

The Development of Family Business Literature in 2000-2014: What can we learn from Scopus?

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Abstract— In this paper, we provide a summary of family business literature in the 21st century based on the information extracted from Scopus. We present the time development of the number of studies dealing with family business and compare it with the number of all studies in the field of management. Then, we present an overview of countries where most family business research has been published, and again, we compare their frequencies with other management disciplines. Subsequently, we present the most active academic institutions and the most important academic journals publishing family business studies, including incoming citations from recent years. Finally, we analyze the frequencies of keywords used in family business studies.

Keywords—Family business, family business research, bibliographic databases, Scopus

I. INTRODUCTION

Family-controlled enterprises play a powerful role in the economies worldwide. Many global firms operating in various industries, such as Walmart, Samsung, Tata Group, C&A, Estee Lauder or Porsche, are family firms. In most countries, family businesses represent the major share of all businesses ([1]; [2]; [3]; [4], among others). As such, family businesses make a significant contribution to employment, turnover, added value, investments and accumulated capital [5].

It is no wonder that researchers have been attracted towards studying family businesses. Family business has become a research area which has been receiving growing academic attention over the past decades. Sharma et al. [1] observed a substantial increase in related research in 1971-1995. The continuing trend has been further described by de Massis et al. [7] for the period 1996-2010.

At the same time, the number of papers in all research areas seems to be increasing so to say exponentially [8]. Under such circumstances, researchers can ask whether family business receives more attention than other domains in the field of management.

The aim of this paper is to summarize quantitatively the family business literature published in the 21st century using

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bibliographic data. Thus, we formulated the following research questions:

- How does the number of family business studies evolve in time?
- From which countries do family business researchers originate from? And where are the authors most affiliated?
- What are the main journals focusing on family business research?
- What keywords do family business researchers use?

Citation databases have become a widely used tool of scientific evaluation and an important source of information about scholarly articles. Elsevier’s Scopus, although being a nonpublic service, is one of the major bibliographic databases, which includes affiliation of authors, abstracts, references, and other metadata of published peer-reviewed research. The sources are evaluated according to relatively strict criteria for inclusion, which improves the quality of Scopus content.

To answer the above-defined research questions, we used the data from the Scopus database. To summarize family business studies, we looked up in Scopus all articles published between 2000-2014 which mentioned the keyword “family business” and were published in one of the following research domains:

- Business, management and accounting,
- Economics, econometrics and finance,
- Social sciences,
- Psychology, and
- Arts and humanities.

We omitted the year 2015 to avoid the possible “editorial delay” in this year, since at the time of writing of this paper, some academic works from 2015 may still remain unpublished, or they are published as “online first articles”.

The rest of the papers is organized in the following manner. First, we provide an overview of time development of the number of studies dealing with family business and compare it with the number of all studies in the field of management. Second, we present an overview of countries where most family business research has been published, and again, we compare their frequencies with other management disciplines. Subsequently, we present the most active academic institutions and the most important academic journals publishing family business studies, including incoming citations from recent

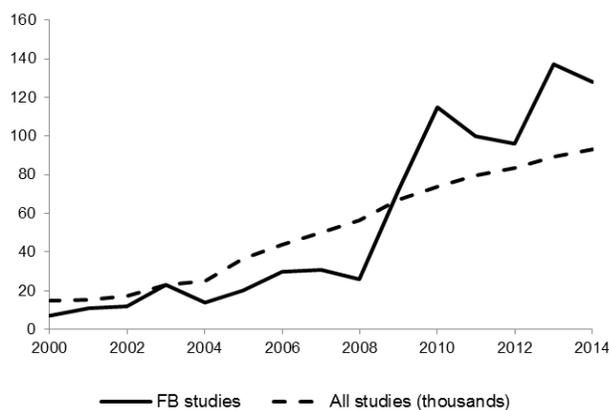
years. Finally, we analyze the frequencies of keywords used in family business studies.

II. TIME DEVELOPMENT OF THE NUMBER OF FAMILY BUSINESS STUDIES

The number of studies focused on family business keeps increasing since the beginning of the millennium. While in 2000, Scopus included only 7 articles focused on family business, in 2014, there have been 137 articles focused on this topic.

The particular attractiveness of family business as a research topic can be challenged by the idea that the growth of publication in all research domains in business and management has been extensive in past years [9]; however, it seems that the number of family business studies has been growing even more rapidly (see figure 1 for a comparison): the relative change of the articles focused on family business has been more than three times greater (1 729% as compared to 533%).

Figure 1 Number of family business studies (2000-2014)



Source: Scopus

III. COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF FAMILY BUSINESS RESEARCHERS

Table 1 lists the countries where family business authors originate from and lists the percentages of total number of authors publishing in related domain. We also display the percentages of authors of all studies published in the field of management in general.

The authors from Anglo-Saxon countries, especially US and UK, but also Canada and Australia, clearly dominate the current family business research. This is a phenomenon which occurs in other areas in management research (percentages in parentheses in table 1) but also in other domains of science [9]. However, there are countries which are underrepresented in family business research as compared to the total number of articles published in the field of management. In other words, countries in which the share of family business studies is much lower than the share of studies dealing with management as a whole. Such countries include Iran, Nigeria, Ireland, Russian

Federation, New Zealand, Thailand, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, and Romania.

