

POVERTY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH: A BIBLOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF SCOPUS-INDEXED JOURNAL ARTICLES (1974-2024)

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 13 July 2025

Revised: 7 January 2025

Accepted: 12 January 2026

Published: 15 March 2026

Keywords:

Poverty, entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation, bibliometric analysis.

ABSTRACT

The World Bank reported a significant decline in global poverty of approximately 29.5% from 1990 to 2023; however, poverty remains widespread, affecting about 659 million people. To sustain their livelihoods, individuals living in poverty often engage in informal entrepreneurship due to its low entry barriers and minimal skill requirements. This study employs bibliometric methods to analyse 1,523 Scopus-indexed journal articles on poverty and entrepreneurship published between 1974 and 2024. The analysis integrates descriptive performance indicators and science-mapping techniques, including citation and co-word analyses conducted using VOSviewer. The findings indicate that the strongest internal co-authorship networks are within the United States, the United Kingdom, and Malaysia. The most influential study is Mair and Marti (2009), which focuses on local institutions acting as social entrepreneurs that leverage constrained resources to alleviate poverty among women. The dominant themes identified through the intersection of co-word analysis, bibliographic coupling, and citation analysis include poverty reduction in developing countries, microfinance and microcredit, and social entrepreneurship. These findings suggest that effective poverty alleviation policies should move beyond innovation-centric entrepreneurship models to empowerment-based, context-sensitive approaches that integrate microfinance, social entrepreneurship, and institutional support to address the realities of necessity-driven entrepreneurship among marginalised populations.

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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1) aims to eliminate extreme poverty and expand social protection coverage by 2030. Despite the global rise in average income, poverty remains a formidable challenge (Pogge, 2005). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this issue, with projections indicating it could push millions into poverty, potentially reversing the global downward trend (Ekwebelem *et al.*, 2021; Bruckner *et al.*, 2022). By 2022, estimates suggest that poverty rates have regrettably rebounded to 2019 levels, affecting

approximately 682 million individuals, or 8.5% of the global population, trapped in extreme poverty. Those living in poverty constitute some of the most vulnerable segments of society, facing not only resource scarcity but also heightened infant mortality, increased child stunting, and reduced educational attainment. Effectively addressing poverty and improving the well-being of these marginalised groups requires policymakers to have access to accurate information regarding the most affected demographics, their geographical distribution,

and the underlying causes of disadvantage. Low-income countries have borne the brunt of this setback and continue to struggle with recovery efforts. The World Bank's April 2024 report reveals a distressing increase, with 712 million individuals worldwide enduring extreme poverty.

Entrepreneurship emerges as a significant tool for poverty reduction, stimulating economic growth and fostering innovation (George *et al.*, 2012; Tobias *et al.*, 2013). Nurturing entrepreneurship through supportive policies and incentives can address poverty and foster sustainable development, ultimately enhancing economic prosperity and socio-economic advancement (Mohammadali & Abdulkhaliq, 2019; Doan, 2022). Poverty and entrepreneurship are two interrelated concepts that have received significant attention from academics and policymakers. While poverty continues to rise and poses a global challenge, entrepreneurship is increasingly recognised as a pathway out of poverty (Steiner & Teasdale, 2019; Zhang *et al.*, 2022).

Entrepreneurship holds significant potential as a pathway for individuals from low-income backgrounds to escape poverty and achieve economic advancement. By starting and managing their own businesses, these individuals can not only generate income but also create jobs within their communities, contributing to overall economic prosperity. Entrepreneurship provides low-income individuals with a means to take control of their financial futures, building resilience against economic downturns and uncertainties. Successful entrepreneurship can lead to a substantial increase in household income, enabling individuals and their families to afford improved amenities, including better housing, education, healthcare, and more.

The research is primarily guided by several theoretical perspectives, particularly from the fields of poverty and entrepreneurship. The intersection of these two areas is increasingly

recognised as a critical pathway for economic development and social mobility, especially for individuals from low-income backgrounds. Key studies in the area such as those by George *et al.* (2012) and Tobias *et al.* (2013), emphasise the role of entrepreneurship in stimulating economic growth and reducing poverty by fostering innovation and job creation. These perspectives highlight how entrepreneurship can be a vehicle for economic advancement, particularly in low-income countries, where it can lead to increased household income and better access to essential services like education, healthcare, and even community development.

Recent studies have increasingly highlighted the intricate relationship between entrepreneurship and poverty, focusing on several key areas: The role of social entrepreneurship in poverty reduction (Zhang *et al.*, 2022), the sustainability of necessity-driven entrepreneurship (Tabares *et al.*, 2022), the effectiveness of microfinance as a tool for poverty alleviation (Kannangara, 2023), entrepreneurial behaviours that can lead to improved conditions for people experiencing poverty (Santos *et al.*, 2022), and the reasons behind the fragility and failure of ventures among the poor (Morris *et al.*, 2023; Morris *et al.*, 2024). Despite growing interest in this area, there is no consensus on the mechanisms through which entrepreneurship can effectively alleviate poverty, particularly in varying socio-economic environments. Addressing this inconsistency is crucial, as it impacts policy formulation, development interventions, and scholarly discourse.

This issue is particularly pressing now for several reasons: The rapid changes in the global economy exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise of digital entrepreneurship and the gig economy, which have introduced new dimensions to the entrepreneurship-poverty relationship, and the increasing focus on entrepreneurship in poverty alleviation policies,

particularly in developing countries with diverse backgrounds. It is critical to evaluate existing research to ensure these policies are informed by comprehensive, up-to-date evidence. Therefore, this study employs bibliometric analysis to inform policymaking by providing valuable insights into the trends, patterns, and dynamics of research in this field.

Bibliometric methods employ quantitative analysis to track trends in past literature. This approach differs from Systematic Literature Reviews (SLRs), which are qualitative and thus prone to authors' interpretation biases (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, SLRs focus on specific topics, as they require comprehensive content analysis to derive suitable themes. In contrast, bibliometric methods utilise extensive datasets of literature records, allowing for broader topics and the observation of long-term thematic trends (Donthu *et al.*, 2021).

Recent and Notable Bibliometric Studies in Poverty and Entrepreneurship

In recent years, the intersection of poverty and entrepreneurship has garnered significant attention from scholars and policymakers. Researchers have utilised various bibliometric techniques to map out the intellectual structure of this field. These studies include analyses of the impact of microfinance on the poor and their well-being (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2022), entrepreneurship as a means to address SDG 1 (no poverty) in Africa (Gyimah *et al.*, 2023), the potential of microfinance solutions for the growth of women-led enterprises (Kato, 2023), and the evolving trends in research on the relationship between social entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development (Miah *et al.*, 2024).

Ribeiro *et al.* (2022) combined bibliometric studies and a SLR of 524 articles from the Web of Science (WoS) database covering 2012 to 2021. They employed methods such as keyword co-occurrence, citation analysis, bibliometric

coupling, and content analysis. Their results identified five thematic clusters related to the impact of microfinance on the poor: Socio-economic outcomes (Cluster 1), the credibility of microfinance regarding social performance or mission drift (Cluster 2), credit access and loan repayment through group lending, social networks, and social capital (Cluster 3), the contribution of entrepreneurial activities and financial service innovations to poverty alleviation (Cluster 4), and the impact of microfinance on vulnerable women (Cluster 5).

