

Cultural and Social Value Drivers of SME Performance: A Bibliometric Review

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Abstract

This study maps research on cultural and social value drivers of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) performance using a bibliometric approach. A structured search of Scopus-indexed journal articles published between 2016 and 2024 yielded 325 records. Keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted in VOSviewer using full counting and all keywords, with a minimum occurrence threshold of four and selection of the top fifty keywords based on total link strength. The resulting network indicates a dense conceptual core centered on social capital, performance, innovation, organizational culture, and competitiveness, suggesting that cultural and relational value constructs are most often discussed through the lenses of capability-building and competitive advantage. Beyond this core, connected themes emphasize entrepreneurship and leadership, knowledge management and sharing, and sustainability-oriented concepts, indicating that performance is increasingly framed in terms of more than purely financial outcomes. The review also shows that local wisdom appears as a connected but less dominant stream, while digitally oriented and resilience-related themes are becoming more visible in recent publications. Overall, the findings provide a clear overview of the field's thematic structure, highlight underexplored conceptual boundaries, and identify future directions for improving construct clarity, measurement consistency, and comparative research across sectors, countries, and institutional settings. These insights can support more targeted theory development and evidence-based SME policy design.

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, Cultural Values, Organizational Culture, Performance, SME, Social Capital.

Introduction

Understanding the cultural drivers of SME performance is increasingly vital in a globalized, rapidly changing business landscape. Culture, expressed through shared values and beliefs, has been positioned as a key enabler of innovation dynamics in SMEs, and scholars emphasize a shift from a static view of culture to a more transformational perspective that co-evolves with environmental change, leveraging SMEs' flexibility and flattened structures (1). In this context, SMEs are often considered more adaptive than larger organizations because their relatively simple organizational structures allow cultural values and social interactions to become deeply embedded in daily managerial and entrepreneurial activities. This flexibility enables SMEs to respond more quickly to environmental uncertainty, technological change, and evolving market expectations

while maintaining strong relational ties with internal and external stakeholders. Furthermore, the close interaction between owners, employees, and communities often enables SMEs to build stronger social cohesion and organizational commitment, which may contribute positively to long-term business continuity and innovation performance. Evidence from SME research also shows that performance outcomes are not only associated with operational initiatives but are shaped by organizational culture, which can directly influence SME performance and affect how improvement practices translate into results (2). At the individual level, entrepreneurial culture matters because entrepreneurial orientations and cultural values may differ across contexts and have been widely examined as important determinants influencing SME competitiveness, strategic

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behavior, and performance across regions (3). In many entrepreneurial settings, cultural orientation influences how entrepreneurs perceive opportunities, manage uncertainty, establish trust, and develop collaborative relationships. These culturally influenced behaviors often shape strategic decision-making, innovation, and long-term business sustainability within SMEs.

Social and cultural values are increasingly recognized as important intangible resources that influence how SMEs develop capabilities, maintain stakeholder relationships, and respond to competitive and institutional pressures. In many SME contexts, particularly within emerging economies, relational trust, shared norms, community-based interactions, and culturally embedded organizational practices play a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial behavior, innovation capacity, and long-term business sustainability. These social and cultural dimensions are therefore frequently associated not only with financial performance but also with resilience, adaptability, and sustainability-oriented competitiveness. The growing relevance of sustainability and inclusive development has further strengthened scholarly interest in understanding how culturally embedded values influence SME competitiveness. In local business ecosystems, social cohesion, collective identity, reciprocity, and informal institutional arrangements often serve as mechanisms supporting cooperation, resource exchange, and entrepreneurial continuity. Consequently, SMEs operating within supportive social and cultural environments may possess stronger adaptive capabilities during periods of economic instability and market disruption.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are widely recognized as engines of employment and broader economic activity, particularly in emerging economies, where they contribute substantially to output and job creation (4). At the same time, their performance is often shaped by culturally embedded values and socially grounded relations because SMEs rely heavily on social networks, trust, and relational mechanisms to secure resources, access opportunities, and reduce uncertainty (5). However, the evidence base remains dispersed, and conceptually overlapping studies may label similar relational cultural mechanisms under different terms (e.g., social

capital, embeddedness, personal relations, economic interaction), making measurement and causal linkage to performance outcomes more challenging (6). In addition, the literature addressing cultural and relational drivers of SME performance is often spread across multiple disciplines, including entrepreneurship, sociology, organizational studies, innovation management, and regional development. This disciplinary fragmentation creates challenges in identifying conceptual boundaries, synthesizing empirical evidence, and understanding the field's broader intellectual structure.

To reduce fragmentation, this study applies bibliometric mapping to identify the field's intellectual structure and major thematic areas. It then discusses implications and highlights research gaps based on the mapped themes. Bibliometric analysis is particularly relevant because it enables researchers to systematically evaluate publication trends, thematic clusters, conceptual relationships, and emerging research directions within large bodies of literature. Compared with conventional narrative reviews, bibliometric approaches provide a more comprehensive and objective understanding of knowledge development patterns and thematic evolution.

