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Mapping the Intellectual Structure and Research Trends of Social Capital in Management: A Bibliometric Analysis.

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Abstract

One of the ideas that has drawn the interest of many researchers over the past few decades is social capital. It is a fundamental interdisciplinary topic in management sciences and an organisational value for businesses. However, there is currently no scientific consensus regarding its conceptualisation, dimensions, and operational measurements.

This study aims to examine the body of research on the concept of social capital in management sciences that was published between 1998 and 2024. We have chosen and examined 6504 papers published in journals that are indexed in the Scopus database. This study uses a bibliometric approach. With the aid of the VOSviewer software, the authors analyse the results from the following perspectives: the number of publications per year, the articles that are most frequently cited by other authors, the most renowned authors, the most influential reviews, the countries with the highest productivity, the cooperation of international universities, the co-occurrence of Spanish words, and the bibliographic couplage. The findings of this study can also be used to enhance our understanding of social capital research in management sciences and support additional reflections and research in this field.

Keywords

Social capital, bibliometric analysis, scientific cartography, VOSviewer.

Introduction

The concept of social capital has become increasingly popular in social sciences, especially sociology, where it has been used to examine social ties at many levels: the macro level (nations) (Fukuyama, 2001; Membiela-Pollán & Pena-López, 2017), The meso level (communities, networks, and interorganisational relationships)(Burt, 1992; Membiela-Pollán & Pena-López, 2017; Putnam, 1995), and the micro level (individual) (Membiela-Pollán & Pena-López, 2017). This interdisciplinary approach saw social capital as a collection of social relationships that included resources that could be mobilised by individuals or groups. (Kwon & Adler, 2014).

In the field of management sciences, social capital has gradually emerged as a crucial framework for understanding economic relationships and organisational phenomena. (Payne et al., 2011). The groundbreaking work of Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) made it possible to organise this idea by offering a three-dimensional conceptualisation that distinguished between structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions. These dimensions are now widely used in empirical research. This approach emphasises that social capital encompasses not just the networks themselves but also the resources that may be accessed through these relationships, such as information, opportunities, and reputation. (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998a). From an organisational standpoint, social capital promotes resource acquisition, knowledge sharing, business performance, and increased competitiveness. (Aidoo et al., 2020; Augusto Felício et al., 2014; Boudreaux et al., 2021; Corrêa et al., 2021; Ince et al., 2023; « Individual Social Capital », 2017; Oyeku, 2024; Rodrigo-Alarcón et al., 2018; Sulistyo & Ayuni, 2019; Xu et al., 2022). Thus, the concept of social capital, which is multidimensional and interdisciplinary, constitutes a structural notion whose evolution and research directions justify a thorough bibliometric analysis.

The field of bibliometric research is part of a framework of knowledge production that will enhance scientific reflection on the landscape and the perspectives of social capital research in management sciences.

There are several systematic reviews and some bibliometric analyses discussing the concept of social capital associated with various management theories, such as operations management theory, according to research on the two bases of scientific scope and web.

(Matthews & Marzec, 2012), Crowdfunding (Cai et al., 2021), knowledge management (Santos et al., 2020), supply chain risks (Daghar et al., 2020), social capital and SME (Gamage, s. d.)

supply chain sustainability (Dias & Silva, 2022), buyer-supplier relationships (Alghababsheh & Gallear, 2020), Performance on Born Global (Social Capital in the Performance on Born Global, s. d.), Accounting (de Villiers et al., 2022), Social Entrepreneurship (Daskalopoulou et al., 2023). Additionally, we have only found one bibliometric study in the field of management and organization studies that addresses social capital. (Alan & Köker, 2021). This recent study conducted a limited bibliometric analysis of social capital, focusing only on its structural dimension and ignoring its relational and cognitive dimensions.

Due to the lack of systematic or bibliometric research on the concept of social capital holistically within management sciences, this study seeks to fill this gap in the scientific literature.

This study's goal is to present an organized summary of the scientific literature on social capital in the management sciences from 1998 to 2024. The study uses a bibliometric technique to map the intellectual and thematic structure of this field of study, track the development of scholarly production, identify the most prominent authors, articles, and nations, and analyze the dynamics of international collaboration. In order to determine future research directions, it also aims to highlight the major research themes, their recent evolution, and emergent subjects.

This study draws on earlier scientific research and uses bibliometric tools to address the following research questions:

Q1: What is the evolution of scientific articles on social capital in management sciences between 1998 and 2024?

Q2: Which authors are the most influential and productive on this topic?

Q3: Which papers have had the most impact in terms of citations?

Q4: Which countries are the most significant and cooperative in the study of social capital in management sciences?

Q5: What are the driving themes behind the topic of social capital in management sciences? What are the emerging topics?

Q6: What have been the main research themes related to social capital during the past five years?

The essay is divided into four sections to address these goals and the developed research questions. The conceptual underpinnings of social capital and its evolution in management sciences are discussed in the first section. The methodological approach of the bibliometric study, including the data collecting and selection strategy and the analytical methodologies used, is described in the second section. The results pertaining to trends in scholarly output, the major players in the discipline, and its intellectual and thematic structure are presented and discussed in the third section. The study's primary findings, consequences, limitations, and future research directions are finally presented in the final part.

1. Literature review

To understand the concept of social capital in social sciences, three authors stand out: Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam.

Bourdieu (1980) defines social capital as "the sum of real and potential resources linked to the possession of a lasting network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual knowledge and recognition—in other words, belonging to a group." Other forms of capital are distinguished by Bourdieu as follows: symbolic capital, which represents any type of capital that finds legitimacy within society; cultural capital, which includes everything pertaining to culture, knowledge, credentials, etc.; and economic capital, which refers to assets and income.

According to Bourdieu, an actor's social capital is primarily determined by the number of individuals in his personal network and the quantity of their economic, cultural, and symbolic capital.

A decade later, James S. Coleman defines social capital through its functions: "It is not a single entity, but a variety of entities that share two characteristics: they all constitute a part of the social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure.

"Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making it possible to achieve certain goals that could not be achieved without it" (Coleman, 1988) . For Coleman, social capital constrains behaviour within society and therefore constitutes an alternative to contract. Indeed, social capital establishes rules, norms, obligations, and sanctions among actors within a given social structure. (Coleman, 1988).

Putnam (1995), for his part, helped spread the concept of social capital. According to this author, social capital is a concept that characterises social organisation such as trust, norms, and networks that encourage and facilitate cooperation and coordination among actors in order to achieve mutual benefits.

In academic research, it is common to acknowledge that social capital consists of three dimensions: structural, relational, and cognitive. A contrast between these three dimensions was established by Nahapiet, J. and Ghoshal, S. (1998), and it is currently considered the reference framework.

The structural dimension of social capital relates to the specific characteristics of social systems and relational networks (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998a). The visible aspect of a network that enables us to examine the density, connection, hierarchy, and ownership of relational networks within a particular setting, like a community, organization, or group, is known as structural social capital.