Gyimah *et al.* (2023) analysed 200 documents on the SDGs in Africa from the Scopus database, covering 2015 to 2022, using bibliometric and systematic review methods. They examined quantitative aspects such as the top contributing authors, the most productive countries, and the most cited papers, using bibliometric methods and performed keyword analysis. They also conducted content analysis to identify methodological gaps in the SDGs literature. Their study identified two main categories: Entrepreneurship as a solution to poverty reduction and the contributions of renewable energy, tourism, and ICT.

Meanwhile, Kato (2023) reviewed 402 articles from Scopus (2003 to 2023) using co-author analysis, keyword co-occurrence analysis, and thematic analysis. The study identified three major themes regarding the impact of microfinance on women entrepreneurs: economic growth driven by women in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), the potential of microfinance to enhance the sustainability of women-led businesses, and the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in East Africa, including challenges in enterprise development.

Recently, Miah *et al.* (2024) conducted citation and co-occurrence analyses of keywords across 461 articles in WoS (1998 to 2022) addressing poverty through social entrepreneurship for sustainable development. Citation analysis revealed four thematic clusters:

Dynamics of social entrepreneurship (Cluster 1), sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems (Cluster 2), social entrepreneurship for social innovation (Cluster 3), and integrated sustainable entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, co-occurrence analysis identified five thematic clusters: Entrepreneurial development (Cluster 1), sustainable development and higher education strategies (Cluster 2), responsible innovation for inclusive business growth (Cluster 3), sustainable innovation and collaboration in enterprises (Cluster 4), and socio-economic empowerment linkage (Cluster 5).

Based on these recent bibliometric studies, it is evident that the focus is on specific aspects of entrepreneurship and poverty, particularly solutions to poverty eradication through microfinance or microcredit and social entrepreneurship. Recent studies have primarily focused on vulnerable populations such as the poor and women, with a geographical focus on Africa. In contrast, our study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between entrepreneurship and poverty, spanning multiple marginalised and vulnerable groups such as immigrants (Trevizo & Lopez, 2016; Ngota *et al.*, 2018), ethnic minorities (Morrison *et al.*, 2006; Mendy & Hack-Polay, 2018), women (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010), and individuals from conflict-ridden areas such as Afghanistan, Iraq (Renko *et al.*, 2021), and Nigeria (Kolade, 2018). By adopting this broader perspective, we aim to address the knowledge gap in understanding the multifaceted relationship between entrepreneurship and poverty.

This broader perspective has significant real-world implications for practitioners across various fields. For microfinance institutions, the insights gained from our study can be instrumental in tailoring support services for vulnerable groups by focusing on their social performance rather than profit margins. Additionally, the comprehensive geographical and demographic perspective offered by our

study can guide international development organisations such as the United Nations, in creating targeted programmes that address the diverse needs of populations across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Meanwhile, the nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities identified in our study also benefits policymakers in crafting policies to foster entrepreneurship among ethnic minorities, women, and people in conflict zones. Other than that, by understanding why ventures among people with low incomes often fail or succeed, as identified in our study, community and non-profit organisations can provide more effective training and resources to aspiring entrepreneurs in their communities.

This study aims to explore the bibliometric landscape of poverty and entrepreneurship, highlighting key trends, identifying common themes, and offering recommendations for future research. By providing quantitative evidence, this article aims to address the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are the trends in research literature on poverty and entrepreneurship?
- RQ2: What patterns exist in author and country cooperation?
- RQ3: Which work holds the most influence in the fields of poverty and entrepreneurship?
- RQ4: What are the prevalent themes in research papers on poverty and entrepreneurship?

Methodology

The methodology begins with a search strategy in the database, then moves to bibliometric analysis, which is divided into two parts: Performance analysis (descriptive) and science mapping (co-authorship analysis, citation analysis, bibliographic coupling, co-citation analysis, and co-word analysis) (Donthu *et al.*, 2021).

Search Strategy

The chosen database is Scopus because it covers a broader range of journals and is more inclusive than other databases (Moradi *et al.*, 2020). Although using a single database may

limit absolute comprehensiveness, Scopus was selected for its broad, multidisciplinary scope. The first step is to determine the inclusion criteria for our search strategy (Table 1).

Table 1: Inclusion criteria

Document Type	Article
Source type	Journal
Publication stage	Final
Subject area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Sciences • Business, Management and Accounting • Economics, Econometrics and Finance • Arts and Humanities
Language	English

Next, the keywords “poverty” and “entrepreneurship” are incorporated into the query string in the advanced document search in the Scopus database to meet all the inclusion criteria, as outlined below:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (poverty* AND entrepreneur*)AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “SOC”) OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “BUSI”) OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “ECON”) OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “ARTS”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, “English”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, “ar”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, “j”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, “final”))

The total number of recorded documents is 1,523. Subsequently, these documents were transferred to an Excel file for data cleaning, including the removal of duplicates and handling of missing data. Only journal articles written in English were retained, while non-

relevant document types such as conference proceedings and book chapters, were excluded. Descriptive analysis was then conducted (see Table 2 and Figure 2), and the cleaned Excel file was exported to VOSviewer for bibliometric analysis. A PRISMA-style flowchart is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 illustrates the flow diagram of the search strategy, which restricted results to journal articles published between 1974 and 2024 in English. A total of 1,523 records were identified and included in the bibliometric analysis to facilitate a comprehensive thematic exploration. This inclusive methodology supports the study’s objective of capturing diverse socio-economic perspectives on poverty and entrepreneurship that address social issues. The search was therefore limited to relevant subject areas, such as Social Sciences, Business, Management and Accounting, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, and Arts and Humanities.