Although prior studies have examined social capital, organizational culture, entrepreneurship, and SME performance, much of the literature remains fragmented across partially disconnected thematic streams. Existing bibliometric and review studies also tend to focus on specific constructs or sectors rather than examining the broader interconnections among cultural values, relational resources, sustainability-oriented performance, and emerging entrepreneurial contexts. This study contributes by integrating these overlapping themes into a unified bibliometric mapping framework, thereby identifying conceptual linkages, emerging thematic developments, and underexplored areas for future research on SME performance. Furthermore, this study contributes by providing a broader perspective regarding how social and cultural values interact with entrepreneurial ecosystems, organizational adaptability, and sustainability-oriented competitiveness within SMEs. By synthesizing fragmented research streams, this study seeks to clarify the field's intellectual structure and identify

opportunities for future theoretical and empirical development.

Accordingly, we address three research questions: (RQ1) What is the thematic structure of research on cultural/social value constructs and SME performance? (RQ2) Which keywords, sources, and geographic contexts are most prominent in this literature? (RQ3) What future research directions emerge from the bibliometric evidence?

Methodology

Data Source and Search Strategy

We used Scopus as the sole database to ensure consistent indexing and export formats for the bibliometric analysis. The search was performed in the TITLE-ABS-KEY fields using a structured query that combined three core concept blocks:

- a) culture/value constructs (local wisdom; traditional/indigenous knowledge; cultural values/dimensions; organizational culture; and social capital);
- b) SME-related terms (SME/MSME and variants, including small and micro enterprise terms);
- c) performance-related outcomes (e.g., business/firm/organizational/financial performance, profitability, growth, competitiveness, and competitive advantage).

Broader contextual terms such as “business,” “enterprise,” and “performance” were intentionally included to maximize retrieval coverage and reduce the risk of overlooking relevant studies on SME performance. To improve dataset relevance and consistency, the retrieved records were screened for title, abstract, language, document type, and thematic alignment before inclusion in the final bibliometric dataset.

To improve precision, the query also included contextual business terms (e.g., business/firm/enterprise and entrepreneur/owner-manager). The search was limited to journal

articles and to the Scopus publication-year filter (PUBYEAR > 2015 and PUBYEAR < 2025), resulting in 325 records. Only English-language journal articles were included in this study. Conference proceedings, book chapters, review articles, and non-English publications were excluded to maintain consistency in bibliographic metadata, ensure peer-reviewed scholarly quality, and improve the comparability and reliability of the bibliometric analysis. The complete Boolean search string used for the Scopus database retrieval is provided in Appendix A to enhance the study's transparency and reproducibility.

Although foundational studies published prior to 2016 remain important in shaping the theoretical understanding of constructs such as social capital and organizational culture, the selected timeframe was intended to capture more recent developments and contemporary thematic trends in SME performance research, particularly those related to sustainability, resilience, and digital transformation.

This database-driven search strategy follows established guidance for transparent bibliometric reviews and ensures reproducibility of the retrieval process (7). Consistent with science-mapping workflows, we treated search and preprocessing as critical steps because data quality and term consistency strongly influence network and cluster stability (8).

To strengthen methodological rigor and reporting transparency, this study follows the PRISMA framework, which is widely used to improve transparency and reproducibility in systematic and bibliometric review studies. A PRISMA-style flow process was also applied to document the identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of bibliographic records used in the final bibliometric dataset, as illustrated in Figure 1 (9).

