

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Date of Receipt: 27/03/2025 – Date of Acceptance: 30/06/2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36995/j.visiondefuturo.2025.30.01.001.en>

RESUMEN

El documento presenta una revisión sistemática de la literatura sobre la evolución y las tendencias de la historia del emprendimiento, utilizando el método PRISMA. El estudio analiza la producción científica registrada en la base de datos SCOPUS para el período 2010-2024. El objetivo principal son identificar las tendencias temáticas y metodológicas, analizar la evolución de la producción científica y destacar las contribuciones relevantes de autores, instituciones y revistas especializadas. La revisión incluye un análisis bibliométrico de 1046 artículos, identificando un creciente interés académico en el campo, con un aumento significativo en la producción científica desde 2016. Se destaca la importancia de la innovación social, el emprendimiento femenino y el impacto de los factores culturales y económicos como temas emergentes en la investigación sobre emprendimiento.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Emprendimiento; Revisión sistemática; PRISMA; Análisis bibliométrico

ABSTRACT

The paper presents a systematic review of the literature on evolution and trends in the history of entrepreneurship, using the PRISMA method. The study analyses the scientific production registered in the SCOPUS database for the period 2010-2024. The main objective is to identify thematic and methodological trends, analyze the evolution of scientific production and



highlight relevant contributions from authors, institutions and specialized journals. The review includes a bibliometric analysis of 1,046 articles, identifying a growing academic interest in the field, with a significant increase in scientific production since 2016. The importance of social innovation, female entrepreneurship, and the impact of cultural and economic factors are highlighted as emerging themes in entrepreneurship research.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship, Systematic Review, PRISMA, Bibliometric Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has long been recognized as a key driver of economic development, innovation, and job creation in modern societies (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). However, the historical dimension of entrepreneurship—understood as the study of how business practices have evolved over time and their impact on social, economic, and political structures—has received relatively less scholarly attention compared to other aspects of the entrepreneurial phenomenon. Scholars such as Casson & Casson (2014) and Wadhwani & Lubinski (2017) have emphasized the importance of understanding the historical context of entrepreneurship in order to better grasp its current dynamics and anticipate future developments.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in scholarly output related to the history of entrepreneurship, particularly in areas such as social entrepreneurship, innovation, and the influence of cultural and economic factors on business activity (Méndez-Picazo et al., 2021; Hayhurst, 2014). Nevertheless, the existing literature remains fragmented and lacks a systematic review that integrates and synthesizes the most significant findings. This fragmentation has hindered the identification of clear trends and patterns in the development of this field of study.

Despite growing academic interest in the historical analysis of entrepreneurship, there remains a shortage of studies that comprehensively systematize and evaluate the body of scientific literature in this area. Most existing research tends to focus on specific aspects—such as social entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial education—without addressing the historical evolution and thematic trends of entrepreneurship as a coherent field of inquiry. This lack of integration makes it difficult to identify research gaps and to understand how the field has progressed over time. In response, this study aims to fill that void by conducting a systematic and up-to-date review of the scientific literature on the history of entrepreneurship, employing a rigorous and transparent methodology that enables the identification of trends, patterns, and opportunities for future research.



Within this context, the present study proposes a systematic literature review (SLR) on the evolution and thematic trends in the history of entrepreneurship, following the PRISMA methodology (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). This methodological framework ensures a transparent, rigorous, and structured review of the existing literature, facilitating the identification of patterns, research gaps, and future research directions (Page et al., 2021). The review focuses on scientific publications indexed in the SCOPUS database—one of the most widely recognized and utilized academic databases—for the period 2010 - 2024.

The study is organized around three primary objectives: (1) to identify thematic and methodological trends in research on the history of entrepreneurship; (2) to analyze the evolution of scientific output in this field; and (3) to highlight the most significant contributions from authors, institutions, and specialized journals. To achieve these aims, the study applied rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria, ultimately selecting 1,046 articles that directly address the subject of interest. A bibliometric analysis of these documents was conducted by using tools like Bibliometrix to evaluate the volume, quality, and structure of the academic output.