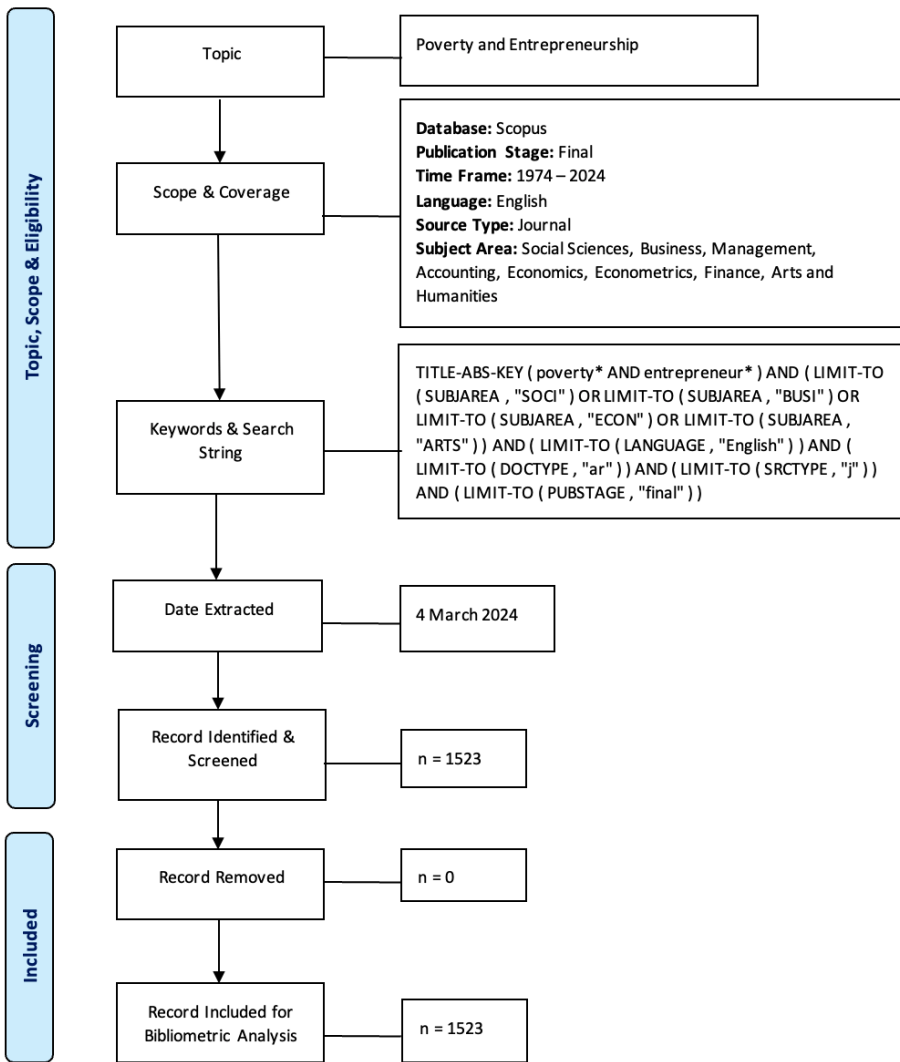


Figure 1: Flow diagram of the search strategy

Results

Descriptive

Table 2: Descriptive information

Papers	1523
Publication years	1974-2024 (50 years)
Total citations	33138
Total contributing authors	159
Citations per year	662.76
Citations per paper	21.76
Single-authored papers	474
Co-authored papers	1049
Publications per year	30.46
h-index	81
g-index	139

The total number of publications is 1,523 documents spanning 50 years from 1974 to 2024. The total number of contributing authors is 159, and the total number of citations for all documents is 33,138, resulting in a rate of 208.42 citations for every contributing author. Meanwhile, the citation rates per year and per paper are 662.76 and 21.76, respectively. The number of single-authored papers is 474, while the number of multi-authored papers is 1,049, indicating that collaboration among authors has resulted in more publications. The h-index is 81, indicating that there are 81 documents in our records with at least 81 citations, while the g-index is 139, showing that there are 139 highly cited documents.

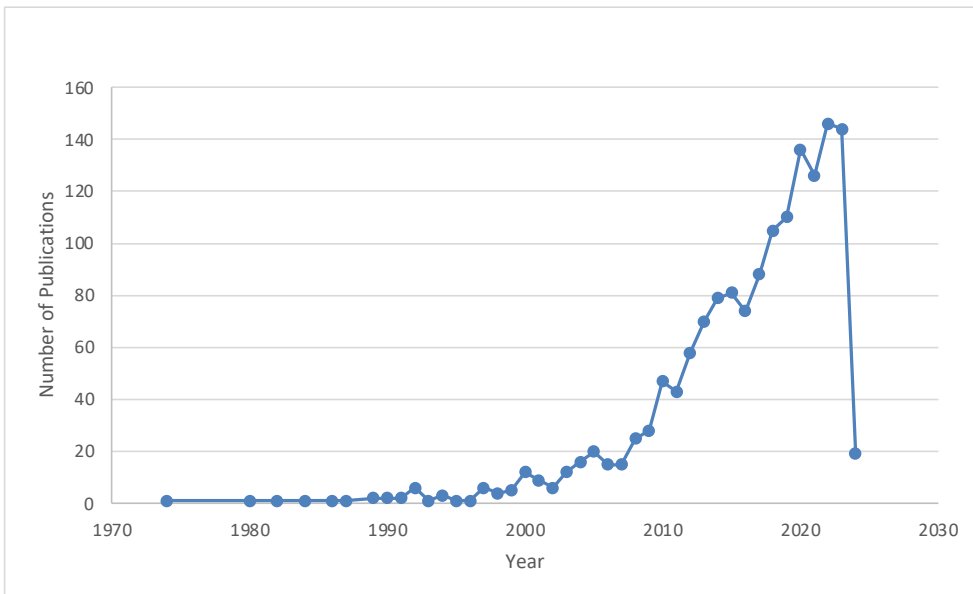


Figure 2: Trend of publications based on year

The trend in Figure 2 indicates that the first document was published in 1974, with no publications recorded until six years later. Subsequently, a few publications were recorded steadily from 1980 until 2000. Starting from 1997, the number of publications increased gradually but exponentially until 2023. As of the

time of writing this article, which is March 2024, only 19 documents were recorded for 2024. The highest number of publications recorded was 146 documents (9.59%) in 2022, with only 2 fewer in 2023, totalling 144 documents (9.46%), indicating a high level of interest among researchers in recent years in this topic.

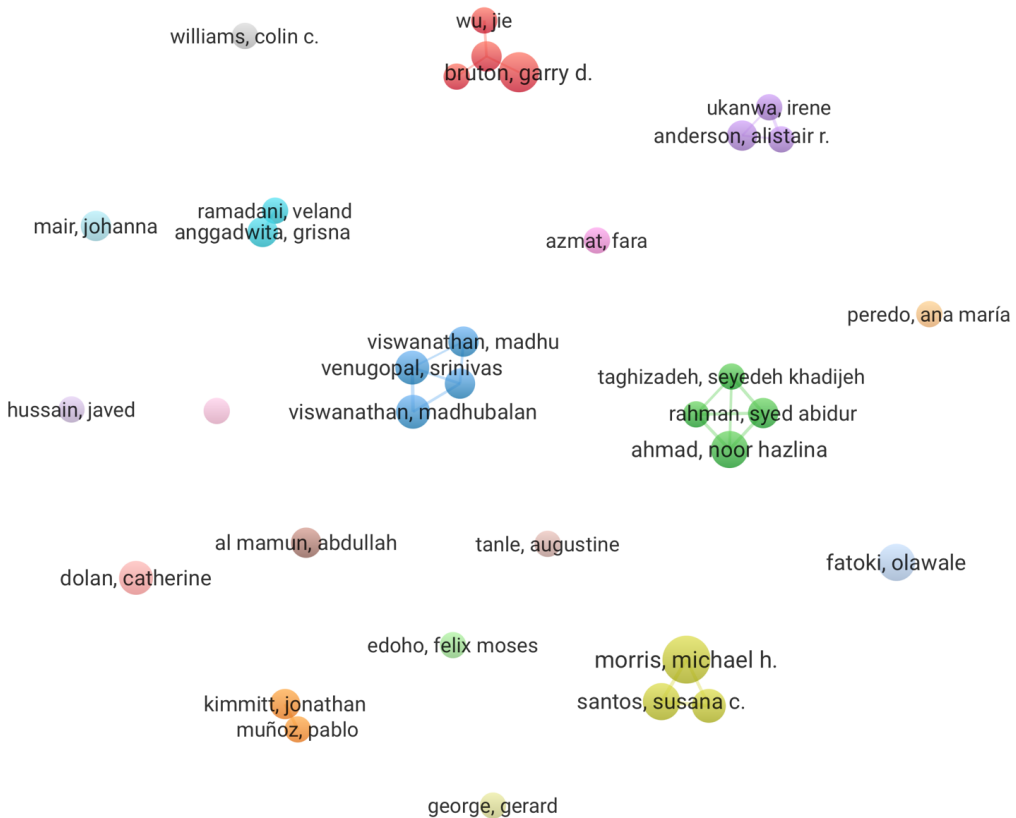


Figure 3: Co-authorship analysis based on authors’ linkage
Source: VOSviewer

Co-authorship signifies intellectual collaboration among scholars within a specific field. Stemming from diverse affiliations across institutions and countries, this collaboration aids in identifying key authors and research groups actively contributing to the field (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). Analysing co-authorship patterns alongside citation data can offer insights into

the productivity and impact of collaborative research (Abdullah & Naved Khan, 2021). In VOSviewer, co-authorship links represent the strength of co-authorship, measured by the number of publications researchers have co-authored (Jan van Eck & Waltman, 2020). Referring to Figure 3, the analysis is based on the threshold that an author must have at least 3

documents and at least 50 citations. Of the 3,317 authors per document, 34 met the threshold. Several strong co-authorship networks will be discussed.

