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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND TRENDS IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN FAMILY FIRMS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF STUDIES OF PREVIOUS TWO DECADES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study adds a historical yet contemporary perspective to the debate on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in family firms (FF). This study aims to explore the quantitative and qualitative research maps of CSR in FF, as presented in the literature. The authors present a thematic map of CSR in FF research, including stakeholders of CSR in FF, socioeconomic wealth creation by CSR in FF, disclosures and reporting of CSR in FF, and the association between socioemotional wealth in FF and CSR.

Design/Methodology: This study uses a systematic literature review to analyze CSR in FF from historical, contemporary, and theoretical perspectives. Bibliometric analysis maps the publication landscape, including citation and keyword analyses of the most popular journals, authors, and countries. Cluster analysis conducted using VOSviewer, mapped with manual content analysis, revealed the thematic clusters of the research field.

Findings: The content analysis of the management literature on CSR in FF reveals four primary clusters: (a) CSR in FF stakeholders, (b) socioeconomic wealth creation through CSR in FF, (c) disclosure and reporting of CSR in FF, and (d) socioemotional wealth in FF and CSR. Based on the gaps identified through thematic analysis, we also present future research directions that broadly contemplate “what is” and “what can be” in boosting CSR in FF through strategic incentives and programs.

Originality/Value: This study comprehensively and objectively analyses contemporary management literature on CSR in FF from a historical perspective. This study combines bibliometric mapping and content analysis to provide a holistic understanding of CSR research in the FF industry and future research opportunities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Family businesses are pivotal to the global economy for a country’s business growth and stability. Family businesses comprise more than 70% of the GDP in most emerging and developed countries (Mathew, 2019). FFs and their management strategies have been studied increasingly (De Massis et al., 2021; Sharma, 2004). Family Firms (FFs) are deeply involved in CSR. According to Bain and Company’s India Philanthropy Report 2025, family owned enterprises in India account for 65–70 percent of private sector CSR spending annually (Sheth et al., 2025). Studies have shown that FFs engage in CSR activities for various reasons, including the desire to maintain their reputation, commitment to social and environmental issues, desire to attract and retain employees, need to differentiate themselves from competitors, improve long-term financial performance, build social capital, and enhance their legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders.

FFs may also face challenges in implementing CSR initiatives because of their small size, traditional management structures, resistance to change, the need to

balance social responsibility with profitability, and conflicts among family members over the allocation of limited resources for CSR activities. (Cruz et al., 2014; Garcia-Sanchez et al., 2021; Sheikh et al., 2022). Furthermore, if a family firm fails to live up to its CSR commitment, it may reduce financial performance in the short term, weaken corporate governance, and increase scrutiny and criticism from stakeholders. Moreover, the available literature has either focused on finding the relationship between CSR activities and FFs or on analyzing the influence of CSR activities on the performance of FFs (Cui et al., 2018; Iyer and Lulseged, 2013), with mixed results on the relationship between FFs and CSR initiatives. For example, Chen et al. (2010), Chen and Hsu (2009), and Munari et al. (2010) report that FFs do not necessarily perform better than non-family firms in conducting CSR activities. Dou et al. (2014) reported that FFs are most likely to donate to charities as part of their CSR activities. Theoretically, family firm CSR behavior is explained through multiple complementary lenses: stakeholder theory illuminates extended family perspectives toward all constituencies; legitimacy theory addresses amplified reputational concerns when family names are tied to businesses; agency theory explains how ownership-control alignment facilitates long-term CSR investments; and socioemotional wealth (SEW) theory uniquely captures how non-economic utilities—reputation, legacy, and dynastic succession—profoundly shape CSR strategies in ways that are distinct from non-family enterprises (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007; Berrone et al., 2012).

Thus, FFs must develop a clear strategy for CSR implementation, regularly assess the impact of their initiatives, and balance social responsibility with profitability to maximize CSR engagement benefits. Research on CSR in family businesses can lead to a deeper understanding of how the unique dynamics of family businesses influence CSR activities. Given the long-term horizons of family enterprises, it is crucial to understand the role of CSR in maintaining their legacies and reputations. A thorough examination of the subject is necessary, given the importance of the topic and the growing family commitment to corporate social responsibility.

Furthermore, CSR in family businesses has been categorized in previous literature reviews based on the context of Western European, North American, and Asian countries (Citterio et al., 2024); relationship dynamics; or the drivers, activities, outcomes, and contextual influences of family businesses with other aspects such as CSR, sustainable development goals, and environmental aspects (Stock et al., 2023); and with particular reference to the effects of ownership as multiple mediating mechanisms and moderators on family firm CSR (Su et al., 2022). Another study by Mariani et al. (2023) focused on the motivations behind and results of CSR practices, procedures, and strategies in family businesses. Thus, a literature review is required to provide an informed and detailed overview of the current research and develop suggestions for future scholars in the context of CSR and FFs (Dana et al., 2023).

Despite the growing scholarly attention, significant research gaps persist, necessitating a comprehensive synthesis and mapping of the existing literature. Previous literature reviews have examined CSR in family businesses through

geographical lenses (Citterio et al., 2024), relationship dynamics and drivers (Stock et al., 2023), ownership effects (Su et al., 2022), and motivations behind CSR practices (Mariani et al., 2023). This study significantly extends previous reviews in several ways. First, the current study integrates the literature up to February 2023 and provides a bibliometric and in-depth content analysis of 154 publications on CSR and FFs, offering a more comprehensive and updated understanding of the area. Second, within the framework of important theories, including agency theory, stakeholder theory, socioemotional wealth theory, and stewardship theory, this study clarifies the complex relationships between family businesses, CSR, governance, and sustainability. Third, this study's themes specifically discuss how CSR initiatives support value creation, legitimacy building, payout policy, and the relationship between CSR and corporate governance structures, including CEO duality, board size, board independence, and family control in family firms. This approach offers a more thorough, in-depth, and objective assessment of current knowledge topics. Our review aims to identify contemporary themes emerging in the CSR and FF fields. Therefore, this study conducted a bibliometric and systematic literature review to identify contemporary themes emerging in the CSR and FF fields using thematic and content analyses.

