

Article

Ethics and Social Responsibility in Family Firms. Research Domain and Future Research Trends from a Bibliometric Perspective

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Abstract: Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethics have been studied in a wide variety of business contexts, but the field of family business has mainly devoted attention to Corporate Social Responsibility, with less attention paid to the field of ethics. Being two closely related fields, they should be analyzed jointly in order to study the evolution of the field. To achieve this objective, we use two different bibliometric techniques, a co-word and a document coupling, as they are complementary and allow us to identify research topics and, therefore, to establish future research lines. Results show that the differences that exist between CSR in family businesses and CSR in non-family businesses continue to be a central focus, and that ethics should be found in the roots of that question. However, the underpinning factors and the linkage of the different CSR policies and ethical values to performance still require more attention. To be more precise, topics such as socio-emotional wealth, financial performance, ethics, firm, and management remain at the core of the field.

Keywords: CSR; ethics; family firm; bibliometric; co-word; coupling



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1. Introduction

In recent decades, the analysis of scientific production has provided a general overview of advances in all research disciplines, and has assisted in the understanding of the evolution and structure of research. This type of analysis can also constitute a major opportunity for the identification of new lines of research and for the opening of new research fronts.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethics (hereafter CSR-E) have been studied in a wide variety of business contexts, such as multinationals [1–3] and SMEs [4,5], in its relationship with performance [6,7], and with different sectors and countries [8,9]. Likewise, a growing interest in studying the case of family firms (FFs) can be observed [10–12], as can research focused on the relationship between CSR and FFs, which marks a growing trend [13].

The justification for this research is found in the fact that, despite the existence of bibliometric studies focused on CSR-E [14–16] or sustainability [17], and on family businesses [18,19], as well as an incipient and growing literature in recent years linking CSR-E to family businesses, no conclusive bibliometric studies have yet been produced that clearly state the areas in which work has been and continues to be carried out on this relationship.

Other recent bibliometric/meta-analytical studies affirm the increase in research focused on CSR-E in FFs. The first was conducted by Cavanati [20] and is a meta-analytical study that confirms the lack of consensus and the existence of contradictory results in most research in the comparison of the relationship of CSR with FFs and non-FFs. The second paper, also recently published, analyzes the same relationship, but is largely focused on the antecedents that inspired the study of CSR and FFs [21]. Through citation analysis, both studies recognize the existence of a cluster composed of papers linking CSR and FFs, and

verify the major heterogeneity offered by these numerous papers. Recently, as observed by Ferreira et al. [17], this topic falls into four different clusters: family business capital, family business strategy, family business social responsibility, and family business succession. Meanwhile, Mariani et al. [22] suggest that family involvement, corporate governance, and sustainability are the most frequently studied topics.

However, to the best of our knowledge, ethics has been left out of these studies, despite the close relationship between the two research fronts. Indeed, if we consider that ethics and CSR are interlinked and co-evolve, new studies considering both aspects at the same time are needed. Vazquez [23] observes an increasing interest in the role that ethics plays in EF, suggesting the importance of considering both fields instead of a single approach. Besides the aforementioned studies, no in-depth study based on this relationship is carried out by these authors; instead, from each field of study, the authors and research that have been decisive in the relationship are analyzed. They also highlight the need for new studies to elucidate certain unknowns in this CSR-E/FF relationship [24], and offer an analysis of the main lines investigated to date, their temporal evolution, and the most relevant authors and work in the field [20,21]. Therefore, the objective of this study is to evaluate the state of the art of CSR-E in FFs. To achieve this objective, we can structure the objective of this research using three different research questions: (1) What is the current status of the research in this field? (2) What research contexts and topics have been explored in the literature to date? (3) Which may be the future research lines to be addressed?

For this purpose, bibliometric methodologies of a more sophisticated nature are required, such as those that have been employed in other disciplines to demonstrate their enormous potential. To fill this gap, we propose conducting a bibliometric study by analyzing all articles published in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) through the Web of Science database. This study will shed more light on not only the main lines of research in this field, on the theories and approaches upon which they are based, and on their evolution and their main authors, but it will also show where science in this field is advancing.

Knowledge regarding intellectual production, patents, and scientific information in general has benefited greatly from the growing development of information technologies, which, added to the processes of globalization, have given birth to a series of new indicators that enable advances to be made in analyzing the state of knowledge. In this respect, Bibliometrics and Scientometrics allow us to study scientific production in a scientific domain, using metrics that form the basis for the processes of research and the advancement of knowledge.

Bibliometrics is useful in the analysis of indexed publications, topics, authors, and content [25–27]. Graphs and/or bibliometric maps enable the visualization of the different research areas, for the subsequent analysis of their conceptual structure and of the dynamics of their evolution [28]. As suggested by Mariani et al. [22], more complex methodologies are required to deepen the understanding of the evolution and theoretical basis of the field. Following recent studies [29], bibliographic analyses should not be based on a single technique. Combining techniques offers a more in-depth insight into a research field. As a result, we suggest in our study the implementation of two complementary techniques: bibliographic coupling analysis and co-word analysis.