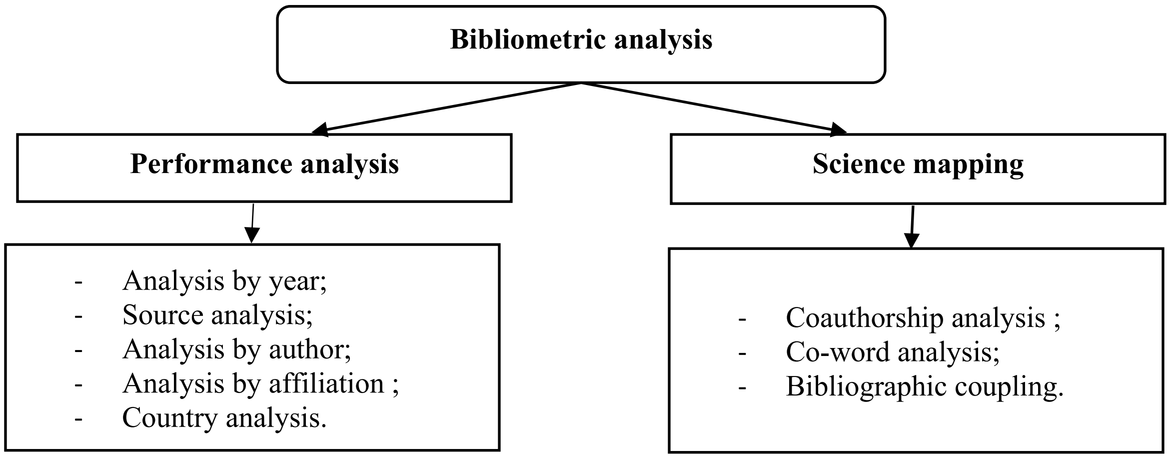
An important aspect of structural social capital is the number of links that participants have and the strength of those links (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998a). Cognitive social capital is composed of cognitive schemas and psychological systems that enable interconnected members to develop a common language. Furthermore, the cognitive aspect of social capital consists of language, symbols, and codes that facilitate healthy communication between different actors. (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998a). Lastly, relational capital is related to the affective aspect of social capital, which includes the qualities and attributes of personal relationships including respect, trust, engagement, and admiration. The type and quality of connections and relationships that arise during an ongoing process of interaction and manifest as behavioural traits like responsibility, group norms, and reliability constitute the relational component of social capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998a).

2. Method and materials

2.1. Framework of bibliometric analysis

In order to carry conduct our bibliometric analysis, we selected indicators (Figure 1) that both satisfy the introduction's research goals and are consistent with the suggestions put out by (Zupic & Čater, 2015; Linnenluecke et al., 2020; Donthu et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2022) . Furthermore, this approach is applied by several authors on different economic and managerial topics (Addahar et al., 2026; Eljadidi et al., 2025; Guezri et al., 2026; Hobad & Kabbouri, 2026; Sabir et al., 2026, 2026).

Figure 1: Bibliometric indicators studied in this review, developed by the authors



Source: Developed by the authors

2.2. Database Selection

The first step in any bibliometric study is to choose a reliable and appropriate database. For our bibliometric analysis, we opted for Scopus to select a sample for our query.

The Scopus database was selected due to its wider documentary coverage and superior disciplinary representation over Web of Science. In fact, Scopus integrates nearly all of the journals indexed in the Web of Science database and indexes a sizable number of publications, especially in the fields of science, technology, and management (V. K. Singh et al., 2021). Although the two databases Web of Science and Scopus largely overlap, Scopus is the most comprehensive database of citations and abstracts of peer-reviewed literature across a wide range of fields.(Al-Khoury et al., 2022).

Furthermore, it provides a multitude of exclusive publications that provide a more thorough comprehension of global scientific output. (V. K. Singh et al., 2021). This wealth of content makes Scopus a reliable and preferred source for conducting representative and in-depth bibliometric analyses.

2.3. Data Collection: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

We used the keyword "social capital" to conduct the research in the Scopus database. Several researchers have used this keyword in their bibliometric or systematic studies (Mathey et al., 2024; Saglietto et al., 2013). Furthermore, "structural social capital," "relational social capital," and "cognitive social capital" are all logically included in the keyword "social capital."

The initial search query was: "social capital". Based on this query, 41,058 documents were found. We then limited the analysis period to the years 1998 to 2024. This temporal delimitation is explained by the importance of the seminal article by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) entitled "Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organizational Advantage", published in The Academy Management Review. This work is considered a structuring contribution to the literature in management science. It proposed an integrated conceptualization of social capital, particularly through its structural, relational and cognitive dimensions, which has greatly inspired subsequent research. Since then, the concept of social capital has gradually become established as a central analytical framework in several areas of management. The choice of 1998 thus ensures theoretical consistency and covers the main developments in research up to the most recent work. After this time limit, the number of documents found is 40611.

The search process continued by selecting the category "accounting, commerce, and management." We then focused on articles written in English and published in journals. The final list of articles selected for our bibliometric analysis contained 6504 publications.

Equation of definitive research:

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("social capital") AND PUBYEAR > 1997 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))

The query was stopped on 26/01/2025 at 2:00 AM. The data selection process and the exclusion and inclusion criteria according to the principles of the PRISMA method are detailed in **Figure 2** below.