Morris M.H., affiliated with the University of Notre Dame, United States (US), has the strongest co-authorship with Neumeyer X. from the University of North Carolina, US, and Santos S.C. from Rowan University, US. They have co-authored three documents with a total of 205 citations. Additionally, Kimmitt J. from Newcastle University, United Kingdom (UK),

has the strongest co-authorship with Muñoz P. from the University of Liverpool, UK, also contributing to three documents with a total of 163 citations. Moreover, Ahmad N. H. from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Malaysia, has co-authored with Rahman S. A. from Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, Taghizadeh S. K. from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Malaysia, and Amran A. from USM, Malaysia. They have jointly contributed to three documents with 67 citations.



Figure 4: Co-authorship analysis based on countries' linkage
Source: VOSviewer

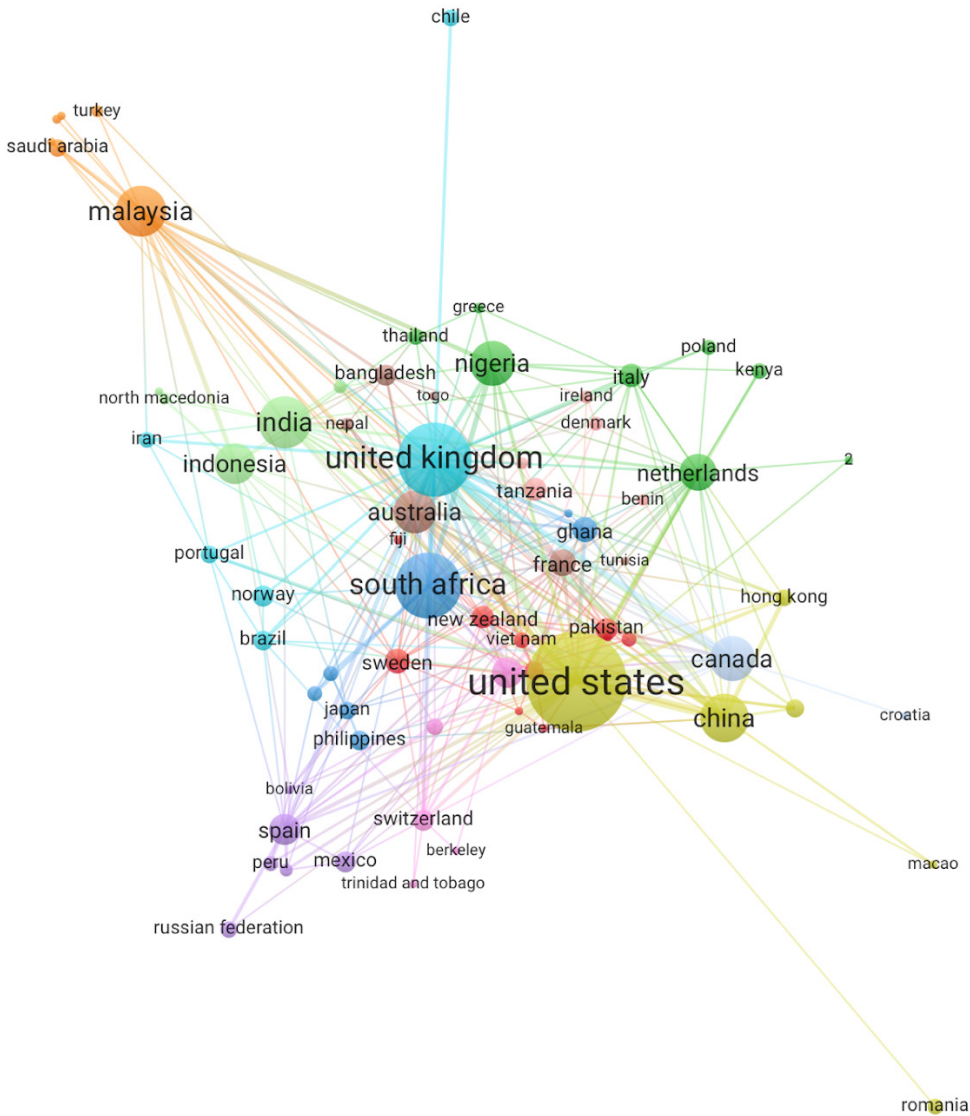


Figure 5: Co-authorship analysis based on countries' linkage that involved collaboration
 Source: VOSviewer

Meanwhile, co-authorship by country shows that, among 120 countries with a threshold of one document and 20 citations per country, publications from the US have the highest link strength, with 363 documents and 13,477 citations. Additionally, scholars from countries

such as the UK, China, Canada, South Africa, Australia, and Malaysia also demonstrate strong collaboration networks, as shown in Figure 5. However, as shown in Figure 4, countries such as Ethiopia, Slovenia, and Cameroon do not have collaboration networks with other countries.

Citation Analysis

In this section, we discuss several of the most influential articles in our records, excluding any review articles due to potential biases and their broad overviews rather than specific analysis. With a threshold set at least 50 citations per document, McDougall *et al.* (1994) stand out with the highest number of citations at 1,047. The study explores international new ventures as startup companies, utilising strategic

alliances and networking to overcome resource poverty. It’s important to note that “poverty” in this context refers to resource scarcity rather than socio-economic conditions, which is our primary focus. Despite its high citation count, this document has no citations to other documents in our records, as shown in Figure 6, suggesting that the topic is not widely discussed among scholars.

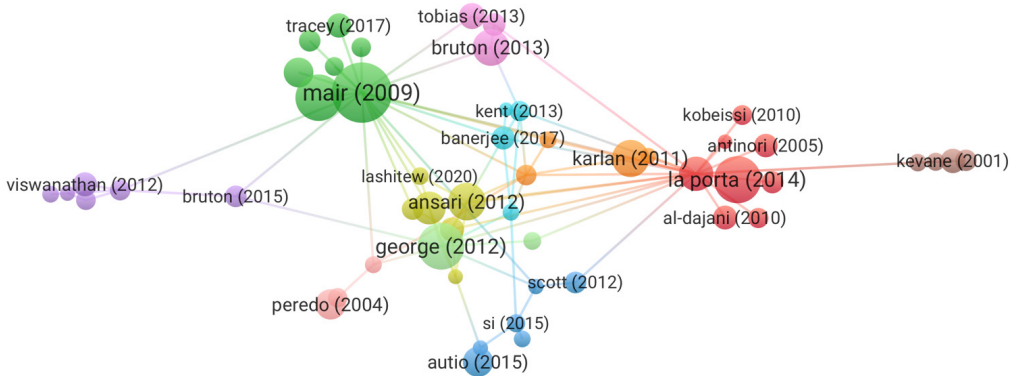


Figure 6: Citation analysis based on documents’ links
Source: VOSviewer

Moving on, the second-highest number of citations is attributed to Mair and Marti (2009), with 945 citations and 59 links, indicating significant discussion among scholars in our records. Mair and Marti (2009) examine the institutional voids hindering market participation among the extreme poor in rural Bangladesh. They focus on a case study of local institutions acting as social entrepreneurs, utilising constrained resources to alleviate poverty among women. This social entrepreneurship institution provided underprivileged women with basic assets such as cows and poultry, for business startups, along with financial, skills, healthcare, and development support to empower them as independent micro-entrepreneurs, thus enabling them to generate their own incomes over time.