Bibliographic coupling analysis allows us to observe how community relationships are built between researchers and institutions, while co-word analysis, based on keywords, enables their co-occurrence to be measured. With these analyses, relational matrices can be constructed, to which grouping or clustering algorithms are applied to visualize the relationships graphically through maps.

All in all, our work strives to analyze ethics and CSR research in FFs, through a bibliometric analysis, based on the articles published in the SSCI in the Web of Science database until March 2021, by means of the following process: First, a literature review is conducted. Second, a bibliographic coupling and publication citation analysis is performed to detect influential concepts, paradigms, and theoretical frameworks related to the field

of CSR and FF. Third, structural patterns and relational attributes within the knowledge structure of the field are investigated through an author co-occurrence network analysis and a co-citation network analysis so that CSR and FF scholars can observe a complete picture of the structure of the fundamental knowledge of the field. Our study is completed with a discussion and presentation of conclusions.

2. Literature Review

In CSR-E, existing bibliometric studies describe the evolution of this field of knowledge and show the various lines and different approaches. For example, Zhao et al. [30] found six research trends through citation analysis: business ethics, integration of stakeholder management, the evolution of the CSR concept, the political and social requirements of CSR, the financial implications of CSR, and reputation and sustainability management, and the role that ethics plays as a general framework. It is remarkable to observe the emergence of ethics in this study despite the fact that this was not the objective.

Other studies that analyze the evolution of CSR point out that some of the most studied aspects are culture and ethics, carried out mainly in large companies and/or multi-nationals [31]. Many of these studies focus on cultural differences between countries – the so-called cross-cultural differences – to find which cultural conditions are more favorable to ethics and social responsibility [32,33]. One of the aspects that has been and continues to be of greatest interest is the relationship of these with business performance or results, both financial [6,7] and non-financial [34,35]. In fact, certain studies highlight the difficulty involved in studying this relationship and propose the need to conduct more studies using a longitudinal methodology, employing new, less quantitative but more qualitative measures of performance, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment [36,37], or even suggest a bidirectional relationship between CSR and performance [38].

Regarding FFs, bibliographic studies can also be found that show the evolution of research in this field. For example, in a generalist way in the field, the study conducted by Ratten et al. ([39], p. 1) for the *Journal of Family Business Management* is considered “the main source of research related to the family firm from a management perspective”, as is the study by Dana et al. [40] for the *Journal of Small Business Management*. Recently, several articles have focused their studies on analyzing the internationalization of family business [19,41,42]. Other work develops internationalization within innovation and business technology strategy [43]. Nordin et al. [44] develop their bibliometric study in family business and social capital.

One of the most prominent aspects of family business studies is that of succession, for which there are bibliometric studies that analyse the succession of these companies [45]. Furthermore, bibliometric works are beginning to be published that focus on the background in CSR, on the one hand, and in FF, on the other, revealing the existence of a growing and incipient line of research that studies CSR in the context of FFs [21]. The meta-analysis by Canavati [20] also deserves mention, where the absence of conclusive results is emphasized when it comes to demonstrating which type of company, albeit family or non-family, is more involved in social responsibility. This latter study concludes that certain circumstances, such as the fact that the FF is private versus public, or that the family is involved in management, renders the FF more socially responsible than non-FFs. It is worth remarking on the paper by Mariani et al. [22] that links CSR and FF.

The concept of CSR-E has evolved throughout its history; however, some current and global definitions are missing [46]. However, from its origins, it was explained as the maximization of profits alongside the creation and maintenance of a balance with the demands of its customers, its workforce, and the community [47]. Bowen [48] was one of its promoters and defined a specific set of principles for companies to fulfil their social responsibilities. With globalization, the evolution of this concept is accompanied by new ideas, such as the stakeholder perspective [49,50], agency theory [51,52], and institutional theory [53,54].

Bowen's study was first applied to larger companies; research involving SMEs is much more recent. In recent years, it has been observed how the casuistry that defines family businesses, both large and SMEs, has awakened a growing interest in analyzing how certain aspects, such as corporate governance composed of families, the pressure of these families, and whether management is performed by families, affect the objectives and the social and environmental practice of these companies, in addition to the economic objectives. Initially, these studies were created in an effort to show whether there were differences between family and non-FFs in their socially responsible and environmental commitment [55,56]. These works compared the definitory characteristics of FFs to evaluate whether there were any differences in ethical behaviors compared to non-FFs. In principle, it remains impossible to clearly identify which of these companies acquires a greater social commitment, due to different and even contradictory results [57], and this has become one of the main lines of research in this field. Certain authors argue that FFs show low levels of commitment to CSR, especially if they are controlled by their founders [58], and that they report fewer responsible practices than non-FFs [59]. On the contrary, other work highlights that FFs are more likely to value CSR performance [60] and underscores the preponderant role of the family firm in the communication of these practices [61] or the positive orientation of independent directors in the disclosure of CSR practices, when there is a moderating effect from families [62]. Despite all these studies, it could be explained that, under certain circumstances, such as family involvement in management or private consideration, or even in those institutional environments with weak governance and labour regulatory frameworks, FFs are more committed to social responsibility than non-FFs [21]. These aspects are also drawn from the conclusions reached by Mariani et al. [22] from the bibliometric analysis. They identify three main research domains at the intersection between FFs and CSR: family involvement [63], corporate governance [64], and sustainability [65]. It is also interesting to see that other topics (SEW, ethics/religion, and entrepreneurial orientation) are closely related to but not associated with their topics, suggesting a need to deepen the research into those aspects. However, the topic of ethics in the family firm still represents an understudied area [23].

