

## A Bibliometric Look at Informal Entrepreneurship from Different Scenarios

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**Abstract** - This study conducted a bibliometric analysis of informal entrepreneurship in the period 2020-2025, identifying 71 high-impact articles that were indexed in the SCOPUS bibliographic database. These results show that, despite its growing academic relevance, research on informality remains fragmented and concentrated in certain countries and authors, reflecting inequalities in the production and circulation of knowledge. Countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Finland lead the way in scientific output, while Latin America and Africa show a high incidence of informality and limited participation. The findings show that informal entrepreneurship is a very complex phenomenon, which is conditioned by various structural factors such as education, available formal employment, and income; personal factors such as social networks, resilience, and gender; and contextual factors such as the pandemic, governance, and economic crisis. This diversity of factors explains its ambivalent nature, being on the one hand a means of subsistence and an adaptive response to exclusion from the formal labor market, and on the other hand, evidence of a limit to business productivity, hindering tax collection and reproducing itself through socioeconomic inequality. That is why the impact of informality on sustainable development is so significant. It contributes to job creation and local dynamism, but also poses risks in terms of lack of social protection and precariousness. This raises the need to create differentiated policies that recognize the heterogeneity of entrepreneurs and the contexts in which they operate. Therefore, the most effective strategies must include incentives

for formalization sequences, the creation of capacity-building programs, and access to regulated financing.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Informal, Informal Economy, Informal Sector, Informal Sector

### I. INTRODUCTION

The economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were profound, significantly affecting businesses as a whole worldwide, leading to massive reductions in employees and collaborators. This crisis intensified socioeconomic disparities, reflected in peripheral regions and provinces, which suffered the most severe effects. Despite initiatives to promote formal entrepreneurship, the operational restrictions and regulatory complexities of the pandemic potentially accelerated informal economic activities. It is therefore essential to examine in detail the structure of the informal sector and the characteristics that define informal entrepreneurs in various global contexts.

Emerging market economies are characterized by large informal sectors. However, unlike the formal private sector, entrepreneurship within the informal economy often driven by necessity typically contributes less to economic growth and sustainable development (Naciones Unidas, 2023). During crises, individuals with lower incomes increasingly resort to necessity-driven informal entrepreneurship for

subsistence. Conversely, opportunity-driven informal entrepreneurship, more common among higher-income individuals, often declines in these periods. This countercyclical pattern highlights a critical structural divergence in the motivations and socioeconomic foundations of informal entrepreneurial activities (Estrin et al., 2024).

Regarding, (Omri, 2020) the influence of financial development and governance quality on the dynamics of formal and informal entrepreneurship in emerging economies, they demonstrate that a higher degree of financial development has a positive and significant effect on formal entrepreneurship, while exerting a significant negative influence on its informal counterpart. Similarly, it confirms that strong governance is a key factor in promoting formal entrepreneurial activity and, at the same time, a critical factor in curbing the prevalence of informal entrepreneurship. The interaction between these two factors financial development and good governance generates a synergistic effect that favors the expansion of the formal sector and limits the expansion of the informal sector (Widiastini et al., 2024). This relationship suggests that sound governance acts as a promoter of financial development. Furthermore, by conceptualizing informal entrepreneurship as a relevant component in the process of business creation, a future research agenda is proposed that recognizes this modality as a widespread practice worldwide (Amiri et al., 2015). Despite its relevance, informal entrepreneurship continues to be perceived as a marginal activity with respect to the formal economy and is often attributed a lower value than regulated entrepreneurship. (Simba et al., 2023; Kapoor & Menon, 2025).

The research places the circular economy within the broader framework of environmental sustainability, emphasizing the key role played by informal Roma entrepreneurial activities deeply rooted in the informal economy and driven primarily by social capital formation which generate incidental social benefits. This highlights a persistent and significant gap between the theoretical recognition of informality and the practical challenges of formalization, which often renders these entrepreneurial initiatives unsustainable in terms of their broader socioeconomic impact. However, the study provides empirical evidence and a conceptual framework that underscores the potential value of integrating Roma-led informal initiatives into public policy design for the circular economy. A fundamental precondition for this transformation is their deliberate incorporation into inclusive and strategically designed regulatory frameworks. Finally, this approach posits that, despite the structural constraints inherent to informality, there are opportunities to leverage these practices as viable mechanisms for sustainable development (Gittins & Letenyei, 2023).