To this end, this study addresses the following research questions:

(i) What are the most influential aspects of the body of knowledge regarding papers published in different years, countries, research institutions, journals and authors?

(ii) What are the trends and efficiencies of the co-authorship network based on author and country analyses?

(iii) What are the citation metrics and trends of the most-cited articles?

(iv) What are the most popular keywords, thematic areas, and facets of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in family businesses?

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the data and methodology used in the analysis. Section 3 presents the empirical findings and discussion. Section 4 presents an overview of the research implications and concludes the paper. Section 5 provides details of the study's limitations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. *Defining Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)*

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved considerably over the past several decades, reflecting changes in societal expectations and business priorities. Dahlsrud (2008) analyzed 37 definitions of CSR and found that while the definitions varied in emphasis, they commonly incorporated five dimensions: environmental, social,

economic, stakeholder, and voluntary. At its core, CSR represents a company's commitment to operate ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of its workforce, their families, the local community, and society.

Recently, the concept of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) has gained prominence as a framework for evaluating corporate sustainability performance. While CSR and ESG are often used interchangeably, ESG provides a more structured and measurable approach to assessing corporate responsibility across three pillars: environmental stewardship (climate impact, resource use, and pollution), social responsibility (labor practices, human rights, and community relations), and governance quality (board structure, executive compensation, and shareholder rights) (Velte, 2023). ESG disclosure has become increasingly important for stakeholder transparency and accountability, particularly in family firms, where governance structures may differ from those of non-family enterprises (Borralho et al., 2022).

The integration of CSR and ESG concepts reflects a broader shift toward stakeholder capitalism, where businesses are expected to create value not only for shareholders but also for all stakeholders affected by corporate activities (Freeman et al., 2010; Jones, 1995).

2.2. Defining Family Firms and Understanding Heterogeneity

Defining what constitutes a family firm remains a fundamental challenge in family business research. Chua et al. (1999) proposed a behavioral definition, arguing that family firms are distinguished not merely by ownership structure but by the vision of the dominant coalition, the intention to shape and pursue that vision by a dominant family coalition, and the intention for the business to remain within the family. This behavioral perspective emphasizes that family influence on strategic decisions and organizational culture is as important as formal ownership.

Another critical consideration is family firms' heterogeneity. Family firms vary significantly across multiple dimensions, including generation in control (founder-led versus multigenerational), degree of family involvement in management and ownership, family governance structures, and presence of non-family managers and directors (Fehre and Weber, 2019; Madden et al., 2020). This heterogeneity has profound implications for CSR engagement, as different types of family firms pursue CSR for various reasons and with varying levels of commitment (Marques et al., 2014).

Hughes et al. (2025) emphasize that family firm heterogeneity extends to their approach to ESG, with some family businesses viewing ESG as integral to their identity and legacy, while others adopt a more instrumental approach driven by external pressures. Understanding this diversity is essential for explaining the mixed findings in the literature regarding family firms' CSR performance compared to non-family firms.

2.3. Core Theoretical Foundations

The relationship between family firms and CSR is theoretically grounded in five complementary frameworks that explain the unique motivations, dynamics, and outcomes of CSR engagement in family controlled companies. Stakeholder theory, pioneered by Freeman (2010) and refined by Clarkson (1995) and Jones (1995), posits that firms should create value for all stakeholders, such as employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and shareholders. For family firms, this perspective is of heightened significance, as family entrepreneurs often view all stakeholders as an extension of their family, creating stronger stakeholder bonds and increasing the likelihood of socially responsible behavior (Singh and Mittal, 2019; Signori and Fassin, 2023). Legitimacy theory explains why family firms conduct CSR activities and report social and environmental information to maintain their social license to operate (Singh and Mittal, 2019; Sucahyati et al., 2022). As family names are typically associated with businesses, legitimacy concerns are heightened. CSR activities serve as critical legitimacy-building mechanisms, particularly when firms face increased scrutiny, and disclosure is essential for maintaining external constituency support (Miller and Le Breton-Miller, 2017; Boshnak, 2022).

Agency theory addresses principal-agent conflicts arising from ownership-control separation (Davis, 1991). In family firms, when family members serve as both owners and managers, classical agency problems are attenuated through ownership-control alignment, facilitating long-term CSR investments that build reputational capital (Samara et al., 2023). However, alternative agency conflicts may emerge between family and non-family shareholders, with CSR commitment serving as an intervention to incentivize sustainable practices (Greiner and Sun, 2021). Socioemotional wealth (SEW) theory, the most influential framework for understanding family firm behavior, refers to the non-economic utilities that family owners derive from the firm: family control and influence, identification with the firm, binding social ties, emotional attachment, and dynastic succession (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007; Berrone et al., 2012). Family firms prioritize preserving socioemotional endowments, sometimes at the expense of financial performance, engaging in CSR to protect their reputation, build legitimacy, and maintain their legacy (Cruz et al., 2014; Izzo and Ciaburri, 2018). However, SEW's dualistic character means that firms may adopt selective, instrumental CSR approaches rather than holistic ones when initiatives threaten family control or resources (Zientara, 2017). Finally, stewardship theory proposes that family managers act as stewards whose interests align with organizational goals, view the business as an extension of family identity, and are intrinsically motivated to ensure long-term success (Davis, 1991; Hernández-Perlines et al., 2021). This perspective suggests that family firm managers engage in CSR because they view social and environmental responsibilities as integral to organizational success and family legacy, fostering investments in stakeholder relationships and sustainable practices that enhance enduring viability (Kuttner et al., 2020).