The special characteristics of the ethical behavior of family businesses come from three key aspects: the participation of the owner's family, social emotional wealth, and social interaction. These aspects converge into ethical dynamics, which will also affect ethical issues related to various stakeholders in the family business, such as the moral development of family members, the ethical climate, the norms of the family business, the development and ethical behavior of company members and the ethical considerations of external stakeholders.

3. Methodology

For this study, the use of two different complementary bibliometric analyses is proposed. On the one hand, bibliographic coupling is used in order to identify the evolution of the various research trends, and, on the other hand, co-word analysis is employed, which will bring out the topics developed in such research trends.

One of the critical steps involved in developing a solid literature review is the choice of the documents to be analysed. The Web of Science (WoS) database was used, since it has been widely considered in this type of analysis [66,67]. The following Boolean search ("family firm*" OR "family business*") AND (CSR * or Ethic * or "corporate social responsibility*") was performed. The results were limited to papers, to reflect the leading sources of knowledge development. The search was undertaken in April 2021 without a time restriction.

For quantitative data processing, we used the VOSviewer software [68], a free tool developed by the University of Leiden, which allows the construction and visualization of bibliometric networks.

Once the database was created, bibliometric coupling analysis and co-word analysis were employed to identify the evolution and future trends of the field, since these methods

were closer to the research objectives of this study. Thus, in contrast to co-citation, which is more oriented toward understanding the intellectual structure of a field [69], co-word analysis is built on the assumption that keywords describe the content of a paper and can therefore assist in identifying papers covering the same research topics. As a complement, bibliographic coupling identifies papers that cite one or more identical documents in their references [70,71]; it can be assumed that these are built on the same theoretical framework [72]. Thus, the combination of these two methods offers interesting insights into the evolution of research trends by identifying key studies and the topics within them.

4. Analysis of the Results of the Bibliographical Coupling

The main bibliometric method used in this study is bibliographical coupling. This concept was introduced by Kessler [70], who proposed that the relationship between two or more articles is revealed in the number of shared references. The premise of this criterion is as follows: the more coincident the references are, the closer their research topics and theoretical basis must be. This idea is similar to co-citation analysis, but instead of grouping together cited references, we associate papers with similar references. The advantages of this methodological approach have been reflected by Boyack and Klavans [72].

In our study, based on a total of 193 documents, the articles analysed are those that carry the greatest weight within the field.

Of those documents, 33 meet the threshold of having over 25 citations. Despite the fact that all documents were considered, for mapping purposes we only used those documents over the aforementioned limit (17%). The number of papers analysed allows us to identify the most cited and therefore most relevant articles. Among the most cited documents, Table 1 lists those with the highest number of citations.

Table 1. Most cited documents in the CSR-FF field.

| Document | Citations |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Cruz et al. (2014) | 149 |
| Déniz and Suárez (2005) | 143 |
| Graafland et al. (2003) | 139 |
| Niehm et al. (2008) | 132 |
| Fassin (2011) | 118 |
| Campopiano and De Massis (2015) | 111 |
| Mitchell (2011) | 104 |
| Wagner (2010) | 98 |
| Sorenson (2009) | 92 |
| Block (2014) | 88 |
| Duh (2010) | 85 |
| Marques (2014) | 82 |
| Amba-rao (2000) | 59 |
| Cuadrado-ballesteros (2015) | 53 |
| Nekhili (2017) | 51 |

These documents were grouped according to the number of shared references. The process revealed that there is an item that does not relate to the remaining documents. To be precise, it is the work of Johan Graafland, Bert Van de Ven, and Nelleke Stoffele: “Strategies and instruments for organising CSR by small and large businesses in the Netherlands”, published in the *Journal of Business Ethics* in 2003.

Since this paper was isolated, it was decided to remove this item from the graph, since it does not offer information about the relationship between the different papers that conform to a research trend. The result of the analysis provided a total of 4 clusters, as shown in Figure 1 and Table 2.