There are also countries where family business research has been addressed much more than other fields of management. Among such countries, we may cite Yemen, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Liechtenstein, Cyprus, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Colombia, Austria and Spain. It seems that there is no regular pattern as to the geographical distribution of “underrepresented” or “overrepresented” countries.

When referring to continents, most FB studies have been published by European authors (41.22%) followed by North America (30.73%) and Asia (17.75%). Other continents are represented less frequently: 4.78% of family business researchers come from Australia and New Zealand, 4.39% from South America, and only 1.05% of family business studies have been published by African authors.

Table 1 Top countries of FB researchers' affiliations

Country	% FB	% all	Country	% FB	% all
US	23.95	28.98	India	1.62	1.99
UK	8.68	10.96	Singapore	1.34	0.69
Canada	6.39	4.08	Netherlands	1.34	2.43
Spain	5.63	2.28	Japan	1.24	1.26
Australia	4.48	5.00	Colombia	1.15	0.17
Italy	4.48	1.97	Hong Kong	1.15	1.13
Germany	4.48	3.53	Switzerland	1.05	1.04
China	3.63	7.26	Turkey	1.05	0.68
Sweden	2.39	1.40	Israel	0.86	0.61
Taiwan	2.39	1.52	Cyprus	0.76	0.09
Finland	2.29	1.05	Venezuela	0.76	0.11
Austria	2.00	0.62	Mexico	0.76	0.37
Malaysia	1.91	1.04	Brazil	0.67	1.26
France	1.81	2.55	Lebanon	0.67	0.06
Belgium	1.72	0.80	Other	9.35	12.37

Note: % of FB: percentage of total number of family business studies, % of management: percentage of total number of management studies.

Source: Scopus

Another interesting observation is the geographical distribution of family business authors in Europe. While authors from Western Europe published 52.31% of European family business studies and Southern European authors published 28.7%, Northern Europe's share is 14.12%, but only 4.86% European family business authors come from Central and Eastern Europe.

Of course, these numbers are influenced by the concentration of research-focused universities, research-funding resources, developed economies and other factors, but they also indicate where family business research may still be an emerging field of research.

IV. INSTITUTIONS PUBLISHING FAMILY BUSINESS RESEARCH

The location of institutions which publish most family business studies are closely related to the countries

summarized in section III. All of them are universities, i.e. there are no research institutes in the “top fifteen” institutions (see table 2). Most of these universities are located in the United States (University of Alberta being the “top one”) and United Kingdom. However, there are also universities from Germany, Finland, Italy, Canada, Sweden, and Austria. By contrast, universities from Spain, Australia, China, Taiwan, and other countries mentioned in the previous section are not represented among the top institutions that publish family business research.

Table 2 Institutions publishing most family business studies (2000-2014)

University	FB studies
University of Alberta	28
Kennesaw State University	19
University of Minnesota Twin Cities	18
Mississippi State University	13
Wissenschaftliche Hochschule für Unternehmensführung	13
Lancaster University	13
Jyväskylä Yliopisto	13
University of Calgary	12
Università degli Studi di Bergamo	12
Università Concordia	12
Jonköping International Business School	12
Ohio State University	11
Iowa State University	9
Purdue University	9
Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien	8

Source: Scopus

V. MOST ACTIVE ACADEMIC JOURNALS

Unsurprisingly, academic journals haven't devoted the same attention to family business research. The search query indicates that most family business research has been published in two main periodicals: Journal of Family Business Strategy and Family Business Review. The latter enjoys one of the highest impact factors in Thomson Reuters' Web of Science (Social Sciences & Humanities) – but has been covered in Scopus only since 2005, which means that the number of family business studies is much higher. On the other hand, Journal of Family Business Strategy has received its first (and relatively high) impact factor in 2014, which also indicates the attractiveness of family business in current management research, and has been covered since 2010. Other major journals publishing family business research are Journal of Family and Economic Issues and International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business. There are also other broad-based journals where family business research has been published; see table 4 for the top ten journals. The results

highlight the multidisciplinary nature of family business research, but also confirm the well-known fact that there are two kinds of journals [7]: specialized journals (the first three listed in table 3) and broad-based journals publishing family business studies, such as journals focused on entrepreneurship.

Table 3 Top ten journals publishing most family business research (2000-2014)

Journal Title	FB studies
Journal of Family Business Strategy	66
Family Business Review	43
Journal of Family and Economic Issues	24
International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business	24
Corporate Ownership and Control	21
Journal of Business Venturing	16
Journal of Business Research	14
International Journal of Entrepreneurial Venturing	13
Journal of Business Ethics	12
Journal of Management and Organization	11

Source: Scopus

It is also possible to compare number of citations to family business studies that the individual journals have received. However, such comparison makes sense only for journals that have been covered by Scopus over the whole period. Since important journals such as Journal of Family Business Strategy have been covered later than in 2000, we list the number of citations for the period 2010-2014 when most of the high-quality journals have been covered. Table 4 presents the number of citations per journal (top ten results). The results are somewhat different from table 3. This indicates that the quality or relevance of family business studies differs across journals; the most relevant sources are, again, Journal of Family Business Strategy and Family Business Review, but the third journal, Journal of Family and Economic Issues, ranked the fifteenth (not displayed in table 4).