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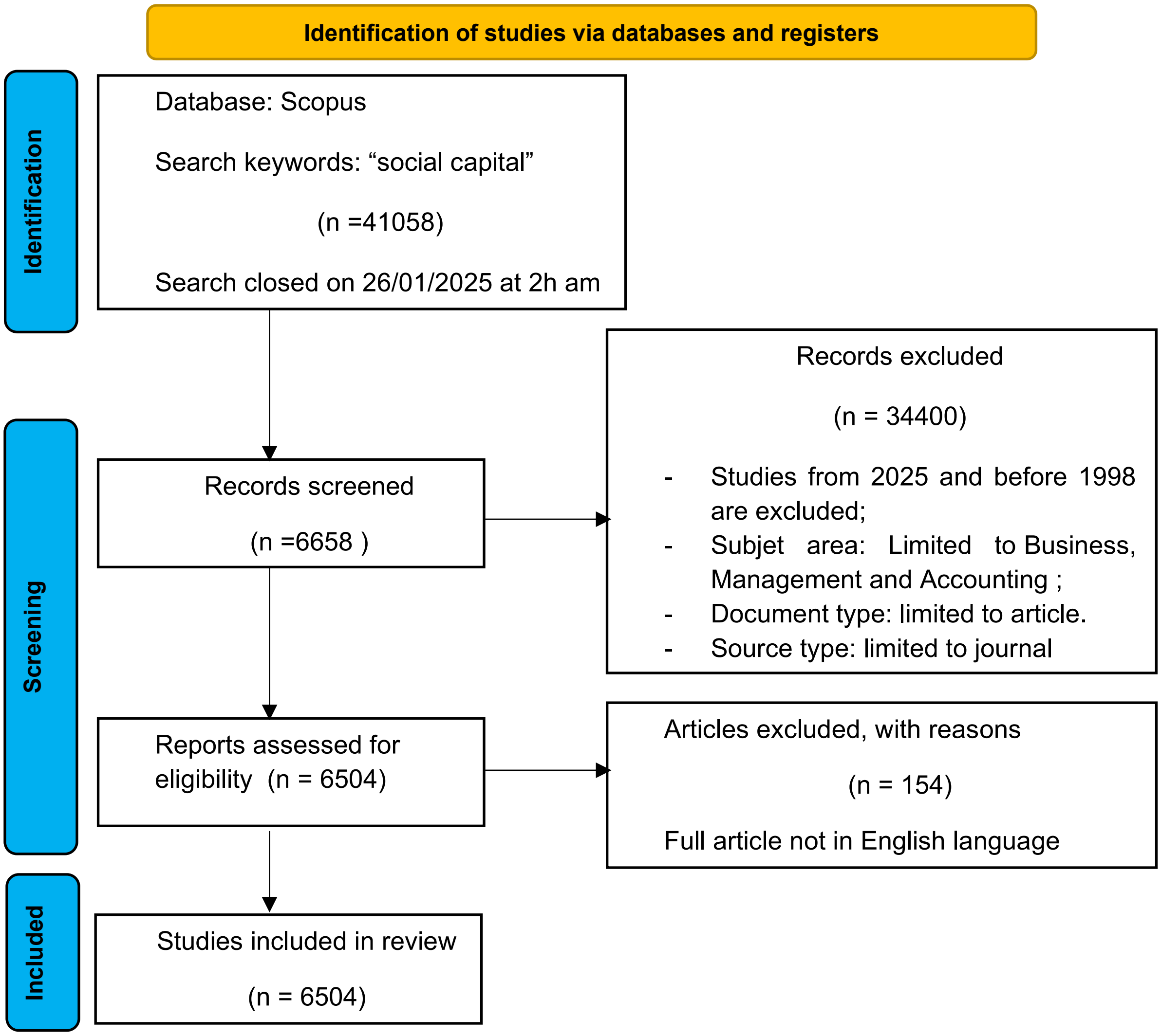
Figure 2: Research and selection process



Source: Developed by the authors

To perform the analysis of the co-authorship of organizations, the analysis of the co-occurrence of keywords, the analysis of bibliographic linkage and to generate the scientific maps, we utilised the VOSviewer software. This tool is designed for the analysis of bibliometric networks; it allows users to create, visualize, and explore maps based on any type of network data. (van Eck & Waltman, 2023). Furthermore, the use of VOSviewer software is a common practice in bibliometric studies in management science. (Addahar et al., 2026; Eljadidi et al., 2025; Gariel

& Bartel-Radic, 2024; Guezri et al., 2026; Hobad & Kabbouri, 2026; Kaushik & Dangwal, 2025; Rosli & Zaki, 2023; Sabir et al., 2026).

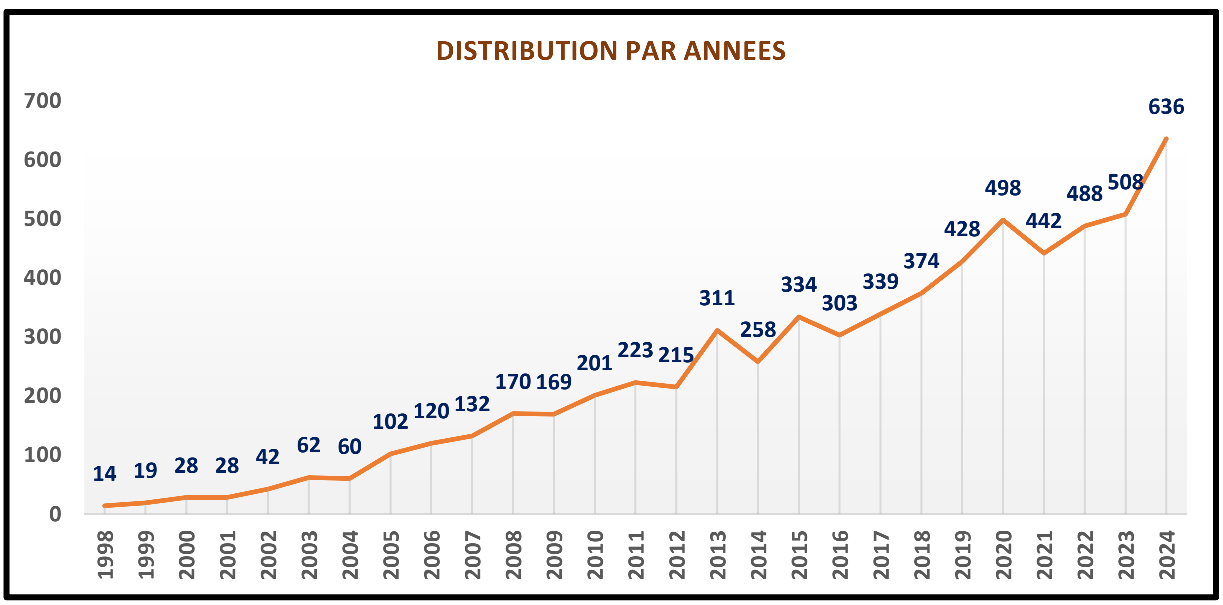
3. Results and discussion

3.1. Performance analysis

3.1.1. Evolution of publications by year

There is a general rising trend in the number of papers published between 1998 and 2024 (figure 3). During this period the number of publications increased 45-fold, from 14 in 1998 to 636 in 2024. This development demonstrates a strong interest in studies on social capital in management sciences. This growing trend can be divided into several distinct phases. From 1998 to 2004, the number of publications was low (253 articles in 7 years) with relatively slow growth. These numbers attest to a discipline that is still emerging in the field of management science. Furthermore, during this period, a significant amount of research was conducted to lay the conceptual and theoretical foundations of social capital. For example, the article entitled "social capital, intellectual capital and the organizational advantage" by Nahapiet and Ghoshal published in 1998, and the article by Adler and Kwon entitled "social capital: prospects for a new concept", published in 2002.

Figure 3: Evolution of the annual number of research articles published on social capital in management science between 1998 and 2024



Source: Developed by the authors from Scopus data and using Excel software.

The second phase covers the years from 2005 to 2015. During this phase, the number of publications is relatively high, exceeding 100 articles per year. Publications accelerated, reaching a peak in 2013 and 2015, demonstrating the continued relevance and importance of using the concept of social capital to address managerial, economic, and social issues.

From 2016 to 2024, the high number of published articles remained consistently high, with research becoming increasingly diverse and interdisciplinary, highlighting the growing importance of social capital in academic discourse. A new peak of 498 articles was recorded in 2020. This is characterised by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has likely pushed publications to the top, highlighting the potential role of capital in managing health, environmental, and economic crises.