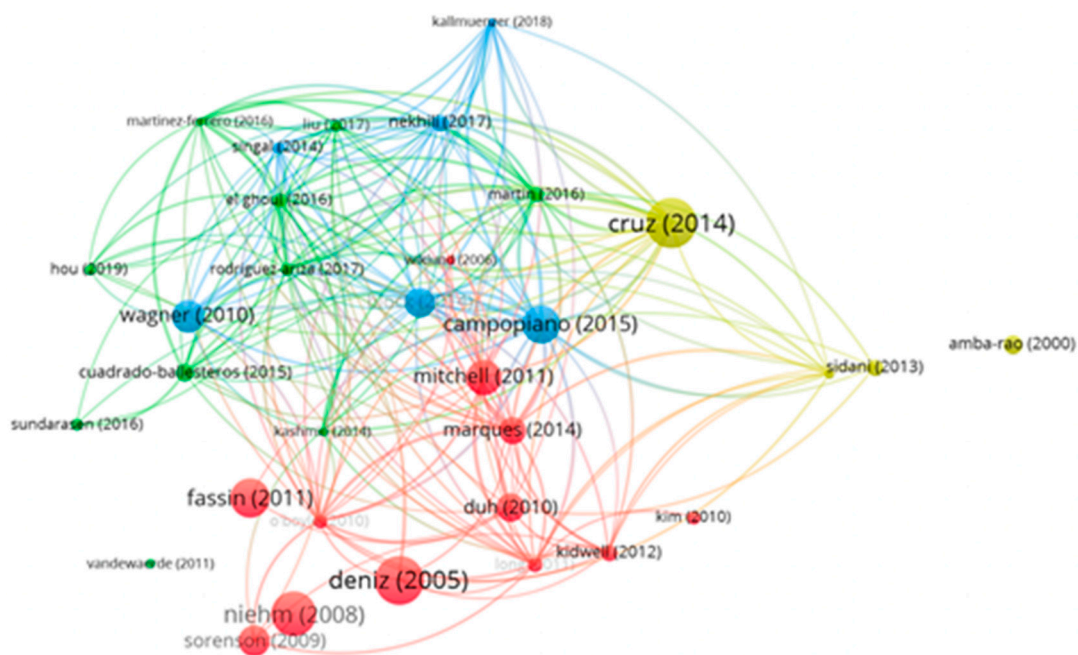


Figure 1. Bibliographic coupling network.

Table 2. Different clusters derived from the bibliographic coupling analysis.

| Cluster 1 (12 Items) | Cluster 2 (10 Items) | Cluster 3 (6 Items) | Cluster 4 (4 Items) |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Déniz and Suárez (2005) | Cuadrado-ballesteros (2015) | Block (2014) | Amba-rao (2000) |
| Duh (2010) | El ghoul (2016) | Campopiano and De Massis (2015) | Cruz et al. (2014) |
| Fassin (2011) | Hou (2019) | Kallmuenzer (2018) | Mcmullen (2015) |
| Kidwell (2012) | Kashmiri (2014) | Nekhili (2017) | Sidani (2013) |
| Kim (2010) | Liu (2017) | Singal (2014) | |
| Long (2011) | Martin (2016) | Wagner (2010) | |
| Marques (2014) | Martinez-ferrero (2016) | | |
| Mitchell (2011) | Rodriguez-ariza (2017) | | |
| Niehm et al. (2008) | Sundarasan (2016) | | |
| O'Boyle et al. (2010) | Vandewaerde (2011) | | |
| Sorenson (2009) | | | |
| Wiklund (2006) | | | |

The lines in the graph represent those relationships that include at least five matches, and hence certain items show no relationships despite having them.

As mentioned above, each group of articles shares the same bibliographical basis in their research. From the analysis of the content of these studies, the main topics studied in the field of CSR-E and FFs research are described below.

For Cluster 1, the themes established are ethics and the ethical approach of small and family businesses, in which, in certain cases, the differences with respect to larger and non-family businesses are sought. These studies do not offer a unique relationship in the sense of establishing a single direction between family businesses and ethics or CSR.. However, these studies do obtain direct relationships between CSR processes in FFs, over and above those in non-FFs, although the opposite also holds true. In both cases, explanatory arguments are offered for this situation. These results have probably led Déniz and Suárez [55] to conclude that organizations are not a homogeneous group in terms of their orientation toward corporate social responsibility. They establish the existence of three possible clusters of family and ethical and/or socially responsible companies. This research would give support to the results of most of the investigations that obtain diverse and even contradictory results, and therefore serves as support to any explanation offered

regarding the results obtained. The versatility of this work has meant that it is cited in most studies bearing these characteristics.

Cluster number 2 includes research that attempts to delve a little deeper into the relationship between family businesses and CSR processes. In this relationship, certain aspects studied include the impact of this relationship on business results. Another aspect of interest to these researchers involves ascertaining under which situations family businesses maintain greater socially responsible commitments than do non-family businesses. For example, it is stated that in recession situations, family businesses commit more resources to their SR obligations than do non-family businesses. In this group of papers, research is based on agency and stakeholder approaches. This work investigates the role of corporate governance and the composition of the board, and/or the role of women therein. Another line of research that is emerging and is currently very much alive concerns socio-emotional wealth. It should be borne in mind that, in this group of researchers, there is no one who stands out above the others; this is especially noticeable in comparison with the situation in the other three clusters.

Cluster 3 brings together researchers who focus mainly on the study of specific SR practices, especially their communication. Furthermore, these studies also strive to distinguish between behaviors of family businesses and those of non-family businesses. In this cluster, there are researchers who stand out above the others, such as Campopiano and De Massis [73] and Wagner [74]. In the case of the first work, this constitutes the most cited of all the research in our study, despite its research being relatively recent. Specifically, these authors study the difference in behavior that exists between family and non-family businesses regarding the disclosure of their social and environmental actions, focusing on the influence of the family in this process. In this way, a new theoretical framework emerges, such as institutional theory. They conclude that FFs are better at publicizing their social and environmental commitments, but are less compliant with CSR norms. Wagner [74] focuses on how the socially responsible behavior of firms, including that of FFs, influences their performance.