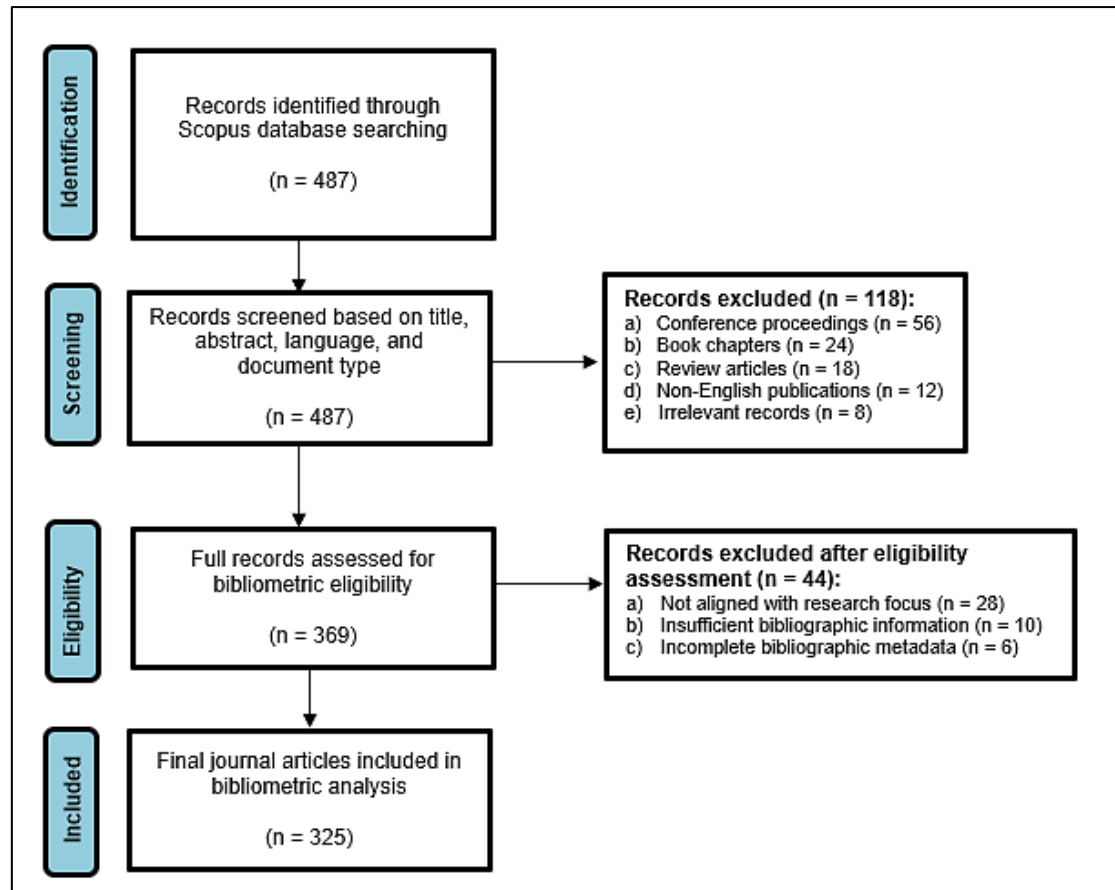


Figure 1: Article Selection and Screening Process

Bibliometric Procedure

Bibliometric mapping focused on keyword co-occurrence to reveal conceptual linkages. Records were exported from Scopus and analyzed in VOSviewer. We used full counting and applied a thesaurus file to harmonize synonyms (e.g., SME/SMEs/MSMEs; cultural values/value).

Automated preprocessing was primarily performed using Scopus export standardization and VOSviewer procedures. In contrast, manual cleaning was applied through thesaurus-based harmonization of synonymous terms, abbreviations, and closely related keyword variations (e.g., SME/SMEs/MSMEs; cultural value/values). Because thesaurus construction may involve interpretive decisions, iterative consistency checking was performed during preprocessing to reduce subjectivity and improve term standardization across the bibliometric network.

The minimum keyword occurrence was set to 4, yielding 63 eligible keywords; the map retained the top 50 keywords by total link strength to improve readability. Network visualization was generated with node size reflecting occurrences

and link thickness reflecting co-occurrence strength.

Keyword co-occurrence (co-word) mapping is widely used to uncover the conceptual structure of a research field. At the same time, VOSviewer provides validated network visualization and clustering routines for large bibliographic datasets (10). We additionally followed good practice by relating co-occurrence patterns to performance-relevant domains, including operations and supply chain contexts (11).

Our focus on intellectual capital, organizational culture/climate, and innovation-related terms is consistent with empirical evidence that these intangible resources and contextual conditions are strongly interrelated and positively associated with SME performance in transition-economy settings. In addition, the inclusion of social capital and community- and stakeholder-oriented concepts in the search string aligns with resource-based and stakeholder perspectives, demonstrating that relational resources (e.g., social and intellectual capital, entrepreneurial orientation,

and strategic management of community ties) contribute to small business performance.

Prior methodological work also shows that VOSviewer can process sizeable text-derived term networks when the input is prepared in the required format, supporting its flexibility for term mapping (12). We also aligned the reporting of mapping choices (unit of analysis, counting method, thresholds, and term unification) with recommended bibliometric workflows to improve interpretability and comparability across studies (13).

Results and Discussion

To address RQ1, we first describe the thematic structure using the keyword co-occurrence

network and theme synthesis. To address RQ2, we then report prominent keywords, leading sources, and major contributing countries. Finally, we use these bibliometric signals to motivate future research directions for RQ3.

Publication and Source Trends

This section summarizes descriptive patterns in the dataset, including publication output over time and the most active publication venues. These indicators complement the keyword network by showing how the literature has grown and where it is published. In line with RQ2, we focus on the most frequent keywords, the most active publication venues, and the leading geographic contributors.