Next, La Porta and Shleifer (2014), with 578 citations and 9 links, examine the dualism of the formal and informal business sectors, arguing that each sector remains permanent. They suggest that the informal sector, often a by-product of poverty is run by uneducated individuals who provide low-quality products primarily bought by low-income consumers. In contrast, the formal sector, managed by educated professionals, offers high-quality products for higher-income customers. The study suggests that the solution to growing formal business is through countries’ economic development, despite the potential for informal businesses to disappear during this process. Apart from that, George *et al.* (2012), with 566 citations and 23 links, propose an inclusive innovation framework to enhance the well-being of

the poor by utilising organisational macro-processes as enablers. Mort and Weerawardena (2006), with 410 citations but no links, examine how small firms utilise network capabilities to address resource poverty in international entrepreneurship. The absence of links indicates that this topic has not received substantial attention among poverty and entrepreneurship scholars.

Ansari *et al.* (2012), with 368 citations and 23 links, propose enhancing the well-being of Bottom of Pyramid (BoP) communities through social capital in capability development projects initiated by Multinational Corporations (MNCs) as part of their corporate social responsibility efforts. Karlan and Valdivia (2011), with 359 citations and 18 links, find that while microfinance development services have improved the business knowledge of micro-entrepreneurs, there's limited evidence of significant business expansion or increased profits, underscoring the need for further research on the effectiveness of microfinance services.

Viswanathan *et al.* (2014), with 109 citations and 16 links, explore how survival entrepreneurs leverage the social capital with their customers within the same impoverished community to create unique community-level exchange systems in the informal economy. Halme *et al.* (2012), with 281 citations and 15 links, extensively analyse the innovation strategies of multinational corporations (MNCs) aimed at serving low-income populations, emphasising the utilisation of resource constraints within MNCs to develop inclusive business models for poor communities. Lastly, Scott *et al.* (2012), with 122 citations and 15 links, discuss the emancipatory potential for poor Black women in South Africa through the direct selling of

MNC's Avon products, empowering them to escape poverty and gain self-confidence.

In conclusion, the most influential documents focus on interventions by social entrepreneurial organisations, including MNCs and local institutions, in poverty alleviation, and on how poor entrepreneurs overcome resource scarcity through social capital to sustain their necessity-based businesses. Influential documents are not only those with high citation counts but also those with strong connections to other documents, indicating heightened scholarly interest in these topics.

Bibliographic Coupling

Bibliographic coupling measures the strength of the relationship between two documents based on their shared citing documents or bibliographies. The greater the number of references that two documents share, the stronger their connection is (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Since matching the bibliographies of a publication from 1984 with one from 2023 usually does not make sense, bibliographic coupling is suitable for observing connections within a given timeframe. Subsequently, thematic clusters are formed based on the citing documents (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). With a threshold fixed at least 50 citations per document, the results yield 150 documents and nine clusters, as shown in Figure 7. The documents within each cluster were then manually examined based on their titles, abstracts, keywords, and research focus. Themes were assigned by identifying shared concepts and dominant research emphases across documents within the same cluster, ensuring that each theme accurately reflected the underlying scholarly discourse. A brief overview of each thematic cluster is explained below.

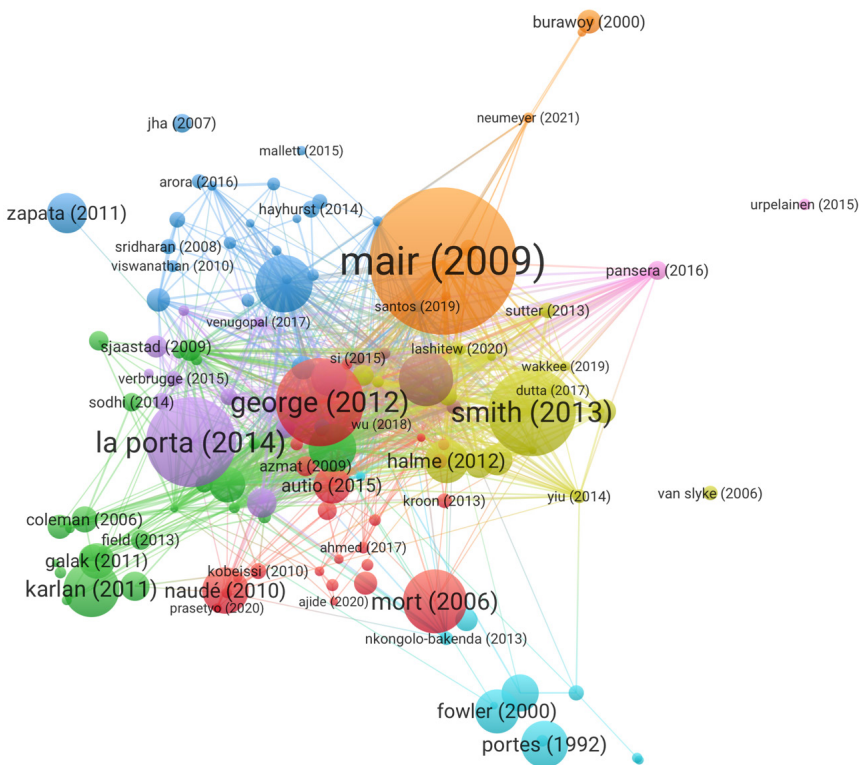


Figure 7: Bibliographic coupling based on documents
Source: VOSviewer

Cluster 1 (Red): Empowerment

This is the largest cluster, containing 25 documents with a total of 3,209 citations discussing the empowerment of poor and marginalised entrepreneurs through capabilities, business growth, innovation, economic development, among other factors, to elevate themselves from poverty. Some influential works in this theme include (George *et al.*, 2012), (Mort & Weerawardena, 2006), (Naudé, 2010), and (Autio & Fu, 2015).

entrepreneurs. Some studies focus on the characteristics of participants in microfinance programmes. Most studies found that the impact of microfinance is either positive, negative, or inconclusive, as evidenced by works such as Karlan and Valdivia (2011), Bradley *et al.* (2012), Galak *et al.* (2011), and Coleman (2006).

Cluster 2 (Green): Microfinance and Microcredit

This cluster comprises 24 documents totalling 3,166 citations that discuss the impact of microfinance programmes and access to credit on poverty alleviation among poor

Cluster 3 (Blue): Social Capital

This cluster comprises 23 documents with 2,435 citations, mostly examining the impact of bottom-up approaches from local communities such as social capital, on sustaining their

informal economies. Relevant studies include Ansari *et al.* (2012), Zapata *et al.* (2011), and Viswanathan *et al.* (2012).

Cluster 4 (Yellow): Social Entrepreneurship

This cluster consists of 16 documents that primarily focus on the role of social-entrepreneurship institutions, including multinational corporations, in poverty alleviation. Notable documents in this theme include Gonin *et al.* (2013), Halme *et al.* (2012), and Tobias *et al.* (2013).

