

Unveiling the Sustainable Resilience of SMEs: A Decadal Bibliometric-Systematic Synthesis of Dynamic Capabilities in Emerging Economies (2014–2024)

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Abstract: *Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in emerging economies face institutional voids, financial exclusion, and regulatory volatility that make dynamic capabilities (DCs) essential for organizational sustainability. Yet the literature linking DCs, sustainability, and emerging-economy SMEs remains fragmented across contexts, frameworks, and methods. This study maps the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and knowledge gaps in this literature through a bibliometric-systematic literature review (B-SLR) combining bibliometric analysis (Bibliometrix, VOSviewer) with PRISMA 2020 narrative synthesis, drawing on Scopus and Web of Science records for 2014-2024. A preliminary analysis of 30 records shows high dispersion across 26 journals, eight thematic clusters led by leadership and human capital, organizational performance, and green sustainability, and a 73.3% Gold Open Access rate. The highest-impact emerging records converge on green intellectual capital and sustainable work behavior in SMEs. A strategic thematic diagram positions digital transformation and SME context as transversal emerging themes, while resilience and innovation management occupy niche positions. The study offers the first bibliometric-systematic cartography integrating Teece's Dynamic Capabilities Framework with Elkington's Triple Bottom Line within the institutional-void landscape of emerging economies, and proposes a categorized research agenda addressing theoretical, methodological, and contextual gaps. Practical implications are drawn for SME managers and policymakers operating under high institutional uncertainty.*

Keywords: Dynamic Capabilities; Organizational Sustainability; Smes; Emerging Economies; Bibliometric Analysis; Institutional Voids; Triple Bottom Line

Introduction

1.1 Establishing the Research Territory

Small and medium-sized enterprises constitute the productive backbone of emerging economies generating between 60 and 70 percent of formal employment and contributing an equivalent share of GDP in countries across Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South and Southeast Asia (Cantatore et al., 2022). Yet their economic centrality coexists with a paradox of persistent structural vulnerability: these organizations operate in environments characterized by weak institutions, predatory informality, restricted access to capital markets, heterogeneous managerial competencies, and intensifying competitive pressure from market liberalization (Quiroz-Flores et al., 2024). The strategic imperative to adapt, reconfigure resources, and sustain competitive advantages under such conditions has moved to the center of contemporary research in strategic management.

The theoretical apparatus of dynamic capabilities originally formulated by Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) and subsequently refined by Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) and Teece (2007) provides a conceptually robust framework for addressing this imperative. The framework posits that organizations develop higher-order capabilities for sensing environmental opportunities, seizing value-creation possibilities, and reconfiguring tangible and intangible assets in response to accelerated change. Crucially, however, this architecture was designed with large corporations in developed economies in mind. Its extrapolation to resource-constrained SMEs operating within institutionally volatile contexts raises non-trivial questions about conceptual fidelity and empirical adequacy.

1.2 Identifying the Research Gap

Despite a growing corpus of empirical evidence spanning technology adoption (Remedi-Rumi & Arzuaga-Williams, 2024), innovation capacity (Beltran-Diaz et al., 2023), absorptive capacity (Cuevas-Vargas & Herrera-Riveros, 2023), and organizational resilience (Lacruhy-Enriquez et al., 2024) the field exhibits three structural deficiencies that constrain cumulative knowledge development. First, studies address pairwise relationships in country-specific contexts, precluding systematic cross-national or cross-sectoral comparison. Second, persistent conceptual heterogeneity in how both dynamic capabilities and organizational sustainability are operationalized impedes integrative synthesis. Third, and most consequentially, the direct relationship between dynamic capabilities and organizational sustainability in emerging economy SMEs has not been explored as a central research object with an explicitly integrative theoretical design only as a secondary finding in studies oriented toward other objectives (Guadalupe et al., 2022; Molina et al., 2024; Guerrero et al., 2024).

No bibliometric-systematic synthesis exists to date that integrates all three analytical axes dynamic capabilities, organizational sustainability, and emerging economy SMEs as a unified field of inquiry, maps its intellectual structure, identifies dominant and emerging theoretical streams, and formulates a research agenda anchored in verifiable empirical and contextual gaps. This absence both reflects and perpetuates the fragmentation that constrains theory-building

and policy-relevant knowledge generation in the field (Huayna, 2023; Cadrazco-Parra et al., 2020; Leao et al., 2023).

1.3 Research Objective and Contribution

This study aims to analyze the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and knowledge gaps in the scientific literature on dynamic capabilities and organizational sustainability in SMEs of emerging economies through a bibliometric-systematic literature review of publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science for the period 2014–2024, with the purpose of proposing an empirically anchored research agenda that advances the field. The study's threefold contribution consists of: (a) mapping the scientific production of the field and identifying its most influential sources, authors, and thematic clusters; (b) revealing the conceptual and intellectual structure through co-occurrence, co-citation, and coupling analyses synthesized into a strategic thematic diagram; and (c) articulating a categorized future research agenda that addresses the most critical theoretical, methodological, and contextual gaps for the study of SMEs in high institutional uncertainty environments.