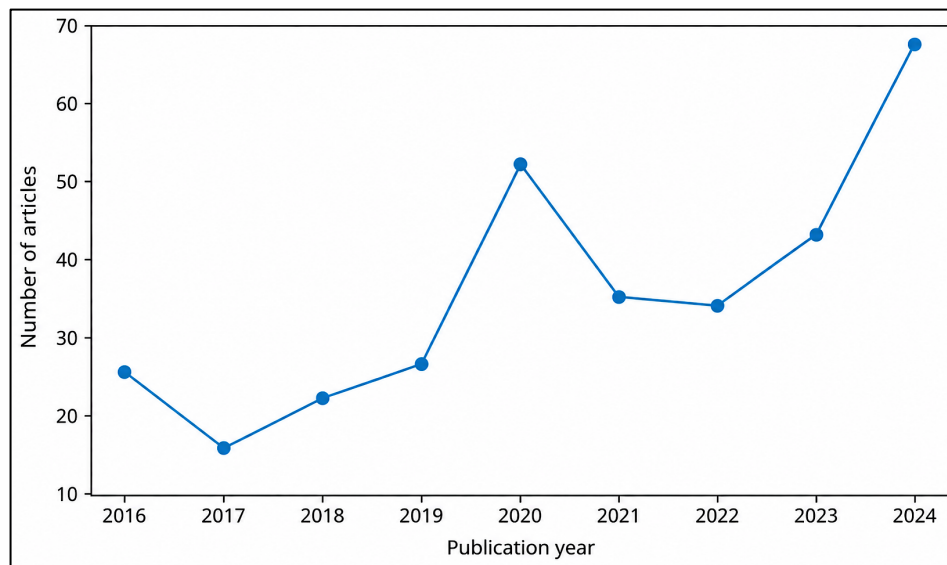


Figure 2: Annual Publication Trend from Scopus Dataset (n=325) (14)

Figure 2 shows a clear upward trajectory in publication activity over the study period, indicating growing scholarly attention to cultural and social value drivers of SME performance. The acceleration in recent years suggests an expanding research community and a broadening set of themes, which is further examined through the

subsequent source, geographic, and keyword analyses. Table 1 presents the leading publication sources in the dataset. The distribution shows that research on cultural and relational drivers of SME performance is mainly published in sustainability, entrepreneurship, innovation, and small business journals.

Table 1: Top Sources by Number of Publications (top 15)

Source Title	Documents
Sustainability	21
Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development	5
Cogent Business and Management	4
International Journal of Innovation Management	4
Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies	4
Journal of Enterprising Communities	4
Journal of the Knowledge Economy	4
Southern African Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management	4
Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal	3

Revista Venezolana de Gerencia	3
International Journal of Manpower	3
International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning	3
Review of International Business and Strategy	3
International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management	3
PLoS ONE	3

The dominance of journals focused on sustainability and entrepreneurship among leading publication outlets indicates that research on cultural and relational drivers of SME performance is increasingly linked to broader discussions of sustainability, innovation, and long-term competitiveness. This pattern also reflects growing interdisciplinary interest in the relationship between cultural resources, organizational capabilities, and SME resilience.

Geographic and Author Productivity Patterns

We next report geographic productivity to indicate which countries/regions contribute most to the literature on cultural drivers of SME performance. If desired, author and affiliation productivity can also be summarized to identify leading contributors.

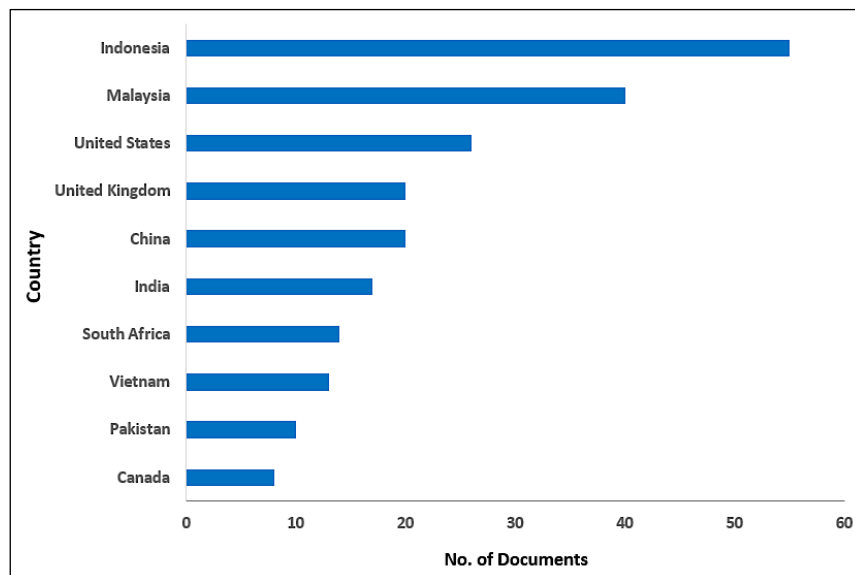


Figure 3: Top Countries by Publication Output (Top 10) (14)

Figure 3 indicates that publications are concentrated in a small number of countries/territories, with strong representation from emerging-economy contexts (e.g., Indonesia and Malaysia) alongside major research hubs (e.g., the United States, China, and the United Kingdom). This pattern suggests that culturally grounded performance drivers are frequently examined in settings where local values and community-based relationships are salient for SME competitiveness. The geographic concentration of publications in emerging-economy contexts also suggests that cultural and relational dimensions of SME performance are particularly relevant in environments where informal networks, local knowledge, and community-based interactions

play a stronger role in business development. At the same time, the distribution of publications across countries highlights opportunities for future comparative research to examine how institutional conditions, regional business ecosystems, and cultural contexts shape the relationship among social capital, organizational culture, and SME performance outcomes.