Cluster 4 includes research that again studies differences between family and non-family businesses, but concerns other variables, such as culture, and also focuses on aspects such as socio-emotional wealth. New theories, such as self-determination, emerge, which frame results such as the effect that founding parents can have on promoting affective commitment in their children-successors by supporting their psychological needs regarding competence, autonomy, and relationships within the family business. To this cluster belongs the most cited research of the entire sample: Cruz et al. [57]. This research analyses the differences between family and non-FFs by attending to aspects such as socio-emotional wealth and other social dimensions under the stakeholder approach. These authors show that FFs exert a positive effect on social dimensions related to external stakeholders and a negative effect on internal stakeholders. This result enables the authors to explain and justify the fact that family businesses present responsible and irresponsible behaviors. As is the case in the first cluster, this conclusion offers a major opportunity to support a large part of the research that has been carried out since 2015, in which it is possible to obtain diverse results in the observation of socially responsible behaviors of family businesses, compared to that of non-family businesses.

In our analysis, our objective is to test the temporality of the different topics associated with CSR research in family businesses. In Figure 2, it can be observed how the relevant topics develop over time, starting with the oldest publications (before 2008), which are shown in bright blue, through green (around 2014), and continuing with the most modern and current studies, which are shown in yellow (2018 to the present day).

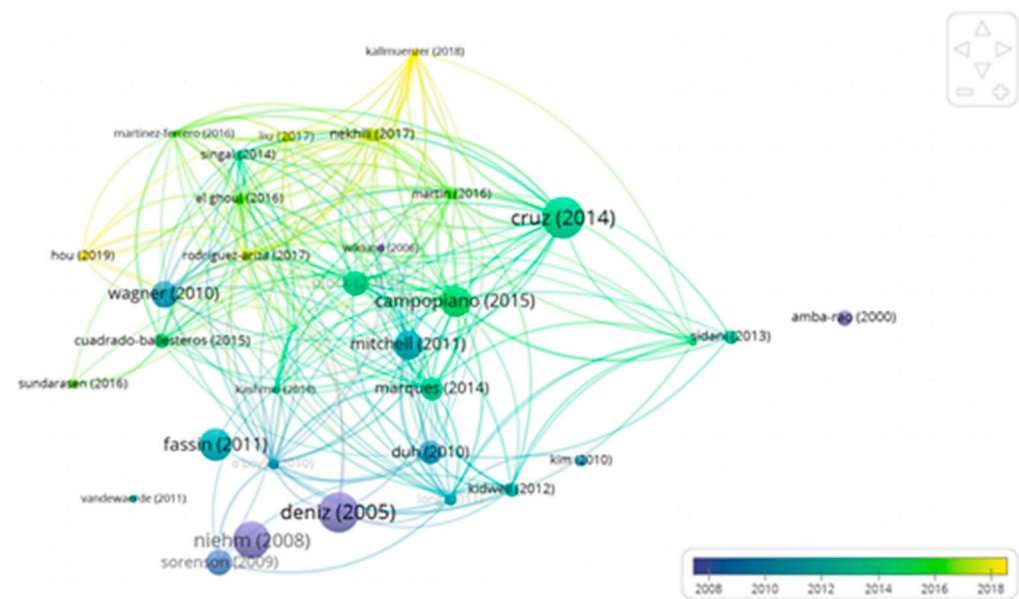


Figure 2. Time evolution of the bibliographic coupling network.

Therefore, although Campopiano and De Massis [73] and Cruz et al. [57] occupy the central positions on the map, since they are two of the most cited studies, their origins belong to Déniz and Suárez [55] and Niehm et al. [65], both of which belong to Cluster 1. These last two studies have been cited in much of the research based thereon. We believe that what has made all or most of these studies decide to base their results and conclusions on these papers is, on the one hand, their pioneering role in the study of the CSR and family business relationship. Secondly, these studies suggest that there are different possibilities or options for the relationship between socially responsible practices and the case of family businesses. They also investigate the antecedents and consequences of social responsibility in family businesses. These proposals have led to a large number of studies developed in this field that cite these two pioneering studies. Moreover, Déniz and Suárez [55] and Niehm et al. [65] were also the first to offer an ethical framework for the concept and application of corporate social responsibility, and to analyze its impact on corporate performance.

This last aspect is usually one of the most recurrent, and is normally proposed as a future line of research, due to the need to seek other approaches, methodologies, and samples, or simply due to the limitations that always arise when trying to relate CSR to business performance, regardless of the type of company [1,7]. Regarding the work of Campopiano and De Massis [73] and Cruz et al. [57], which is comparatively more contemporary in this line of research, they have already offered a sufficiently extensive number of years to have become two clear benchmarks of research into CSR in FFs. These two research studies already offer an in-depth analysis regarding the circumstances under which FFs include social and environmental responsibility practices in their strategies. For example, they study the disclosure of these actions and socio-emotional wealth, which currently constitutes one of the best-received lines in this field of study [75,76]. In addition, they have clearly contributed to the advancement of research on both CSR and family businesses, reporting significant implications for practice, and making research proposals that have been further developed by other authors. Examples include the opportunity to investigate how FFs react to institutional and cultural norms that may affect their propensity to behave proactively as stewards toward their community. Another proposal involves improving the understanding of the ways in which family involvement affects the propensity to engage in corporate philanthropy in small and medium-sized family businesses, and yet another suggestion proposes that all these studies be conducted using longitudinal methodology.