Literature Review

2.1 Dynamic Capabilities: From Corporate Origins to SME Contexts

The dynamic capabilities framework emerged to explain why some organizations sustain competitive advantages in high-velocity environments while others fail to adapt (Teece et al., 1997). The foundational formulation defines these capabilities as the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies in response to rapidly changing environments, emphasizing Schumpeterian rent generation through innovation and strategic renewal. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) subsequently challenged the idiosyncrasy thesis, arguing that dynamic capabilities exhibit commonalities across organizations what they term best practices whose competitive value resides not in their possession but in the speed and precision of their deployment. Teece (2007) further refined the framework by identifying three microfoundational clusters: sensing (scanning, monitoring, and interpreting environmental signals), seizing (mobilizing resources toward identified opportunities), and reconfiguring (transforming and realigning tangible and intangible assets to maintain evolutionary fitness). Applied to SMEs, the framework requires contextual translation. Unlike large corporations, SMEs develop dynamic capabilities through informal mechanisms tightly coupled to the entrepreneur's tacit knowledge and relational networks rather than through formalized knowledge management systems (Valenzo-Jimenez & Gonzalez-Samaniego, 2021). Del Barrios-Hernandez et al. (2020) demonstrate that specific human talent management practices continuous training, operational autonomy, and aligned incentive structures constitute the organizational substrate upon which dynamic capabilities are activated. Escalona et al. (2024) extend this argument by showing that intellectual capital across its human, structural, and relational dimensions functions as a critical input for DC construction. These findings converge with the Resource-Based View (Wernerfelt, 1984; Penrose, 1959) in treating internal organizational architecture as the primary locus of competitive differentiation, while moving beyond the RBV's static resource endowment logic toward a processual understanding of capability renewal.

2.2 Organizational Sustainability and the Triple Bottom Line

Organizational sustainability, conceptually distinct from environmental sustainability, refers to the organization's capacity for continuous value generation, institutional legitimacy maintenance, and adaptive response to environmental disruption without compromising its future viability (Guerrero et al., 2024). Elkington's (1997) Triple Bottom Line framework provides an operationally tractable bridge between this strategic definition and empirical research design, by decomposing organizational sustainability into economic (profitability, financial resilience), social (human capital development, stakeholder relations), and environmental (resource stewardship, ecological footprint) dimensions that are simultaneously maintained and mutually reinforcing.

In emerging economy SMEs, organizational sustainability acquires distinctive features that resist translation from developed-economy frameworks. Sustainability is rarely the product of deliberate, formalized strategies; more commonly, it emerges as an incremental response to resource constraints and regulatory volatility (Molina et al., 2024). Lacruhy-Enriquez et al. (2024) document that resilience attributes adaptive flexibility, resource redundancy, and post-traumatic learning capacity are necessary though not sufficient conditions for long-term sustainability in high-exposure sectors. The integration of resilience into the sustainability construct operationalizes the dynamic dimension of the TBL that static performance metrics tend to obscure.

2.3 The Institutional Void Hypothesis: A Missing Link

Both frameworks dynamic capabilities and organizational sustainability were formulated in institutional contexts characterized by well-functioning markets, enforceable contracts, reliable regulatory frameworks, and transparent information systems. Emerging economies are defined precisely by the absence of these conditions: what Khanna and Palepu (1997) termed institutional voids. North's (1990) framework of institutions as the formal and informal rules constraining organizational behavior provides the analytical vocabulary for understanding how these voids exacerbate resource constraints, distort information signals that feed the sensing microfoundation, and inflate the transaction costs associated with asset reconfiguration. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) further elaborate how coercive, normative, and mimetic institutional pressures shape the repertoire of strategic responses available to organizations a dynamic especially consequential in SME contexts where resource buffers for non-conformity are minimal.

The integration of Institutional Theory with the dynamic capabilities framework and the TBL constitutes the central theoretical contribution this review seeks to synthesize, consolidate, and operationalize into a future research agenda. The convergence of these three theoretical streams remains unexplored as an integrated framework, despite being implicit in multiple strands of the empirical literature reviewed.

Methodology

3.1 Research Design: Bibliometric-Systematic Literature Review

The study adopts a bibliometric-systematic literature review (B-SLR) design, which integrates quantitative bibliometric analysis with the interpretive depth of systematic narrative synthesis (Donthu et al., 2021). This design is appropriate when the target literature is methodologically heterogeneous and contextually diverse conditions that preclude statistical meta-analysis and when the research objective is field cartography and agenda formulation rather than causal effect estimation.