After presenting publication sources and geographic distribution, Table 2 summarizes the top-cited articles in the dataset. These highly cited studies provide the main intellectual basis for interpreting the relationship among sustainability, resilience, social capital, organizational culture, innovation, and SME performance.

Table 2: Top Cited Articles in the Dataset (top 15)

Year	Title	Source	Citations	References
2023	Role of Digital Transformation for Achieving Sustainability: Mediated Role of Stakeholders, Key Capabilities, and Technology	Sustainability	353	(15)
2019	Rethinking organizational resilience and strategic renewal in SMEs	Entrepreneurship and Regional Development	275	(16)
2018	Social capital, knowledge sharing, and innovation of small- and medium-sized enterprises in a tourism cluster	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	228	(17)
2024	Impact of Organizational Culture on The Level of Corporate Social Responsibility Investments: An Exploratory Study	Circular Economy and Sustainability	168	(18)
2022	Sustainable Leadership Practices and Competencies of SMEs for Sustainability and Resilience: A Community-Based Social Enterprise Study	Sustainability	162	(19)
2019	Intellectual capital, organisational climate, innovation culture, and SME performance: Evidence from Croatia	Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development	132	(20)
2017	Entrepreneurs' Social Capital and the Economic Performance of Small Businesses: The Moderating Role of Competitive Intensity and Entrepreneurs' Experience	Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal	116	(21)
2017	Knowledge management and intellectual capital in networks of small- and medium-sized enterprises	Journal of Intellectual Capital	115	(22)
2017	Extending the resource-based view: Effects of strategic orientation toward community on small business performance	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	101	(23)
2020	Human capital, institutional economics and entrepreneurship as a driver for quality and sustainable economic growth	Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues	99	(24)
2018	From social network to firm performance: The mediating effect of trust, selling capability and pricing capability	Management Research Review	99	(25)
2022	Entrepreneurial Orientation, Organizational Culture, and Business Performance in SMEs: Evidence from Emerging Economy	Sustainability	93	(26)
2021	Business as unusual: A business model for social innovation	Journal of Business Research	91	(27)
2021	Organizational culture and leadership as antecedents to organizational flexibility: implications for SME competitiveness	Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies	89	(28)
2021	Dynamic capabilities, value creation and value capture: Evidence from SMEs under Covid-19 lockdown in Poland	PLoS ONE	86	(29)

The most highly cited articles in the dataset indicate that research on SME performance has increasingly adopted interdisciplinary perspectives integrating sustainability, social capital, organizational culture, innovation capability, resilience, and digital transformation. Highly cited studies emphasize that SME competitiveness is not solely determined by financial or operational capabilities, but is also strongly influenced by intangible and relational resources such as social capital, organizational culture, intellectual capital, knowledge sharing, and stakeholder engagement (15, 16).

Several influential studies highlight the growing importance of sustainability-oriented leadership, resilience, and social innovation in strengthening SME adaptability in uncertain environments, particularly in the post-pandemic context (17, 18). In parallel, other studies emphasize the strategic role of social capital, trust, entrepreneurial orientation, and knowledge-sharing networks in enhancing innovation capability and business performance among SMEs (19, 20).

The citation patterns also demonstrate increasing scholarly attention toward organizational culture, intellectual capital, and community-oriented

strategic behavior as critical mechanisms supporting long-term SME sustainability and competitiveness (21-23). Furthermore, recent studies increasingly position digital transformation and social innovation as emerging strategic themes shaping SME resilience and sustainable business models in contemporary economic environments (24).

Bibliometric Network Structure

This section presents the bibliometric findings from the keyword co-occurrence analysis. Using VOSviewer (all keywords; full counting), we developed a network map to visualize how culture- and value-related constructs are connected to research on SME performance. The map highlights central topics (high-frequency and highly connected keywords) and their associations, providing a structured overview of the field.