As was suggested in the methodology, we combined the coupling technique with a co-word analysis in order to identify the key topics in the evolution of the various research fronts.

For the most modern lines of research, or those that are currently topical, the work of Kallmuenzer et al. [77], who focus their study on how family businesses pursue social and environmental sustainability beyond regulations, deserves a special mention. These studies mainly rely on the socio-emotional wealth literature and introduce new theories, such as random utility. The most modern work involved in our study also deserves mention: Hou [78] continues to examine the impact of the CSR of firms on their performance, in an effort to discover the role of the board of directors in this relationship.

An additional analysis performed herein involves the study of co-words that, again, leads us to four clusters, shown and explained below (see Table 3 and Figure 3).

Table 3. Clusters obtained from the co-word analysis.

| Cluster 1 (13 Items) | Cluster 2 (7 Items) | Cluster 3 (6 Items) | Cluster 4 (5 Items) |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Family business | Board of directors | CSR | Agency theory |
| Culture | Corporate governance | Financial performance | Controlled firms |
| Entrepreneurship | Directors | Innovation | Determinants |
| Ethics | Gender | Strategy | Engagement |
| Firm | Governance | Sustainability | Socio-emotional wealth |
| Management | Impact | | |
| Perceptions | Ownership | | |
| Performance | | | |
| Perspectives | | | |
| Religiosity | | | |
| SME | | | |
| Stewardship theory | | | |
| Values | | | |

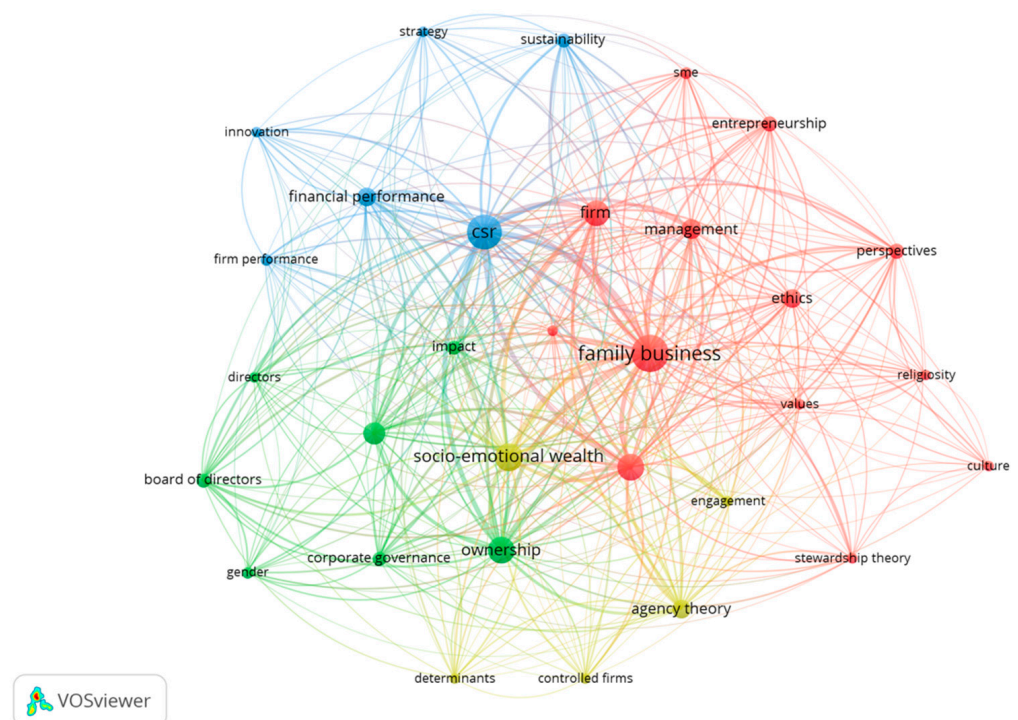


Figure 3. Co-word network.

The search for articles that would participate in this bibliographic study was carried out primarily by compiling studies that focus their study on CSR and family business. It

was therefore logical to discover that these were the two most cited words therein. In the case of the word family business, this belonged to the first cluster, while the word CSR was in the third cluster.

As for the first cluster, it can be observed that the five most frequently cited keywords appearing together with family business are firm, performance, management, and ethics. The rest of the words that comprise this cluster, up to a total of thirteen words, seldom appear again. It is interesting to bear in mind that while culture and values are among the most recurrent keywords in CSR research, this is not the case when approached from the side of the family firm. For the second cluster, the most cited keyword is ownership, followed by governance. In this group, the two main initial theories, agency and stakeholders, are introduced. However, the authors of these papers decide not to give visibility to the theories through the choice of keywords, but to do so on the basis of governance or corporate governance. In cluster 3, the most recurring keywords are financial performance, firm performance, and sustainability. This cluster was largely characterised by delving into the differences between FFs and non-FFs, and – as in most of these papers – by incorporating their impact on corporate performance. For the last and fourth studied groups, the keyword most frequently mentioned is that of socio-emotional wealth, which is currently an emerging line of research, despite having previously been investigated in one of the articles belonging to cluster 2 [75]. For this reason, socio-emotional wealth appears in the point cloud in the intermediate zone between clusters 2 (green) and 4 (yellow). It is in cluster 4 that it acquires greater relevance, having been chosen as a keyword for the work of Cruz et al. [57], which constitutes the most frequently cited paper in the analysis of co-citations carried out in this study.