2.4. CSR in Family Firms: Current Understanding and Research Gaps

Current research demonstrates that family firms engage in CSR for multiple reasons: maintaining reputation, commitment to social and environmental issues, attracting and retaining employees, differentiating themselves from competitors, improving long-term financial performance, building social capital, and enhancing legitimacy (Cruz et al., 2014; García-Sánchez et al., 2021; Sheikh et al., 2022). However, CSR engagement may also reduce short-term financial performance, complicate governance, and invite stakeholder criticism if commitments are not fulfilled. The empirical evidence on CSR performance is mixed. While some studies suggest that family ownership enhances CSR commitment due to reputational concerns and long-term orientation, others find no significant difference or even negative associations, depending on the CSR dimensions examined (Block and Wagner, 2014; Uhlaner et al., 2004). This inconsistency likely reflects the heterogeneity of family firms and the varying salience of SEW dimensions across different contexts.

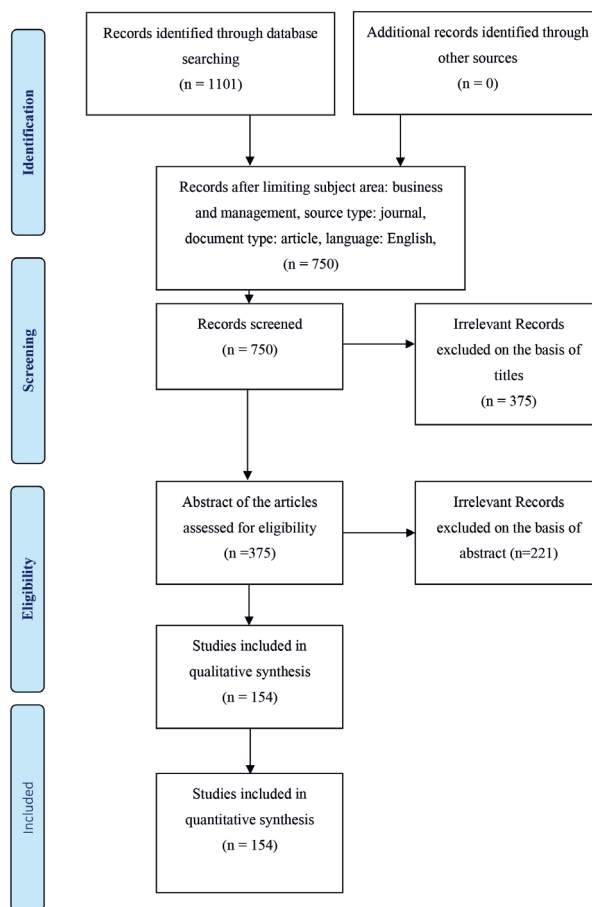
Thus, our study presents an integrated synthesis that systematically maps the thematic landscape while identifying core theoretical foundations across stakeholder engagement, socioeconomic wealth creation, disclosure practices, and socioemotional wealth dimensions. This systematic literature review performs bibliometric and in-depth content analyses of 154 publications to map contemporary themes, identify theoretical foundations, and provide a structured framework that advances both scholarly understanding and practical applications in the CSR-family firm nexus.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on an open, credible, and repeatable systematic literature review (SLR) (Tranfield et al., 2003). This study used bibliometric analysis to review the literature on the topic. The bibliometric approach is a quantitative technique used to evaluate the effectiveness of a research domain on a specific topic (Nirmal et al., 2023; Chhabra et al., 2025). Data from the Scopus database were accessed in February 2023. An all-inclusive strategy was adopted to perform the topic search using Scopus database. The Scopus database is the largest abstract-indexing database, comprising high-quality and impactful journals (Abbas et al., 2022; Chhabra et al., 2022). The investigation delved into the domain by scrutinizing the terms (“*corporate governance*” OR “*CSR*” OR “*corporate social responsibility*” OR “*business ethics*”) AND (“*family ownership*” OR “*family business**” OR “*family firm**”) encompassing abstracts, titles, and keywords fields. Further limitations were placed in the search area, such as being confined to the subject areas of business and management, journal source type, article document format and the English language. Initially, the search yielded 750 articles. Each article was subjected to detailed scrutiny and filtering. Two authors meticulously examined the abstracts of the selected articles to confirm the role of FFs in the

implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The intercoder reliability was 95% before the discussion, after which the disagreements were resolved. It became apparent that numerous articles merely referenced these concepts contextually or as part of their findings without substantially contributing to the understanding of FFs' role in executing CSR and the realm of corporate social responsibility within FFs. Consequently, these articles were excluded from the analysis. This resulted in 154 articles (Appendix 1). The sequential progression of this filtering procedure is visually encapsulated in a Prisma Flow Diagram (Figure 1). Furthermore, document analysis, keyword analysis, co-authorship, and citation network analysis of the final list of articles were performed using VOSviewer (Van Eck and Waltman, 2014). Furthermore, a qualitative analysis of all selected articles was conducted to explore trends and themes in the current literature on CSR and corporate governance in FFs.

Figure 1. The Prisma Flow Diagram depicting



Source: Authors' compilation

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the influential aspects of the body of knowledge on CSR in the FFs field regarding articles published by various countries, research institutions, journals and authors in different years (Jain and Chhabra, 2021).

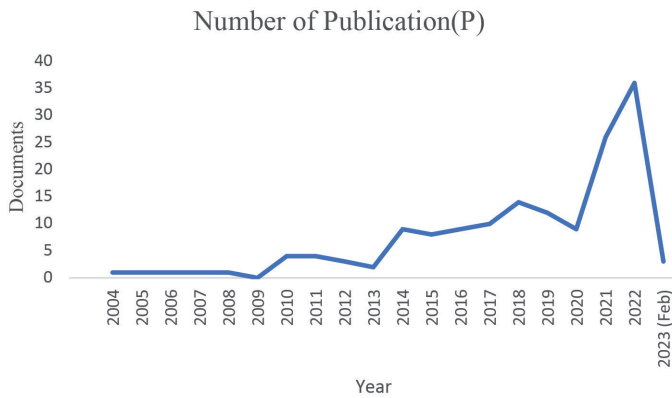
4.1. Year of publications: evolution of published studies

Table 1 shows the number of publications on CSR in FFs from 2004-2023. The number of publications on this topic has increased since 2009. After 2013 and 2020, interest in studying CSR in family firms increased. Businesses now consider CSR an integral component of their overall business strategy, especially in light of consumer activism and socially responsible investing. Figure 2 shows a graphical representation of the publications organized by year.