Conducting a systematic literature review on the history of entrepreneurship is essential for several reasons. First, it enables the synthesis and organization of existing knowledge, facilitating the identification of trends and patterns in the research landscape (Page et al., 2021). This is particularly important in a field like entrepreneurship, where the literature is vast and diverse but often fragmented. Second, this study helps bridge a gap in the literature by offering a comprehensive overview of how scholarly research on the history of entrepreneurship has evolved over time. By applying the PRISMA method, the review ensures a transparent and rigorous process, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings (Urrútia & Bonfill, 2010). This methodological approach not only highlights the most impactful contributions but also identifies areas that warrant greater scholarly attention in the future.

Moreover, the findings of this research have practical implications for academics, practitioners, and policymakers. For academics, it provides a solid foundation for future studies by identifying emerging research areas and underexplored topics. For practitioners, the study offers valuable insights into how business practices have evolved and how these lessons can be applied in contemporary contexts. Finally, for policymakers, this review can inform the development of public policies that support entrepreneurship, grounded in a deeper understanding of its historical evolution and future potential.

In conclusion, this research contributes not only to the advancement of knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship history but also provides valuable tools for application in academic,

professional, and policy-making contexts. By synthesizing the existing literature and highlighting key trends, this study lays the groundwork for future research and fosters a more nuanced understanding of the role of entrepreneurship in society.

DEVELOPMENT

Literature Review

The history of entrepreneurship is shaped by a series of transformations that have influenced both business practices and the academic understanding of the phenomenon. According to Méndez-Picazo et al. (2021), entrepreneurship has evolved from an individual activity into a collective endeavor driven by innovation and collaboration. This shift is especially evident in the context of social innovation, where entrepreneurs aim not only for economic gain but also for generating positive social impact.

Studying the history of entrepreneurship enables researchers to trace how business practices have responded to economic, social, and technological changes over time. For example, the Industrial Revolution marked a turning point in entrepreneurial history, leading to new forms of business organization and the emergence of large corporations (Hayhurst, 2014). In contrast, the digital era has fostered the rise of startups and technology-based ventures, reshaping the entrepreneurial landscape and opening new opportunities for innovation and business creation.

Current Trends in Entrepreneurship

Current trends in entrepreneurship reveal a growing emphasis on sustainability, social innovation, and the influence of cultural and economic factors on entrepreneurial activity. As Shane and Venkataraman (2000) describe, entrepreneurship is a dynamic process involving the identification and exploitation of opportunities. In this regard, social innovation has emerged as a key trend, with entrepreneurs developing sustainable business models aimed at addressing social and environmental challenges (Van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016).

Women's entrepreneurship has also gained prominence in the academic literature, highlighting the importance of addressing gender-related barriers and promoting greater female participation in the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Colette, Foss, & Ahl, 2016). Recent studies have shown that while women entrepreneurs face distinct challenges, they also have significant potential to contribute to economic and social development (Mucollari et al., 2024).

Methodology

To identify trends and the evolution of research on the history of entrepreneurship, this study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR), a scientific research approach that analyzes primary

studies focused on a common topic. Since it investigates existing research, this type of analysis is considered secondary research (Ferreira-González et al., 2011), a method widely used by scholars (Farias et al., 2019; Qureshi et al., 2020; Beltrami et al., 2021; Cruz-Ríos et al., 2022).

Following this approach, a bibliometric analysis was conducted on scientific publications indexed in the SCOPUS database between 2010 and 2024. To ensure the relevance and quality of the data throughout the research process, the study adhered to the principles of the PRISMA method (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), which promotes a structured and methodical review process. PRISMA was specifically designed to help authors transparently document the rationale for the review, the methods employed, and the findings obtained (Urrútia & Bonfill, 2010; Page et al., 2021).

PRISMA Methodology

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The PRISMA methodology establishes specific inclusion criteria for articles to be considered in the analysis, as outlined by Tucunduva et al. (2022). Articles were required to contain the terms “Company history” or “History of entrepreneurship” in their titles—using singular or plural forms—in order to ensure relevance to the topic under investigation and to capture a comprehensive set of relevant studies. On the other hand, exclusion criteria were applied in two distinct phases: screening and eligibility, as described by Nawijn et al. (2019). During the screening phase, all articles with indexing deficiencies in the database—such as errors in metadata—were excluded, as these would compromise the accuracy of the bibliometric analysis. Additionally, articles that failed to meet acceptable methodological standards based on their publication type were also excluded.