The temporal analysis that determines the evolution of co-citations (Figure 4) also enables some very interesting results to be identified, including the fact that those keywords that were identified in Cluster 1 as being not very recurrent in the analysis of CSR in family businesses have been and continue to be so in studies of CSR or business ethics. These keywords, such as culture, ethics, and values, were selected as keywords in the first studies that appeared on this subject; however, as shown above, they have not been the most recurrent keywords in subsequent work. It can be observed that, obviously, those that have been most cited are family business and CSR, and this is due to the fact that our search was principally based thereon. These appeared in the middle of the period analysed (2016 and 2017), and therefore it is understood that it is precisely at this time that CSR research in family business became relevant. In order to conclude the temporal analysis, it should be stated that socio-emotional wealth is the most frequently cited contemporary keyword, which again must be attributed to the work of Cruz et al. [57], the most cited paper of all those in this field since 2017, which gives rise to this line of research. It should also be emphasized that the most modern keywords appearing in the latest published work include religiosity, engagement, and corporate governance, cited from 2018, whereby the latter is perhaps the keyword that has acquired more notoriety than the other two. However, its evolution remains to be seen.

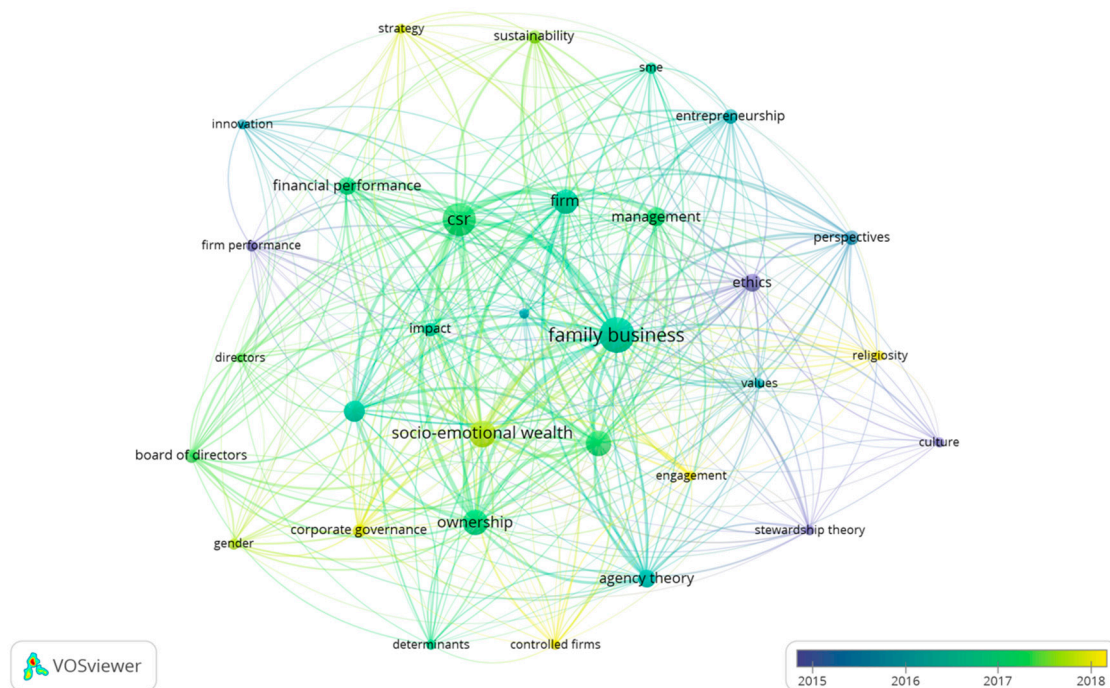


Figure 4. Evolution of the co-word network over time.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The present study is based on the need to analyse research on ethics and CSR in family businesses. This work is based on the selection of all articles that have been published in the SSCI on the Web of Science database up to March 2021. The result of the visualizations obtained has enabled us to understand the thematic structure of the main lines of research in ethics and CSR-E applied to family businesses. Following the basis for the visualization of the bibliometric map, a series of conclusions can be drawn.

Our first research question was to acknowledge the present status of research on Big Data and Artificial Intelligence. In this sense, the presented results enable researchers on this topic, being in an early or mature stage in their career, to understand the current situation of the field. This may allow one to identify areas not developed, or at least less investigated areas, which may facilitate the next steps to be developed in the field. Furthermore, the key documents have been identified. This will help researchers who are being introduced to this specific research domain easily reach the state-of-the-art.