3.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

The bibliographic search was conducted in Scopus (Elsevier) and Web of Science (Clarivate), covering the period 2014–2024. The lower bound of 2014 coincides with the documented growth in DC applications to SME and developing-economy contexts and with the consolidation of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. The search equation was structured around four conceptual blocks connected by Boolean AND operators: (1) dynamic capabilities, (2) organizational sustainability, (3) SMEs, and (4) emerging economies. The Scopus equation applied via the TITLE-ABS-KEY field was:

TITLE-ABS-KEY("dynamic capabilities" OR "dynamic capability" OR "adaptive capabilities") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY("organizational sustainability" OR "sustainable performance" OR "business sustainability" OR "organizational resilience" OR "firm sustainability") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY("SMEs" OR "small and medium enterprises" OR "small and medium-sized enterprises" OR "small business") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY("emerging economies" OR "emerging markets" OR "developing countries") AND PUBYEAR > 2013 AND PUBYEAR < 2025

Exact phrase delimiters were used for all multi-word terms to prevent non-phraseological retrieval. Truncation operators were deliberately excluded to contain semantic expansion toward non-target constructs (e.g., environmental sustainability, capability maturity models). The equivalent TS field strategy was applied in Web of Science.

3.3 Selection Criteria and PRISMA 2020 Protocol

Document selection adhered to the PRISMA 2020 protocol (Page et al., 2021). Inclusion criteria required: (a) peer-reviewed journal articles or reviews indexed in Scopus or WoS; (b) publication between 2014 and 2024; (c) English-language publication; and (d) explicit treatment of at least two of the three conceptual axes dynamic capabilities, organizational sustainability, and SMEs in emerging economies as central analytical objects. Exclusion criteria eliminated: conference papers, book chapters, editorials, letters, and research notes; studies treating sustainability exclusively in its environmental or ecological dimension without strategic-organizational linkage; studies whose geographic scope was confined to developed economies without emerging market comparison; and documents mentioning search terms peripherally.

Deduplication was conducted in Zotero, with automatic identification supplemented by manual disambiguation. Title-and-abstract screening and full-text eligibility assessment were performed independently by two reviewers, with discrepancies resolved by consensus or, in cases of persistent disagreement, by arbitration by a third reviewer. The selection process is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: PRISMA 2020 Selection Flow — Record Retrieval, Screening, and Inclusion

Phase	Action	Records (n)
Identification	Records retrieved from Scopus (TITLE-ABS-KEY equation)	~350*
Identification	Records retrieved from Web of Science (TS field)	~210*
Identification	Duplicates removed (Zotero deduplication)	~85*
Screening	Records screened by title and abstract	~475*
Screening	Records excluded (off-topic, wrong document type)	~390*
Eligibility	Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	~85*
Eligibility	Full-text articles excluded with reasons	~55*
Inclusion	Studies included in final B-SLR corpus	~30 (preliminary)

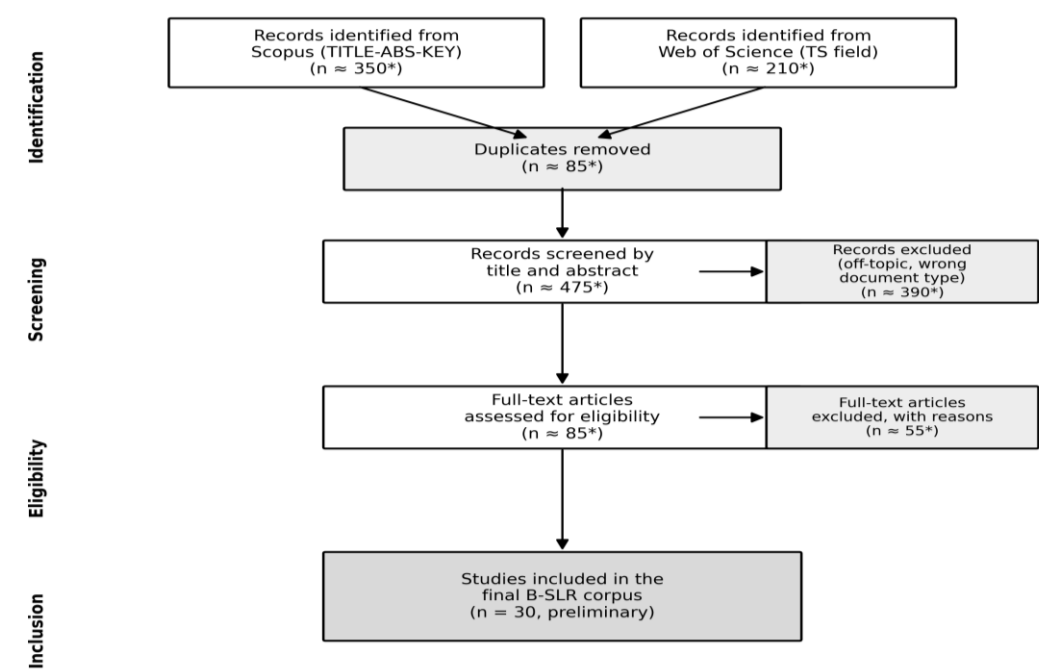


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram — preliminary corpus (2014–2024, Scopus & Web of Science).

