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Trends and Patterns in Research on Business Sustainability for Women Entrepreneurs: A Bibliometric Approach

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Abstract

This study performs a thorough bibliometric analysis on the topic of business sustainability among women entrepreneurs. It examines patterns, key authors, and highly referenced publications. The study includes a dataset of 899 papers obtained from the SCOPUS database and utilises a variety of bibliometric indicators, such as citations based on authors, countries, and organisations. The data demonstrates a substantial surge in academic attention, as evidenced by the increase in publications over a duration of 20 years, from 1 in 2005 to 194 in 2023. The descriptive analysis revealed the most common document types and countries within the field of business sustainability among women entrepreneurs. Simultaneously, the citation analysis finds the most important papers, authors, and countries in this area of study. In conclusion, this bibliometric analysis gives a broad picture of the large body of academic literature, reveals new trends, shows how research is developing, and helps to better understand the academic discussion about how to make women entrepreneurs' businesses more sustainable. These findings are valuable not just for scholars, but also for policymakers and professionals in the respective domain seeking to enhance their knowledge on the subject.

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing global emphasis on sustainable development has drawn significant attention to the role of entrepreneurship in fostering economic growth, social equity, and environmental stewardship. Within this broad spectrum, the contribution of women entrepreneurs to business sustainability is a critical yet underexplored area. Women entrepreneurs play a vital role in driving innovation, creating jobs, and enhancing community resilience. For women entrepreneurs, achieving business sustainability is not only a business requirement; it also gives an opportunity to establish a strategic advantage tool that will enable future growth. Women-owned firms that adopt sustainable business practices not only assure the longevity of their businesses but also have the potential to impact the economic ecosystems of their local communities positively.

However, women-owned businesses, are susceptible to being influenced by their environment. The most pressing challenge is dealing with limited financial support. They may struggle to secure finance due to financial institutions' restrictive policies. There are also cases where women have restricted funds, as some may be denied the opportunity to inherit or own assets (Md Isa et al., 2019). From a cultural point of view, according to a study conducted by (Selamat & Endut, 2020), the core principles of a patriarchal society, which assert male superiority over females, provide significant obstacles for women entrepreneurs striving to succeed in their businesses. Although it is often believed that women are capable of managing their households effectively (Al-Shami et al., 2019), it is not truly reflected properly in their company operations. This is due to the fact that women-owned firms are more susceptible to being affected by economic crises or family issues (Al-Shami et al., 2019). It is possible that this is owing to the fact that some of these business owners fulfil the role of being the primary breadwinner for their families. This may be the case because of circumstances such as divorce, long-distance relationships with spouses, or polygamous relationships.

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis to map the current state of research on business sustainability among women entrepreneurs. By examining publication trends, influential studies, key authors, and the geographic distribution of research outputs, this study seeks to identify gaps, emerging themes, and future directions. The study aims to find the answer to the following research questions:

- 1. What is the distribution of publications on business sustainability among women entrepreneurs by year, document type, publication language, and country?
- 2. What are the most influential (most-cited) studies, countries, and research in the field of business sustainability among women entrepreneurs?

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing a complete overview of the historical evolution of research on business sustainability among women entrepreneurs. This is accomplished through the application of bibliometric analysis to the existing body of literature. The understanding of the evolutionary path within this research topic and the future study is facilitated by this contribution, which helps researchers better understand the path. The aim is to offer a strong and comprehensive framework that may assist policymakers, educators, and practitioners in promoting and expanding sustainable entrepreneurial enterprises led by women. This will in turn contribute to creating fairer and more resilient economies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's global economy, the concept of business sustainability, which may be defined as the practice of operating a company with a long-term view that takes into consideration potential consequences on the environment, society, and the economy, is becoming increasingly important. According to (S. S. A. Al-Shami et al., 2016), this concept is complex and diverse, and its meaning may differ based on the market sector being addressed. Sustainability is not only a regulatory obligation for business owners but also a strategic advantage for women entrepreneurs in particular. (Lee & Kim, 2019) and (Mohamad & Chin, 2019) both state that sustainable business practices are beneficial in ensuring a company's survival and that it will continue to exist for future generations. (Al-Shami et al., 2019) expresses the same line of thought, which states that the concept of business sustainability refers to the capacity of women-owned businesses to grow and flourish. This is further supported by (Adebisi & Bakare, 2019) and (Al Mamun et al., 2021), who both emphasised that the success and survival of non-subsidiary independent firms were directly related to the sustainability of business operations for small and medium-sized organisations.