Table 1. Year of publications

Year	Number of Publication(P)	Publication % (N=154)	Cumulative Percent
2004	1	0.65	0.65
2005	1	0.65	1.30
2006	1	0.65	1.95
2007	1	0.65	2.60
2008	1	0.65	3.25
2009	0	0.00	3.25
2010	4	2.60	5.84
2011	4	2.60	8.44
2012	3	1.95	10.39
2013	2	1.30	11.69
2014	9	5.84	17.53
2015	8	5.19	22.73
2016	9	5.84	28.57
2017	10	6.49	35.07
2018	14	9.09	44.16
2019	12	7.79	51.95
2020	9	5.84	57.79
2021	26	16.88	74.68
2022	36	23.38	98.05
2023 (Feb)	3	1.95	100.00
Total	154	100	100

Source: Authors' compilation based on the Scopus database as on 15th Feb, 2023

Figure 2. Documents by year

Source: Authors' compilation on the basis of the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

4.2. General publication profiling of the CSR in FFs research field: countries, research institutions, journals, and authors

While assessing 154 articles, the researchers identified 389 authors and contributions from 46 countries. Most publications came from developed countries, with the majority from the United States, followed by Spain, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Canada (Figure 3). Of the 154 documents, 22 were from both developed and developing countries, 97 from developed countries, and 35 from developing or emerging nations. Thus, developed countries (77%) contribute more to CSR research on FFs. Our study found that journals such as the “*Journal of Business Ethics*,” “*Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*,” and “*Journal of Cleaner Production*” are the major journals for publishing research centered on subjects related to the field of CSR in FFs. Table 2 provides an insightful overview of publication patterns within the realm of CSR research in FFs, emphasizing the prevalence of various scholars and universities that contribute to this domain. Remarkably, García-Sánchez I.-M. and Martínez-Ferrero J. from the University of Salamanca, Salamanca, Spain, and Rodríguez-Ariza L. from the University of Granada, Spain, stand out as the most prolific authors in CSR research on FFs.

Table 2. General publication profiling of the research field of CSR in FFs

Group	Top Ten Items in Context of Number of Publications
Country	“United States (30)”, “Spain (22)”, “France (16)”, “Germany (13)”, “Italy (12)”, “Canada (12)”, “United Kingdom (12)”, “China (11)”, “India (10)”, “Pakistan (8)”
Research Institution	“University Of Otago, New Zealand (3)”, “The Hashemite University, Jordan (2)”, “Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia (2)”, “Kumasi Technical University, Ghana (2)”, “Jenderal Soedirman, Indonesia (2)”, “Indian Institute Of Technology, India (2)”, “Irbid National University, Jordan (2)”, “RMIT University, Australia (2)”, “State University Of New York, United States (2)”, “University Of Alberta, Canada (1)”
Source Title	“Journal of Business Ethics (15)”, “Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management (8)”, “Journal of Cleaner Production (7)”, “Corporate Ownership and Control (5)”, “Journal of Business Research (5)”, “Journal of Family Business Management (5)”, “Journal of Family Business Strategy (5)”, “Social Responsibility Journal (5)”, “Technological Forecasting and Social Change (5)”, “Business Strategy and the Environment (4)”
Author	“García-Sánchez I.-M. (5)”, “Martínez-Ferrero J. (5)”, “Rodríguez-Ariza L. (5)”, “Cordeiro J.J. (4)”, “Ananzeh H. (3)”, “Cuadrado-Ballesteros B. (3)”, “Miller D. (3)”, “Wagner M. (3)”, “Le Breton-Miller I. (2)”, “Campopiano G. (2)”

Source: Authors' compilation based on the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

4.3. Authorship analysis

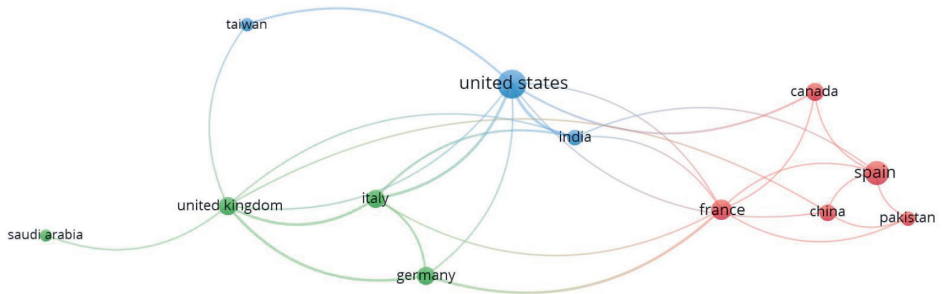
Table 3 lists the number of authors for each document. Articles with three authors were the highest in number (32.47 %), followed by two (27.92%), four (23.38%), and one (11.69%) author. The most productive authors in the CSR field in family enterprises are listed in Table 2, along with Garcia-Sánchez I.-M. contributed the most publications to CSR in FFs, whereas Miller D. (682) is the most renowned in terms of citations. Figure 3 illustrates the extent of collaborative engagement among scholars across multiple nations. As shown in Figure 4, the influential countries in collaborative efforts were the United States, Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, China, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia. Figures 3 and 4 depict the cooperation between countries and scholars in this collaborative network. The most prominent author countries in collaborative efforts were China, the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Australia, Canada, and Romania. In the context of collaborative efforts, most influential authors are García-Sánchez I.-M., Martínez-Ferrero J., Rodríguez-Ariza L., Cuadrado-Ballesteros B., García-Meca, E. And López-González E. from Spain, Cordeiro J.J. from the United States, Ananzeh H. and Alshurafat, H. from Jordan, Biswas, P.K., Roberts H., and Whiting R.H. from New Zealand, Galeazzo, A. from Italy, Hussainey, K. from United Kingdom, Shaw T.S. from India. These authors form a homogeneous network in which cooperative efforts are limited to authors within their respective countries.