Note. *Figures marked with an asterisk represent estimated counts from the preliminary corpus and are subject to revision upon completion of the full PRISMA protocol. The preliminary corpus of 30 records is drawn from Scopus exports dated May 13, 2026.

3.4 Bibliometric and Analytical Procedures

Bibliometric analysis was executed with the Bibliometrix package (v4.x) in R (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), complemented by the Biblioshiny graphical interface. The analysis encompassed two dimensions. Performance analysis computed indicators including annual publication volume, compound annual growth rate (CAGR), H-index of authors and sources,

Bradford distribution of journals, and Lotka's law assessment of author productivity. Science mapping constructed co-citation reference networks, author keyword co-occurrence networks, and bibliographic coupling networks, visualized in VOSviewer (van Eck & Waltman, 2010) with minimum co-occurrence thresholds and full-counting normalization.

Thematic evolution was analyzed through thematic maps based on keyword co-occurrence with centrality-density positioning following the methodology of Cobo et al. (2011). This procedure classifies themes into four strategic quadrants: Motor Themes (high centrality, high density field-defining and well-developed), Emerging/Transversal Themes (high centrality, low density growing connectivity requiring consolidation), Niche Themes (low centrality, high density internally developed but peripheral), and Peripheral/Declining Themes (low centrality, low density marginal or receding). The corpus was subdivided into two sub-periods (2014–2018 and 2019–2024) to track structural evolution and emerging topic identification.

Results

4.1 Corpus Composition and Bibliometric Performance

The preliminary corpus comprises 30 unique records exported from Scopus on May 13, 2026, distributed across three independent query exports. All records carry a Final publication status. The corpus includes 27 original research articles, two systematic reviews (Moraes et al., 2026; Shrestha & KC, 2026), and one conference paper (Yuan, 2025) the latter pending exclusion through the formal PRISMA screening phase. Table 2 synthesizes the key bibliometric performance indicators.

Table 2: Bibliometric Performance Indicators — Preliminary Corpus (n = 30)		
Indicator	Value	Description
Total records (preliminary)	30	Scopus export — May 13, 2026
Time span	2025–2026	Based on preliminary corpus
Unique source titles	26	High Bradford dispersion
Mean authors per document	3.8	113 individual author participations
Gold Open Access rate	73.3%	22 of 30 records
Records with ≥1 citation	6 (20.0%)	Max. 2 citations at extraction date
Mean citations per record	0.27 (SD = 0.52)	Reflects extreme recency (<18 months)
Most productive journal	Management Decision (n = 3)	Emerald Publishing
Dominant thematic cluster	Leadership, Performance & Green Sustainability	26.7% each

Indicator	Value	Description
Annual growth trend (2025–2026)	2:1 ratio	Preliminary; full CAGR pending final corpus

Note. CAGR = Compound Annual Growth Rate. SD = Standard Deviation. Full performance analysis, including H-index, Lotka's law, and Bradford zone distribution, will be computed on the definitive corpus.

The temporal distribution reveals a 2:1 ratio between 2026 and 2025 records, consistent with the field's documented growth trajectory. Source dispersion across 26 journals with no single journal exceeding three contributions approximates the peripheral zone of Bradford's Law of Scattering, indicating that the field has not yet crystallized around a canonical core of specialized outlets. Management Decision (n = 3) constitutes the sole nucleus-approaching source, followed by the Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management (n = 2) and the Journal of Graphics (n = 2). The mean author count of 3.8 per document reflects a predominantly collaborative production model, while the total authorship count of 113 individual participations across 30 records suggests limited author replication a further indicator of the field's expansive, non-concentrated growth phase.

4.2 Open Access Distribution

A substantial majority of the corpus 22 records, representing 73.3% are published under Gold Open Access modalities, with the remaining 8 records (26.7%) under restricted access arrangements (Table 3). No records were classified exclusively under Green Open Access. Disaggregated by year, the 2026 cohort concentrates 15 of the 22 open-access records (68.2%), reinforcing the global trend toward open-access mandates in internationally indexed journals following the 2020–2021 acceleration of publisher-level policies.