Based on the theoretical foundations of human capital and social capital, the hypothesis that entrepreneurial decisions related to the formalization process are influenced by the

particular characteristics of informal microentrepreneurs was assessed. Recognizing the diversity and heterogeneity within this group of entrepreneurs, this study focused on analyzing the determining factors that influence their willingness or intention to enter the formal sector of the economy. This study also focused on analyzing decisions related to formalization, which respond not only to structural conditions but also to individual attributes, acquired skills, social networks, and perceptions about the costs and benefits of formalizing their activities. This reflects the structural persistence of unregulated work in these contexts. (Pérez, 2024). In other regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Central and South Asia, informal employment rates remain high, ranging from 87.2% to 84.8%, respectively. These results show that, despite the efforts of international and national organizations, the transition to formal employment in these areas remains limited, posing a significant challenge to sustainable economic development and reducing social gaps, as advocated by the SDGs (OIT, 2023).

In recent years, informal entrepreneurship (IE) has attracted significant and growing interest among academics and practitioners due to its unique theoretical attributes and crucial role in contemporary economic systems. From a dynamic perspective, this phenomenon can be conceptualized through three fundamental trajectories: reactive formalization, proactive formalization, and informalization. These pathways represent a continuum through which informal entrepreneurs move to acquire, consolidate, or, in some cases, relinquish the regulatory legitimacy conferred by the institutional framework. From its conceptual perspective, it not only clarifies the complex interaction between the informal and formal economies, but also provides a critical lens for examining the contextual, regulatory, and strategic factors that underpin entrepreneurs' decisions regarding their formal status (Salvi et al., 2023). While (Sendawula et al., 2024) concludes that informal entrepreneurs show courage and resilience, while informal entrepreneurs feel more passion and have greater prospects for formalization.

La economía informal en Albania es un tema en discusión, debido a la influencia significativa en el PIB y el bienestar social; sin embargo, se considera un obstáculo para la competencia en el mercado y el desarrollo económico. Fue prioritario en dicha investigación analizar cómo las políticas estatales afectan el desempleo y la distribución del ingreso, y si perpetúan la informalidad. Tal es el caso del sector turístico, donde la informalidad dificulta el cumplimiento de las normas necesarias, y concluimos que las disparidades en los impuestos sobre el alojamiento generan pérdidas económicas significativas. (Balliu et al., 2024).

Research conducted in Malaysia's Klang Valley region identifies necessity and opportunity-seeking as primary drivers of informal entrepreneurship. On one hand, individuals pushed by necessity exemplified by limited access to formal employment turn to informality as a survival strategy. On the other hand, those pulled by opportunity are

motivated by greater autonomy and flexibility, opting for self-employment within the informal sector. Between these two motivational extremes lies an intermediate factor: the upgrading process, which acts as a mediator in entrepreneurial pathways. This process suggests that neither necessity nor opportunity alone ensures venture success. Rather, sustainable outcomes depend on the entrepreneur's ability to convert initial constraints into competitive advantages and leverage structural and contextual conditions that facilitate market permanence and growth (Othman et al., 2022).

Regulatory institutions can have counterproductive effects if not properly implemented. Policy interventions must be implemented cautiously to avoid institutional inconsistencies. This suggests that improving governance may not be sufficient to increase productivity if the informal economy is large. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze the relationship between the informal economy and business productivity at the national level, since the size of the informal economy is negatively associated with business productivity (Fredström et al., 2021)

Personal characteristics are a determining factor in the formalization decisions made by entrepreneurs operating in the informal economy. While all entrepreneurs face various challenges in managing their businesses, those operating in the informal sector do so in a context marked by constant changes in the environment, lacking the regulatory limits and support offered by formal institutions (Veas Espinoza, 2025). In the specific case of Ghana, informal entrepreneurs are recognized within four distinct entrepreneurial identities: gatekeepers, subsistence entrepreneurs, ambitious entrepreneurs or "go-getters," and those oriented toward growth. These identities are closely linked to three key coping strategies: resignation or "succumbing," improvisation, and the ability to break new ground. Analysis of these relationships shows that both resource scarcity and structural uncertainty shape "underdog" entrepreneurial behavior, characterized by the search for creative and resilient solutions in the face of adversity (Poornimadarshini et al., 2024). This approach also provides insight into how contextual and personal factors interact to influence the transition toward formalization and sustainability of business initiatives (Teyi et al., 2023). Informal self-employed women workers in the UK face marginalization and stigmatization, with policies failing to address their obstacles, needing recognition and support to overcome stigma and constraints (Jones & Nadin, 2025; Amiri et al., 2015)

A systematic analysis of data on informal entrepreneurship, synthesized from research published in eight leading entrepreneurship journals, reframes the understanding of this phenomenon. Traditionally conceptualized as a marginal and inferior counterpart to regulated entrepreneurship, informal entrepreneurship is now emerging from a broader academic perspective as a critical priority for knowledge generation within the field (Hoseinnezhad, 2016). This reconceptualization positions informal entrepreneurship theory around a dynamic process integral to business

formation and consolidation. It provides a robust conceptual framework for explaining the emergence and evolution of ventures outside conventional economic circuits. Building on this theoretical foundation, (Piperopoulos et al., 2021) delineate a future research agenda aimed at deepening the understanding of its unique particularities, broader socioeconomic implications, and potential contributions to business development across diverse contexts (Piperopoulos et al., 2021).