Table 3. Author frequency for the documents in the sample

No. of Authors	Frequency	% (N=154)
1	18	11.69
2	43	27.92
3	50	32.47
4	36	23.38
5	5	3.25
6	2	1.30

Source: Authors' compilation based on the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

Figure 3. Network visualization map of the co-authorship



Unit of analysis = Countries

Counting technique: fractional counting

The minimum number of documents per country = 5

The minimum citations per country = 0

Source: Authors' creation using Vosviewer based on the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

Figure 4. Network visualization map of the co-authorship

Component of analysis = Authors

Counting technique: fractional counting

The minimum number of documents per author = 2

The minimum citations per author = 0

Source: Authors' creation using Vosviewer based on the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

4.4. Citation analysis

Table 4 displays the citation metrics for the shortlisted 154 articles on CSR in FFs between 2004 and 2023. The total number of citations over 20 years was 5, 299, with 278.89 citations per year. A citation count of 34.40 per document is a decent percentage (Beaulieu, 2015). Table 5 shows the most cited articles in the field of CSR in family businesses, with Le Breton-Miller I. and Miller D.'s (2006) article "Why do some family businesses outcompete others? Governance, long-term orientation, and sustainability capability had the highest number of citations (n = 556). Family firms connect corporate governance, investment policies, competitive asymmetries and long-term capabilities. According to their discourse, family controlled business owners have the discretion, incentive, knowledge, and resources to make significant

investments in the company's future, which results from governance conditions that encourage competitive asymmetries. Therefore, if competitive asymmetries are linked to the value chain, they help build sustainable capabilities and foster CSR. As the authors depicted in Table 5 had good citations, they were the most relevant in the search (Demil and Lecocq, 2010).

Table 4. Citation's metrics

Metrics	Data
Publication Years	2004-2023
Citation Years	20 (2004-2023)
Papers	154
Citations	5299
Citations/Year	264.95
Citations/Paper	34.40
Citations/Author	13.62
Papers/Author	0.40
Authors/Paper	2.53

Source: Authors' compilation based on the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

Table 5. Highly cited articles: most influential authors

No.	Authors	Title	Cites	Cites per Year
1	"Le Breton-Miller I., Miller D."	"Why do some family businesses out-compete? Governance, long-term orientations, and sustainable capability"	556	30.89
2	"Cruz C., Larraza-Kintana M., Garcés-Galdeano L., Berrone P."	"Are Family Firms Really More Socially Responsible?"	273	27.30
3	"De La Cruz Déniz Déniz M., Suárez M.K.C.S."	"Corporate social responsibility and family business in Spain"	221	11.63
4	"Campopiano G., De Massis A."	"Corporate Social Responsibility Reporting: A Content Analysis in Family and Non-family Firms"	217	24.11
5	"Niehm L.S., Swinney J., Miller N.J."	"Community social responsibility and its consequences for family business performance"	191	11.94
6	"Sharma P., Sharma S."	"Drivers of proactive environmental strategy in family firms"	183	14.08

7	“Uhlaner L.M., Van Goor-Balk H.J.M., Masurel E.”	“Family business and corporate social responsibility in a sample of Dutch firms”	174	8.70
8	“Block J.H., Wagner M.”	“The effect of family ownership on different dimensions of corporate social responsibility: Evidence from large US firms”	162	16.20
9	“Wagner M.”	“Corporate social performance and innovation with high social benefits: A quantitative analysis”	144	10.29
10	“Marques P., Presas P., Simon A.”	“The Heterogeneity of Family Firms in CSR Engagement: The Role of Values”	141	14.10

Source: Authors' compilation based on the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

4.5. Mapping knowledge network results

One of the primary objectives of this study is to enhance the knowledge map of family firms and CSR. Lexical and co-citation analyses were applied to examine the knowledge networks within this discipline, tracing their origins to the beginning of this line of investigation.

4.5.1. Keywords analysis

Figure 5 shows the keywords and co-occurrence or co-word evaluations (Di Vaio et al., 2022). This figure shows the numerous, widely known attributes associated with CSR in FFs. We have discovered that based on the popular keywords' attributes, the various facets of CSR in FFs (Table 6) are “board composition,” “firm characteristics,” “institutional voids,” “tax avoidance,” “socioemotional wealth,” “profitability,” “firm size,” “CEO duality,” “independent directors,” “ownership structure,” “earnings management,” “financial performance,” “Buddhism,” “CSR disclosure,” “sustainability,” and “business ethics.” The above keywords and a detailed analysis of the selected articles on CSR in family firms show that various aspects of family firms, such as CEO duality, independent directors, firm size, and firm characteristics, may have a direct or indirect impact on factors such as sustainability, CSR activities, CSR disclosure, and socio-emotional wealth (Miller and Le Breton-Miller, 2017; Uhlaner et al., 2004; Habbash, 2016).

Table 6. Most popular keywords

Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency
Corporate Social Responsibility	58	Business Ethics	3	External CSR	2
Family Firms	47	Environment	3	Family CEO	2
CSR	35	Financial Performance	3	Family Commitment	2
Family Business	33	Firm Performance	3	Family Governance	2
Corporate Governance	23	Firm Value	3	Family Management	2
Family Ownership	21	Institutional Voids	3	Female Directors	2
Socioemotional Wealth	18	Performance	3	Firm Characteristics	2
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	10	Profitability	3	Firm Size	2
Sustainability	10	Board Composition	2	Gender Diversity	2
Social Responsibility	7	Board Independence	2	Independent Directors	2
Agency Theory	5	Buddhism	2	Internal CSR	2
Board Of Directors	5	Business Groups	2	Social Development Goals (SDGS)	2
Family Firm	5	CEO Duality	2	Social	2
Family Involvement	5	Covid-19	2	Stakeholder Management	2
Corporate Social Responsibility Disclosure	7	CSR Performance	2	Stakeholder Theory	2
Disclosure	4	CSR Reporting	2	Stakeholders	2
Earnings Management	4	Dynamic Capabilities	2	State Ownership	2
Governance	4	Entrepreneurial Orientation	2	Tax Avoidance	2
Ownership	4	Environmental Performance Disclosure	2	Trust	2
Ownership Structure	4	Environmentalism	2		
Stewardship Theory	4	Ethics	2		