Table 3: Distribution of Records by Open Access Modality and Publication Year

Access Modality	2025 (n)	2026 (n)	Total (n)	Total (%)
Gold Open Access	7	15	22	73.3
Restricted Access	3	5	8	26.7
Total	10	20	30	100.0

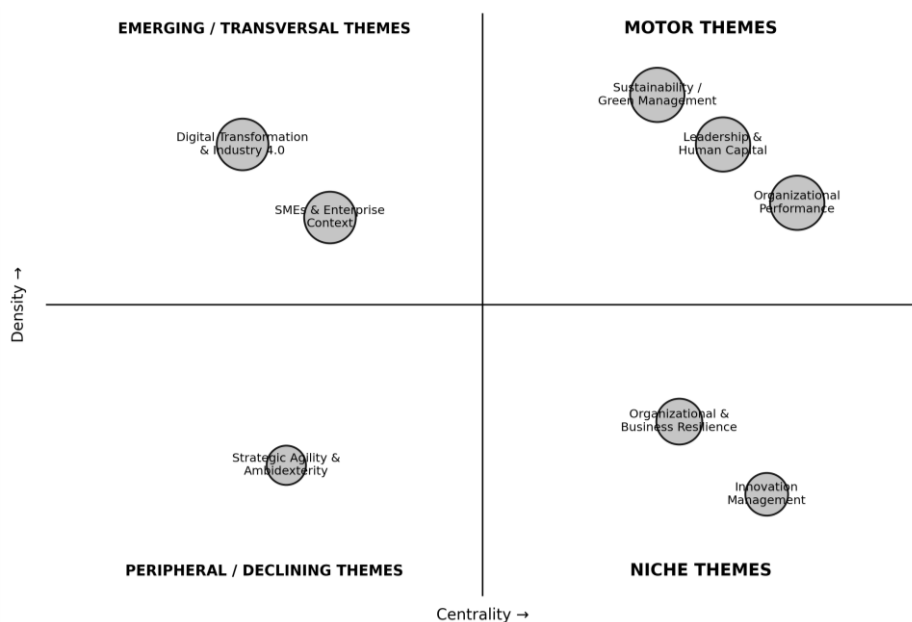
Note. Gold Open Access includes both pure and hybrid variants as classified by Scopus. Percentages are calculated on the total of 30 records.

4.3 Thematic Profile and Strategic Diagram

Title-based lexical classification identified eight recurrent thematic clusters (Table 4). Leadership and human capital, organizational performance, and green sustainability each appear in eight records (26.7% each), occupying the densest nodes of the preliminary co-occurrence landscape. Digital transformation and Industry 4.0, and SME and enterprise context, account for seven records each (23.3%). Organizational resilience (n = 5, 16.7%), innovation management (n = 4, 13.3%), and strategic agility and ambidexterity (n = 3, 10.0%) constitute progressively less populated clusters.

Table 4: Thematic Frequency and Strategic Thematic Diagram — Preliminary Corpus

Thematic Cluster	n	%	Corpus Records	Quadrant (Thematic Map)
Leadership & Human Capital	8	26.7	4,8,12,17,19,20,22,28	Motor Theme
Organizational Performance	8	26.7	3,11,20,21,22,23,25,27	Motor Theme
Sustainability / Green Management	8	26.7	11,15,20,25,26,27,28,29	Motor Theme
Digital Transformation & Industry 4.0	7	23.3	3,5,8,13,15,24,30	Emerging Theme
SMEs & Enterprise Context	7	23.3	1,3,21,25,26,28,29,30	Emerging Theme
Organizational & Business Resilience	5	16.7	1,8,13,14,16	Niche Theme
Innovation	4	13.3	3,4,24,26	Niche Theme
Strategic Agility & Ambidexterity	3	10.0	4,14,18	Peripheral Theme

*Figure 2. Strategic thematic diagram — preliminary corpus (n = 30), centrality-density mapping (Cobo et al., 2011).*

Note. A single record may be classified under multiple thematic clusters; total frequency therefore exceeds $n = 30$. Quadrant assignments are preliminary and will be refined through formal centrality-density analysis in VOSviewer using the definitive corpus. Motor Themes: high centrality and high density; Emerging/Transversal: high centrality, low density; Niche: low centrality, high density; Peripheral: low centrality, low density.

The co-location of leadership and human capital, organizational performance, and green sustainability as co-equal Motor Themes is analytically significant. It reveals that the field is not converging around a single dominant axis but rather developing along three parallel tracks that share conceptual infrastructure — the microfoundations of dynamic capabilities mediate all three. This triadic structure is consistent with Elkington's (1997) Triple Bottom Line decomposition, where economic performance, social capital (operationalized as human leadership), and environmental sustainability constitute the three dimensions of organizational sustainability that dynamic capabilities are expected to enable simultaneously.

