LITERATURE REVIEW OF SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract. The long-term availability of food is essential to guaranty human existence. Therefore, relevant stakeholders, the government, and society are increasingly concerned about public food procurement in the most sustainable manner where distance and cultural characteristics are considered. While short food supply chains (SFSC) are essential, little is known about the relevance, magnitude, and policy lesson within a developing country context.

Purpose – to identify the thrust of the SFSC; classified in terms of depth of research, content analysis, and methodology; and provide direction for future research.

Research methodology **–** systematic literature review (SLR) on SFSC and corresponding data analysis.

Findings – while identifying heterogeneous clusters, this study provides new and insightful evidence that was a prior unclear. This study reached plausible conclusions with three major gap identifications and offered relevant recommendations to redirect policy and research on the subject.

Research limitations – the study is limited to the SFSC from studies published from 2001 through 2020.

Practical implications – the study can help decide relevant stakeholders, the government, and society on use-cases of SFSC.

Originality/Value – the paper presents state-of-the-art SRL results on SFSC, identifies main gaps and future research directions and extends the analysis by further appraising these papers' results in a stratified manner to reach a comprehensive conclusion sufficient for an international readership.

Keywords: short food supply chain, systematic literature review, alternative food supply chain, food logistics, developing country.

JEL Classification:

R11 - Regional Economic Activity: Growth, Development, Environmental Issues, and Changes

R41- Transportation: Demand, Supply, and Congestion

Introduction

Food production and continuous availability are essential as life. Without food supply sustainability, human existence remains in grave danger (Khan et al., 2021). This is why food supply chain stakeholders, researchers, government, and society are increasingly interested in every aspect

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that leads to the procurement and continuous production and supply of food across various levels and dimensions. However, while the significance of the short food supply chain (SFSC) is well established in theory and practice (Thomé et al., 2021), few studies within the developing country context have established a clear line of thought on the subject matter. Therefore, it becomes apt and expedient to provide evidence-based policy documents that aid a better understanding of the peculiarities of the SFSCas a substitute to global food production and supply that have dominated the fast-moving consumer goods industry.

Numerous challenges facing SFSC management has dominated the literature with little evidence-based policymaking approach adopted in prior studies on the relations (Lioutas & Charatsari, 2020). This study focuses on the challenges and opportunities facing the SFSC in Nigeria, a developing country with existing underlying economic challenges, inadequate capital for pursuing growth and development objectives and a growing population. Nigeria faces a multitude of challenges in meeting its development needs. Understanding the structural parameters in Nigeria's SFSC will clarify age-old ambiguity that has clouded quality decision-making about the queuing and networking decisions around the SFSC in Nigeria.

Knowing how the challenges and opportunities around the SFSC have culminated into the misalignment of Nigeria's food sustainability challenges is essential for evidence-based policymaking and development objectives (Nwuneli, 2010). These new insights into the challenges of the SFSC can redefine food redistribution strategies that could bring about an egalitarian society that is mostly desired. Nigeria ranked among the worst economic disadvantaged country around the world. Policymakers and society at large want to ensure policy measures and implementations are synonymous with the country's food growth agenda. Despite a surge in the country's development needs, experimental proof of how the challenges and opportunities around the SFSC have explained variation in food sustainability and redistribution remains dimly discerned within the developing countries context. This study leaned empirical credence to the challenges and opportunities around Africa's SFSC most populous black nation, Nigeria, to develop findings that can redefine policy and research on the subject matter.

The SFSC refers to the equidistance from the origin (source) to the market (consumers) or a supply chain with little or no intermediation (Canfora et al., 2015). The SFSC has been used and conceives by large sections of the society to mean an orthodox food supply chain. The major difference can be a=harnessed from the perspectives of the equidistant relationship and the number of intermediating agents which serves as food agents. With the conventional food supply chains, a host of intermediation exists, which makes the food supply chain/ distribution network rather clumsy and more challenging. This can be responsible for the relevance of the SFSC as individuals and the society at large are in an era where hospitality has gained new momentum. With an estimated increase in developing countries consumerism capability, hitches in the food distribution network are beginning to wane, and people are favouring near food with little glitch compared to the orthodox food supply chain that is overly complicated.