Economic sustainability in business involves practices that ensure a company's long-term profitability and viability without compromising future generations' ability to meet their needs. Sustainable practices help businesses build resilience against economic fluctuations, regulatory changes, and resource shortages by promoting efficient resource use, innovation, and risk management. Additionally, businesses that prioritize sustainability tend to enjoy enhanced reputations, attracting customers, investors, and partners who value ethical and responsible operations. Ultimately, economic business sustainability fosters a stable and inclusive economy by supporting job creation, community development, and environmental stewardship, ensuring that businesses contribute positively to society and the planet for future generations.

Economic business sustainability is crucial as it ensures long-term business viability while balancing financial performance with social and environmental responsibilities. The rise of women entrepreneurs significantly contributes to this sustainability, as women are increasingly adopting innovative and community-oriented business models that prioritize ethical labour practices, responsible sourcing, and environmental stewardship. Their unique approaches often lead to more resilient and inclusive economic growth. By fostering sustainable practices within their enterprises, women entrepreneurs not only drive their businesses' success but also promote broader societal and environmental benefits, underscoring their pivotal role in advancing comprehensive economic sustainability.

Women entrepreneurs face several challenges in achieving business sustainability. The main obstacle that women entrepreneurs must overcome is the limited availability of funding sources and financial resources. A notable proportion of women-owned businesses are small-scale enterprises, often leading to restricted resource availability. As a result,

many companies are forced to operate within the constraints of strict budgetary constraints. Regarding the financing of her business, a women entrepreneur typically has two alternatives (Adam et al., 2021): utilising her personal funds or seeking loans from banks, financial institutions, or other family members (Welsh et al., 2017). Occasionally, women entrepreneurs utilise business borrowing to cover personal expenses. They needed money to make their businesses run smoothly and generate income. They needed quick access to money, nevertheless, in order to pay back their debts on time. In addition, people who went through difficult personal circumstances—like illness or the death of a family member—were more likely to miss payments and file for bankruptcy (Al-Shami et al., 2019; Khelil, 2016).

Beyond financial barriers, women entrepreneurs often encounter societal and cultural challenges that impede their sustainability efforts. Gender biases and stereotypes can lead to undervaluation of women-led businesses, affecting their market opportunities and growth potential. (Kamberidou, 2020) posits that small, medium and enterprises (SMEs), particularly women-owned businesses, face persistent pressure from several challenges, including but not limited to jealousy, low self-confidence, gender-related concerns, and lack of support from spouses, family, friends, and the community. Balancing business responsibilities with traditional family roles also adds to the strain, limiting the time and energy women can dedicate to their ventures. Furthermore, women frequently have less access to professional networks and mentorship opportunities, which are crucial for gaining industry insights, resources, and support essential for sustainable business growth. These combined challenges create a complex environment where women entrepreneurs must navigate additional hurdles to achieve and maintain business sustainability.

Despite business sustainability is crucial for ensuring long-term business success, women entrepreneurs encounter multiple obstacles that hinder their development in adopting sustainable practices. These obstacles, which are strongly influenced by financial, societal, and cultural reasons, hinder their capacity to completely incorporate sustainability into their business strategies. Gaining comprehension and effectively tackling these obstacles is crucial for cultivating a more comprehensive and robust entrepreneurial ecosystem. Women entrepreneurs should prioritise the implementation of effective management strategies across all areas of business operations, as these practices have a significant impact on the long-term sustainability of the business (Santos, 2023).