Ejiogu et al., 2022 analyzes informal entrepreneurship in Africa, highlighting how factors such as corruption, political instability and access to infrastructure influence the decision to register businesses, depending on the specific local context. In the field of entrepreneurship within the informal sector, on which a large proportion of urban entrepreneurs in developing countries depend, there is a clear need to generate proposals that contribute to correcting the structural imbalances that limit its sustainability. To this end, a decision-making model based on institutional theory (IT) and resource dependence theory (RDT) was proposed. This model seeks to provide a comprehensive response to three central dimensions of sustainability requirements: environmental, social, and economic. The study conducted in the context of Bangladesh illustrates how these theoretical perspectives can complement each other to provide a framework for analysis that not only strengthens our understanding of how informal entrepreneurship works, but also guides practical strategies aimed at improving the living conditions of entrepreneurs, facilitating their gradual integration into formal structures, and promoting more balanced urban development (Khan et al., 2024). A study in Ghana identified four informal entrepreneurial identities and three coping strategies, while resource scarcity and uncertainty shape entrepreneurial behavior, shaping how they face challenges in the informal economy (Teyi et al., 2023).

Bolarinwa & Simatele, 2024 states that, in countries such as Angola, Congo, Guinea, Gambia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, where globalization fosters informality, it recommends policies to integrate the informal sector into the formal economy. These policies include transition programs, capacity building and support for small enterprises, suggesting the establishment of social safety nets and improved market access, including the implementation of monitoring mechanisms and education on the benefits of globalization.

For countries with positive shocks to informality, it recommends business support programs and formalization of the sector; these policies seek to capitalize on the positive effects by fostering entrepreneurship and market access. In case of negative shocks, it suggests strengthening the resilience of the informal sector and adopting flexible labor policies (Chandan Singh et al., 2025) Policy interventions aimed at incentivizing formalization, improving access to finance and strengthening regulatory compliance are crucial for integrating informal enterprises into the formal economy.

India faces a strategic imperative to harness the potential of its unregistered business sector as a catalyst for sustainable and inclusive development. This necessitates a dual policy approach that addresses the structural constraints of informality particularly in regulatory compliance and labor protection while capitalizing on its role as a significant source of innovation and socioeconomic resilience. Furthermore, within this context, the relationship between tourism and informal economic activity remains critically underexplored (Abdulkareem, 2022). Although tourism is widely recognized as a driver of macroeconomic growth, the specific mechanisms through which it shapes informal entrepreneurship, employment, and value chain integration warrant deeper empirical analysis. A more nuanced understanding of these linkages is essential for designing targeted policies that maximize positive spillovers and mitigate potential distortions within informal sectors (Mallick, 2023).

This lack of clarity opens up a field of analysis that invites further exploration of the connections between tourism, the creation of unregulated jobs, and the transformation of local socioeconomic dynamics, in order to better understand its role in building more inclusive and sustainable economies. This study used a panel regression, resulting in a U-shaped relationship: informality initially decreases with tourism development, but then increases (Rahou & Taqi, 2021). This suggests that tourism has variable effects on the informal economy (Lv, 2020).

Researchers analyzed the capital of informal tourism entrepreneurs in Chiang Mai, Thailand, using Bourdieu's theory, where these entrepreneurs have limited access to resources, but possess dynamism, positive social capital, flexibility and symbolic capital, which are linked to local conditions that structure their tourism contribution. Collaboration between informal entrepreneurs and other stakeholders is crucial, exemplifying China, the wage gap between formal and self-employed employees increased by 17.4%, while between formal and informal employees decreased by 16.4%. Improving the human capital of informal employees is essential to reduce the wage gap (Tian & Guo, 2021). To characterize informal entrepreneurship in Tamaulipas by identifying the motivations and effects of informal economic activity on women entrepreneurs, allowing the author to identify that the main reason for informal entrepreneurship is the lack of job opportunities or low-wage jobs, as a consequence of businesses not being formally constituted due to lack of knowledge of the advantages of operating in a regulatory framework (Mellado Ibarra & Sánchez Tovar, 2024).