The heightened interest in the SFSC was also attributed to cultural preference in terms of food supply. Regional differences and cultural orientation towards consumption and socio-economic dimensions are other outliers, while SFSC is preferred to the conventional food supply chain. The literature review on SFSC presents an overview of obscure relations in the SFSC discourse to illuminate what is known and unknown such that plausible policy lessons conducive to sustainable growth and development can be reached. With a systematic literature review, this study presents the challenges and opportunities around SFSC in the depth of research, content analysis, methods and gaps, and the recommendation for further studies. This approach answers the call for a better understanding of SFSC challenges and opportunities that can guide policy and practice on the subject.

This study answers the call to understand better challenges and opportunities around the SFSC from various dimensions. Within the food supply chain logistics and distribution, actions plan to enhance SFSC and sustainability informed food distribution choices are advanced based on perspectives of the representative sample sought in this study. The effectiveness of Nigeria's horizontal and vertical food supply chain will be established to advance a clear line of thought on the subject.

This study provides a clear understanding of the SFSC through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The SLR aggregates and categorises prior studies to establish a clear thought on the subject based on observable and well-known thematic, which helps explain what is known and unknown logically and sequentially. Although the SLR technique is prevalent in social sciences and management research, its specific application remains dimly discerned in the SFSC.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: Section I reviews the SFSC; Section II describes the methodological approach and how the scientific literature review was performed.; Section III presents conclusions.

1. The methodology of SLR

This study seeks to provide a clear understanding of the subject matter through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The SLR aggregates and categorises prior studies to establish a clear thought on the subject based on observable and well-known thematic, which explains what is known and unknown logically and sequentially (Kraus et al., 2020). Although the SLR technique is prevalent in social sciences and management research, its specific application in SFSC literature remains dimly discerned. This research is designed to establish the challenges and opportunities around the SFSC. The following questions are pertinent to this study:

1. How can the SFSC research be classified in the depth of research, content analysis, and methodology?
2. What are the key challenges and opportunities of the SFSC?
3. What is the potential direction for future research?

This study defines SFSC as a network of food distribution that involves short physical distance or little or no intermediation between the producers and consumers of food. The boundary specification agrees with the SFSC definition. In consonance with Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003), setting the conceptual boundaries shapes the initial process to show a clear line of thought in the SLR of SFSC. The baseline SLR favoured identifying the research gap to stimulate fresh insights on relatively underexplored areas. The SLR is based on a well-structured, standardised identification procedure with a replicable research path (Meier, Gonzalez and Kunze, 2021). The search was based on English language peer-reviewed papers previously published in the extant literature of leadership and strategy process, identified with primary keywords as detailed: "short food supply chain" OR "food chain" OR "sustainable food consumption", OR "food logistics", OR "alternative food network".

The search was conducted across various journal databases that included Sciencedirect.com (Elsevier); Springer; Taylor and Francis Online; Wiley Online; Google Scholar; EBSCOhost (Academic Search Ultimate, Business Source Elite, Business Source Ultimate and EconLit); ProQuest (20 databases in the social and management sciences) and the Social Science Research Network (SSRN).

This study reviewed journal articles, institutional and non-institutional working papers, industry/practitioners' studies, and reports from 2001 through 2020. The scope of 20 years allowed to trace the SFSC literature development for two decades. The starting year of 2001 was chosen because even though SFSC literature has appeared in the 1980s, the scientific literature's major thrust began towards the late 90s. Although SFSC literature has appeared since the 1980s, the literature's major thrust did not gather considerable momentum until the turn of the century. Further identification was made with the review of citations in papers considered to include additional interest documents on the subject in consonance with Randolph (2009). The initial search returned 75 articles. This study extends the analysis by further appraising these papers' results in a stratified manner to reach a comprehensive conclusion sufficient for an international readership.

Further exclusion criteria were employed to ensure the quality of the result of the included literature. On a case-by-case scenario, the researcher manually established the relevance of each article by their significance in explaining SFSC. Duplicate articles were expunged from the search outcome. The abstract, introduction and thrust of the entire manuscript were appraised to determine

appropriateness for inclusion in the SLR.

Following the inclusion and exclusion criteria, this study identified twenty-three (23) articles on these relatively underexplored phenomena relevant to the SLR from 2001 through 2020. Those for exclusion were the papers or articles that were outside the scope of SFSC. In the next section Table 1 presents a description of the SLR Process.