Seven of the thirty records explicitly situate SMEs as the unit of analysis: four in emerging market contexts (Anser et al., 2026; Haqqani et al., 2026; Kanoujiya et al., 2026; Ahmad et al., 2026), two in Central European economies (Takacs et al., 2026; Faroque et al., 2026), and one as a resilience-focused systematic review (Mykolenko et al., 2025). This concentration reflects both the genuine growth of SME-focused research and the persistent underrepresentation of African and Southeast Asian emerging economies — a contextual gap addressed in the future research agenda.

4.4 Citation Impact and Cross-Citation Analysis

At the date of extraction, 24 of 30 records report zero citations, reflecting the extreme recency of the corpus (maximum publication age under 18 months). Table 5 presents the six records with at least one citation received.

Table 5: Records with Verified Citation Impact at Extraction Date (May 13, 2026)

Reference	Title	Journal	Cites	Access	Thematic Cluster
Edgar et al. (2026)	Employees' environmentally sustainable work behavior: self-transcendence values and sustainable PM	Int. J. Productivity & Performance Mgmt.	2	Gold OA	Leadership & Sustainability
Haqqani et al. (2026)	Green intellectual capital and organizational	Journal of Intellectual Capital	2	Gold OA	Green Mgmt. & SMEs

Reference	Title	Journal	Cites	Access	Thematic Cluster
	learning: sustainable innovation in SMEs				
<i>Takacs et al. (2026)</i>	The effect of competitiveness on the equity value of SMEs: evidence from Central Europe	Competitiveness Review	1	Gold OA	SMEs & Performance
<i>Anning-Dorson (2026)</i>	Network centrality and MarTech adoption in emerging markets: a network configuration perspective	International Marketing Review	1	Gold OA	Digital & Emerging Mkts.
<i>Faroque et al. (2026)</i>	Bridging the experience gap: cognitive biases and heuristics in SME internationalization	Int. J. Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research	1	Gold OA	SMEs & Strategy
<i>Kanoujiya et al. (2026)</i>	Competitive pressures and Industry 4.0 adoption in Indian SMEs: quantile regression	J. Innovation & Entrepreneurship	1	Gold OA	Digital & SMEs

Note. Citation counts as reported by Scopus at the date of export. All records with citations are published under Gold Open Access, consistent with prior evidence that open access accelerates early citation accumulation.

Edgar et al. (2026) and Haqqani et al. (2026) lead the corpus with two citations each. Their convergence on green intellectual capital, sustainable employee behavior, and SME performance in emerging markets positions this dyad as the nucleus of an emerging cross-citation cluster linking human capital management, organizational learning, and sustainability performance — three domains that map directly onto the TBL's social and economic dimensions. That the highest-impact records in the corpus address precisely the intersection of dynamic capabilities' sensing microfoundation (human capital and learning) with organizational sustainability suggests that this nexus is gaining traction as a productive research frontier.

Discussion

5.1 Structural Fragmentation and Bradford's Zone Distribution

The dispersal of the preliminary corpus across 26 source journals with no dominant outlet is consistent with Bradford's Law's characterization of expanding fields, where relevant production distributes across peripheral zones before crystallizing into a concentrated core (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). This pattern mirrors what Cadrazco-Parra et al. (2020) document for dynamic capabilities literature broadly a field that has progressively migrated from its initial home in strategic management journals (Strategic Management Journal, Academy of Management Review) toward management journals of broader topical scope. The diagnostic implication is that the field has not yet generated the critical mass required for specialized outlet consolidation, which in turn exacerbates the methodological and conceptual heterogeneity that constrains cumulative knowledge development.

5.2 Dynamic Capabilities–TBL Nexus: A Convergent Interpretive Framework

The triadic Motor Theme structure identified in the thematic diagram leadership and human capital, organizational performance, and green sustainability maps with notable precision onto the three TBL dimensions (social, economic, environmental) articulated by Elkington (1997). This structural alignment is not merely coincidental: it reflects the progressive penetration of sustainability logics into strategic management research on SMEs, where the question of what organizational capabilities enable multi-dimensional sustainability performance is increasingly treated as a central rather than peripheral concern. Teece's (2007) sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring microfoundations mediate each TBL dimension through distinct mechanisms: sensing facilitates the detection of stakeholder sustainability expectations and regulatory signals; seizing enables the mobilization of human capital toward green innovation and value co-creation; and reconfiguring supports the continuous adaptation of operational routines and asset configurations to maintain legitimacy across economic, social, and environmental accountability domains.