Cluster 5 (Purple): Economic Growth

With 12 documents, this cluster observes that the economic growth of the poor, especially in informal businesses, differs from that of the mainstream economy. Thus, there is a need for inclusive economic growth initiatives to support poverty alleviation efforts, as discussed in works such as La Porta and Shleifer (2014), McMullen (2011), and Alvarez and Barney (2014).

Cluster 6 (Ocean Blue): Marginalised Individuals

This cluster also contains 12 documents primarily discussing marginalised individuals such as immigrants and indigenous entrepreneurs, as explored in works like Portes and Zhou (1992), Peredo *et al.* (2004), and Peredo and McLean (2013).

Cluster 7 (Orange): Institutional Impact and Technology Adoption

With seven total documents, this thematic cluster mostly investigates issues such as the institutional impact on poor entrepreneurs and their technology adoption, as evidenced by works such as Mair and Marti (2009), Kent and Dacin (2013), and Asongu and Tchamyou (2016).

Cluster 8 (Brown): Poverty Reduction Through Entrepreneurship

With five documents in total, this cluster examines the relationship between poverty reduction and entrepreneurship, as discussed in works such as Bruton *et al.* (2013), Si *et al.* (2015), and Kimmitt *et al.* (2020).

Cluster 9 (Pink): Environmentally Friendly Entrepreneurship

The smallest cluster, with only two documents, focuses on environmentally friendly entrepreneurship, such as solar home systems in developing countries, as examined in works like Pansera and Sarkar (2016) and Urpelainen and Yoon (2015).

In conclusion, cross-checking the references of documents in our records provides insights into several themes widely discussed among scholars. These interconnected themes illustrate how entrepreneurship alleviates poverty through multiple mechanisms, including the provision of resources, the enhancement of entrepreneurs' agency, and the achievement of economic and social outcomes, consistent with Kabeer's (2003) three-dimensional empowerment theory.

Co-citation Analysis

Co-citation measures the strength of two documents based on the documents that cite them; the main difference from bibliographic coupling is that it is based on the citing documents. Co-citation analysis means that the higher the frequency with which two documents are cited together in another document, the stronger their connection is (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Thus, co-citation analysis usually helps us identify clusters of highly cited seminal works that provide a strong foundation for later publications (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). In our analysis, we aim to identify influential sources or journals that have published these seminal works. Due to our large dataset, we set the threshold at 50 citations per journal.

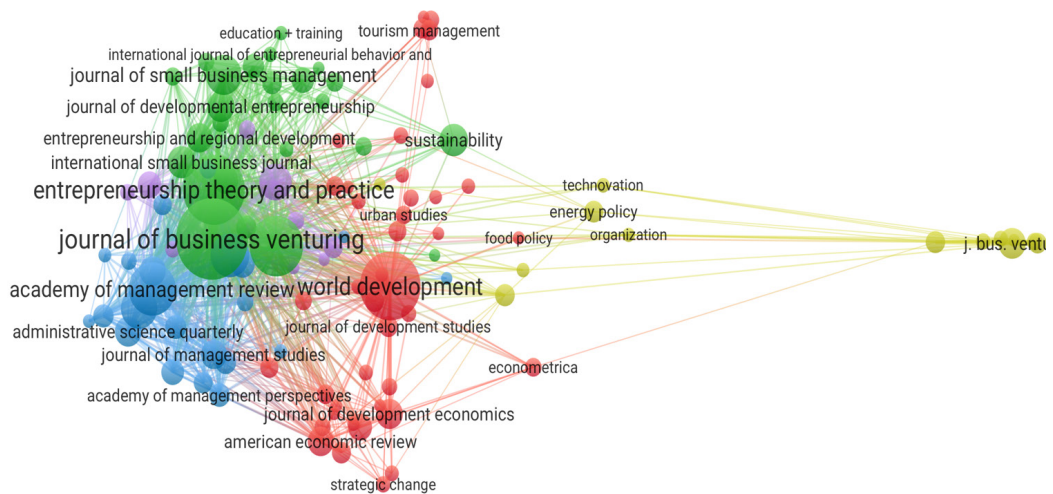


Figure 8: Co-citation analysis based on cited journals

Source: VOSviewer

Figure 8 indicates that academic impact in poverty–entrepreneurship research is dominated by a small number of highly cited studies and authors, suggesting that a limited group of influential works has shaped the field. As depicted in Figure 8, 110 journals are categorised into five clusters. The largest cluster, indicated in red, comprises 46 journals, with World Development leading as the most cited journal (847 citations), followed by Journal of Development Economics (214 citations), American Economic Review (206 citations), Journal of Political Economy (178 citations), and others. All of these influential journals have high impact factors. The second-largest cluster, highlighted in green, contains 25 journals, with Journal of Business Venturing (1124 citations), Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice (873

citations), and Small Business Economics (686 citations) standing out as influential, high-impact journals. The blue cluster, comprising 22 journals, includes high-impact titles such as Academy of Management Review (554 citations), Academy of Management Journal (359 citations), and Journal of Business Ethics (402 citations). The next cluster, represented in purple, comprises nine journals, including notable high-impact titles such as Journal of Business Research (299 citations), Journal of Management (174 citations), and Journal of Macromarketing (123 citations). The smallest cluster, denoted in yellow and totalling eight journals, features prominent high-impact journals such as Science (129 citations), Energy Policy (125 citations), and Technovation (65 citations).

Africa. Scholars in this cluster primarily discuss issues related to entrepreneurship knowledge in poverty reduction to stimulate economic growth in rural and impoverished areas such as Africa and Nigeria. This cluster aligns with the red cluster from bibliographic coupling, which focuses on empowering marginalised individuals through business knowledge to help them lift themselves out of poverty.

Cluster 2 (Green): Microfinance and Microcredit

This cluster consists of 12 keywords such as poverty, microfinance, microcredit, women, training, and microenterprise. These keywords support the earlier findings from the green cluster in bibliographic coupling regarding the impact of microfinance programmes, training, and microcredit loans on poverty alleviation among micro-entrepreneurs, especially women. Cluster 2 demonstrates how microfinance programmes provide critical financial resources to entrepreneurs.

Cluster 3 (Blue): Social Entrepreneurship

With a total of 12 keywords, including social entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation, social enterprise, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Bottom of Pyramid (BoP), social capital, and innovation, this cluster complements the earlier results from bibliographic coupling clusters blue and yellow. These keywords align with themes surrounding the role of CSR, particularly that of multinational corporations, in a bottom-up approach, focusing on social capital and social innovation to sustain the BoP economy.

Cluster 4 (Yellow): Women and Gender Issues

This cluster contains 11 keywords, including women entrepreneurs, gender, economic development, financial inclusion, the informal economy, and neoliberalism. From these keywords, we can conclude that some scholars also have an interest in the economic development

of women entrepreneurs in the informal sector. In the literature on neoliberalism, previous findings often frame women in terms of gender discrimination and their emancipatory potential through entrepreneurship (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010; Dy *et al.*, 2017; Martinez Dy *et al.*, 2018; Althalathini & Tlaiss, 2023).

Cluster 5 (Purple): Sustainable Employment

This cluster comprises 10 keywords: Entrepreneurship, employment, South Africa, sustainability, and education. Based on a quick review of the literature in our records, we found that some scholars often view entrepreneurship as an opportunity for sustainable employment, especially in South Africa, where education and skills are limited.