This study will utilise a bibliometric approach to examine trends and patterns in research on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs. The objective is to reveal important findings and provide guidance for ways that assist women in overcoming hurdles and attaining sustainable business success.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised bibliometric analysis to investigate the publication trends regarding company sustainability for women entrepreneurs. Bibliometric analysis involves the quantitative and descriptive statistical evaluation of academic publications. Searching the Web of Science or Scopus databases using specific criteria like topic, author, journal, and time range allows users to access bibliographic information. Bibliometric analysis is utilised by academics for a variety of purposes, including the discovery of developing trends in article and journal performance, patterns of collaboration, and research elements, as well as the investigation of the intellectual structure of a particular topic in the existing body of literature (Donthu et al., 2021).

All the information that was used in this study was obtained from the Scopus database of scientific literature. It is widely recognised as one of the most comprehensive and authoritative indexing databases in the world. According to Scopus developers, the database consists of more than 14,000 scientific, technological, and medical (STM) as well as social science publications from 4000 publishers. That entitle Scopus to be considered as the "largest single abstract and indexing database ever built". The collection consists of 27 million abstracts, including citations from as early as 1966 (Burnham, 2006).

Data was collected using the advanced document search feature on Scopus with certain keywords. This study carefully selected certain keywords and imposed restrictions on the year to create the final query. The search was conducted on 27 February 2024 using the following query strings:

"TITLE-ABS-KEY ("women business owner") OR ("women entrepreneur") OR ("women microentrepreneur") OR ("businesswoman") AND ("business sustainability") OR ("business performance") OR ("business survival") AND PUBYEAR > 2003 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (OA , "all"))"

This search returned 899 relevant publications addressing this topic, spanning 20 years from 2002 to 2024. Through the query, specific bibliographic details from these articles were obtained.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

A) Descriptive analysis

Distribution of Publications by Year

The study began by analysing the distribution of studies published in the Scopus database over the years. The results are shown in Figure 1.

Documents by year

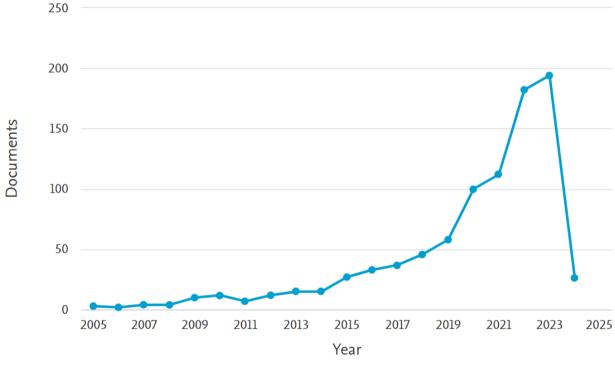


Figure 1: Distribution of Publications by Year

The pattern of publication by year on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs illustrates a significant increase in scholarly output over time, particularly starting around 2010. The number of documents published annually gradually rises until reaching a peak in 2023, with 194 documents signifying a notable surge in research interest in business sustainability for women entrepreneurs. This peak is followed by a slight decrease in 2024, with 26 documents, yet maintaining a relatively higher level of scholarly activity compared to earlier years. The upward trend in publications reflects a growing recognition of the importance of gender inclusivity and sustainable business practices in entrepreneurship, suggesting an increasing focus on understanding and addressing the unique challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in pursuing sustainable ventures.

Distribution of Publications by Document Type and Language

Figure 2 presents a summary of the distribution of publications analysed in the study, classified by document type.