Table 4 Top ten journals receiving most citations to family business studies (2010-2014)

Journal Title	Citations
Journal of Family Business Strategy	573
Family Business Review	505
Entrepreneurship and Regional Development	252
Organization Science	188
Asia Pacific Journal of Management	77
Strategic Management Journal	76
Journal of Business Ethics	74
Journal of Business Venturing	71

Journal of Financial Economics	66
International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research	57

Source: Scopus

VI. KEYWORDS

We also evaluated the most frequently used keywords in family business studies (table 5). It is obvious that family business research significantly overlaps with entrepreneurship and disciplines related to small business. The most important groups of keywords belonged to succession, performance, corporate governance and gender issues. The keywords used in family business studies also included other frequently discussed topics such as innovation, social capital and business groups. The analysis of keywords is a bit tricky, since many of them are similar (such as “strategy” and “strategic management”, or “ownership” and “ownership structure”), but not necessarily synonyms and studies that use these variations of words may be focused on quite different topics.

Table 5 Top keywords used in family business research (2000-2014)

Keyword	Freq.	Keyword	Freq.
Family business	517	Internationalization	11
Succession	51	Ownership structure	11
Corp. governance	47	Board of directors	10
Entrepreneurship	43	Values	10
Performance	39	Succession planning	10
Gender	23	Familiness	9
Family	22	Family ownership	9
Agency theory	17	Strategic management	9
Innovation	16	Ownership	9
Governance	16	Resource-based view	9
Social capital	16	Family influence	8
Business groups	16	Women	8
Small business	15	Business development	7
Strategy	14	Growth	7
Leadership	13	Family life	7
Culture	13	Human capital	6

Source: Scopus

However, it is not the purpose of this paper to perform a content analysis of all studies; for a thorough recent bibliometric analysis, see e.g. [10]. On the other hand, we may acknowledge that a number of potentially promising topics are undercovered: among the better known areas, we may cite privately-held family firms [11], ownership commitment in family firms [12], goal formulation in family firms [7], drivers of long-term success of family firms, and other potentially emerging topics. For instance, no study so far dealt with family

business issues associated with microbusinesses founded by immigrants from third world countries coming to developed countries.

VII. TYPES OF DOCUMENTS

Table 6 presents the types of documents extracted from Scopus. Unsurprisingly, most documents are articles, followed by conference papers and reviews (which are known for having a greater chance of being cited than original research papers). Only a few documents belong to other categories. However, one has to be cautious when interpreting these numbers; there are journals that publish “research notes” or “discussion papers”, which have virtually the same “flag” as original research papers.

Table 6 Family business literature: document types (2000-2014)

Document type	Number	Relative frequency
Article	619	83.09%
Conference Paper	70	9.40%
Review	35	4.70%
Article in Press	9	1.21%
Editorial	5	0.67%
Book Chapter	5	0.67%
Short Survey	1	0.13%
Note	1	0.13%

Source: Scopus

VIII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper presented a summary of contemporary family business research based on information which can be obtained from Scopus.

We observed an increasing number of family business studies as compared to other studies from the field of management. We also identified the prominent journals publishing family business research and confirmed that there are two kinds of periodicals: specialized journals and broad-based journals [7].

Family business research is very concentrated in terms of countries of authors. While most family business research is published by authors affiliated in Anglo-Saxon countries, the scientific output in developing countries, such as China, Taiwan, or Malaysia, keeps increasing [9]. Worldwide, family business issues in Africa and Latin America will deserve academic attention in the future; the importance of family businesses in the economic development of these emerging economies is indisputably a promising area of research. In Europe, family business issues in Central and Eastern countries represent a particularly interesting area of interest even after more than 25 years after the fall of the “iron curtain”.

This article has several limitations. First, it is based on data

extracted from Scopus. The most important journals in the field of family business research - *Journal of Family Business Strategy* and *Family Business Review* - have not been covered over the whole period 2000-2014. This indicates that the number of studies actually published in these journals (and the number of citations) will be higher; which, again, confirms the dominant position of these journals in the field of family business research. Besides that, we emphasize that research based on bibliographic data can be biased due to missing coverage or erroneous metadata.

Second, we didn't perform any form of text mining, although the availability of abstracts would allow for such an analysis. Following multiple authors, such as Xi et al. [10], family business as an academic discipline is largely fragmented. Moreover, topics such as performance of family firms as compared to non-family firms [13], succession issues ([14]; [15]), corporate entrepreneurship in family firms [16], family firm value creation [17], the relation of role involvement to work-family interference [19] but also the very family definition of the term "family firm" [18], and many other family business research topics provide mixed results to academic audience. Therefore we made no attempt to identify the clusters of research topics, which has been already successfully accomplished by other researchers [10].

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