Cluster 6 (Ocean Blue): Development and Inequality

This smallest cluster consists of five keywords which are development, developing countries, inequality, institutions, and self-employment. Since poverty often exists in developing countries and entrepreneurship often equates to self-employment, we can conclude that this cluster discusses the issues of development and inequality faced by poor entrepreneurs in developing countries.

In conclusion, the keywords within each cluster are consistent with one another, making these themes more reliable than those obtained through bibliographic coupling, which may include confusing references, as seen in the earlier combination of references in the institutional impact and technology adoption cluster.

This thematic synthesis reveals that entrepreneurship offers a promising avenue for alleviating poverty by empowering marginalised individuals through business knowledge, sustainable entrepreneurial activities, and women empowerment. Poverty reduction is facilitated not only through credit

loans but also via training programmes provided by microfinance institutions. Additionally, social entrepreneurship contributes to poverty alleviation through social innovation, often supported by the CSR initiatives of multinational corporations. Other than that, entrepreneurship is seen as a pathway for women living in poverty to realise their emancipatory potential, enabling them to generate income, achieve economic independence, and gradually lift themselves out of poverty and patriarchal culture, particularly within the informal sector.

The thematic clusters identified in this study converge with recent bibliometric research on poverty and entrepreneurship. In line with Ribeiro *et al.* (2022) and Kato (2023), Cluster 2 (Microfinance and Microcredit) and Cluster 4 (Women and Gender Issues) reaffirm the central role of microfinance, microcredit, and training in poverty alleviation and the growth of women-led and micro-enterprises. Consistent with Gyimah *et al.* (2023), Cluster 1 (Poverty Reduction in Poor Countries) highlights entrepreneurship education and business knowledge as key mechanisms for poverty reduction in African contexts, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria. Furthermore, Cluster 3 (Social Entrepreneurship) aligns with the evolving trends identified by Miah *et al.* (2024), emphasising social innovation, social capital, and sustainable development, while additionally foregrounding the role of CSR and bottom-up approaches for bottom-of-the-pyramid entrepreneurs. Finally, the inclusion of Cluster 5 (Sustainable Employment) and Cluster 6 (Development and Inequality) advances existing bibliometric literature by integrating long-term employment sustainability, development contexts, and inequality, suggesting a shift in entrepreneurship research towards a more holistic understanding of inclusive and sustainable development.

Discussions

Bibliometric studies have identified several prominent research themes within the nexus of poverty and entrepreneurship. These include the role of entrepreneurship in poverty alleviation, the impact of socio-economic factors on entrepreneurial activity in disadvantaged communities, and the effectiveness of entrepreneurship programmes and policies in fostering economic development and social inclusion. Additionally, scholars have explored the intersectionality of poverty with other dimensions such as gender, ethnicity, and geography, shedding light on the complex dynamics at play.

Unifying Underpinning Theory

These multifaceted themes can be coherently interpreted through a unifying underpinning theory, namely the three-dimensional approach to empowerment established by Kabeer (2003), which conceptualises empowerment in terms of resources, agency, and achievements (Sadabadi & Rahimi Rad, 2021). This framework provides a comprehensive lens for integrating the six thematic clusters identified in this study.

The dimension of resources aligns most strongly with Cluster 2 (Microfinance and Microcredit) and Cluster 6 (Development and Inequality). Access to microfinance, microcredit, institutional support, and entrepreneurship training equips micro-entrepreneurs particularly in developing countries with both financial and human capital. Within Cluster 6, it is important to understand the structural and social inequalities faced by these individuals, including immigrants, ethnic minorities, women in patriarchal societies, and those from conflict-affected areas, which often drive their necessity-driven entrepreneurship. Classical entrepreneurship theories such as Schumpeterian innovation, emphasise opportunity-driven entrepreneurship and technological change, the bibliometric

clusters identified in this study largely reflect a different reality. The dominant themes focus on necessity-driven entrepreneurship, informality, and survival-oriented ventures, particularly in developing economies. This contrast highlights an important theoretical distinction: Entrepreneurship in poverty contexts often operates outside the innovation-centric assumptions of traditional entrepreneurship theory. Understanding these contexts also helps identify tailored resources and sheds light on the reasons behind the failure of ventures among marginalised groups. Such resources are critical for addressing structural and social inequalities, facilitating self-employment, and reducing income disparities at both micro- and macro-levels.

The agency dimension corresponds closely with Cluster 1 (Poverty Reduction in Poor Countries) and Cluster 4 (Women and Gender Issues). The agency emphasises individuals' capacity to act as active agents of change rather than passive recipients of aid. In this context, marginalised entrepreneurs in rural and impoverished regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria utilise entrepreneurship education and business knowledge to lift themselves out of poverty. For women entrepreneurs, particularly those operating in informal and home-based businesses, agency is further shaped by gendered constraints. Viewed through a neoliberal feminist lens, entrepreneurship becomes a pathway for women to achieve self-sufficiency and realise their emancipatory potential despite persistent structural discrimination.

The achievements dimension is reflected in Cluster 3 (Social Entrepreneurship) and Cluster 5 (Sustainable Employment). Achievements represent the tangible outcomes of empowerment, including poverty alleviation, sustainable employment, and economic resilience. Social entrepreneurship and social enterprises, often supported through CSR initiatives and bottom-up approaches at the

BoP, enable individuals and communities to mobilise social capital and innovation to generate employment opportunities. In contexts such as South Africa, where limited education and skills constrain labour market access, entrepreneurship emerges as a viable mechanism for sustainable employment and long-term economic sustainability.

Within this unifying framework, the findings indicate that entrepreneurship alleviates poverty through three interrelated mechanisms: Resources, agency, and achievements. First, access to resources such as microfinance, microcredit, and entrepreneurship training enables poor and marginalised individuals, particularly in African and low-income contexts, to enter self-employment and stabilise their income. Second, entrepreneurship strengthens agency by enabling vulnerable groups, including women, immigrants, and ethnic minorities, to participate in economic activities where formal labour-market access is constrained. Third, achievement outcomes emerge in the form of sustainable employment and social innovation creation especially through social entrepreneurship and CSR-supported initiatives at the bottom of the pyramid. These mechanisms vary across regions: Entrepreneurship in developing and conflict-affected contexts often supports survival and inclusion, whereas in parts of Europe and Asia, it is more closely linked to opportunity-driven ventures and long-term employment sustainability.

Bibliometric Discussions

The bibliometric analysis provides not only a surface-level mapping of the literature but also a nuanced view of the intellectual content discussed among scholars. Descriptive analysis establishes the field's structural characteristics and maturity, highlighting its growth and citation intensity, but does not indicate who drives the research or what dominates it. Co-authorship

analysis offers a social-structural perspective by identifying key scholars, collaboration patterns, and geographically concentrated research communities, revealing how knowledge production is organised. Co-citation analysis identifies the seminal sources and journals that form the intellectual foundation of the field. In contrast, citation analysis captures works with high influence and active integration through citation linkages. Bibliographic coupling uncovers thematic structures based on shared references, enabling the identification of nine research clusters reflecting current and emerging trajectories. Co-word analysis synthesises substantive content through authors' keywords, providing a concept-driven validation of the themes identified via bibliographic coupling. Taken together, triangulating these methods enables a multidimensional synthesis of structure (descriptive, co-authorship), influence (citation, co-citation), and content (bibliographic coupling, co-word analysis), clarifying the distinct contribution of each method while reducing redundancy in the results.