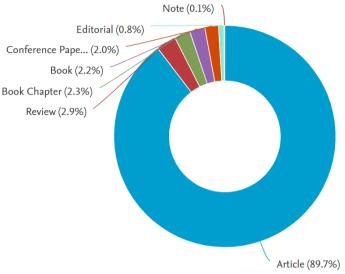


Figure 2: Distribution of Publication by Document Type

The pattern of documents by type on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs showcases a predominance of articles, constituting most of the scholarly output with 806 publications. Reviews and book chapters follow, with 26 and 21 documents respectively, reflecting a moderate level of academic engagement in synthesizing existing knowledge and contributing to specialized discourse. Books and conference papers also contribute significantly to the body of literature, with 20 and 18 documents respectively, indicating a diverse range of scholarly outputs in both long-form and conference settings. Additionally, editorials and notes represent smaller yet notable contributions to the field, with 7 and 1 document respectively, suggesting engagement with current debates and emerging issues in business sustainability for women entrepreneurs across various publication formats.

Distribution of Publications by Country

A comprehensive study was undertaken to examine the distribution of publications pertaining to the research topic across all nations that had at least one publication. Figure 3 depicts the top 10 countries that have the greatest number of publications.

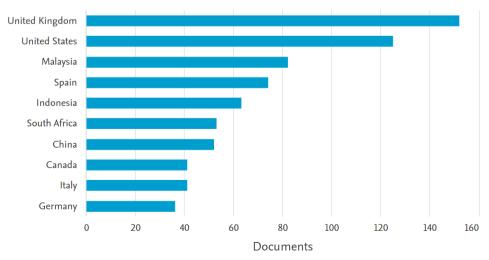
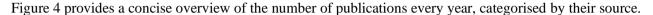


Figure 3: Distribution of Publication by Countries

The pattern of documents by countries on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs reveals a diverse geographical distribution of scholarly contributions, with several countries exhibiting significant engagement in research on this topic. The United Kingdom emerges as the leading contributor with 152 documents, closely followed by the United States with 125 documents, indicating a strong presence of research activity in these regions. Malaysia and Spain also demonstrate notable participation, with 82 and 74 documents respectively, reflecting a growing interest in business sustainability for women entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia and Europe. Furthermore, countries such as Indonesia, South Africa, and China exhibit substantial scholarly output, with 63, 53, and 52 documents respectively, underscoring the global relevance and cross-cultural significance of research in this field. While some countries contribute fewer documents, their inclusion highlights the increasingly global nature of research on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs, with insights and perspectives emerging from diverse contexts across the globe.

Distribution of Publications per Year by Source



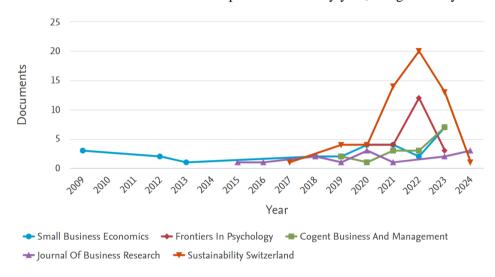


Figure 4: Distribution of Publication per Year by Source

The pattern of documents per year by sources on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs reflects a diverse array of academic journals and publication outlets contributing to the field. Sustainability Switzerland emerges as the leading source, with 57 documents, indicating a substantial focus on sustainability issues within the Swiss context. Small Business Economics and Frontiers in Psychology follow closely with 27 and 23 documents respectively, highlighting the intersection of entrepreneurship, small business management, and psychological aspects in understanding women's entrepreneurship and sustainability. Additionally, Cogent Business and Management, Journal of Business Research, and Journal of Women's Entrepreneurship and Education contribute significantly to the scholarly output, with 16, 14, and 13 documents respectively, showcasing a multidisciplinary approach to studying business sustainability for women entrepreneurs. Moreover, a wide range of other journals and sources, including Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, Journal of Small Business Management, International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal, and International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship, among others, demonstrate the breadth and depth of research engagement in this field across various disciplines and thematic areas.

Distribution of Publications by Subject Areas

Figure 5 presents a comprehensive breakdown of the publications according to their respective subject areas.