2. How can the SFSC research be classified in the depth of research, content analysis, and methodology?

In this section, an overview of the extant literature in leadership and strategy implementation is presented. In Table 1, this study summarises the titles of journals with the corresponding number of SFSC articles published. This study observed an irregular pattern in the year of publication of papers in SFSC literature. With four (4) Sustainability (Switzerland) returned the highest number of articles illuminating the challenges and opportunities around SFSC.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the Identified Studies

S/N	Journal Title	Article(s) count
1	Journal of Food Science	1
2	Food Policy	1
3	Sustainability (Switzerland	4
4	Land	1
5	Food Quality and Preference	1
6	International Journal of Operations and Production Management	1
7	Journal of Rural Studies	2
8	Environmental Management	1
9	IWMI Working Papers	1
10	Sociologia Ruralis	2
11	Journal of Europian Society for Rural Sociology	1
12	Economic Geography	1
13	Frontiers in Veterinary Science	1
14	Sustainability Science	1
15	Environment and Planning	1
16	Journal of Cleaner Production	2
17	Agriculture (Switzerland	1
	TOTAL	23

In Fig 1, a summary of the articles by year was presented. Since the turn of the 21st century, studies on SFSC have been understudied until recently in 2015, when there was an appreciable increase in the number of studies focused on the challenges and opportunities of SFSC. The renewed interest in SFSC, as evident in 2015 onward, shows the need to clarify the ambiguities in SFSC literature. Although the literature is growing asymptotically on the subject, observations show it has been more linked to SFSC in the sustainable agrarian sector. There is a need to address the lopsidedness in the SFSC literature to include sector logistics, cultural differences and person-specific peculiarities.

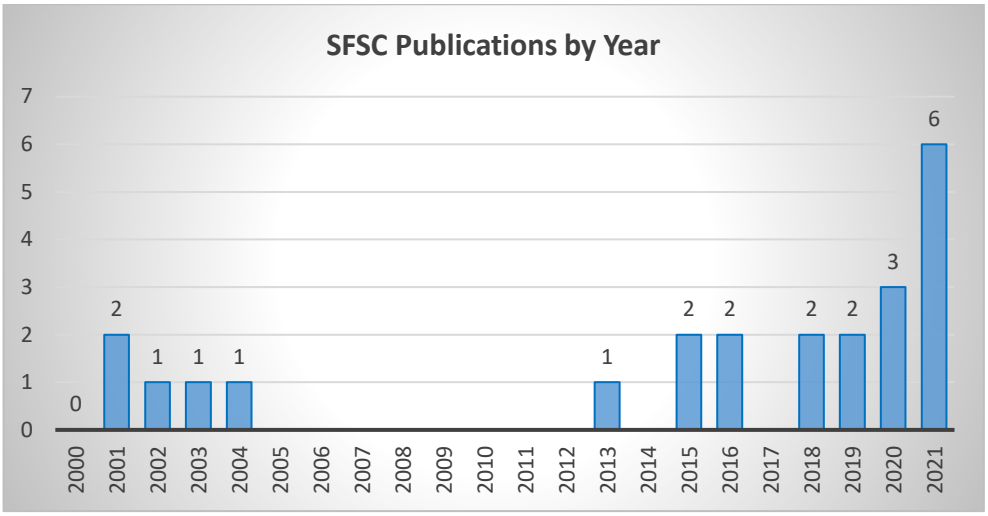


Fig. 1. Number of Articles per year

Fig. 2 depicts what has been observed regarding the geographical focus of the sample articles. The data reveals high interest in SFSC in the UK, followed by Brazil, Italy, Germany and the USA. Whilst 8% of the articles adopted quantitative methods, 70% adopted qualitative and 22% mixed methods. All identified studies were researched in a single country setting via discussion, interviews, surveys, and observations. There is a need to understand the issues in SFSC beyond single country boundaries, particularly in the developing country context where growth and development objectives remain inadequately met. That provides insights for future research.