Sources of Information

In line with the methodology described above, the data source for this bibliometric analysis on the history of entrepreneurship consisted of academic publications retrieved from the SCOPUS database in November 2024. SCOPUS was selected due to its high citation volume and accessibility, making it one of the most widely used databases for literature review and bibliometric research (Hall, 2011). As a secondary source of information, SCOPUS is particularly suitable for the scope and relevance of this study. Moreover, it provides access to a range of interdisciplinary databases, enabling in-depth exploration of specialized subfields and offering tools for accessing, analyzing, and managing research information.

Search Strategy and Information Selection

To identify relevant studies, a specialized search equation was developed based on the previously defined inclusion criteria. This query was executed within the selected data source—SCOPUS—up to the cut-off date of November 2024. The search string was defined as follows:

(TITLE({business history}) OR TITLE({entrepreneurial history})). In selecting databases, 12 were chosen from the fields of business and economics, along with 35 multidisciplinary databases with related content.

The application of this search strategy in SCOPUS initially yielded a total of 36,964 records. Based on the established exclusion criteria and using Microsoft Excel for data management, the PRISMA protocol was implemented (as outlined by Nawijn et al., 2019). The filtering process is illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram presented in Figure 1.

Data Processing

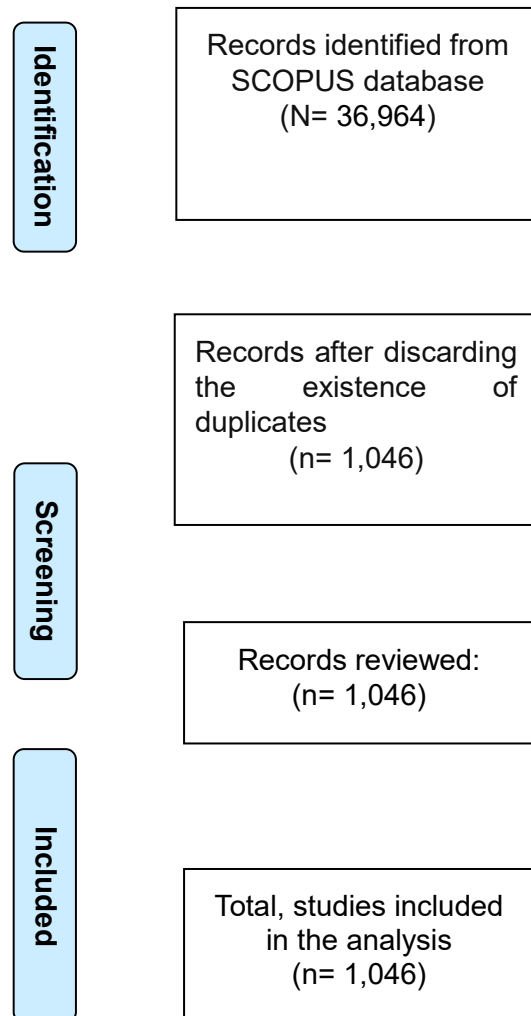
From the initial 36,964 records retrieved, several selection criteria were applied to refine the dataset. Duplicate entries were removed, and only those documents directly related to the history of entrepreneurship were retained. The final selection included relevant articles published between 2010 and 2024. In total, 1,046 articles were selected for bibliometric analysis. These were analyzed using the Bibliometrix tool to identify trends and patterns within the research domain.

Results and Discussion

The analysis is based on the 1,046 records retrieved from the SCOPUS database, covering publications from 2010 to 2024. These records were used to examine key indicators established in the methodology—namely, indicators of quantity, quality, and structural patterns within the scientific literature.

Figure 1

PRISMA flow chart



Source: Authors' own work.