Source: Authors' compilation based on the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

government ownership, family firm characteristics, and family ownership affect CSR in family businesses (Miller and Le Breton-Miller, 2017; Uhlaner et al., 2004). Furthermore, in family firms, legitimacy theory explains why corporate management conducts particular activities, such as reporting social and environmental information (Singh and Mittal, 2019). If the community feels that the company has fallen short of its expectations, it threatens sustainability (Sucahyati et al., 2022). Thus, Miller and Le Breton-Miller (2017) believe that family members can acquire legitimacy, power, and status from the three institutional contexts of family, business, and the local community. Thus, Cluster 1 (Table 7) indicates that family firms (FFs) often prioritize CSR because of their unique governance conditions, long-term perspectives, and stakeholder relations, including legitimacy concerns and sustainable development needs. According to these studies, family businesses inclined towards corporate social responsibility (CSR) align with stakeholder theory. Family entrepreneurs view all stakeholders as their extended family, which increases their likelihood of being socially responsible and, consequently, satisfying all stakeholders in society.

Table 7. Cluster 1 -Stakeholders of “CSR and family firm.”

S.No.	Authors	Findings
1	Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2006	Consolidated ownership, lengthy tenures, and profound business bestow upon proprietors of family-controlled businesses (FCBs) the autonomy, stimulus, knowledge, and resources to plunge intensely into the prospective trajectory of the enterprise. Such long-term investments arise due to specific governance conditions, fostering lopsided competitive advantages and creating sustainable proficiencies.
2	Déniz and Suárez, 2005	Family enterprises, despite their apparent cohesion, exhibit a heterogeneous spectrum in their alignment with corporate social responsibility. This diversity has led to an amalgamation of affirmative and adverse attributes within their relationships with stakeholders.
3	Uhlaner et al., 2004	In FFs, a confluence of perspectives on corporate social responsibility serves to elucidate the intricacies underlying associations with, and behaviors towards, various constituencies like employees, clients, and suppliers. Myriad determinants, including the proprietor’s generational cohort, the enterprise’s longstanding presence within the community, community size itself, the size of the company, and the incorporation of the family surname into the business name, have substantial moderation effects.
4	Miller and Le Breton-Miller, 2017	They posited that a myriad of factors, encompassing family values and educational pedigrees, governance structures, organizational dynamics, and prevailing environmental pressures, are influential moderators in context of FFs, shaping their inclination towards the adoption of corporate sustainability practices.
5	Singh and Mitta, 2019	Their emphasis rested upon the diminished prominence of legitimacy and influence attributed to secondary stakeholders, namely community entities and non-governmental organizations. Whereas in family run enterprises, primary stakeholders—encompassing customers, employees, and shareholders—exert significant authority in steering the integration of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives a leadership belief oriented towards CSR exerts a moderating influence.

Source: Authors’ creation based on the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

4.5.2.2. Cluster 2 – Socioeconomic wealth creation by CSR in FFs

Cluster 2 comprised 22 keywords exploring how CSR in family firms contributes to socioeconomic wealth creation, encompassing both economic performance and social capital development. From an agency theory perspective, family firms' governance structures reduce monitoring costs and align interests, enabling more efficient resource allocation toward CSR, which generates long-term socioeconomic value (Samara et al., 2023).

Community involvement and commitment are critical pathways for creating socioeconomic wealth. Niehm et al. (2008) demonstrated that community cohesion and commitment foster CSR practices that simultaneously build social capital and enhance firm performance. This dual value creation is further evidenced by Block and Wagner's (2014) finding that family ownership positively correlates with employee welfare, diversity, and environmental initiative dimensions that contribute to broader socioeconomic development beyond pure financial returns.

However, governance mechanisms mediate the relationship between CSR and socio-economic outcomes. Board composition, particularly the inclusion of non-executive and female directors, influences the effectiveness of CSR in translating into socioeconomic benefits (Sundarasan et al., 2016). Moreover, family firms strategically balance earnings management with ESG disclosure, suggesting that socioeconomic wealth preservation sometimes conflicts with short-term financial optimization (Borralho et al., 2022; Rahman and Zheng, 2023; Liu et al., 2017). Table 8 illustrates key studies demonstrating how family ownership, governance structures, and environmental attitudes interact to shape socioeconomic outcomes through CSR engagement. Through community involvement, balanced family ownership, board diversity, and reduced agency conflicts, CSR in family businesses contributes to enhanced socioeconomic performance while lowering monitoring costs.

Table 8. Cluster 2 – Socio-economic wealth creation by CSR in FFs

S.No.	Authors	Findings
1	Liu et al., 2017	The association between CSR performance and family involvement is the primary driver of the relation between CSR performance and earnings management.
2	Sharma and Sharma, 2011	The scholarly article discerned that family engagement in businesses exerts a discernible impact on the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control of the prevailing coalition within a company affecting their proactive course of action concerning environmental strategy.
3	Block and Wagner, 2014	The researchers revealed a nuanced pattern: family ownership displayed an adverse correlation with CSR endeavors linked to community engagement, while demonstrating a favorable connection with CSR dimensions encompassing diversity, employee well-being, environmental stewardship, and product-related initiatives.