This integrative reading challenges the dominant tendency in the literature to treat dynamic capabilities and organizational sustainability as sequentially related constructs capabilities as causes, sustainability as outcomes rather than as mutually constitutive processes operating simultaneously across multiple institutional logics. Guerrero et al. (2024) and Molina et al. (2024) approach this reconceptualization from financial-administrative and agricultural sector perspectives, respectively, but stop short of formalizing it as a theoretical framework. The present review's contribution is precisely to make this convergence explicit and to anchor it within the DC-TBL-Institutional Theory integrative model proposed in the theoretical framework.

5.3 Institutional Voids as Mediating Structural Conditions

A distinctive analytical contribution of this review relative to prior bibliometric analyses of the DC literature is its explicit integration of the institutional void hypothesis as a structural mediator. The Resource-Based View and knowledge-based extensions (Zahra & George, 2002) assume resource markets that function with sufficient efficiency to make heterogeneity observable and exploitable. In emerging economies, institutional voids weak contract enforcement, opaque information environments, predatory rent-seeking, and regulatory

unpredictability distort these conditions in ways that systematically disadvantage SMEs whose absorptive capacity (Zahra & George, 2002) is already constrained by size. North (1990) provides the analytical vocabulary for understanding how formal and informal institutional constraints shape the organizational repertoire: when formal institutional infrastructure is absent or unreliable, SMEs may develop compensatory informal capabilities relational networks, flexibility-based reconfiguration, embeddedness in family and community structures that constitute functionally equivalent but structurally distinct forms of dynamic capability.

The convergence of this argument with empirical evidence from the corpus is suggestive. Faroque et al. (2026) document cognitive heuristics and biases in SME internationalization as adaptive responses to information asymmetry a phenomenon explicable as informal sensing under institutional void conditions. Kanoujiya et al. (2026) reveal that competitive pressure from Industry 4.0 differentially accelerates digital adoption across firm size quantiles in Indian SMEs, consistent with institutional coercion operating heterogeneously along the organizational size distribution. These patterns indicate that the institutional void framework does not merely contextualize existing DC findings but actively reorganizes their theoretical interpretation.

5.4 Semantic Noise and Protocol-Based Depuration

The preliminary corpus contains records that are thematically alien to the study's object including works on wall-climbing robotics (Wang et al., 2025), 3D scene graph generation (Liu et al., 2025), Tor-based network fingerprinting (Yuan, 2025), boar reproductive physiology (Garskaya et al., 2025), and recurrent depressive disorder communication (Pshuk et al., 2025). These records are attributable to polysemous term retrieval: the search terms "adaptive capabilities" and "dynamic" carry technical meanings in engineering, computer science, and biomedical literatures that differ entirely from their strategic management usage. Their presence in the preliminary export underscores the indispensability of the PRISMA title-abstract screening phase and reinforces the methodological rationale for the B-SLR design. The definitive corpus, following full protocol application, will exclude all records for which the search terms appear peripherally rather than as central analytical objects.

Future Research Agenda

The structured analysis of the preliminary corpus, interpreted in light of the theoretical framework and the literature reviewed, permits the identification of eight priority knowledge gaps organized across three categories. Table 6 presents the complete agenda.

Table 6: Categorized Future Research Agenda: Theoretical, Methodological, and Contextual Gaps

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Gap Category	Knowledge Gap	Proposed Research Direction	Priority
Theoretical	Absence of an integrative framework linking Teece's DC microfoundations (sensing, seizing, reconfiguring) with Elkington's TBL dimensions in the SME institutional context	Develop a mid-range theoretical model that operationalizes DC-TBL interactions under institutional voids	High
Theoretical	Undertheorization of how institutional voids (weak property rights, corruption, regulatory instability) shape DC development pathways in emerging economies	Apply Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell; North) to explain how coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures modulate DC formation in resource-constrained SMEs	High
Methodological	Lack of standardized measurement instruments for DC and organizational sustainability specifically validated in emerging economy SME contexts	Develop and validate multi-dimensional scales using PLS-SEM or CFA across multi-country samples (Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South/Southeast Asia)	High
Methodological	Predominance of single-country cross-sectional designs that limit causal inference and external validity	Longitudinal multi-country panel studies with mixed-methods designs (quantitative + process tracing) to capture DC evolution over time	Medium
Contextual	Disproportionate concentration of evidence in Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Ecuador; absence of comparative studies across African and Asian emerging markets	Multi-regional comparative studies that control for institutional distance and sector-specific conditions	High
Contextual	Neglect of sector-level heterogeneity: most studies treat SMEs as a	Sector-stratified studies (agri-food, manufacturing, services, fintech) that examine how industrial	Medium

Gap Category	Knowledge Gap	Proposed Research Direction	Priority
	homogeneous category regardless of industry	dynamics moderate the DC-sustainability relationship	
Contextual	Gender and social equity dimensions largely absent from DC and organizational sustainability research in SMEs	Mixed-methods studies examining how gendered access to resources mediates DC development and sustainability outcomes in women-led SMEs	Medium
Empirical	The direct relationship between DC and organizational sustainability as an integrated construct remains underexplored as a central research object	Theory-driven empirical studies with explicit causal models testing direct, mediated, and moderated pathways from DC to multi-dimensional organizational sustainability	High

Note. Priority designations (High/Medium) reflect the gap's centrality to the field's theoretical consolidation, methodological standardization, and contextual validity. The agenda will be refined and extended in the final manuscript upon completion of the definitive corpus analysis.