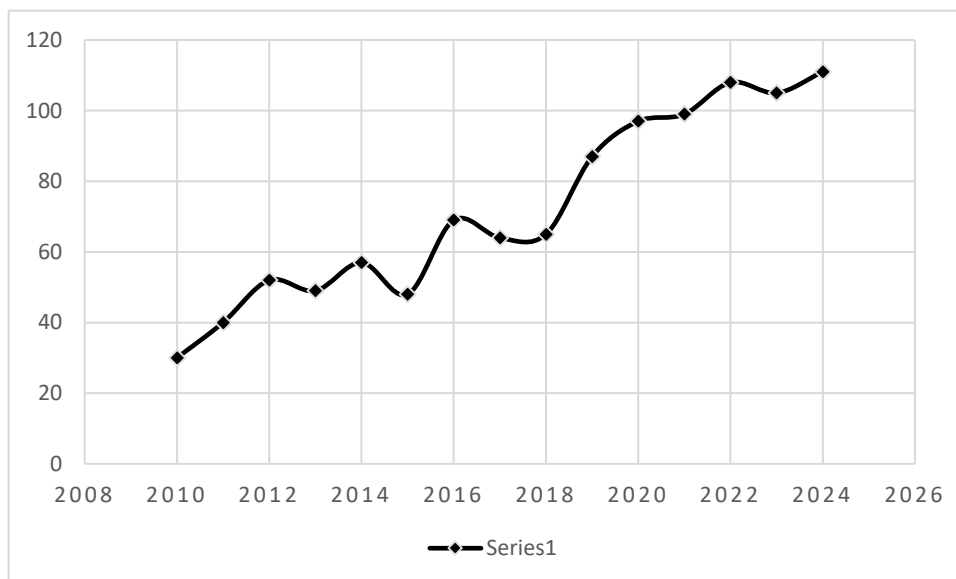
The results of the bibliometric analysis are presented below, including the number of publications per year, authors, journals, countries, and other relevant indicators (Villa et al., 2018). The analysis examines both the research trends and the evolution of scholarly output in the field of entrepreneurship. Figure 2 illustrates the number of publications per year. As shown, the volume of publications experienced fluctuations between 2016 and 2018, reflecting a cyclical pattern during the analyzed period. The most productive years were 2019, 2020, and 2021, each with more than forty publications. In contrast, the lowest levels of productivity occurred in 2022, 2023,

and 2024, with fewer than three publications per year. Despite these fluctuations, there is clear evidence of a growing academic interest in the field of entrepreneurship.

The trend shown in Figure 2 is consistent with the observed transformation of entrepreneurship over time, largely driven by innovation.

Figure 2

Number of publications per year

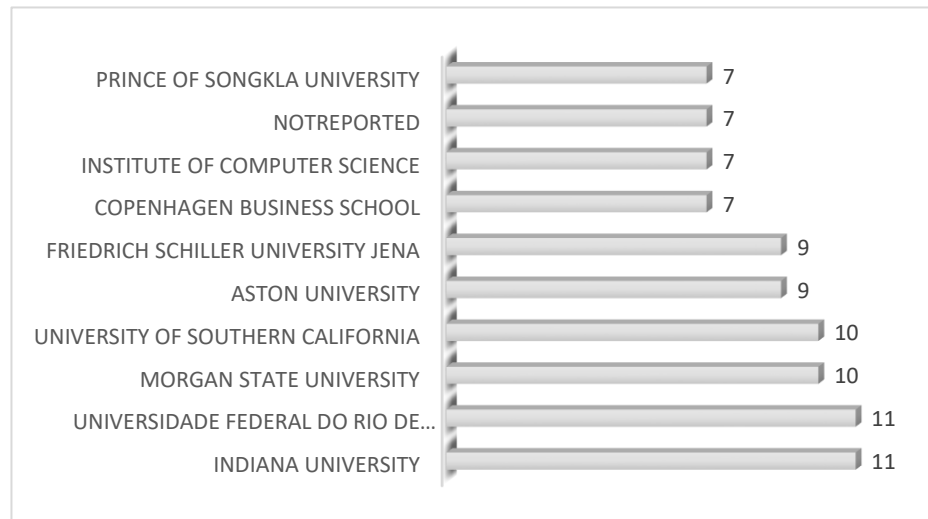


Source: Authors' own work.

Figure 3 presents the ten leading institutions contributing the highest number of publications on entrepreneurship. Among them, Indiana University and Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro stand out, each with 11 articles on the subject. They are followed by a group of eight universities located in developed countries, where research budgets tend to be higher than in developing nations (World Bank, 2021). These institutions have published between 11 and 7 articles on entrepreneurship-related topics.