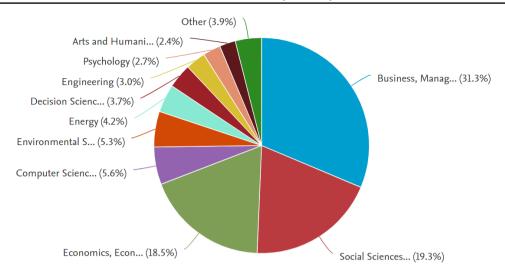


Figure 5: Distribution of Publication by Subject Areas

The pattern of documents by subject areas on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs reveals a diverse range of disciplinary engagement in studying this topic. Business, Management, and Accounting emerge as the primary subject area, with 564 documents, underscoring the central focus on understanding the business dynamics, management strategies, and accounting practices relevant to women entrepreneurs in sustainable ventures. Social Sciences and Economics, Econometrics, and Finance follow closely with 348 and 333 documents respectively, indicating a multidisciplinary approach to examining the societal, economic, and financial aspects of women's entrepreneurship and sustainability. Additionally, Computer Science, Environmental Science, and Energy demonstrate significant scholarly engagement, reflecting the growing importance of technology, environmental sustainability, and energy efficiency in entrepreneurial endeavours. Moreover, Decision Sciences, Engineering, and Psychology contribute to the understanding of decision-making processes, technical innovations, and psychological factors influencing women's participation in sustainable entrepreneurship. Arts and Humanities, Mathematics, and other subject areas also provide valuable insights into the cultural, mathematical, and interdisciplinary dimensions of business sustainability for women entrepreneurs, highlighting the complexity and interconnectedness of factors shaping sustainable entrepreneurial practices.

Distribution of Publications by Authors

An extensive analysis of the publications, as reported by the authors, is shown in Figure 6.

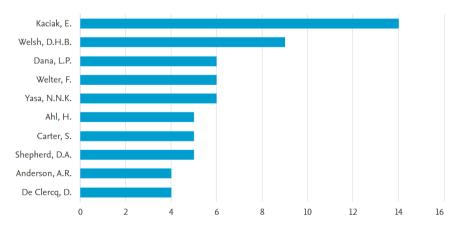


Figure 6: Distribution of Publication by Authors

The pattern of documents by subject authors on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs underscores the contributions of various scholars from diverse backgrounds and regions to the field. Notably, Kaciak, E. emerges as the most prolific author with 14 documents, followed by Welsh, D.H.B., Dana, L.P., Welter, F., and Yasa, N.N.K., each with 6 documents, showcasing a range of research interests and expertise. Additionally, several authors, including Ahl,

H., Carter, S., Shepherd, D.A., and Anderson, A.R., among others, contribute significantly with 5 documents each, reflecting a multidisciplinary approach and collaboration across different thematic areas. Furthermore, a myriad of authors, such as De Clercq, D., Giantari, I.G.A.K., Henry, C., Mamun, A.A., and McAdam, M., among others, demonstrate notable scholarly engagement with 4 documents each, highlighting the global reach and interdisciplinary nature of research on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs.

B) Citation Analysis

Citation analysis reveals the most cited publications, authors, countries, or sources. Citations serve as a quantitative indicator of influence. An article is deemed significant if it has a substantial number of citations. The argument that follows is based on the premise that authors reference documents that they deem significant for their work. Citation analysis can offer insights into the comparative impact of publications, although it does not possess the capacity to detect the interconnected networks of scholars (Zupic & Čater, 2015).

Distribution of Most Cited Studies and Authors

Table 1 displays the 10 most referenced papers and authors in literature along with their information as part of the research.