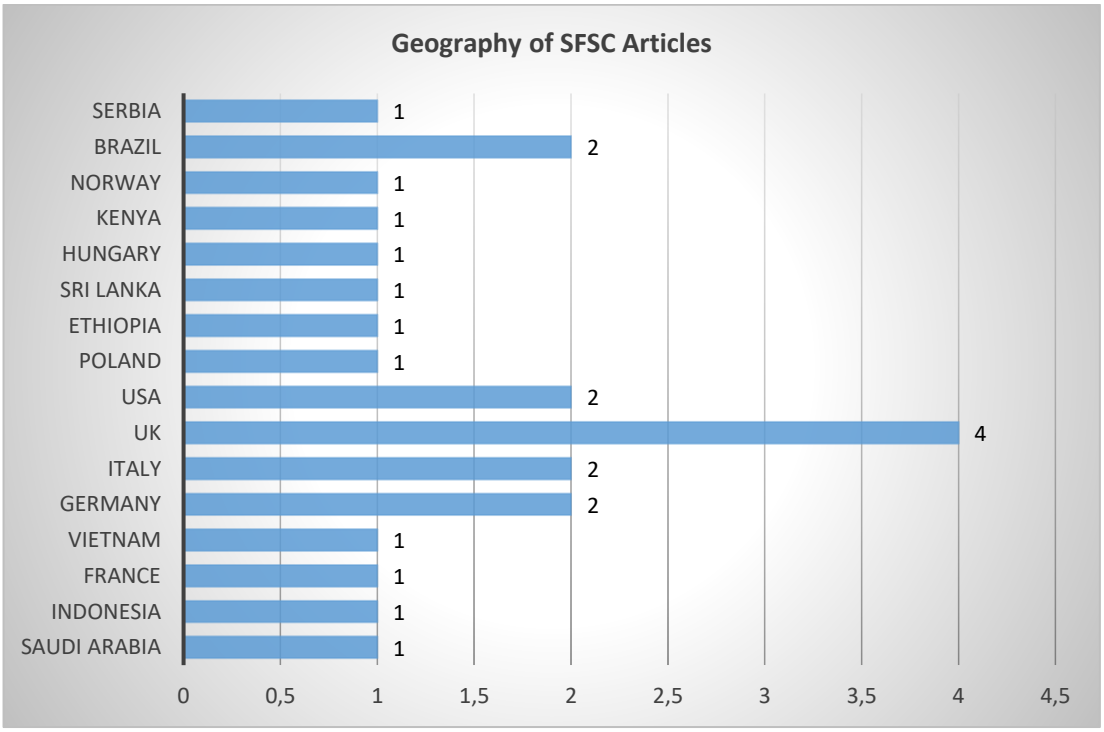


Fig. 2. Geography of Articles

3. What are the key challenges and opportunities of the SFSC?

Few studies have appraised the challenges and opportunities of the SFSCto rejuvenate policies and practices on the subject (Table 2).

Table 2. The challenges and opportunities of the SFSC

Opportunities

• *Environmental Sustainability* Less transportation; job creation on farms, development and satisfaction for farmers, and the dissemination of sustainable agricultural practices (Bui et al., 2021; Burgess & Sunmola, 2020; Jarzebowski et al., 2020; Malak-Rawlikowska et al., 2019; Todorovic et al., 2018; Yuna et al., 2016)
• Distinctive product characteristics (Keraita & Drechsel, 2015)
• Ecological raw materials and methods (Arsyad et al., 2021)
• Direct revenues for families (Bui et al., 2021)
• Local characteristics (more natural) (Hendry et al., 2019; Marsden et al., 2000)
• Short distances from the origin and source of the food
• *Economically Sustainable* (Giampietri et al., 2018)
• Healthier than other food supply chain (Nygard & Storstad, 1998)
• Ability to deliver products with high quality and traceability (Sellitto et al., 2018)
• The SFSCcan strengthen the economic sectors and activities that allow the integration of increasing numbers of actors involved in the agri-foods chains (Thomé et al., 2021)
Challenges
• Difficulty in proving and communicating locality
• Food governance challenges in terms of allocation and redistribution (Alrobaish et al., 2021; Garske et al., 2020; Jiren et al., 2021; Murungi et al., 2021; Pahl-Wostl et al., 2021; Warshawsky, 2019)
• Inability to share real-time information (Burgess & Sunmola, 2021)
• There are growing consumer concerns about ecology, health and animal welfare (Renting et al., 2003)
• Ambiguity in the definition of the origin of food and the quality of food leading to broader issues • (Murdoch et al., 2000)
• Issues of relational of geographical proximity (Aubry & Kebir, 2013)
• Variances in consumers needs and behavioural pattern (Ilbery et al., 2004)
• interaction between production systems and the consumer (Hinrichs, 2000)