By studying entrepreneurship from the informal-formal and necessity-opportunity dimensions, it analyzed how people with higher incomes can use informal entrepreneurship as a testing ground for entrepreneurial ideas. The research used data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) in Chile to test hypotheses about the role of income on types of entrepreneurial entry, where four categories of

entrepreneurial entry were identified: informal-necessity, formal-opportunity, informal-opportunity and formal-necessity (Chávez et al., 2023). Necessity entrepreneurship can be an avenue for both low-income and high-income individuals, albeit for different reasons; informal-opportunity entry is also an option for both income groups. During downturns, people with lower incomes tend to increase their informal entrepreneurial activity out of necessity, in contrast, people with higher incomes may wait for more profitable opportunities to resurface (Estrin et al., 2024).

González-Agüero & Burcu, 2024 examined how Venezuelan migrants managed to enter the labor market through informal entrepreneurship, identifying both the challenges they faced and the sources of resilience they were able to develop in this process. The study highlights that the possibility of accessing stable employment became crucial to their well-being, even though formal channels for achieving this were practically non-existent in the host context. Given this limitation, informal entrepreneurship became a space for motivation and adaptation, allowing migrants not only to generate income but also to build networks of contacts and social support. The relationship between the informal economy, entrepreneurship and tourism in BRICS countries was examined in the context that the informal economy is crucial in developing countries, promoting innovation and economic dynamism. The rapidly growing tourism offers opportunities for informal entrepreneurs, and the convergence of these sectors has socioeconomic and policy implications for sustainable development. The review highlights advances, gaps and possibilities for future research (Ayanda Sibiya, 2024).

The informal tourism sector in Bali is vital to the local economy, contributing to decent work and economic growth; however, these workers face daily obstacles and lack clear sustainability strategies. Four coping strategies were identified: prudent financial management, communication skills, social capital, and understanding of government policies, with effective management of economic capital crucial to sustaining livelihoods while in developing countries, it has greater involvement through the sale of products and services aimed at tourists, being the main or only source of income for local and migrant informal traders involved, where it explored how migrant and non-migrant entrepreneurs weathered the crisis, as it offers practical implications for the recognition of their resilience and the contribution of both local and migrant traders to job creation in the informal tourism sector (Fourie et al., 2024).

Business tourism in the Global South, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly Harare, Zimbabwe, was identified as a destination for informal business tourists. Through interviews with cross-border traders, they revealed the reasons why Harare is a preferred location, gaining importance in the network of cities connected by informal traders. Cross-border traders in the region visit Harare to buy and sell goods (Makoni et al., 2023).

In 2023, the main reasons for business exit were lack of profitability (37.40%), lack of financing (21.38%), and

personal problems (19.31%). Ecuador, recognized by the (GEM) 2023 as the country with the highest level of female entrepreneurship, with the motivation of necessity being the most influential factor for Ecuadorian women to become entrepreneurs. Having entrepreneurial skills, having support networks and experience in informal investment also have a positive impact; the level of higher education and residing in the coastal region decrease the propensity to undertake (Altamirano Aguirre et al., 2024) , despite the percentage of discontinuity; causing causes and the probability of being in the informal sector of the Ecuadorian economy (Lasio et al., 2024).

The methodology was developed by applying logit and panel logit econometric models to the ENEMDU. As a result, a probability of 85% of a person in Ecuador entering informality was determined, considering as causes the rurality, unique development of agriculture, low level of education, high wage gaps, and gender discrimination (Fernández et al., 2022).

The growing interest in establishing relationships and differences between formal entrepreneurship and informal work has motivated numerous studies, which have adopted various methodological and conceptual approaches to characterize both phenomena. These approaches have made it possible to identify key variables at the global level and in specific contexts, focusing on Ecuador, through the use of multivariate models that integrate statistical, mathematical, and social perspectives. Within this framework, this research conducts a documentary review and bibliometric analysis of the variables associated with business and labor informality (Poornimadarshini et al., 2024). The analysis critically distinguishes between contexts and theoretical approaches, recognizing the central role that culture and the

socioeconomic environment play in shaping the dynamics of informality.

## II. METHOD

In order to search for first source information related to the objective of the document, we used the Elsevier bibliographic and citation database that indexes peer-reviewed scientific publications, offering tools for the monitoring, analysis and visualization of academic research, called SCOPUS. The search strategy used was article title, abstract and keywords "informal AND entrepreneurship" identifying 2340 related articles; after this, the following specifications were considered: defining a time range from 2020 to 2025, defining as thematic area: business, management and accounting, economics, econometrics and finance; regarding the type of document, only articles were filtered; and as keyword were chosen: informal sector, economy, informal and informal entrepreneurship, taking only articles in English, quantifying from these filters a total of 71 high impact articles. In addition, as a method of data collection, we proceeded to use R Study with the Bibliometrix library. Based on this, the following questions were asked:

What is the relevance of informal entrepreneurship in different global scenarios?

What are the characteristics that differentiate formal from informal entrepreneurship?