4	Sundarasan et al., 2016	This paper examines the impact of board composition non-executive directors (NEDs), independent non-executive directors (INEDs) and female directors on implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in family-run and non-family-run enterprises.
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Source: Authors' creation based on the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

4.5.2.3. Cluster 3 – Disclosures and reporting of “CSR in FFs”

Cluster 3 specifies that information openness and disclosure of environmental and social implications are essential for businesses to develop relationships with the public (Li et al., 2019). According to Boshnak (2022), who used stakeholder and legitimacy theories to support his argument, government ownership, family firm characteristics, and family ownership groups affect voluntary corporate social and environmental disclosure (CSEVD). Many factors, such as family firm size, profitability, board diversity, government and family ownership, firm size, firm age, and profitable FFs with foreign directorships, positively influence the extent of corporate social responsibility (CSR) disclosure (Campopiano and Massis, 2015; Habbash, 2016; Muttakin et al., 2015). According to Borralho et al. (2022), family businesses may intentionally reveal corporate social responsibility activities to make up for their earnings management techniques to divert stakeholders' contemplation from unconventional reporting practices. A reduction in earnings management requires consideration of all environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions, and firms' family status affects the interaction between ESG disclosure and earnings management. Ananzeh et al. (2022) state that various family factors, such as CEO duality, board size, and ownership structure, affect forward-looking corporate social responsibility (CSR) disclosure (FCSRD). Thus, CSR reporting in FFs is an important practice driven by stakeholder and legitimacy theories to demonstrate firms' alignment with stakeholders and society's perception. Cluster 3 indicates that family firms' CSR disclosures are influenced by factors such as ownership structure, firm size, board diversity and profitability (see Table 9).

Table 9. Cluster 3 – Disclosures and reporting of “CSR in FFs”

S.No.	Authors	Findings
1	Campopiano and Massis, 2015	Family-owned enterprises exhibit a broader spectrum of corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports, evince comparatively lower adherence to established CSR norms, and allocate emphasis towards distinct CSR subjects.
2	Nekhili et al., 2017	Their study demonstrated that family-owned companies tend to provide a reduced amount of information concerning their corporate social responsibility (CSR) obligations in comparison to non-family businesses. Nonetheless, a positive correlation was observed between market-driven financial performance and CSR disclosure within family-run enterprises.

3	Muttakin et al., 2015	This study elucidates that variable such as family firm size, profitability, and board diversity—specifically, the composition in terms of director gender and nationality—have influence on the scope of corporate social responsibility (CSR) disclosures, within the distinctive context of a developing nation.
4	Habbash, 2016	The research showcased that certain factor, namely government and family ownership, firm size, and firm age, wield a positive influence on the extent of corporate social responsibility (CSR) disclosure, whereas firm leverage exerts negative effect and other factors such as the effectiveness of the audit committee, board independence, role duality, institutional ownership, firm profitability, and industry type were not having major effect on CSR disclosure.

Source: Authors' creation based on the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

4.5.2.4. Cluster 4– Socioemotional Wealth in family businesses and CSR

Cluster 4 emphasizes socioemotional wealth in family businesses and its association with CSR (Table 10). Socioemotional wealth describes the non-financial components of FFs that meet the affective demands of the family, such as identification, the ability to exert family influence, and the continuation of the family dynasty. Various strategies in family firms generate socioemotional wealth resources, such as reputation, solid stakeholder relationships, and a long-term outlook, which family businesses can use to leverage substantive CSR to improve long-term firm performance and symbolic CSR to improve short-term firm performance (Combs et al., 2023). Thus, family controlled businesses, in contending with fierce competition, resource scarcity, and precarious economic situations, use CSR strategies to manage the demands of internal and external interest groups and protect their socioemotional worth. According to Izzo and Ciaburri (2018), depending on the SEW dimensions (family control and influence, identification of family members with the firm, binding social ties, emotional attachment, and renewal of family bonds with the firm through dynastic succession), FFs are particularly likely to engage in instrumental, moral, and relational CSR practices. Additionally, family related SEW dynamics improve CSR, emphasizing the importance of favorable ecological and social results for larger financial gains (Cruz et al., 2014; Kallmuenzer et al., 2018). Thus, family businesses engage with all their stakeholders to preserve their legitimacy for various non-economic reasons related to socio-emotional wealth theory (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). Consequently, family businesses' participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR) is influenced by their innate socioemotional wealth propensity, which means that they prioritize non-financial objectives, such as reputation, legacy, and stakeholder connections (Cruz et al., 2014; Zientara, 2017).

Table 10. Cluster 4– Socioemotional Wealth in Family Businesses and CSR

S.No.	Authors	Findings
1	Labelle et al., 2018	They stated that in case of family-owned businesses, the lower spectrum of family control, family owners allocate greater resources toward social initiatives, driven by a desire to safeguard their socioemotional wealth (SEW).
2	Zientara, 2017	The paper asserts that due to the dualistic character of SEW, FFs having the notion to safeguard SEW, may embrace an instrumental and selective approach, as opposed to a strategic (holistic) and normative one, when it comes to the implementation of CSR projects that have negative effects on the stakeholders.
3	Block and Wagner, 2014	They posited that the ownership structure characterized by family and founder ownership reduces the emphasis on corporate social responsibility concerns (CSR concerns) whereas family and founder CEO shows an elevated focus on CSR concerns.
4	Cruz et al., 2014	They viewed that FFs owing to their inherent socioemotional wealth inclination, yield a favorable influence on social aspects associated with external stakeholders, while exerting an adverse effect on internal social dimensions.

Source: Authors' creation based on the Scopus database as of 15th Feb 2023

To enhance clarity and demonstrate thematic coherence, we provide an overview of the four clusters identified through textual analysis, summarizing their core focus, key theoretical foundations, and primary variables examined (Table 11). This overview aligns with our research objective of mapping the thematic landscape of CSR research on family firms in the following ways.