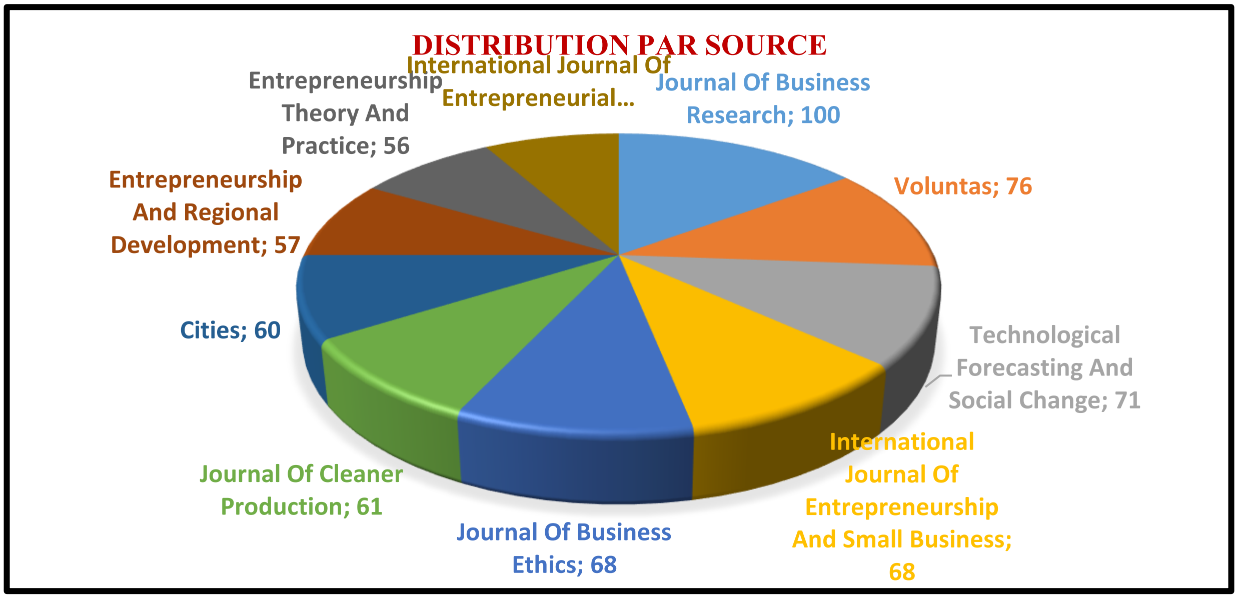
In this context, a study explored the impact of social capital on the proactivity of e-commerce to respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis (Al-Omoush et al., 2020). Other researchers have empirically tested the influence of social networks on supply chain resilience. (Asamoah et al., 2020). In another research project in Africa and Indonesia, authors examined the difficulties faced by small local producers in cultivating, harvesting and selling their products in the context of COVID-19 (Paganini et al., 2020). This study revealed that local production systems continued to function thanks to significant adaptive capacities and social capital.

These studies undoubtedly demonstrate the crucial role of social capital as a determining factor in resilience to social and economic challenges in the context of crisis.

3.1.2. Distribution by source

In terms of publication volume, Figure 4 highlights the ten most productive journals in the field of social capital. The journal that published the most articles is the Journal of Business Research with 100 articles, followed by Voluntas with 76 articles, and Technological Forecasting and Social Change with 71 articles. The journals Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research, despite their rankings at the bottom of the list, actively contribute to scientific publication on this subject with 57, 56, and 55 articles respectively.

Figure 4: The pie chart shows the most relevant journals in the field of social capital research based on the total number of publications. The indicator (text; number) represents the journal name, and the number corresponds to the total number of publications.



Source: Developed by the authors using Scopus data and Excel.

In terms of academic impact **(Table 1)**, the 2024 Cite Score Tracker for the top ten journals ranges from 1.5 for the International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business to 25.5 for Technological Forecasting and Social Change. Some journals, like Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, have a high Cite Score of 22.3 even though they publish fewer articles. On the other hand, certain journals, like the International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business with an impact of 1.5, have a very low Cite Score even though they are highly rated in number of publications.

It is evident that the topics covered in the most referenced articles are varied and multidisciplinary. They address social capital in relation to topics including leadership, innovation, performance, sustainability, and entrepreneurship. The paper "Signaling in Equity Crowdfunding," which was published in 2015, is one example of how some articles are cited more frequently despite their recent publication dates.

As for the major publishers, Elsevier leads with five journals, followed by Springer Nature with two. Taylor & Francis, SAGE, and Emerald Publishing each have one journal among the top-ranked publishers.

Table 1: List of the main scientific journals on social capital in management science: scientific production, impact and most cited articles.

Journal	TP	Cite Score Tracker 2024*	Most cited article (1998-2024)	Times Cited	year	Publisher
Journal of Business Research	100	24.5	How social capital and knowledge affect innovation	211	2011	Elsevier
Voluntas	76	5.1	Social Origins of Civil Society: Explaining the Nonprofit Sector Cross-Nationally	771	1998	Springer Nature
Technological Forecasting and Social Change	71	25.5	Adoption of interrelated sustainable agricultural practices in smallholder systems: Evidence from rural Tanzania	508	2013	Elsevier
International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business	68	1.5	Athletes as entrepreneurs: The role of social capital and leadership ability	58	2015	Elsevier
Journal of Business Ethics	68	14.5	Investigating stakeholder theory and social capital : CSR in large firms and SMEs	523	2010	Springer Nature
Journal of Cleaner Production	61	20.4	Asymmetric impacts of the policy and development of green credit on the debt financing cost and maturity of different types of enterprises in China	300	2020	Elsevier
Cities	60	10.6	Identifying the results of smart city development: Findings from	125	2019	Elsevier

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			systematic literature review			
Entrepreneurship and Regional Development	57	7.1	Human capital, social capital, and innovation : A multi-country study	609	2004	Taylor & Francis
Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice	56	22.3	Signaling in Equity Crowdfunding	1249	2015	SAGE
International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research	55	9.1	The resilient retail entrepreneur : dynamic capabilities for facing natural disasters	122	2018	Emerald Publishing

Source: Developed by the authors from Scopus data

*Last updated on 05 January, 2025

3.1.3. Distribution par auteur

Table 2: The ten most productive authors in the field of social capital research in management science

Author	Year of 1st publication	TP (1)	(2)	HI (3)	TC	Current affiliation	Country
Dana, Léo Paul	1996	16	489	62	14463	Montpellier Business SchoolThe institution will open in a new tab,	France
García-Villaverde, Pedro Manuel	2010	15	61	25	1757	Universidad de Castilla-La ManchaThe institution will open in a new tab	Spain
Glover, Troy D	2003	14	72	27	2478	University of WaterlooThe institution will open in a new tab	Canada
Parra-Requena, Gloria	2011	14	43	20	1188	Universidad de Castilla-La ManchaThe institution	Spain

						will open in a new tab	
Prashantham, Shameen	2004	13	67	25	2226	China Europe International Business SchoolThe institution will open in a new tab	China
Ruíz-Ortega, María José	2010	12	50	20	1315	Facultad de CC. Económicas Y Emp.,	Spain
Suseno, Yuliani	2006	12	53	19	1107	RMIT UniversityThe institution will open in a new tab	Australia
Liu, Chih Hsing Sam	2012	11	150	42	4850	Ming Chuan UniversityThe institution will open in a new tab	Taiwan
Brettel, Malte	2004	10	185	47	6956	Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule AachenThe institution will open in a new tab	Germany
Jones, Oswald E	1996	9	93	29	2486	University of Liverpool Management SchoolThe institution will open in a new tab	United Kingdom

Source: **Developed by the authors from Scopus data**

(1): number of publications according to the research inclusion and exclusion criteria.