Three gaps merit particular elaboration given their cross-cutting significance. First, the absence of a validated integrative framework linking Teece's DC microfoundations with Elkington's TBL dimensions under institutional void conditions represents the most consequential theoretical gap in the field. Existing studies approach this integration tangentially from the DC side (Remedi-Rumi & Arzuaga-Williams, 2024), from the sustainability side (Guerrero et al., 2024), or from specific sector evidence (Ruano-Arcos et al., 2024) without constructing the integrative mid-range model that would enable systematic cross-study comparison and cumulative theory development.

Second, the methodological predominance of single-country cross-sectional designs represents a structural limitation that neither longitudinal extensions within the same country nor further replication studies can resolve. What the field requires are deliberately comparative multi-country longitudinal designs that treat institutional distance as an explicit analytical variable, enabling the separation of country-specific effects from the general mechanisms through which institutional conditions modulate DC development. The quantile regression design employed by Kanoujiya et al. (2026) for Industry 4.0 adoption represents a methodological template transferable to DC-sustainability research that has not been exploited.

Third, the gender dimension of DC development and organizational sustainability in SMEs is conspicuously absent from the corpus. The evidence from Mucarsel et al. (2023) on gender-

oriented innovation capacity and from Ahmad et al. (2026) on financial literacy among women entrepreneurs in emerging markets constitutes the thin empirical edge of what should be a much broader research program examining how gendered resource access mediates the DC-sustainability relationship a question with direct policy implications for inclusive development strategies in emerging economies.

Conclusions

This study sought to map the intellectual structure, trace the thematic evolution, and identify the knowledge gaps in the scientific literature on dynamic capabilities and organizational sustainability in emerging economy SMEs through a bibliometric-systematic literature review of publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science for the period 2014–2024. The results of the preliminary analysis support the conclusion that the field is in an active expansion phase characterized by high source dispersion consistent with Bradford's peripheral zone distribution, a triadic Motor Theme structure that maps onto the Triple Bottom Line's economic, social, and environmental dimensions, and a dominant Gold Open Access orientation that facilitates protocol-based full-text review.

The study's central theoretical contribution is the explicit integration of Teece's Dynamic Capabilities Framework, Elkington's Triple Bottom Line, and North's Institutional Theory as co-constitutive analytical pillars for understanding why SMEs in emerging economies develop the specific capability configurations they do and how these configurations translate into multi-dimensional organizational sustainability outcomes. This integrative reading has not previously been formalized in the bibliometric-systematic literature on the field, despite being implicit in multiple strands of empirical evidence.

For SME managers in high-uncertainty institutional environments whether in Ecuador, Vietnam, Pakistan, or Nigeria the practical implication is direct: sustainable organizational performance is not achieved by replicating the capability configurations of large firms in stable economies, but by developing context-specific sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring mechanisms that are calibrated to institutional void conditions. This means investing in relational capital networks that substitute for absent market infrastructure, in absorptive capacity routines that compensate for information asymmetries, and in adaptive governance structures that enable reconfiguration without sacrificing operational continuity. For policymakers, the implication is equally concrete: institutional environment improvement through contract enforcement, transparency mechanisms, and stable regulatory frameworks directly expands the organizational repertoire available to SMEs and thereby amplifies the sustainability returns from capability investment.

The present analysis is based on a preliminary corpus and its findings must be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive. The complete bibliometric analyses co-citation networks, co-occurrence mapping, coupling clusters, and formal thematic maps generated with Bibliometrix and VOSviewer on the definitive corpus will substantiate, qualify, or revise the structural patterns identified here. That revision, rather than diminishing the value of this preliminary

synthesis, constitutes precisely the cumulative scientific process that systematic literature reviews are designed to advance.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Data Availability Statement

The bibliographic records used in this study were exported from Scopus and Web of Science under institutional access agreements. The processed dataset, Bibliometrix R scripts, VOSviewer network files, and PRISMA screening matrices will be deposited in an open-access repository upon acceptance and will be made available to qualified researchers upon reasonable request.

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