Figure 3

Productivity of institutions



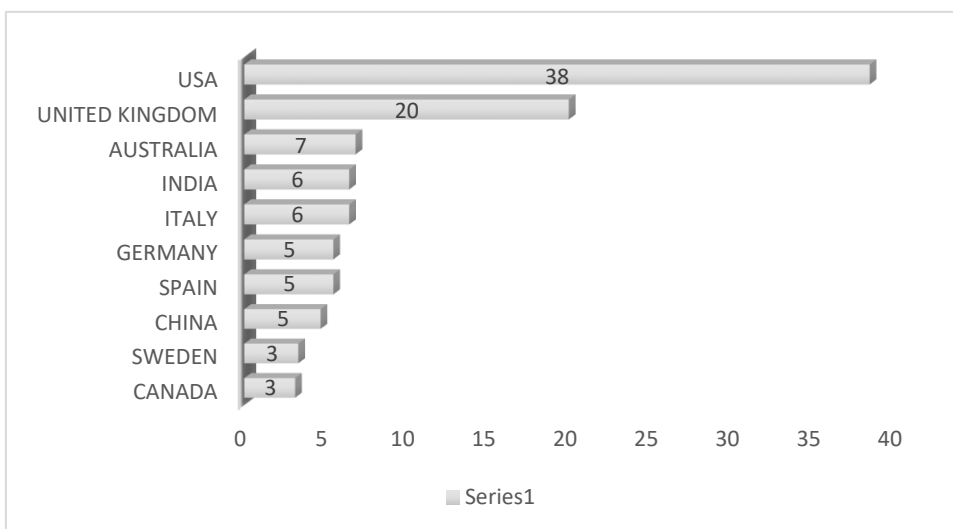
Source: Authors' own work.

Figure 4 illustrates the geographical distribution of scientific publications on entrepreneurship during the period 2018–2023, based on data retrieved from the SCOPUS database. The United States leads in scientific output in this area, with a total of 197 publications, representing approximately 38% of the articles analyzed. The United Kingdom follows with 90 publications, accounting for 20% of the total. Together, these two countries account for more than half of the global academic output in the field.

Other countries, such as Australia, India, and Italy, also show significant contributions, each with over 30 publications during the analyzed period. This distribution reveals a strong correlation between the institutional development level of national research systems and their capacity to generate impactful academic output on entrepreneurship.

Figure 4

Number of publications by country (percentage)



Source: Authors' own work.

Table 1 lists the academic journals with the highest number of publications on the subject. *Business History* ranks first, with 47 articles, followed by *Small Business Economics* with 24. The ten journals with the most articles together account for approximately 16% of all publications in the field of entrepreneurship education and research.

Table 1

Number of publications by journal.

Journals	Country	Number of publications
BUSINESS HISTORY	United Kingdom	47
SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMICS	Netherlands	24
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT	United Kingdom	18
EMERALD EMERGING MARKETS CASE STUDIES	United Kingdom	14
JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT HISTORY	United Kingdom	12
ENTERPRISE AND SOCIETY	United Kingdom	11
ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THEORY AND PRACTICE	United States of America	11

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR AND RESEARCH	United Kingdom	11
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMALL BUSINESS	United Kingdom	11
CARING: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR HOME CARE MAGAZINE	United States of America	9

Source: Authors' own work.

Meanwhile, Figure 4 displays the most frequently used keywords related to entrepreneurship. The color and density—represented by the size of each circle—indicate the prominence of a topic, as determined by the number of researchers *engaged* in that area. The most common keywords include *entrepreneurship*, *entrepreneur*, *innovation*, *development*, *education*, and *technology*.

Figure 4
Keywords



Source: Authors' own findings.

Table 2 presents the ten most highly cited publications in the field of entrepreneurship. These studies explore diverse themes and open new lines of inquiry for theoretical and empirical advancement. The most influential research identified is the study by Robert P. van der Have and Luis Rubalcaba (2016), which examines social innovation as an emerging area within innovation

studies. Another key publication is by Henry Colette, Lene Foss, and Helene Ahl (2016), who investigate gender and entrepreneurship research through a methodological review aimed at fostering change and addressing current challenges.