What is the relationship between informal entrepreneurship, the informal sector and the informal economy?

After the respective analysis and the importance of studying the role that informal entrepreneurship has gained in the economic system worldwide, the 71 articles deserve to be interpreted and analyzed, providing the following results.

## III. RESULTS

TABLE I MAIN SEARCH INFORMATION WITH THE VARIABLE "INFORMAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP"

Description	Results
<b>MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA</b>	
Timespan	2020:2024
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	55
Documents	71
Annual Growth Rate % Annual Growth Rate	0
Document Average Age	3.01
Average citations per doc	11.62
References	0
<b>DOCUMENT CONTENTS</b>	
Keywords Plus (ID)	170
Author's Keywords (DE)	267
<b>AUTHORS</b>	
Authors	174
Authors of single-authored docs	14
<b>AUTHORS COLLABORATION</b>	
Single-authored docs	16
Co-Authors per Doc	2.68
International co-authorships %.	49.3
<b>DOCUMENT TYPES</b>	
Article	71

Source: Information processed in the R Study and its Bibliometrix data package, 2025 (TABLE I).

The systemic review research allowed a comparison of the strategy applied, based on the behavior of the study variable "informal entrepreneurship" and the Boolean system.

For the variable "informal entrepreneurship", the main data covers a period from 2020 to 2024, based on 55 sources (Sources, Journals, Books, etc.), from 71 documents. It is important to mention that the annual growth rate is neutral (0%), which indicates that during the year 2025 there is no scientific production related to the variable of interest. The

average age of the documents is 3.01 years, which indicates that the information is fresh and up to date. Each document has an average of 11.62 citations. As for the content of the documents, it has an average of 170 additional keywords (Keywords Plus) and 267 author keywords. There are 174 authors in total with 14 authors of single-authored papers. Regarding the number of authors, 2.69 are identified and international collaborations is 49.3%. The types of documents include 71 articles, confirming that the information given by the Scopus data is effective.

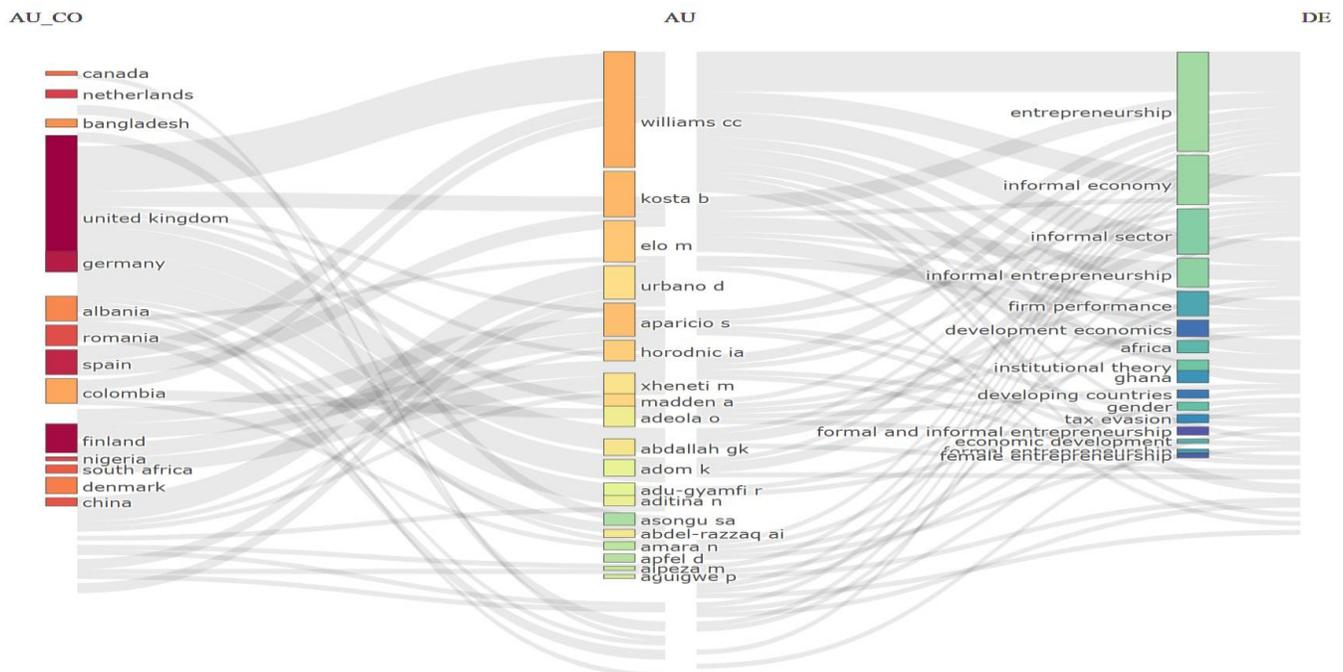


Fig. 1 Relationship Between Author, Affiliation And Country Of Reference

Source: Information processed in the R Study and its Bibliometrix data package, 2025.