Regarding the second research question that pursued the identification of the main trends, and following the methodologies already indicated, the most recurring keywords used by the authors were analyzed, jointly with an analysis of the different documents grouped by shared citations [22]. However, these techniques do not only allow one to identify what has been studied to date. The evolution shows, indeed, how the actual knowledge is shaping future research.

In this line, the first conclusion is of a general nature: although the study of CSR-E is not new and has already been conducted in various business contexts, the interest in focusing on family businesses is relatively recent, since the first studies thereon appeared in 2000 and 2005.

The second conclusion, also of a general nature, refers to the main theories and approaches on which the study of CSR-E and family business is based. These are mainly agency theory, institutional theory, and the stakeholder approach. Recently, the role also played by another theory, random utility theory, has been mentioned [77], as has the growing interest in the socio-emotional wealth approach [75,76,79].

Third, and referring to the specific nature of our study, the map reveals that, throughout the period that it has existed, from the first time that CSR was linked to family busi-

nesses to the present day, several lines of research stand out, which have been consolidated over the years. These lines of research have been grouped into four categories of work, of which we would like to highlight those that have remained of interest from the beginning and are still active today. Hence, the need arises to study the differences that exist between CSR in family businesses and CSR in non-family businesses. These studies begin with ethics and the ethical approach and have yet to offer definitive results. From the temporal analysis carried out, this approach coincides with the origins. Likewise, it can be concluded that the most frequently cited studies are those that offer the opportunity to explain various results, which could even be contradictory. By this conclusion, we advance other studies developed around this field [17,20,22].

We start with the work of Déniz and Suárez [55], of Campopiano and De Massis [73], and of Wagner [74], or even that of the most cited of all, Cruz et al. [57]. Regarding the latter, it should be highlighted that they offer explanations for both the responsible and irresponsible behavior of family businesses. It can be observed that the number of citations does not necessarily coincide with their temporal nature, that is, it is not the oldest papers that are necessarily the most frequently cited, and vice versa. Rather, those that offer a solution to the explanation of the divergence of results between family and non-family businesses with respect to their social and environmental commitments have become the most recurrent. Another line of research that should be borne in mind is that which attempts to offer the results of new research questions, which have been appearing more specifically, such as the impact on business results. It should be noted that this has always been a relevant question in both CSR studies [76,80] and those related to family business [81]. Moreover, regarding said family businesses, there is an interest in discovering under what conditions FFs acquire a greater commitment to SR and how this commitment exerts an impact on their business performance or on their ability to better communicate such commitments.

From a purely temporal analysis, it is logical to note that the first most frequently cited studies [55,65] are those that offer explanations of the antecedents and consequences of social responsibility in family businesses. Therefore, these two studies are considered to be among the most cited pioneering references in this field of research. In turn, these studies are the first to offer an ethical framework for the concept and application of corporate social responsibility. At the other end of the timeline, the works of Campopiano and De Massis [73] and Cruz et al. [57] stand out as the two most interesting recent investigations that delve into the circumstances under which family businesses engage in CSR. Moreover, other research in this field focuses on one of the currently emerging topics: socio-emotional wealth [75,76,79].

In order to answer our third research question, our work is based mainly on the co-word analysis. With regard to this analysis, it should be noted that the most recurrent keywords were the following: socio-emotional wealth, financial performance, ethics, firm, and management. These keywords logically belong to different clusters depending on the topic on which the authors of these papers wish to focus. This analysis also highlights the topics that have triggered the most interest of researchers in this field, as explained above. It should be noted that these words are shaping the future of the field [17,20–22]. Thus, the debate about the effect of gender in CSR and corporate governance, or religiosity in ethics, is shaping some of the future research lines of this research field.

Having completed the discussion and conclusions of our work, we would like to highlight its main contributions to theory and practice. The main contribution made herein is to theory, since it does not study solely CSR and integrates the study of ethics in the same analytical framework and not on the background of each field separately. This study has allowed us to provide a map and an evolution of the topics that have been of interest in this field, from the first work appearing in 2000 to the present day. Specifically, this study highlights the need for more and new research that delves into the circumstances under which family businesses engage in socially responsible and environmental commitments, and the impact that these decisions have on their actions and results.

The main limitations of our work together with how these limitations should be addressed also deserve mention. The first of these is of a general nature in this type of work and concerns the methodology used. As in other research, the analysis of co-citations and co-words sheds light on the study regardless of the field in which it is used. However, the reality of what these studies offer can only be obtained through their comprehensive reading. Aware of this limitation, and given that our bibliometric study suggested 193 papers, we read and analysed all these papers in depth, with the intention of providing results of a more conclusive nature, and not only of offering numerical data and graphs. Another associated limitation involves the low number of documents that form the basis of our bibliometric analysis and how relatively recent these papers are.

In this respect, we can provide further proof that the study of CSR in family businesses is highly topical and of interest to the academic and professional community, to the point where many of these studies have been published in several of the most important references concerning ethics and CSR, such as the *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, while others have appeared in those of management and family business, such as the *Journal of Small Business Management* and the *Journal of Family Business Management*. This study strives to provide motivation for the development of new research that addresses innovative and suggestive research questions for their subsequent treatment with new bibliometric or meta-analytical methodologies such as those applied here.

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