Tabla 2

Most cited publications

Ranking	Title	Authors	Citations	Year
1	<i>Investigación sobre innovación social: ¿Un área emergente de los estudios sobre innovación?</i>	Robert P. van der Have; Luis Rubalcaba	552	2016
2	<i>Género e investigación empresarial: Una revisión de los enfoques metodológicos</i>	Henry Colette; Lene Foss; Helene Ahl	427	2016
3	<i>La dinámica evolutiva de los ecosistemas empresariales</i>	Elizabeth Mack; Heike Mayer	426	2016
4	<i>Formación y explotación de oportunidades: Las implicaciones de los procesos de descubrimiento y creación para la investigación empresarial y organizativa</i>	Vinciane Servantie; Matthieu Cabrol; Gilles Guieu; Jean-Pierre Boissin	404	2013
5	<i>Más allá del periodismo: Teorizando la transformación del periodismo</i>	Mark Deuze; Tamara Witschge	401	2018
6	<i>Impacto económico de las actividades de las universidades emprendedoras: Un estudio exploratorio del Reino Unido</i>	Maribel Guerrero; James A. Cunningham; David Urbano	397	2015
7	<i>Hacia un programa de investigación del ecosistema empresarial</i>	Bernd Wurth; Erik Stam; Ben Spigel	328	2022

8	<i>Trinidad de la agencia del cambio, vías de desarrollo regional y espacios de oportunidad</i>	Markus Grillitsch; Markku Sotarauta	328	2020
9	<i>La larga persistencia de los niveles regionales de iniciativa empresarial: Alemania, 1925-2005</i>	Michael Fritsch; Michael Wyrwich	253	2014
10	<i>Análisis de la influencia del género en el emprendimiento de alta tecnología en el contexto de la incubación de empresas</i>	Susan Marlow; Maura McAdam	221	2012

Source: Authors' own findings.

On the other hand, it is particularly insightful to examine the thematic map (Figure 5), which highlights research trends in entrepreneurship and business development. In Quadrant 1 (upper right), we find the motor themes—areas of research that are both well-developed and highly relevant. These topics receive substantial scholarly attention and generate a large volume of literature. Research in this quadrant typically focuses on demonstrating the role of entrepreneurship in national development, in both developed and developing countries, such as India (Yadav & Unni, 2016).

Quadrant 2 (lower right) represents the basic themes in entrepreneurship research. These are established or evolving areas that show a strong degree of consensus and conceptual cohesion across studies. They are foundational to the academic discourse on entrepreneurship and economic development.

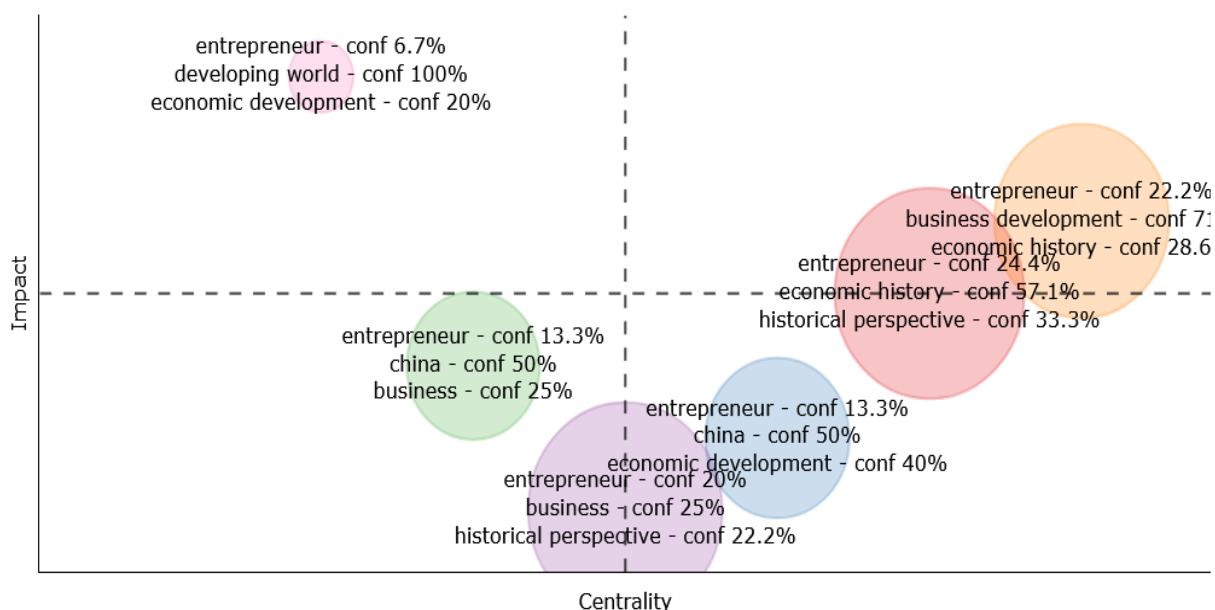
Quadrant 3 (upper left) corresponds to niche themes—topics that are less connected to the broader field but still garner attention within the literature. In our analysis, this quadrant includes research trends that link entrepreneurship with economic development but remain more specialized or isolated.