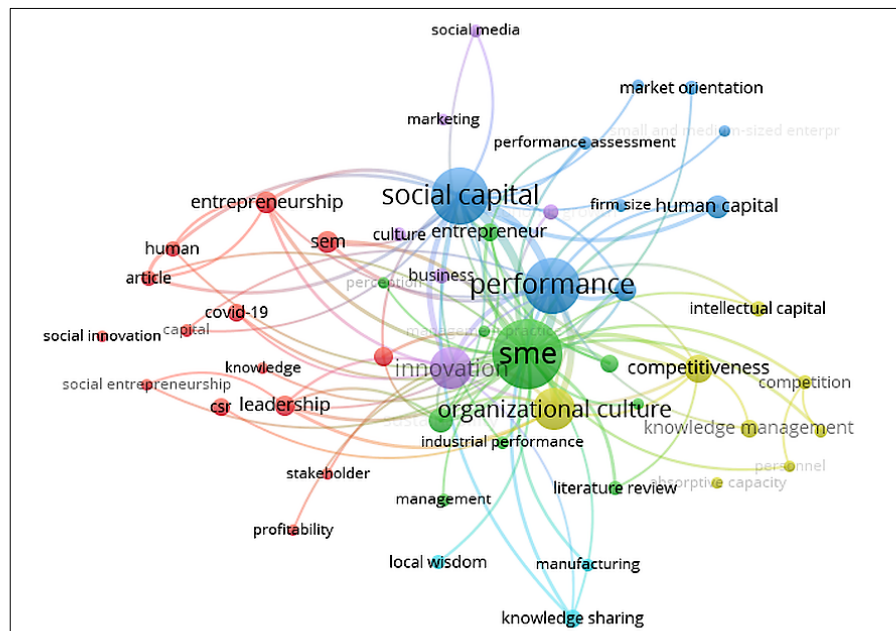


Figure 4: Keyword Co-occurrence Network Generated Using VOSviewer (All Keywords; Full Counting; Minimum Occurrence Threshold = 4; Top 50 Keywords Based on Total Link Strength)

Figure 4 presents the keyword co-occurrence network generated with VOSviewer, illustrating the conceptual relationships among dominant themes in SME performance research. Figure 4 depicts an outcome-centric knowledge structure in which SMEs, performance, and social capital serve as the main hubs. The close alignment of organizational culture, innovation, and competitiveness suggests a dominant pathway in which cultural and organizational factors are discussed

alongside capability-building mechanisms that support competitiveness and performance. Sustainability-oriented terms also appear in proximity to core performance concepts, implying that performance is increasingly discussed beyond purely financial outcomes. While local wisdom is not among the most dominant terms, it remains embedded within the broader culture-performance discourse, supporting the rationale for a focused research agenda at this stage.

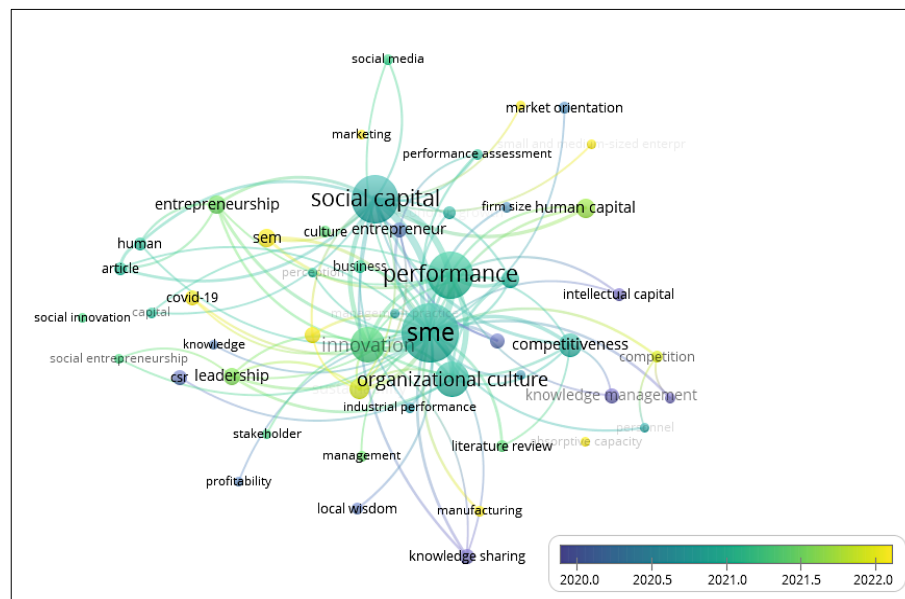


Figure 5: Overlay Visualization of the Keyword Network Showing Temporal Thematic Development Based on Average Publication Year

Figure 5 shows the temporal development of the keyword network based on the average publication year. The overlay view helps identify topics that appear more frequently in recent publications. Terms shown in lighter colors indicate newer or more recent themes in the dataset. This pattern suggests that recent studies increasingly discuss sustainability, digitalization, social innovation, and related topics in relation to SME performance.

To summarize the most influential topics in the network, Table 3 reports the leading keywords from the final map, ranked by total link strength (TLS). Generic indexing terms (e.g., “article”,

“human”) were removed from reporting tables to improve interpretability.

The temporal overlay visualization also indicates that more recent publications increasingly emphasize themes related to sustainability, resilience, digital transformation, and crisis adaptation. These topics appear in lighter-colored nodes, suggesting their growing prominence in recent years compared with more established themes such as social capital and organizational culture. This pattern supports the interpretation that SME performance research is increasingly focused on contemporary issues associated with strategic adaptation and sustainability-oriented competitiveness.

Table 3: Top Keywords by Occurrences and Total Link Strength

Rank	Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength
1	sme	138	306
2	social capital	92	193
3	performance	89	188
4	innovation	51	122
5	organizational culture	50	119
6	sustainability	17	63
7	competitiveness	23	59
8	leadership	12	57
9	entrepreneurship	14	49
10	entrepreneur	10	43
11	sustainable development	11	40
12	business development	9	38
13	entrepreneurial orientation	14	36
14	sem	13	36
15	human capital	15	29
16	covid-19	9	29

17	performance assessment	5	27
18	literature review	6	26
19	competition	6	25
20	capital	5	25

Table 3 summarizes the most influential keywords in the final map, ranked by total link strength. Building on these high-frequency terms, Table 4 consolidates the network into five overarching themes to support interpretation and guide discussion of the cultural drivers of small and medium-sized enterprise performance.