(2): number of publications in all categories and since the first.

(3): h-index

We note that Dana, Léo Paul is the most prolific author in social capital research, with a total of 16 articles since 1998 and 489 articles since his first publication (Table 2.). This author has a very high h-index of 62 and a total of 14463 citations.

The second author is Pedro Manuel García-Villaverde, who has published 15 documents and has an h-index of 25 and a total of 1757 citations. Liu, Chih Hsing Sam; Brettel, Malte; and Jones, Oswald E. are the least productive authors among the top ten, yet they have high h-indexes and citation counts. These numbers demonstrate that although the total number of published publications is a crucial indicator of researcher output, it does not always ensure that those works will be highly visible and recognized by academics.

Furthermore, an examination of the authors' countries of origin and affiliated universities reveals a geographical diversity on an international scale. Indeed, the top ten authors are affiliated with European, Asian, and North American universities. This geographical diversity demonstrates that research on social capital in management science enjoys international recognition.

The best articles shown above (table 2) are the ones that are most frequently cited in the most relevant journals. This table's limitation is that it does not include some of the most influential works on social capital research in management sciences that are not published in the most relevant journals mentioned above (table 1). This is why a summary of the top ten most cited papers and their corresponding authors is considered useful (table 3).

Table 3: The top ten most cited articles in the field of social capital research in management sciences (1998-2024)

Document title	Authors	Source	Year	Citations
Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage	Nahapiet J.; Ghoshal S.	Academy of Management Review	1998	11742
Knowledge management : An organizational capabilities perspective	Gold A.H.; Malhotra A.; Segars A.H.	Journal of Management Information Systems	2001	4211
Social capital and value creation: The role of intrafirm networks	Tsai W.; Ghoshal S.	Academy of Management Journal	1998	4178
Why should I share? Examining social capital and knowledge contribution in electronic networks of practice	Wasko M.M.; Faraj S.	MIS Quarterly: Management Information Systems	2005	4059

The role of social and human capital among nascent entrepreneurs	Davidsson P.; Honig B.	Journal of Business Venturing	2003	3054
The network structure of social capital	Burt R.S.	Research in Organizational Behavior	2000	2753
Social capital networks, and knowledge transfer	Inkpen A.C.; Tsang E.W.K.	Academy of Management Review	2005	2740
Understanding knowledge sharing in virtual communities: An integration of social capital and social cognitive theories	Chiu C.-M.; Hsu M.-H.; Wang E.T.G.	Decision Support Systems	2006	2562
Beyond the business case for corporate sustainability	Dyllick T.; Hockerts K.	Business Strategy and the Environment	2002	2376
Contributing knowledge to electronic knowledge repositories : An empirical investigation	Kankanhalli A.; Tan B.C.Y.; Wei K.-K.	MIS Quarterly: Management Information Systems	2005	2344

Source: **Developed by the authors from Scopus data**

It is observed that all the articles have a very high total number of citations. The most influential article is that of Nahapiet and Ghoshal, published in 1998 and entitled "Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organizational Advantage." This article has accumulated 11,743 citations, making it an essential reference for research on the subject of social capital in management science. In this article (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998b), the authors developed a robust theoretical framework demonstrating the impact of social capital on organizational advantages by incorporating intellectual capital as a mediating variable. Furthermore, the authors dissected the concept of social capital into three dimensions: relational, structural, and cognitive, which constitutes an original contribution to the conceptual analysis of this concept.

The other articles are influential but show a significant difference compared to the first article in terms of the number of citations. This number varies between 2,344 for the tenth article and 4,211 for the second article. It is also worth noting that all the articles were published between 1998 and 2006, which attests to their scientific value and lasting impact.

Regarding the topics covered, an analysis of table no. highlights the diverse nature of the subjects: social capital and knowledge management; social capital, organizational advantages and value creation; social capital and entrepreneurship, which proves the interdisciplinary nature of social capital as mentioned previously.

3.1.4. Distribution by country

Table 4: The top 10 most productive countries

Rank	**Country**	**TP (1)**	**Most significant academic institution (2)**
1	United States	1626	University of North Carolina
2	United Kingdom	926	London Business School
3	China	630	Nanjing University
4	Australia	543	The University of Melbourne
5	Canada	363	University of Toronto
6	Spain	328	IE Business School
7	Italy	264	Università di Trento
8	Germany	243	A.T. Kearney GmbH **(3)**
9	France	231	INSEAD (The Business School for the World)
10	India	209	O.P. Jindal Global University

Source: **Developed by the authors from Scopus data**

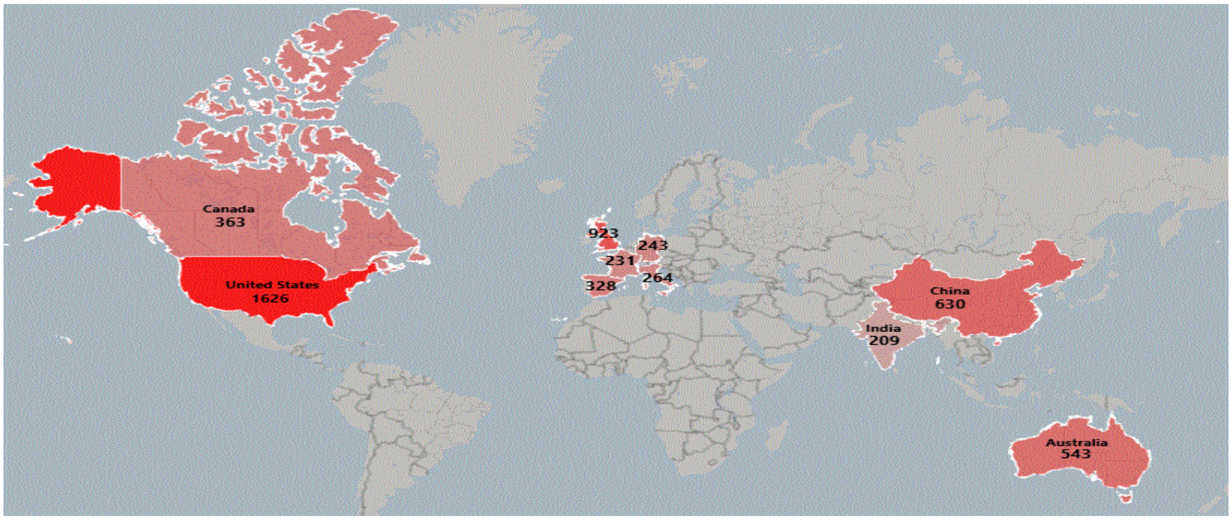
(1): Total publications

(2): The affiliation of the main author of the most cited article.