In Fig. 1 called "Relationship between author, affiliation and country of reference" the search for the field of action given by the variable informal entrepreneurship with a total of 71 high impact articles from countries such as United Kingdom, Germany, Colombia, Finland, Spain, Albania and Romania, seeing that in less research contribution is Denmark, Bangladesh, South Africa, China, and those referred to on a smaller scale according to the image. This trend indicates that the United Kingdom is the leading country in the production of articles related to the study variable "informal entrepreneurship", which could reflect its strong research and financing infrastructure. The same figure shows that the author Williams CC sustains recent research related to entrepreneurship, the informal economy and the informal sector. In the same line of research, the interest of Kosta B., followed by Elo M., and Urbano D. is evident.

Some of the authors mentioned above consider it important to report their research in the most relevant sources, citing the Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship (6), Journal of African Business (4), Asian Economic and Financial (2), Economic Alternatives (2), Economic Research- Ekonomsk (2), International Journal of Ent (2), Journal of Business Venurinc (2), Regepe Entrepreneurship and Small B (2), Sustainability (Switzerland) (2), and Technological Forecasting and Social (2), coming from countries such as UK (37), followed by Finland and United States (12), Germany (9), Spain (7), Australia, Cameroon, Netherlands, Nigeria, Romania with (6), China, South Africa, Sweden (5), Canada, Chile and Denmark with (4), Albania, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Tanzania, Argentina, Croatia, Ecuador, France, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal Switzerland and Uganda with (2) each of the countries detailed, finally countries such as Botswana, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Norway, Saudi Arabia and Singapore each with (1) frequency of scientific production as evidenced in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3.

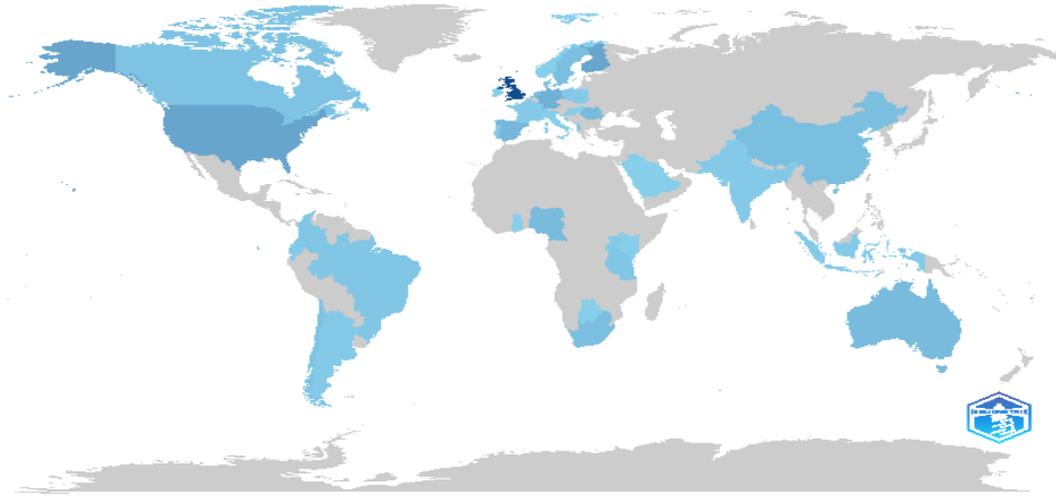


Fig. 2 Countries Where Most Scientific Production Is Generated

Source: Information processed in the R Study and its Bibliometrix data package, 2025.