The prominence of both relational and sustainability-related keywords further indicates that SME performance research is evolving toward more integrated discussions of competitiveness, resilience, and long-term value creation.

Table 4: Theme Summary

Theme/Cluster Label	Representative Keywords	Short Interpretation
Core performance–relational resources	social capital; performance; human capital; firm size; market orientation; performance assessment	The core theme places social capital and human resources/markets as key connectors to SME performance.
Culture–innovation–SME capability	organizational culture; innovation; sme; business; corporate strategy; management practice	Demonstrating the organization's cultural path and internal capabilities related to innovation as drivers of performance.
Competitiveness and knowledge-based resources	competitiveness; competition; knowledge management; knowledge; intellectual capital; absorptive capacity	Mapping literature that emphasizes knowledge/intellectual capital for competitiveness and performance outcomes.
Entrepreneurship/leadership and socio-context	entrepreneurship; entrepreneur; leadership; csr; social entrepreneurship; social innovation; covid-19	Describing the role of leadership and entrepreneurship, including the social context (CSR, social innovation, pandemic) in SME performance.
Local wisdom and sustainability-oriented outcomes	local wisdom; sustainability; sustainable development; economic growth; profitability; stakeholder	The theme of local culture emerged as a more specific stream, but one that remains connected to sustainability and performance outcomes.

Table 4 shows that the field is anchored by a core performance relational resources theme centered on social capital and performance. A second major theme reflects a culture innovation SME capability pathway, emphasizing how organizational culture is discussed in relation to innovation mechanisms. A complementary theme highlights competitiveness and knowledge-based resources, capturing the role of knowledge management, intellectual capital, and absorptive capacity. In addition, the entrepreneurship/leadership and socio-context theme indicate that leadership, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and crisis contexts (e.g., COVID-19) are frequently associated with SME outcomes. Finally, local wisdom and sustainability-oriented outcomes appear as a connected but less dominant theme, motivating the stage to consolidate conceptualizations, measurements, and pathways across overlapping culture/value constructs.

Theme Interpretations

Based on the network structure in Figure 4 and the theme-based grouping in Table 4, we interpret the map as a set of interlinked thematic areas. The dominant theme links social capital with performance and related resource constructs (e.g., human capital, firm size, and market orientation), reflecting relational mechanisms that support coordination and access to resources. A second theme highlights a capability-building pathway linking organizational culture and innovation to SME outcomes, often discussed alongside knowledge-based mechanisms (e.g., knowledge management and knowledge sharing) and competitiveness-oriented outcomes.

A further theme brings together entrepreneurship and leadership with socio-context topics such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), social innovation, and crisis-related conditions (e.g., COVID-19). Finally, sustainability-oriented terms

(e.g., sustainability, sustainable development, and Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]) reflect a broadening view of performance that goes beyond purely financial metrics.

Thematic Implications and Emerging Research Agenda

Integrating the bibliometric evidence reveals actionable gaps:

- (a) construct harmonization (distinguishing cultural values, organizational culture, and local wisdom);
- (b) measurement quality (validated scales, cross-cultural equivalence);
- (c) mechanism testing (mediation via innovation capability, financial inclusion, or market orientation);
- (d) boundary conditions (institutional environment, informality, digital transformation); and
- (e) underrepresented regions and sectors.

Practically, the evidence suggests that strengthening relational capital and culturally aligned organizational practices can support innovation and competitiveness among SMEs.

The post 2015 literature also shows growing attention to strategic renewal and resilience pathways, where culturally embedded practices and relational resources shape adaptation under shocks and competitive pressures. Similarly, evidence is accumulating on how social capital and knowledge sharing operate as capability-building mechanisms that improve innovation and performance outcomes, especially in clustered or networked settings (25).

Recent research further suggests that culture-related drivers are increasingly examined alongside broader outcomes, including competitiveness, sustainability-oriented performance, and strategic adaptation, indicating a widening conceptualization of performance beyond purely financial metrics (26). Taken together, these streams highlight the need for clearer construct boundaries and comparable measurement approaches to explain how culturally embedded values translate into performance outcomes under varying institutional and market conditions (27, 28). Related evidence also indicates that social capital remains a central determinant of MSME competitiveness and that entrepreneurial orientation, organizational culture, and business performance are closely linked in emerging-economy SME contexts.

These thematic developments also align with broader discussions in ESG, circular economy, and sustainable entrepreneurship literature, where SME performance is increasingly evaluated beyond short-term financial outcomes. In this context, relational resources, organizational culture, social innovation, and sustainability-oriented capabilities are viewed as important drivers of long-term competitiveness, resilience, and stakeholder-oriented value creation (29-31). The growing presence of sustainability and resilience-related themes in the bibliometric network suggests that SME research is progressively converging with wider sustainability transition and entrepreneurial ecosystem discussions.