Table 1: Top 10 Most Cited Studies and Authors

Title	Source of Journal	Author(s)	Year	Number
				of
Why receipt an were	Fatroneo a cuestia :	Abl Holono	2000	citations
Why research on women	Entrepreneurship:	Ahl, Helene	2006	1275
entrepreneurs needs new directions	Theory and			
	Practice			
Human capital and entrepreneurial	Journal of Business	Unger, Jens M.; Rauch,	2011	1117
success: A meta-analytical review	Venturing	Andreas; Frese, Michael;		
		& Rosenbusch, Nina		
Gender differences in business	Small Business	Fairlie, Robert W.; &	2009	454
performance: Evidence from the	Economics	Robb, Alicia M.		
characteristics of business owners				
survey				
The influence of personality traits	Journal of Business	Hwee Nga, Joyce Koe; &	2010	438
and demographic factors on social	Ethics	Shamuganathan,		
entrepreneurship start up intentions		Gomathi		
Unpacking diversity, grasping	Organization	Zanoni, Patrizia;	2010	384
inequality: Rethinking difference		Janssens, Maddy;		
through critical perspectives		Benschop, Yvonne; &		
		Nkomo, Stella		
Explaining female and male	Entrepreneurship	Verheul, Ingrid; Stel,	2006	384
entrepreneurship at the country	and Regional	André Van; & Thurik, Roy		
level	Development	_		
Gender and entrepreneurship	International Small	Henry, Colette; Foss,	2016	362
research: A review of methodological	Business Journal:	Lene; & Ahl, Helene		
approaches*	Researching			
	Entrepreneurship			

Reconceptualizing entrepreneurial	Journal of Business	Wennberg, Karl;	2010	357
exit: Divergent exit routes and their	Venturing	Wiklund, Johan;		
drivers		DeTienne, Dawn R.; &		
		Cardon, Melissa S.		
Extending Women's	Entrepreneurship:	Hughes, Karen D.;	2012	347
Entrepreneurship Research in New	Theory and	Jennings, Jennifer E.;		
Directions	Practice	Brush, Candida; Carter,		
		Sara; & Welter,		
		Friederike		
Gender, entrepreneurship, and bank	Entrepreneurship:	Carter, Sara; Shaw,	2007	301
lending: The criteria and processes	Theory and	Eleanor; Lam, Wing; &		
used by bank loan officers in	Practice	Wilson, Fiona		
assessing applications				

Table 1 refer the top ten most cited studies and authors in the field of business sustainability for women entrepreneurs encompass a diverse range of topics and methodologies, reflecting the multidimensional nature of research in this area. Helene Ahl's seminal work "Why research on women entrepreneurs needs new directions" published in Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice in 2006 stands out as the most cited study, emphasizing the necessity for innovative research paradigms in understanding women's entrepreneurship. Other notable contributions include Unger et al.'s meta-analytical review on human capital and entrepreneurial success, Fairlie and Robb's examination of gender differences in business performance, and Hwee Nga and Shamuganathan's study on the influence of personality traits on social entrepreneurship start-up intentions, among others. These studies, published in prestigious journals such as Journal of Business Venturing, Small Business Economics, and Journal of Business Ethics, collectively offer valuable insights into various aspects of women's entrepreneurship, including diversity, inequality, methodological approaches, and access to finance, thereby enriching the scholarly discourse and informing policy interventions aimed at fostering sustainable entrepreneurship among women.

Distribution of Most Cited Countries

Table 2 displays the findings of the citation analysis based on the researchers' country of publication. The analysis threshold is set at a minimum of 5 documents per country.

Table 2: Top 10 Most Cited Countries

Country	Number of	Number of	Citation per
	Publications	Citations	Publication
United Kingdom	152	5653	37
United States	126	5111	41
Sweden	33	2984	90
Germany	36	2446	67
Canada	41	1489	36
Spain	74	1463	20
Malaysia	82	1093	13
Italy	41	839	20
Polan	32	823	26
Norway	16	729	46