In this section, we will also discuss the findings above by addressing the research questions raised in the Introduction.

RQ1: What is the trend in the production of research literature?

The trend of publications began to gain momentum in 2007 and has increased exponentially since then. The highest number of publications is in the recent years, 2022 and 2023. This indicates that the poverty and entrepreneurship topic remains relevant and significant for discussion among scholars. This could be due to certain gaps or inconclusive findings that have opened the way for further studies in recent years.

RQ2: What are the patterns of cooperation among authors and countries?

We have seen the strongest cooperation among scholars in the US, the UK, and Malaysia in the co-authorship analysis. This information could be valuable to policymakers in these countries as they engage with prolific scholars on national agendas related to poverty and entrepreneurship. These scholars are Morris M.H., Neumeier X., and Santos S.C. from the US; Kimmitt J. and Muñoz P. from the UK; Ahmad N. H., Rahman S. A., Taghizadeh S. K., and Amran A. from Malaysia. Other than that, collaborative networks are predominantly found in developed countries, while non-collaborative networks are more common in developing countries. However, despite being a developing country, South Africa participates in collaborative networks with developed countries, indicating growing interest among prominent scholars due to South Africa's longstanding poverty issues.

RQ3: Which is the most influential work in the fields of poverty and entrepreneurship?

From citation analysis, we have seen several influential articles in our records. The most influential work, based on its number of citations in Scopus records and its cited connections with other documents in our records is Mair and Marti (2009). Despite providing qualitative studies rather than a fundamental conceptual framework, their exploration of the impact of local institutions on providing financial and non-financial support to poor entrepreneurs for poverty alleviation has attracted significant interest among later scholars. This is supported by our main thematic clusters green, blue, and red in co-word analysis that are related to microfinance, social entrepreneur institutions and poverty reduction accordingly. Hence, we conclude that our bibliometric study can provide empirical, quantitative evidence on the thematic trends of previous researchers.

RQ4: What are the common themes of research papers on poverty and entrepreneurship?

Based on the earlier discussion, we chose the themes that intersect in our co-word analysis, bibliographic coupling, and citations analysis (influential works) to best describe the common themes of research among scholars in poverty and entrepreneurship. We conclude that the common themes are:

- (a) Poverty reduction in poor countries (including empowerment of the poor)
- (b) Microfinance and microcredit (including their impact and the inconclusive findings)
- (c) Social entrepreneurship (including social capital and social innovation approach, either through CSR or the local poor community)

Limitations

While this study provides a comprehensive bibliometric overview of poverty and entrepreneurship research, several methodological limitations warrant critical reflection. First, the analysis relies solely on the Scopus database, which, despite its extensive coverage, may exclude relevant publications in other databases (e.g., Web of Science, Google Scholar), potentially omitting important interdisciplinary contributions. Second, the inclusion criterion was limited to English-language publications, potentially introducing language bias by underrepresenting non-English studies, particularly from developing countries. Third, the citation thresholds set for this study inevitably exclude recent or lower-cited works, even when they are conceptually important or address emerging trends. Fourth, co-citation analysis is based on cited publications, limiting findings to past research, while bibliographic coupling, based on citing publications, constrains findings to a specific timeframe. Collectively, these factors may affect the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the results.

Future studies could enhance rigour and inclusivity by incorporating multiple databases, non-English sources, and normalised citation metrics to capture a more balanced and current view of the field.

Policy Implications

Grounded in the bibliometric evidence derived from co-word analysis, bibliographic coupling, and citation analysis, this study highlights several policy implications for poverty alleviation through entrepreneurship. The strong prominence of microfinance and microcredit across multiple thematic clusters and influential studies indicates that inclusive financial access should remain a policy priority; however, the mixed findings in the literature suggest that financial support must be complemented by non-financial interventions such as entrepreneurship training, mentoring, and institutional assistance, particularly for marginalised groups facing structural inequalities. The dominance of themes related to poverty reduction in poor countries and necessity-driven, informal entrepreneurship further reveals a disconnect between innovation-centric entrepreneurship policies and the realities of low-income contexts, calling for context-sensitive policy frameworks that recognise informality, simplify regulatory requirements, and integrate social protection mechanisms to reduce vulnerability and business failure.

The clustering of research on women and gender issues underscores the need for gender-responsive entrepreneurship policies that address socio-cultural constraints and enhance women's capacity to participate in economic activities. Additionally, the prominence of social entrepreneurship and sustainable employment within the bibliometric clusters supports policies that promote social enterprises and CSR-supported initiatives particularly in bottom-of-the-pyramid settings where formal employment opportunities are limited. Finally,

the concentration of domestic co-authorship networks in developed countries highlights the importance of strengthening policy–research linkages and cross-regional knowledge exchange to support more inclusive, evidence-based entrepreneurship policies.

Conclusion and Future Recommendations

Recent scholars have shown a high interest in the relationship between poverty and entrepreneurship. Despite numerous efforts to reduce poverty through education, business training, credit provision, and guidance, poverty is still widespread. Almost 700 million individuals worldwide are currently living in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$2.15 per day. Furthermore, necessity-based entrepreneurship often fails to evolve into growth-based entrepreneurship due to factors such as a lack of motivation in corrupt environments, adverse economic conditions, and low levels of awareness (Azmat & Samaratunge, 2009), thereby contributing to the prevalence of poverty.

One common theme stated earlier is social entrepreneurship, including the CSR initiatives of MNCs aimed at empowering poor entrepreneurs through innovation and capital. However, some argue that CSR practices may not be readily applicable to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) due to their difficulty in adopting practices tailored to larger firms (Azmat & Samaratunge, 2009). Therefore, despite much literature having adopted large firm practises such as competitive advantage and entrepreneurial competencies (Al Mamun *et al.*, 2018; Al Mamun *et al.*, 2021; Fazal *et al.*, 2022) future studies should be more cautious in applying these practices to poor entrepreneurs, given their differences in capabilities and qualities. Other than that, the inconclusive findings of the impact of microfinance have also

contributed to the common theme discussed in the previous studies. Therefore, more studies in this area are required to address the ambiguous credibility of microfinance and its potential to alleviate poverty.

Despite the burgeoning literature on poverty and entrepreneurship, several research gaps and challenges persist. One notable gap is the need for more nuanced analyses that account for the heterogeneous nature of poverty and entrepreneurship across contexts. Additionally, there is a lack of longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of entrepreneurial interventions on poverty reduction outcomes. Moreover, while many studies focus on the positive role of entrepreneurship in poverty alleviation, less attention has been paid to the potential risks and challenges faced by entrepreneurs from marginalised backgrounds.

On the other hand, this study makes several important contributions to the literature on poverty and entrepreneurship by using a five-decade bibliometric approach. On the theoretical part, this study contributes by demonstrating how entrepreneurship in poverty primarily functions as an empowerment mechanism shaped by institutional conditions, social structures, and necessity-driven motivations.

In conclusion, bibliometric studies offer valuable insights into the dynamic landscape of research on poverty and entrepreneurship. By mapping key trends, research themes, and gaps in the literature, bibliometric analyses provide a roadmap for future studies that advance our understanding of how entrepreneurship can contribute to poverty alleviation and inclusive development. Through interdisciplinary collaboration and methodological rigour, scholars can continue to generate knowledge that informs effective policies and interventions to address the complex challenges of poverty and inequality.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editor for their valuable comments and suggestions, which helped to improve the quality of this manuscript. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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