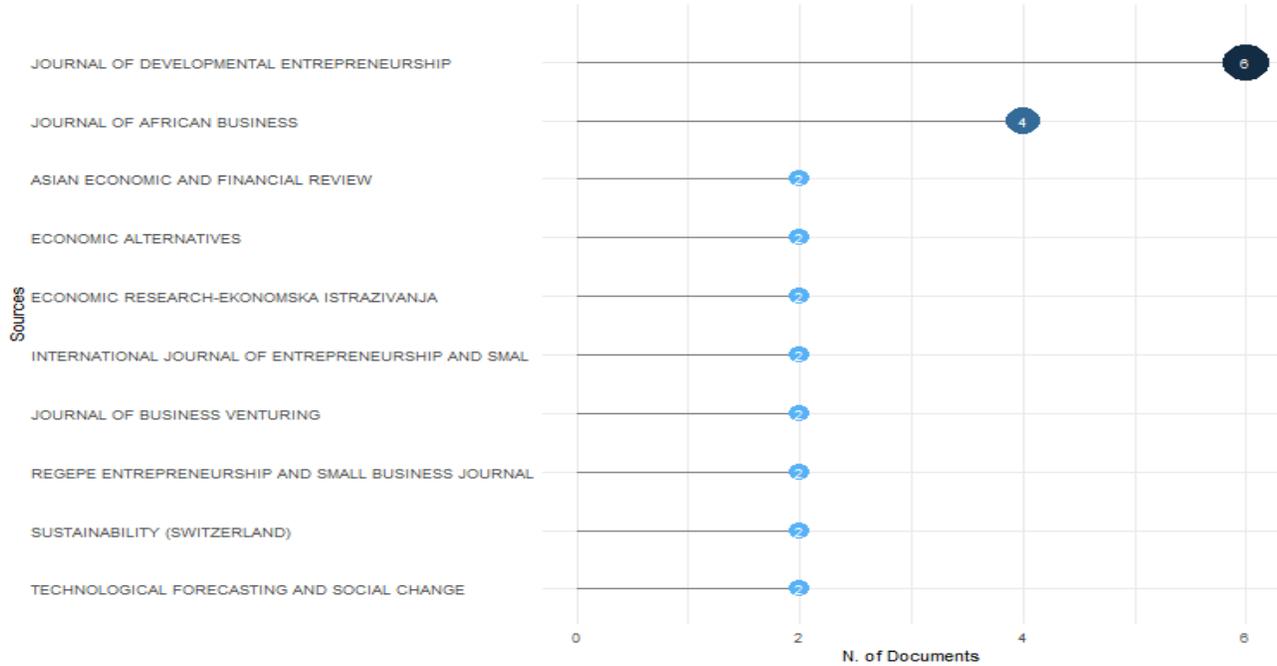


Fig. 3 Most Relevant Sources Of Research Related To Informal Entrepreneurship

Source: Information processed in the R Study and its Bibliometrix data package, 2025.

The R-Study in Fig. 4, allows to identify in the word cloud related to "entrepreneurship" and "informal sector", which means that the given relationship between entrepreneurship-economy-informal sector is the common denominator of the object of study. It is important to mention that words such as "business development", "institutional framework", "women status", "conceptual framework", and "gender disparity" in the present research allow to dimension the conception, skills and characteristics that both people and organizations are part of the informal sector and therefore of the black economy.

During the course of the research, it is evident that both formal and informal entrepreneurs live similar scenarios, starting from a very poor economic situation, a dysfunctional home, limited technical and professional training that allows them to bet on a job in a large company; it is also important to consider that many entrepreneurs come from homes with family members who have some kind of disability, and the role of women who, due to various social, economic and state obstacles, do not reach their progress and positioning in the economic system.



Fig. 4 Word Cloud Related To Informal Entrepreneurship

Source: Information processed in the R Study and its Bibliometrix data package, 2025.

TABLE II ANALYSIS OF SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT, POLICY EFFECTIVENESS AND GOVERNANCE, AND CULTURAL FACTORS

Thematic Dimension	Percentage (%)	Main Thematic Trends	Key Bibliometric Findings	Research Gaps or Challenges	Academic and Social Implications
Socioeconomic Impact	38.0%	Focuses on employment generation, income stability, and local economic resilience.	High concentration of studies in Latin America and Africa; 65% adopt descriptive approaches.	Limited use of econometric modeling and weak connection with welfare or sustainability indicators.	Confirms the role of informal entrepreneurship as a social buffer but highlights its low contribution to structural growth.
Policy Effectiveness and Governance	24.0%	Examines formalization programs, fiscal regulation, and access to microcredit.	Case studies dominate (70%); longitudinal or cross-national evaluations are rare.	Lack of comparative policy analysis and insufficient governance indicators.	Reveals a persistent disconnection between academic research and policymaking processes.
Cultural and Symbolic Factors	18.0%	Explores how values, social networks, gender, and symbolic capital shape informal participation.	Significant growth since 2015; 80% of publications are qualitative or ethnographic.	Limited cross-cultural or intersectional approaches.	Highlights the mediating role of cultural variables in informal business decisions and adaptation.
Methodological Approaches and Collaboration Networks	12.0%	Addresses bibliometric studies, co-authorship, and thematic mapping.	Only 15% apply network analysis and 10% use citation-based metrics.	Weak methodological integration between quantitative and qualitative perspectives.	Calls for multi-method designs and comparative bibliometric frameworks across regions.
Emerging Perspectives (Gender, Digitalization, Urban Informality)	8.0%	Investigates digital entrepreneurship, gendered informality, and urban contexts.	Noticeable increase after 2020; mainly exploratory papers.	Lack of theoretical consolidation and longitudinal evidence.	Suggests potential links between informality, technological transformation, and new labor models.