Bui et al. (2021) found support for an SFSC to create a platform of environmental sustainability through reduced carbon emissions during the transport of food items from source to destination. The SFSC further enhances job creations on commercial farms, which guarantees farmers income to navigate their socio-economic needs. In their explorative study in Vietnam on the capacity of SFSC to create sustainable benefits for farmers, they further revealed that SFSC enhances sustainable agricultural practices. Burgess and Sunmola (2021) consolidate this claim and affirm that SFSC reduces food supply distances. It shortens the equidistance from the origin to market and this immediate aid emancipation of hungry residents and those in dire needs. Using a fuzzy approach, the study shows how informational requirements are prioritised to achieve an effective SFSC. Findings further revealed that monitoring frameworks such as the track and trace, real-time operations and supply chain related data exchange, and real-time supplier data exchange are essential to reach an optimum SFSC.

In the submission of Jarzebowski, Bourlakis and Bezat-Jarzebowska (2020) in their examination of SFSC as a sustainable domestic solution to food distribution challenges, the authors established the barriers to SFSC as a local solution to food challenges. The reduced barriers due to the short equidistant interval between source and market are by far the most significant factor why the SFSC is preferred to the orthodox food supply chains fraught with varying dimensions of food supply challenges. Malak-Rawlikowska et al. (2019) also found similar views to that of Jarzebowski, Bourlakis and Bezat-Jarzebowska (2020) in their examination of the environmental and socio-economic sustainability of SFSC. These claims are also supported by Todorovic et al. (2018), who

examine the solution for augmented sustainability in the SFSC. The author used a qualitative approach to developed several conceptual models to establish SFSC could adopt dynamic logistics and information technology to achieve sustainable food distribution.

Keraita, Bernard and Drechsel (2015) posits that SFSC aid distinctive product characteristics. While navigating West Africans perception of fruits and vegetables towards safeguarding public health, the authors found regulatory measures for risk management less effective in public health management. Arsyad, Amiruddin and Kawamura (2021) presents new evidence on how SFSC improves the ecological raw materials and methods. Rising food prices induce new waves of challenges for growth n development objectives since food is essential to human existence, threatening global food security. In their conference report, evidence was advanced on how SFSC enhances ecological raw materials and methods since less is lost in transit and region-specific food preferences are adequately cared for. Bui et al. (2021) argue that SFSC provides direct revenues for families directly in SFSC business.

Hendry et al. (2019) found support for SFSC to aid local characteristics of food supply. In the assessment of the resilence of SFSC to changes in constitutional arrangement borne out of BREXIT, the authors using multiple case studies involving 14 UK firms, found that substantial evidence for the horizontal and vertical structures in building resilience towards the anticipated influence of the disruption that could arise as a result of impeding conditional arrangement. Marsden, Banks and Bristow (2000) further augment the roles of SFSC on rural development. The author developed a theoretical model to explain how SFSC is built, which is an advancement in how food supplies are moved intermittently from origin to end-users. The authors go further by defining the evolution of SFSC towards sustainability. In the submission of Giampietri, Verneau, Del Giudice, Carfora and Finco (2018) established the economic sustainability of SFSC in modern food supply chain management. While adopting the theory of planned behaviour to explain behavioural responses to SFSC, the authors examined the consumer motives and expenditure pattern towards alternative agri-food networks in Italy. Using the Structural Equation Modelling techniques (SEM), the authors found customer trust to be positively related to intention to purchase at a short distance. The rural residence factor is also a robust behavioural pattern that influences purchasing habits in short supply chains.

Nygard and Storstad (1998) found support for SFSC to be a healthier food chain than other food supply chains. In their analysis of consumer perception of safe food in the food market in Norway, the authors argue that concerns about healthy and safe food and regional and cultural peculiarities of the food supply could define the globalisation of the food market. Sellitto, Vial and Viegas (2018) found support for SFSC to deliver food chains with high quality and feedback mechanisms. Thomé, Cappellesso, Ramos and Duarte (2021) argues that the SFSCcan strengthen the economic sectors and activities that allow the integration of increasing numbers of actors involved in the agri-foods chains. The author further differentiates the conceptual mix up in the use of the food supply chain (FSC) and the SFSC. With a systematic literature review that involves content analysis, the author redefines the coexistence of these interrelated and interchangeable concepts.