(3): Strategy consulting firm (German subsidiary).

Table 4 describes the ten most productive countries in terms of research on social capital in management science. The United States dominates with a total of 1626 publications, followed by the United Kingdom with 926 articles. These two countries together account for approximately 47.5% of the articles published by the ten countries (2552 in absolute terms). Regarding the top academic institutions, it is noteworthy that the countries are represented by universities, with the exception of Germany, which is represented by a strategy consulting firm (A.T. Kearney GmbH). This demonstrates the interest of research and consulting firms in the practical and empirical challenges of social capital in companies.

Figure 5: geographical map showing the geographical distribution of the most productive countries.



Source: Created by the authors using Scopus data and Excel software.

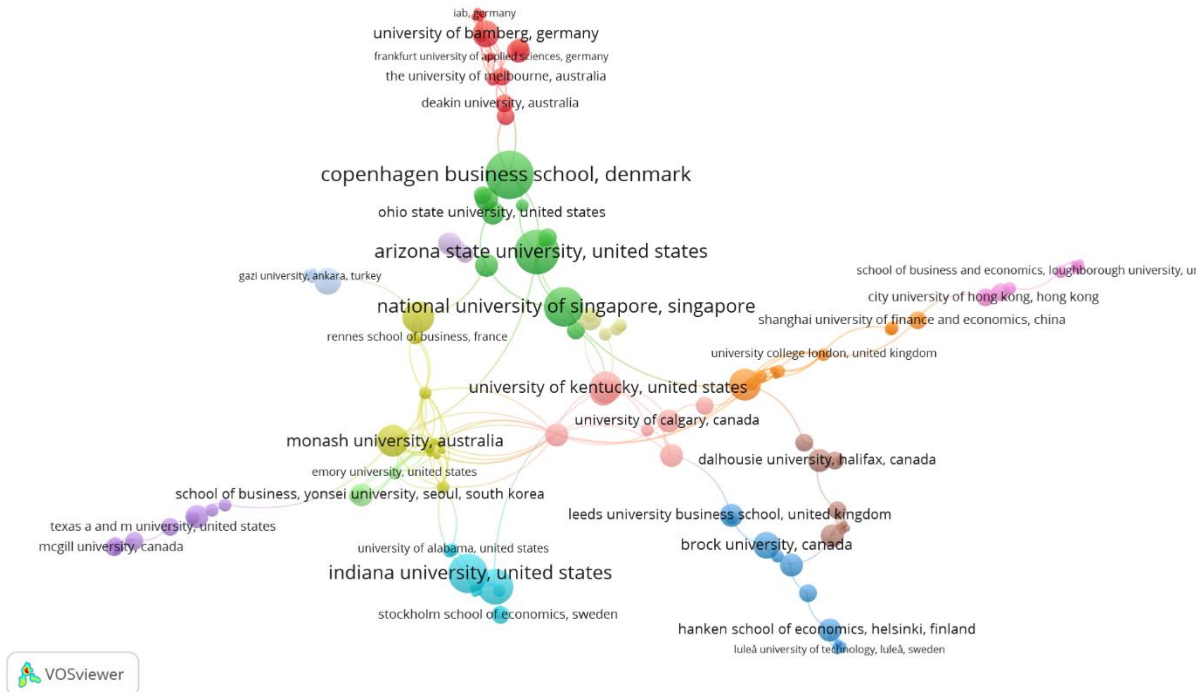
Furthermore, **Figure 5** allows us to quickly visualize that the ten countries are spread across three continents: America (United States, Canada); Europe (United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Germany, France); and Asia (China, Australia, India), demonstrating the international interest in this topic. However, in terms of the development status of the top 10 countries, we note the presence of eight developed countries and only two emerging countries (China, India), and the absence of underdeveloped countries, particularly African countries.

3.2. Analysis of scientific mapping

3.2.1. Co- author

Co-author analysis explores the interactions between researchers in a given scientific field. The benefit of this collaboration is that it contributes to improving research, leading to a greater understanding. (Donthu et al., 2021). The features provided by Vosviewer software allow for the visualization of three types of co-authorship: between authors, between organizations, and between countries. In our case, we opted for the analysis of collaborations between universities. By setting the minimum number of documents per university at 1 and the number of universities at 1000, the data extracted from the Vosviewer software **(Figure 6)** allow us to observe 14 clusters.

Figure 6: Mapping of clusters resulting from the co-authorship analysis of organizations



Source: Developed by the authors using VOSviewer software

The cluster structure highlights the collaboration between universities from different continents, reflecting their diversity and geographical dispersion. For example, Cluster 4 (in yellow) comprises 12 universities from the following countries: Turkey, the United States, France, India, Australia, Colombia, and Ireland. Furthermore, this cluster is also characterized by academic exchanges between developed countries (United States, France, etc.) and emerging countries (India, Colombia, etc.). Cluster 1 (in red), although composed of 14 universities, is concentrated in only three countries: Australia, Germany, and the United Kingdom. It is also observed that some collaborations take place between universities within the same country. This is the case for Cluster 13, which consists of American universities. Finally, we note the lack of African universities participating in international cooperation in the field of social capital research in management sciences.

The visualization of the maps offered by Vosviewer clearly shows the dynamics of international partnerships and the enthusiasm of researchers and universities for building cooperation networks.

3.2.2. Co-occurrence of keywords

Keyword co-occurrence analysis is considered a relevant tool in bibliometric studies. The aim of co-occurrence analysis is to identify, describe, and visually represent the relationships between keywords in a scientific field (Rojas-Lamorena et al., 2022) . The basic unit of co-word analysis is the "word." Co-word analysis is a method that studies the content of publications to explore thematic relationships between words that frequently appear together (Donthu et al., 2021). We will, therefore, examine the co-occurrence of keywords in order to discover the main research themes on social capital in management sciences.

Table 5 presents a list of the main keywords ranked in descending order of the Total Link Strength attribute. This is a standard weight attribute (van Eck & Waltman, 2023). This list confirms the results of (Alan & Köker, 2021) in their bibliometric analysis entitled: "Structural Social Capital Studies in Management and Organization Literature: A Bibliometric Network Study", knowing that they focused on only one dimension of social capital, which is structural social capital. The similarities of the main keywords are illustrated by examples such as: innovation, knowledge sharing, entrepreneurship, human capital, innovation performance, social network, institutional theory… However, some concepts have emerged among the main keywords in our list such as sustainable development, local development and online social networks.