Table 2 shows the top ten most referenced nations in the topic of business sustainability for women entrepreneurs, indicating a worldwide interest and involvement in this research area. The United Kingdom and the United States are in the forefront in terms of publications and citations. The United Kingdom, with 152 publications, has garnered 5653 citations, indicating a citation per publication ratio of 37, while the United States follows closely with 126 publications and 5111 citations, resulting in a slightly higher ratio of 41. Sweden emerges as a notable contributor with 33 publications but a remarkably high number of citations at 2984, resulting in a citation per publication ratio of 90, underscoring the significant impact of Swedish research in this domain. Germany, Canada, and Spain also make substantial contributions, each with a considerable number of publications and citations, highlighting the global reach and importance of research on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs. The varying citation per publication ratios across these countries suggest differences in the depth and impact of their research contributions, with some nations achieving particularly high levels of influence per publication, such as Sweden and Norway, indicating the quality and relevance of their research output in advancing the field.

Distribution of Most Sources for Publications

Table 3 displays the findings of the citation analysis based on the sources for publication. The analysis threshold is set at a minimum of 5 documents per source of publication.

Source of Publications	Number of Publications	Number of citations
Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice	12	2158
Journal of Business Venturing	7	2147
Small Business Economics	27	1641
International Small Business Journal: Researching	9	871
Entrepreneurship		
Journal of Business Research	14	687
Journal of Small Business Management	12	668
Entrepreneurship and Regional Development	7	601
Journal of Business Ethics	6	546
Sustainability (Switzerland)	57	408
Frontiers in Psychology	23	272

Table 3: Top 10 Sources for Publications

Table 3 displays the top 10 sources for publications in the topic of business sustainability for women entrepreneurs, which consist of a variety of scholarly journals that have made major contributions to this area of study. "Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice" emerges as the most prolific source with 12 publications and 2158 citations, reflecting its central role in disseminating cutting-edge research on entrepreneurship. Following closely is the "Journal of Business Venturing", renowned for its high-impact studies, with 7 publications and 2147 citations. "Small Business Economics" also stands out with 27 publications and 1641 citations, highlighting its significance in exploring the intersection of small businesses and sustainability. Other notable sources include the "International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship", "Journal of Business Research", and "Journal of Small Business Management", each contributing substantially to the scholarly literature on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs. Additionally, interdisciplinary journals such as "Sustainability (Switzerland)" and "Frontiers in Psychology" demonstrate the multidimensional nature of research in this field, underscoring the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in understanding and promoting sustainable entrepreneurship among women.

CONCLUSIONS

The exploration of trends and patterns in research on business sustainability for women entrepreneurs using a bibliometric approach has revealed significant insights into the evolving landscape of this field. The increasing recognition of the critical role women entrepreneurs play in fostering economic sustainability underscores the importance of supporting their efforts to implement sustainable business practices. Despite the numerous challenges they face, including limited access to capital, societal biases, and the balancing of professional and personal responsibilities, women entrepreneurs continue to make substantial contributions to sustainable development.

This paper has provided a detailed overview of the current research trends and patterns in business sustainability for women entrepreneurs. By using a bibliometric approach, we have been able to identify key areas of focus and gaps in the existing literature. Moving forward, it is essential to continue this line of research, with an emphasis on practical applications and policy implications that can support women entrepreneurs in their sustainability efforts. Addressing these issues will not only benefit individual women-led businesses but also contribute to broader economic and social development, paving the way for a more sustainable and equitable future.

In conclusion, the bibliometric research of company sustainability among women entrepreneurs has uncovered fascinating trends and findings. Nevertheless, this paper does possess specific constraints, which can provide prospects for suggestions. Initially, this study exclusively gathered articles from the Scopus database. Utilising several database sources consistently enhances the extent of primary information in the investigation. Hence, it is imperative to contemplate the inclusion of additional databases, such as WoS, in future endeavours. Furthermore, this study only concentrates on conducting a descriptive analysis by studying the publication trends and citation analysis, with a specific focus on the most highly cited authors, papers, and nations. In the future, researchers may explore additional methods of analysis, such as co-authorship analysis and co-citation analysis, to gain a deeper knowledge of the research area's patterns and trends.

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