The challenges of the SFSC are enormous and understudied. Some of these challenges include the food governance challenges in terms of allocation and redistribution. Alrobaish, Vlerick, Luning, & Jacxsens (2021), who studied the challenges of food governance in Saudi Arabia, found that central national control of food quality and distribution is a significant challenge that impedes sustainable practices in the food supply chain. The Saudi Arabian economy characterised by high-level observance of Islamic laws towards food consumption and distribution is a peculiar society that poses non-uniformity in SFSC practices similar to what is obtainable in western society. These challenges can be mitigated by looking inward and providing regional specific solutions that are most inclined to the SFSC development objective of each region. Garske, Heyl, Ekardt, Weber, & Gradzka (2020) found support for the enormous governance challenges in the SFSC. The author explores the governance challenges from a European perspective and found the circular economy and waste law of EU and common agricultural policy and the common fisheries policy and food la aid international food targets towards food sustainability. Similar evidence is found in the work of

Murungi et al. (2021), Pahl-Wostl et al. (2021). Warshawsky (2019) found evidence towards food waste governance in Los Angeles, using content analysis of interview responses. Findings revealed that responsible food management could hurt these disgraceful practices among students and residents alike.

4. What is the potential direction for future research?

This section presents gaps in SFSC literature to guide anticipated studies on the subject. However, the research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. Considerably more work will need to be done to address the identified gaps: 1) The contextual gap/ cross-country study gap. 2) Theory-based gap. 3) Inadequacies of contextual empirical clarification.

The contextual gap/ cross-country study gap. The growing international readership of SFSC literature calls for studies that present unique and insightful evidence across time and geographies. Cross-national studies on SFSC can illuminate diverse SFSC solutions that closely address the challenges of queening, networking, cultural preferences in the food supply chain. The broad analysis of past studies helped reach conclusions that present new and insightful evidence towards stimulating further research in underexplored areas on the subject; re-assess SFSCpath as informed by various factors and, more importantly, establish a concessional direction on research areas of the SFSC. By examining the SFSC across borders, evidence can be sought for cross-border variations that look to tourism expansion and cultural diversity limitations.

Theory-based gap. Very few studies were found to have explained SFSC through theoretical perspectives. There is a need for meaningful and insightful findings from further theoretical expositions. Further theoretical analysis, like the theory of planned behaviour, should be considered. New titles on SFSC can be advanced with further clarification on the principal-agent relations. Clarity should be presented on SFSC and how these yet to be explored theoretical foundation explains SFSC toward sustainable food distribution and governance.

Inadequacies of contextual empirical clarification. Since SFSC differs based on physical distances, cultural preferences and socio-economic dimensions, it will be interesting to know within the broader sub-sectors how these phenomena play out across different geography using real-time data gathered from different sources. These anticipated heterogeneous empirical outcomes of SFSC will guide cross-border interactions and knowledge to classify SFSC, rather than explorative studies with no empirical backing. Further studies should concentrate on validating the applicability of various SFSC strategies towards egalitarian food distribution. That will ensure that policymakers, relevant institutions, and society are provided with an evidence-based document that could guide their SFSC policies and practices.

Conclusions

The purpose of the scholarly analysis was to provide a scientific literature review on the SFSC to come up with findings that can redefine policy and research on the subject. With a robust and comprehensive appraisal of the extant literature on the subject, this study reached plausible outcomes illuminating the obscure relations on the challenges and opportunities in the SFSC. The broad analysis of past studies helped reach conclusions that present new and insightful evidence that can stimulate further research in underexplored areas on the subject, re-assess SFSC path as informed by various factors, and more importantly, establish a concessional direction on research areas of the SFSC.

The study has obvious limitations that need to be addressed. At first, the study is limited to the SFSC from studies published from 2001 through 2020 and preference was given to articles published in frontline journals (Journals Articles indexed in Scopus's core collections, Web of Science, ABS ranking, ABCD ranking across their respective database). Secondly, the SLR was limited to peer-reviewed articles, titles, abstracts, and subject terms of the articles. Excluded from the corpus were works that are ongoing and the reports on technical reports. The potential directions for future

research were identified as well. The main areas for future research are the contextual/ cross-country study, theory-based gap-analysis, and inadequacies of contextual empirical clarification.

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