacy," and "empathy." These shifts indicate an increasing emphasis on technology, behavioural science, and the resilience of social enterprises in crises. The emergence and increasing importance of the "circular economy" has also highlighted sustainability, which is one of the crucial elements of social entrepreneurship. Along with this, it is also observed that "crowdfunding" has gained importance as an alternative financing mechanism. The emergence of "crowdfunding," "entrepreneurship education," and "digital transformation" indicates that social entrepreneurial activities are becoming progressively easier and that potential social entrepreneurs are being enabled to realise their visions. New key terms such as "self-sufficiency," "empathy," and "social entrepreneurship intention" show an increasing focus on the psychological factors that influence entrepreneurial behaviour. This indicates a shift from an institution-centred view of social entrepreneurship to an individual-centred perspective. The inclusion of COVID-19 marks a shift towards resilience strategies and adaptation measures in response to global crises, and it indicates that social entrepreneurs who will work against potential future global crises may be observed. Furthermore, future research could continue to explore how social enterprises and social businesses cope with potential pandemics, economic stagnations, and climate-related challenges. The presence of "India" (2016-2024) and "China" (2021-2024) indicates a growing interest in cross-country analyses that reflect the increasing globalisation of social entrepreneurship. The rising frequency of terms such as "social impact," "social value," and "performance" highlights a shift in the field towards developing standardised methods for evaluating the effectiveness of social enterprises. Assessing the value created by social entrepreneurs on both local and global scales has become increasingly important. One of the main reasons for this is the attitudes of both public institutions and the private sector in selecting the most efficient social enterprise to support for various reasons.

The evolution of social entrepreneurship research from 1965 to 2024 demonstrates a transition from theoretical foundations to applied, interdisciplinary, and impact-driven studies. Early research focused on defining the field, while later studies examined governance, sustainability, and business models. The most recent period (2021-2024) highlights an increased emphasis on digitalisation, behavioural science, regional studies, and resilience. Social entrepreneurship stands out as a field that is developing and is expected to continue to develop. Accordingly, the place of this issue in the academic literature is also increasing. When the studies conducted in the field of social entrepreneurship to date are examined within the scope of research, it has been observed that social entrepreneurship will be shaped particularly by the intensive use of technology, and that future research will evolve in this direction. Specifically, the use of topics such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, NFTs, cryptocurrencies, and wearable health technologies in the field of social entrepreneurship will also draw interest. Moreover, it can be considered that social enterprises and consequently the literature on social entrepreneurship will focus on studies in this area, particularly due to the growing attention to concepts related to health, especially public health, such as malnutrition, child malnutrition, sedentary lifestyle, and their effects, not only in underdeveloped countries but also in developed countries.

Future research suggestions

Future research should address the methodological gaps and expand the scope of bibliometric analysis in social entrepreneurship studies. The current study relies primarily on co-occurrence analysis and publication trends, while co-citation analysis and bibliographic coupling remain unexplored. Future studies should apply co-citation analysis to identify the most influential works and theoretical foundations within the field, as well as bibliographic coupling to examine the evolution of contemporary research themes. These techniques would provide a deeper understanding of the intellectual structures and emerging scholarly trajectories.

Co-authorship analysis should be conducted to map collaborative networks among researchers, institutions, and countries. Identifying patterns of academic collaboration would reveal the geographical distribution of research output and highlight key research hubs in social entrepreneurship. Additionally, studying co-authorship networks could facilitate the identification of influential researchers and emerging scholars contributing to the field.

A methodological classification of the social entrepreneurship literature should be undertaken to determine the dominant research approaches. The increasing volume of publications necessitates an assessment of the balance between qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies. Understanding the methodological diversity in social entrepreneurship research would help identify trends in empirical approaches and inform future studies on the most effective methodologies for investigating social entrepreneurship phenomena.

Thematic analysis should be expanded to explore emerging research topics and evolving conceptual frameworks. Advanced text-mining techniques, such as machine learning and natural language processing, could be used to analyse large datasets and detect latent patterns in the literature. Identifying new research directions through systematic literature reviews would contribute to the development of novel theoretical perspectives and interdisciplinary connections.

Future studies should focus on policy-oriented and applied research to assess the impact of social entrepreneurship on economic and social development. Comparative analyses across different regions revealed variations in policy frameworks, institutional support, and financing mechanisms for social enterprises. Investigating the role of government interventions and regulatory policies would provide insights into the factors that enhance or hinder the growth of social entrepreneurship.

There is a need to analyse the financial sustainability of social enterprises and the mechanisms through which they secure funding. The increasing prominence of crowdfunding and impact investing suggests that alternative financing models deserve greater attention in academic research. Examining sector-specific applications of social entrepreneurship could also provide valuable insights into industry-based variations in business models and strategic approaches.

This study has provided a bibliometric overview of social entrepreneurship research, but further analyses are required to refine and expand the understanding of the field. The application of additional bibliometric techniques, methodological classifications, and policy-driven research would contribute to a more comprehensive examination of the social entrepreneurship literature. The integration of quantitative bibliometric analysis with qualitative systematic reviews would further strengthen the field by identifying theoretical gaps and practical implications for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

**Ethics Committee Approval**

The article is a bibliometric analysis study and has been studied with secondary data. In this respect, there is no need for an ethics committee approval.

Peer Review

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Conflict of Interest

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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