Table 5: List of the 20 main keywords ranked in descending order of Total Link Strength attribute.

Mot clé	Cluster	Total link strength	Occurrences
Social capital	3	10224	3691
Human capital	4	2047	478
Knowledge sharing	2	1709	468
Social networking	4	1564	444
Entrepreneurship	5	1540	434
Innovation	2	1453	379
Networking	3	1019	304
Social networking (online)	2	857	217

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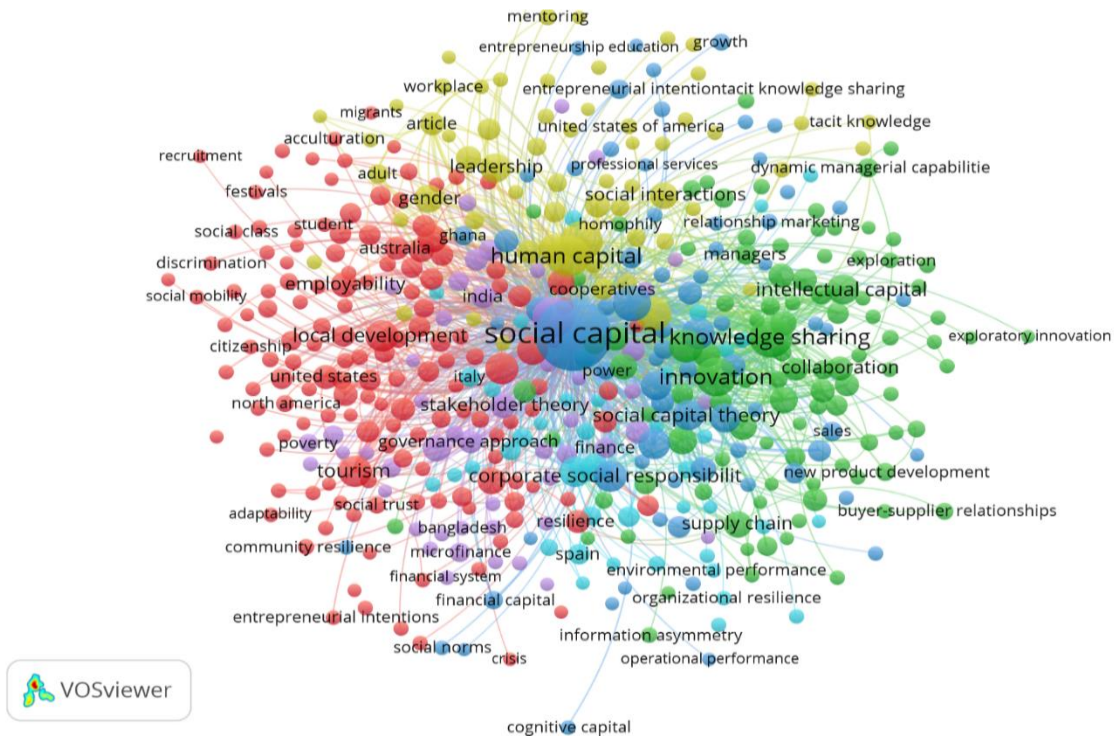
Trust	4	752	239
Local development	1	737	186
Tourism	1	730	174
Sustainability	6	724	146
Quantitative analysis	1	707	130
Economic and social effects	2	620	101
Industrial performance	2	581	84
Smes	3	575	174
Firm performance	3	554	153
Sustainable development	6	548	108
Gender	4	544	123
Institutional theory	2	486	113

Source: Compiled by the authors using VOSviewer software.

Furthermore, an analysis of the keyword co-occurrence map **(Figure 7)** reveals 6 clusters. Cluster 1 (red) contains 106 elements. Within this cluster, the keyword "local development" is the most frequent with 737 total link strengths and 186 occurrences. It is followed by the keyword "tourism" with 730 total link strengths and 174 occurrences. The third most frequent keyword is "quantitative analysis" with 707 total link strengths and 130 occurrences.

Figure 7: Cartography of the clusters resulting from the authors' analysis of the co-occurrence of words



Source: Developed using the VOSviewer software

In cluster 2 (green), the keyword "knowledge sharing" has 1709 total link strengths and 468 occurrences. Next is the keyword "innovation," with 1453 total link strengths and 379 occurrences. The third keyword is "online social networking," with 857 total link strengths and 2017 occurrences. The main keywords for clusters 3, 4, 5, and 6 are presented in **Table 6** below:

Table 6: Thematic clusters from keyword co-occurrence analysis							
Cluster 3				**Cluster 4**			
n°	**Keywords**	**TLS (1)**	**Occ (2)**	**n°**	**Keywords**	**TLS (1)**	**Occ (2)**
1	Social capital	10224	3691	**1**	Human capital	2047	478
2	Networking	1019	304	**2**	Social networking	1564	444
3	Smes	575	174	**3**	Trust	752	239
4	Firm performance	554	153	**4**	Gender	544	123

5	Performance	486	126	**5**	Organizational capital	417	109
Cluster 5				**Cluster 6**			
n°	**Keywords**	**TLS (1)**	**Occ (2)**	**n°**	**Keyword**	**TLS (1)**	**Occ (2)**
1	Entrepreneurship	1540	434	**1**	Sustainability	724	146
2	economic development	458	102	**2**	Sustainable development	548	108
3	Business	378	62	**3**	Technological development	158	22
4	Stakeholder theory	362	73	**4**	Cluster analysis	143	29
5	Investments	290	50	**5**	Board of directors	107	35

Source: Developed by the authors using VOSviewer

(1) : Total Link Strengths

(2) : Occurrences

However, using words as the basic unit of co-occurrence analysis has drawbacks. For example, some words are used in multiple research contexts, making it necessary to read the publications to understand the meaning of the relationships between words. (Donthu et al., 2021).

To overcome these limitations and enrich the analysis, we will subsequently discuss bibliographic linking. This is a highly relevant approach already applied by several authors (Alan & Köker, 2021).