Table 11. Overview of Thematic Clusters in CSR and Family Firms Research

Cluster	Theme	Core Focus	Key Theories	Representative Topics / Keywords	Indicative Outcomes	Alignment with Research Objectives
Cluster 1	Stakeholders of CSR and Family Firms	How stakeholder relations, legitimacy, and governance structures drive CSR engagement	Stakeholder Theory, Legitimacy Theory	Stakeholders, legitimacy, government ownership, family characteristics	Stakeholder satisfaction, sustainable legitimacy, enhanced governance	Explains <i>why</i> FFs adopt CSR and how stakeholder salience shapes CSR strategies
Cluster 2	Socioeconomic Wealth Creation through CSR	CSR as a mechanism for building social and economic value for the firm and the community	Agency Theory, SEW Theory, Social Capital Theory	Family ownership, community engagement, earnings quality, ESG disclosure, board diversity	Enhanced firm performance, social cohesion, and reduced agency conflict	Shows <i>how</i> CSR in FFs generates dual economic and social benefits

Cluster 3	CSR Disclosure and Reporting in FFs	Determinants and implications of CSR disclosure and transparency	Stakeholder Theory, Legitimacy Theory	Disclosure, reporting, board structure, firm size, profitability	Transparency, reputation management, stakeholder trust	Links CSR reporting practices to governance and stakeholder relations
Cluster 4	Socioemotional Wealth and CSR	Non-economic motives driving CSR adoption in family firms	Socioemotional Wealth Theory, Stewardship Theory	Family control, identity, dynastic succession, family influence	Reputation protection, long-term orientation, legacy building	Clarifies <i>why</i> family values and emotions drive CSR participation

Source: Authors' synthesis based on systematic literature review

Several cross-cutting themes emerged from the four clusters. First, family ownership consistently appears to be a moderating variable affecting CSR engagement, disclosure, and outcomes. Second, governance mechanisms (board composition, CEO duality, and ownership concentration) serve as critical mediators between family firm characteristics and CSR practices. Third, the tension between economic and non-economic objectives, particularly socioemotional wealth preservation, distinguishes family firm CSR from non-family enterprises. Finally, stakeholder, agency, and socioemotional wealth theories collectively provide a complementary theoretical toolkit for understanding the unique CSR dynamics of family firms. These insights directly address our research objective of identifying contemporary themes and theoretical foundations in the CSR-family firm nexus.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Through a thorough study of the prior literature, this study adds to the knowledge of the CSR component in FFs literature (Kuttner et al., 2020). This unmistakably shows that academics, researchers, and management today greatly emphasize CSR in FFs because of the surge in CSR studies in 2021 and 2022 (Stock et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the primary goal of this analysis is to identify the themes and facets of CSR in FFs. The current research delineated major themes as “CSR, family firm attributes and stakeholders,” socioeconomic wealth creation, “CSR disclosure and reporting in context of FFs attributes,” and “socioemotional wealth in Family business and CSR”. Further thematic analysis of the clusters shows that the main facets of CSR in family firms include family ownership, family firm heterogeneity, CEO duality, board size, board independence, religion and culture, family involvement, the nature of family control, family governance, and non-economic goals. In contrast, thematic analysis shows that family firms oriented towards CSR lead to better value creation, more dividend-paying propensity, innovation, decreased stock price crash risk, more accrual-

based earnings management, building family legitimacy, and creating socioemotional wealth and company reputation.

The abovementioned themes and literature review may help scholars, policymakers, and practitioners understand what drives family businesses to implement CSR practices and inspire them to adopt sustainable and moral business practices (Fehre and Weber, 2019). Policymakers and practitioners may be interested in the current literature to gain insights into what encourages family businesses to adopt CSR practices and motivate family firms to adopt ethical and sustainable practices (Fehre and Weber, 2019). As a review indicates the role of family attributes in promoting CSR, policymakers and practitioners can develop frameworks that support family oriented traits, including firm size, board diversity, and foreign directorship, to increase the social impact of family enterprises. This study indicates that family firms that participate in CSR are better at managing earnings. Policymakers can foster supportive environments by combining financial incentives with CSR measures. Policymakers should support reporting requirements to assist family businesses and encourage CSR, as the current study shows that CSR reporting is essential for stakeholder relationships and the long-term viability of family businesses. Policies that support socially responsible investments may also align with family company principles, as family businesses place a high priority on CSR to preserve their positive heritage and SEW.

These findings equip scholars with a structured thematic map to build theory-driven models of CSR in family firms, while offering practitioners evidence-based insights to design governance and CSR strategies that balance economic performance with socioemotional and societal goals.

6. LIMITATIONS

This study had some limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, our findings highlight the FF's engagement in CSR initiatives to protect socioemotional wealth, which further facilitates long-term operations and a stable social standing. Current studies effectively show that CSR can ensure the legitimacy of FFs and reflect the family's values and commitment to stakeholders. However, the current literature lacks a focus on environmental sustainability issues for legitimacy with regulators. Thus, we call for future research on CSR and FFs stakeholders, with a specific focus on environmental sustainability. Second, the focus should be on comparing the sustainability practices of family and non-family firms to understand their differences in combating global warming and climate change. Third, insights into FFs' CSR initiatives that benefit local communities contribute to stakeholder theory and community engagement literature (Freeman, 2010; Reed, 2016). This study captures the efficacy of FFs' CSR initiatives in promoting firms' socioeconomic value. However, the concept of regional socioeconomic development has been overlooked in literature.

To this end, we recommend longitudinal studies to analyze the evolution of CSR practices within specific regional contexts and family firms to identify the efficacy of these efforts in the region's socioeconomic development. Fourth, this study highlights that FFs often use symbolic CSR to respond to the demands of powerful stakeholders. Thus, in the context of CSR in FFs and disclosure, we recommend researching the impact of symbolic CSR on firm performance. Additionally, exploring the mechanisms underlying family firms' attitudes toward CSR is essential. Fifth, developed countries have a more established body of literature on CSR practices for FFs than developing countries. This study may benefit developing nations by fostering research on CSR in family businesses (Singh and Mittal, 2019; Ye and Li, 2021). Finally, the current literature focuses on quantitative and qualitative analyses of the past literature. Thus, researchers could conduct quantitative meta-analyses of the identified factors affecting CSR in families. Consequently, researchers may build a quantitative model that illustrates the important CSR dimensions that help family businesses differentiate themselves from other types.

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