Informal entrepreneurship has complex socioeconomic implications that need to be interpreted from a broader perspective. In general terms, it represents a significant source of employment and economic dynamism in local areas where the formal labor market is unable to absorb existing demand; in such contexts, it acts as a mechanism for containing unemployment and a strategy for economic sustainability. However, its contribution to productive development is often limited by structural factors such as low productivity, unregulated marketing, or limited access to formal credit, which perpetuates conditions of vulnerability:

irregular income, lack of social security coverage, and difficulties in accumulating capital. Consequently, academic evidence suggests that the expansion of informality may promote subsistence and short-term economic activity, but simultaneously hinders progress toward sustainable models of growth and well-being, intensifying social and territorial inequalities. For their part, cultural factors act as mediating elements that influence both participation in the informal sector and the response to public policies. Social networks, gender roles, and symbolic capital directly influence business decisions and adaptation strategies (see TABLE II).

#### IV. DISCUSSION

A documentary review and comprehensive bibliometric analysis provided a deeper understanding of the study variable "informality." Results from scientific research indicate that while theories grounding entrepreneurial informality and resource dependence are common approaches to understanding how legal structures and resource constraints affect the decision to formalize a business as expressed by Williams CC & Youssef, 2018, (Bolarinwa & Simatele, 2024; Jones & Nadin, 2025) effective strategies have been identified to address this phenomenon across different contexts.

Furthermore, both endogenous and exogenous factors including external events such as pandemics and climate disasters can increase informality levels. This underscores the need for resilient and adaptive policies that influence financial development and governance (Omri, 2020).

Finally, informality emerges as a multifaceted phenomenon dependent on a complex interaction between cultural, socioeconomic, and political factors issues that warrant further research attention.

The evidence obtained shows that informal entrepreneurship is a multidimensional phenomenon that can transcend traditional economic categories. Its persistence is due to structural limitations such as poor education, gender gaps, and labor supply, as well as contextual factors, including the health crisis, politics, and environmental factors. The results also showed that informal entrepreneurship acts simultaneously as a mechanism for subsistence and as a space for social innovation, which generates an ambivalent impact, favoring the economic resilience of vulnerable populations but also reproducing inequalities and limitations in productivity at the macroeconomic level.

From a conceptual perspective, bibliometric research reveals a high degree of fragmentation in research trends, with limited integration between regions and disciplines (Poornima Darshini et al., 2024). This gap creates an opportunity to move toward comparative and cross-cutting approaches that allow us to understand how institutional and cultural factors interact in the decision to formalize a business. Thus, the impact of informality on the SDGs is evident in its ability to contribute to generating income and employment, which would make it difficult to accurately measure indicators of equity, productivity, and sustainability.

In practical terms, the analysis shows that formalization policies must not only be uniform, but also adaptable to local realities. Therefore, an effective strategy would involve designing inclusive regulatory frameworks that recognize the heterogeneity of informal entrepreneurs, linking tax incentives, access to credit, and training programs. Finally, the challenge is to balance the need for regulation with the flexibility that characterizes this type of enterprise. Thus, it is possible to promote a gradual transition to formality without

eliminating the attributes of dynamism, creativity, and resilience that characterize the informal sector.

#### V. CONCLUSION

This documentary review identifies informality as a complex and context-dependent phenomenon whose manifestations vary significantly according to cultural, economic, and environmental factors. The results reveal that social fragmentation and limited integration among specialized researchers reflect the determining influence of local factors on business formalization decisions.

The analysis concludes that informal entrepreneurship constitutes a multifactorial field of study requiring differentiated policies tailored to specific environments to promote sustainable economic development. The bibliometric analysis identifies key socioeconomic variables—such as education level, gender, and income as significant determinants of informality.

Evidence indicates that low educational attainment and limited formal job opportunities act as critical drivers into the informal sector, particularly in developing Latin American countries. In these contexts, structural economic and social challenges compel populations to leverage cultural and community factors that make informal work a viable or attractive alternative.

In conclusion, informal entrepreneurship is understood as a space of tensions and opportunities, viewed and analyzed from a bibliometric perspective, which allows us to gauge not only its magnitude and research trends, but also the possible practical implications for designing public policies aimed at equity, economic sustainability, and productivity.

#### *Conflicts of interest*

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest in the development of this bibliometric article, and all sources and data used are from recognized academic databases and have been properly cited. This publication is funded by the Universidad Nacional de Tumbes- Escuela de Posgrado. The results and conclusions presented reflect an unbiased evaluation of the existing literature on the subject, without bias or personal or institutional interests that could compromise the integrity of the study.

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