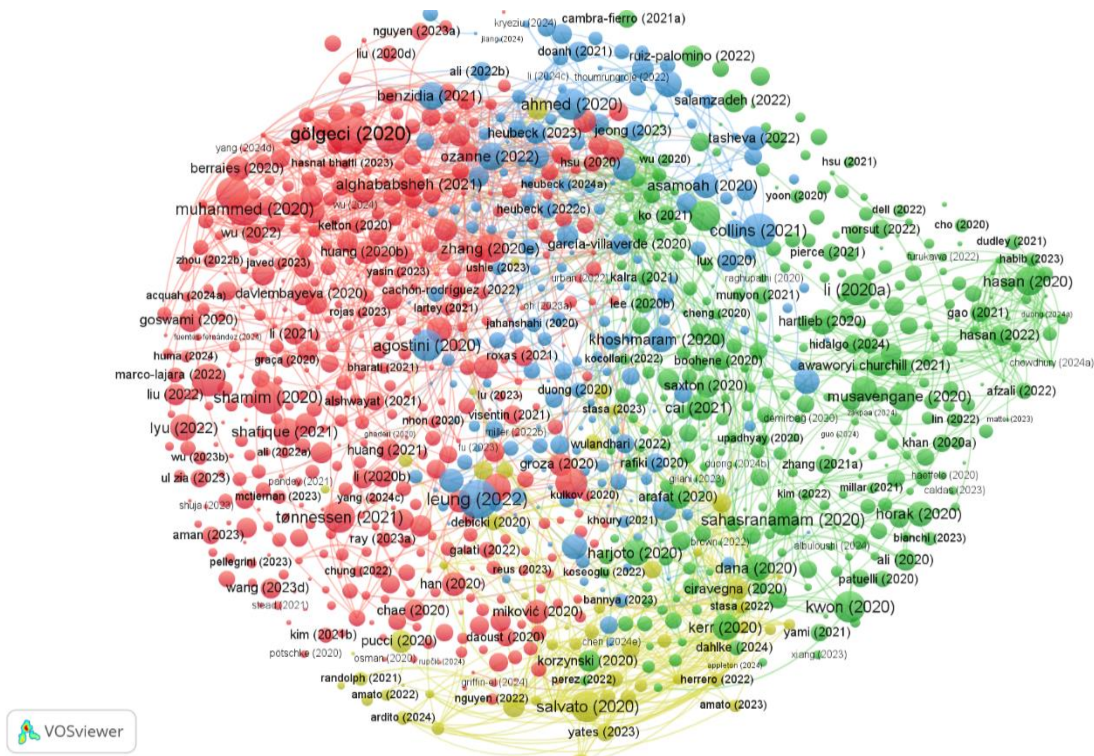
3.2.1. Bibliographic linkage

Finally, to answer question 6, we will proceed with a bibliographic linkage analysis. This step allows us to supplement keyword co-occurrence and obtain a richer and deeper understanding of recent scientific knowledge on a given topic (Rojas-Lamorena et al., 2022). Bibliographic linking allows for the analysis of articles that use the same references, without necessarily citing each other (Donthu et al., 2021). The goal is to discover the latest directions and trends for a given topic (Donthu et al., 2021; Rojas-Lamorena et al., 2022). This is why it is helpful to use a more recent and limited period.

Figure 8 presents the bibliographic linkage map for the last five years (2020–2024). During this period, 2572 articles were published. We can identify four thematic clusters:

Cluster 1, in red, consists, on the one hand, of empirical articles that test the dynamic interactions between social capital and knowledge sharing and their roles in innovation and performance improvement (for example, Berraies et al., 2020; Ghahtarani et al., 2020; Goswami & Agrawal, 2019; Han et al., 2020; Miković et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2021; Tønnessen et al., 2021), and, on the other hand, articles that address quantitative studies on the effect of social capital on the management and resilience of the supply chain (for example (Alghababsheh & Gallear, 2021; Gölgeci & Kuivalainen, 2020).

Figure 8: Mapping of clusters resulting from the analysis of bibliographic linkage



Source: Developed by the authors using VOSviewer software

Cluster 2, in green, consists of studies that focus on the influence of social capital on individual behavior in different contexts such as: the intention to purchase sustainable fashion products (Kim et al., 2020), social trade intentions (Horng & Wu, 2020) , asymmetric cost behavior (Hartlieb et al., 2020). Other articles address social capital from the individual perspective of networking (example,(Awaworyi Churchill et al., 2021; Kwon et al., 2020; Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2022; Sahasranamam & Nandakumar, 2020).

In cluster 3, shown in blue, social capital is coupled with concepts such as human capital, intellectual capital, dynamic capabilities, or dynamic managerial capabilities to solve various problems such as innovation (Khan et al., 2020; Ullah et al., 2021), resilience (Linder et al., 2020; Ozanne et al., 2022), performance (Ahmed et al., 2019; Tasheva & Nielsen, 2022), the financing (Kocollari et al., 2021), human resources management (Collins, 2021) …

Cluster 4, highlighted in yellow, comprises 57 out of 1000 documents. We observed that this cluster is homogeneous in terms of its subject matter. Indeed, it focuses primarily on social capital within the context of family businesses. For example, it includes articles addressing innovation in family businesses (Ardito & Capolupo, 2024; Bendig et al., 2020; Pucci et al., 2020), the role of family social capital in a crisis context (Hadjielias et al., 2022; Salvato et al., s. d.), the performance, competitiveness and sustainability of family businesses (Amato et al., 2023; Ciravegna et al., 2020; Fernandez-Olmos et al., 2020), the internationalization of family firms (Debellis et al., 2023).

Conclusion, limitations and research perspectives

This literature review was conducted as a bibliometric study to examine trends and outcomes in social capital research within management science. In this study, 6504 publications from journals indexed by Scopus and published between 1998 and 2024 were analyzed and then processed using VOSviewer software to generate and visualize bibliometric graphs of international collaborations between institutions, keyword co-occurrence, and bibliographic linkage. Other performance analyses were also performed.

Analyzing the co-occurrence of keywords and their links to existing literature reveals several avenues of research concerning the concept of social capital in management science. These avenues highlight key research areas, such as the role of social capital in local development and tourism, knowledge sharing and innovation processes, and the dynamics of online social networks. Furthermore, the links to existing literature underscore the importance of studying the interactions between social capital, individual behaviors, and network practices, as well as the significant role of combining social capital with other forms of capital and organizational capabilities in explaining firm performance and resilience. These results demonstrate the need for empirical research integrating the structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions of social capital to better understand its overall impact on organizational processes. They also highlight the need for in-depth analysis of social capital in areas that have been relatively understudied, such as SMEs, family businesses, and emerging markets. In this regard, exploring social capital as a driver of innovation and entrepreneurship is a particularly promising avenue of research, especially within Moroccan SMEs, for which relationships and social networks are often key strategic resources for accessing opportunities, knowledge, and funding.

These findings thus open up relevant research perspectives to better understand the role of social capital as a lever for value creation and organizational development.

Like all research, our study has certain limitations. First, the selected sample consists solely of articles from a single database, Scopus. To overcome this limitation, we recommend that future research projects conduct broader analyses using other databases, such as Web of Science, Google Scholar, etc., in order to include as many articles as possible.

Another disadvantage is from the bibliometric approach's inherent limitations, which prevent us from understanding the context in which the concepts are applied in research projects (Donthu et al., 2021). Future research may consider a systematic analysis to further the discussion on the results obtained.

Finally, to enrich this work, we propose employing other bibliometric techniques for future research, such as co-citation studies. This technique could help map the most cited publications and thus discover the theoretical foundations of knowledge. (Donthu et al., 2021).

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