Finally, Quadrant 4 (lower left) displays emerging or declining themes—areas that currently receive limited scholarly attention. Nonetheless, the topic of entrepreneurship is gaining relevance in research discourse. As Guzman and Kacperczyk (2019) note, while the evolution of entrepreneurship has been addressed in the literature, the focus has largely been on the early

stages of the entrepreneurial process. Therefore, future studies are needed to advance theoretical and empirical understanding of entrepreneurship as a complex and evolving field.

Figure 5

Main trends in research



Source: Authors' own work.

Although there are various methods to study research on a specific topic, bibliometric analysis offers key advantages: it is more systematic, replicable, and verifiable, thereby reducing the subjectivity often associated with traditional literature reviews (Salazar-Botello et al., 2023). Furthermore, bibliometric studies are essential for enhancing research efficiency, identifying critical areas for intervention, and strengthening the knowledge base that informs more inclusive business policies and practices.

In this regard, a clear gap is identified in the research lines related to women's entrepreneurship. There is a pressing need for future studies that focus broadly on entrepreneurship as well as on the growth and scaling of women-led businesses. Likewise, current research reveals an emerging trend in studies that link entrepreneurship with economic development and business growth.

This study contributes meaningfully to the general body of research on entrepreneurship, and more specifically, to our understanding of business growth dynamics. The growing academic interest in this topic is clearly evident. Ultimately, the findings offer important insights for

policymakers and educational program designers, enabling them to promote business growth through initiatives aimed at increasing the desirability and feasibility of growth, as well as improving access to necessary resources.

CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals a growing academic interest in the history of entrepreneurship, with a significant increase in scientific production since 2016. This trend is evident not only in the volume of publications but also in the diversity of topics explored, suggesting heightened attention to the historical role of entrepreneurship in economic and social development. Furthermore, academic institutions from developed countries—such as the United States and the United Kingdom—lead in scholarly output in this field. This indicates a strong correlation between research funding and the volume of published studies, highlighting the importance of institutional support in advancing entrepreneurship research (Wáng & Li, 2024).

The bibliometric analysis also identifies emerging themes such as social innovation, women's entrepreneurship, and the influence of cultural and economic factors. These topics not only reflect current research needs but also highlight areas that warrant greater attention and development in the future. A more focused approach is recommended for underrepresented areas—particularly women's entrepreneurship and social innovation—as advancing these topics would not only enhance our understanding of entrepreneurship but also support the development of more inclusive and equitable policies and practices.

The evolution and trends in entrepreneurship research portray a dynamic and continually evolving field shaped by historical, economic, and social forces. Conducting a systematic literature review using the PRISMA method has provided a robust foundation for future research, identifying both emerging areas and those that remain underexplored.

This study adopted a historical lens to examine entrepreneurship, aiming to identify trends and patterns in existing literature. The bibliometric review revealed that much of the existing research has been generalized, highlighting a lack of depth in certain lines of inquiry, particularly in the broader domain of entrepreneurship.

There is a pressing need to encourage future studies that explore the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development, with the goal of generating actionable knowledge for public policy and sustainable growth strategies. Additionally, a gender gap is evident in relation to the size and scale of women-led enterprises. In this regard, the study contributes to the literature on women's entrepreneurship and enhances our understanding of the factors influencing their business growth. The increasing scholarly interest in this topic underscores its relevance.

Finally, the findings provide empirical evidence to inform policymakers and educational program developers, enabling them to promote economic and business growth through targeted efforts that enhance the desirability and feasibility of business expansion, as well as improve access to essential resources.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

Please refer to articles Spanish Biographical abstract.