Future research can build on these bibliometric signals in five practical directions. First, scholars should clarify the boundaries of constructs and terminology (e.g., local wisdom, cultural values, organisational culture, and social capital) to improve comparability across studies and reduce conceptual overlap. Second, more work is needed to test the mechanisms by which values translate into value creation—such as trust-based coordination, knowledge sharing, absorptive capacity, and innovation capability—using stronger causal designs and, where possible, multi-source data. Third, research should examine boundary conditions across contexts (industry, institutional environment, and country) to explain when cultural and relational resources matter most for SME performance.

Fourth, studies can broaden performance conceptualizations by integrating sustainability- and resilience-oriented outcomes beyond financial metrics and by evaluating trade-offs among growth, competitiveness, and sustainability performance. Fifth, the literature would benefit from deeper attention to how culture interacts with digital transformation and entrepreneurship/leadership under shocks (e.g., crisis periods) to explain adaptation and strategic renewal in SMEs.

Managerial Implications

The mapped themes suggest three actionable levers for SME support programs and managerial practice. First, strengthening social capital mechanisms (trust, networks, and coordination) can improve access to resources and market opportunities. Second, culture-aligned organisational practices that enable learning, knowledge

sharing, and innovation capability are repeatedly linked to competitiveness and performance outcomes. Third, the proximity of sustainability-related terms to core performance concepts indicates an expanding view of SME value creation beyond purely financial metrics; policy and enterprise development initiatives may therefore benefit from integrating resilience and sustainability-oriented performance targets alongside growth and profitability objectives.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that SME development programs may benefit from strengthening trust-based business networks, collaborative learning platforms, and community-oriented entrepreneurial ecosystems. Policymakers and SME support institutions can also encourage culturally aligned organizational practices through mentorship programs, innovation capacity-building initiatives, and knowledge-sharing activities that reinforce cooperation, adaptability, and long-term competitiveness. In emerging-economy contexts, integrating local cultural values and relational resources into entrepreneurship support strategies may further enhance SME resilience and sustainability-oriented performance.

Conclusion

This paper maps research on the cultural and social value drivers of small- and medium-sized enterprise performance using a bibliometric analysis. The keyword network shows a clear core centered on social capital, organisational culture, innovation, and competitiveness. This pattern suggests that performance is often discussed in terms of relational resources and mechanisms for capability-building. The map also highlights related themes in entrepreneurship and leadership, knowledge management and sharing, and sustainability-oriented performance, indicating a broader view of value creation. In practice, the findings point to three levers commonly found in the literature: strengthening trust-based networks, aligning organisational practices with local cultural values, and supporting innovation capabilities. For future research, priorities include clearer construct definitions, more consistent measurement, and comparative studies across industries and countries to test when and how culturally embedded values translate into performance outcomes.

This study is subject to several limitations, including reliance on a single database source and keyword-based retrieval procedures that may not capture all relevant publications. Future research may expand comparative analyses across countries, sectors, and institutional contexts, and further examine sustainability-oriented performance, digital transformation, and resilience-related themes in SME research.

Abbreviations

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility, MSME: Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprise, SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals, SME: Small and Medium-sized Enterprise, TLS: Total Link Strength.

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Author Contributions

Rayyan Sugangga: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Software, Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing – Original Draft, Heri Pratikto: Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review and Editing, Puji Handayati: Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review and Editing, Satia Nur Maharani: Supervision, Writing – Review and Editing, Ery Tri Djatmika Rudijanto WW: Validation, Supervision, Writing – Review and Editing, Nyoman Dini Andiani: Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review and Editing, Iradah Rahman: Supervision, Writing – Review and Editing. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability

The bibliographic dataset used in this study was retrieved from Scopus. The processed data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

AI-assisted technology was used only for language editing and formatting support during manuscript preparation. No AI tool was used for data analysis, interpretation, or scientific decision-making. The authors take full responsibility for the final content of the manuscript.

Ethics Approval

Not applicable. This study is based on bibliographic data and does not involve human participants, animals, or identifiable personal data.

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Appendix A. Full Boolean Search String

The following Boolean search string was used in the Scopus database to identify relevant studies on cultural/social value constructs and SME performance. The search query was structured to improve retrieval consistency and ensure alignment with the study objectives.

TITLE-ABS-KEY(("local wisdom" OR "traditional value*" OR "traditional knowledge" OR "indigenous knowledge" OR "cultural value*" OR "cultural values" OR "organizational culture" OR "cultural dimension*" OR "social capital") AND (SME OR SMEs OR MSME OR MSMEs OR "small business*" OR "micro enterprise*" OR "small enterprise*" OR "small and medium enterprise*" OR "small and medium-sized enterprise*") AND ("business performance" OR "firm performance" OR "organizational performance" OR "enterprise performance" OR "financial performance" OR "economic performance" OR "operational performance" OR profitability OR growth OR competitiveness OR "competitive advantage" OR "business success") AND (business OR firm OR enterprise OR entrepreneur* OR "owner-manager")) AND PUBYEAR > 2015 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE,"ar")).