

Evaluating Corporate Social Responsibility in Achieving Sustainable Development and Social Welfare

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Abstract

This study delves into the conceptualization of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a crucial factor for fostering sustainable development and enhancing social welfare. It addresses the challenge of comprehensively perceiving the contributions of CSR activities to sustainable and socially responsible corporate practices. Using a bibliometric approach, this research scrutinizes a substantial corpus of literature, extracting 4,276 documents covering from 2009 to 2024 from the Scopus database, centered on the interplay between CSR, sustainable development, and social welfare. The research utilized the R Biblioshiny software for data analysis incorporates descriptive, annual scientific production, most relevant sources, core sources by Bradford's Law, most relevant affiliations, corresponding author's countries, network, and trend analyses to chart the progression and influence of CSR within these realms. Findings underscore a marked expansion in CSR-related research, spotlighting its evolution from mere charity to an integral component of strategic business operations. Emerging patterns reveal that businesses increasingly view CSR as a pivotal part of their value proposition rather than an optional extra. Despite the growth of academic interest, the study has identified a lacuna in the empirical understanding of how CSR strategies are effectively implemented. Recommendations call for a more seamless incorporation of CSR into the very fabric of corporate strategy and operations. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for future research to develop precise metrics capable of quantifying CSR's social and environmental effects. Contributing a nuanced perspective to the discourse on CSR, this research provides a foundational schema for further

scholarly investigation, underscoring CSR's dynamic and essential role in today's corporate world.

Keywords

Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainable Development, Social Welfare, government, society, bibliometric analysis.

JEL: G30, G35, F14, F43.

Introduction

In the contemporary business environment, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has assumed a pivotal role, significantly influencing sustainable development and social welfare. Recognized as a cornerstone in modern business operations, CSR represents a paradigm shift from being a discretionary practice to a strategic imperative, reflecting businesses' acknowledgment of their substantial impact on society and the environment (Ashrafi et al., 2020; Lindsay, & Martella, 2020). This study endeavors to critically evaluate the role of CSR in promoting sustainable development and enhancing the social welfare of communities, employing advanced bibliometric analysis techniques for a comprehensive understanding. The journey of CSR as discussed by Latapí Agudelo et al., (2019) from its early stages as a philanthropic add-on to its current status as a strategic business essential is a testament to its evolving nature. This evaluation delves into various interpretations and models of CSR, highlighting its multidimensional scope that encapsulates economic, environmental, and social responsibilities. The exploration of these facets aims to shed light on the complex nature of CSR, emphasizing its role beyond mere profit-making (Menassa & Dagher, 2020).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has undergone a significant evolution, as it has been discussed by Ibrahim, (2021) reflecting the changing perceptions of the role of business in society and its impact on the environment and stakeholders. This introduction traces the historical development of CSR, highlighting its transformation from a philanthropic concept to a strategic imperative for sustainable development (Carroll & Brown, 2018). Historically, CSR emerged from a basic understanding of philanthropy and community support, gradually expanding to include ethical business practices, environmental stewardship, and social welfare. Initially, CSR efforts were largely seen as voluntary or additional activities of businesses, not integral to their core operations (Carroll, 2021). However, over time, CSR has evolved to be recognized as a company's commitment to conduct its business in an ethically responsible way that considers its impact on society and the environment. The link between CSR and sustainable development has become increasingly significant. In the latter part of the 20th century, as the concept of sustainable development gained prominence, the role of CSR expanded to encompass not just economic growth but also environmental

protection and social equity. This evolution marks a shift from viewing CSR as separate from core business strategies to an essential component in achieving sustainable development (Bergkamp, 2002; Kakabadse, Rozuel & Lee-Davies, 2005).

In this regard, according to Charlo, Moya, and Muñoz, (2017), the principles guiding the evaluation of CSR have also evolved. Initially focused on transparency and basic reporting, these principles now encompass accountability, stakeholder engagement, and inclusivity. Frameworks for assessing CSR, such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the United Nations Global Compact, have been developed to provide more structured and universally applicable criteria, reflecting a global consensus on the importance of CSR in business operations. The metrics and indicators used to evaluate CSR have become more comprehensive over time. Environmental metrics have expanded from basic resource usage to include broader impacts like carbon footprint and sustainable practices. Social metrics have grown to cover not just community engagement but also employee satisfaction, diversity, and ethical labor practices. Economic metrics have evolved from focusing solely on immediate financial gains to assessing long-term value creation and sustainable growth (Rahman & Wallace-Hadrill, 2022).

Furthermore, the intricate relationship between CSR and sustainable development is a focal point of this discourse. Sustainable development, as defined by the United Nations, emphasizes meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations (Idowu, Schmidpeter, & Zu, 2020). This section examines how CSR initiatives contribute to sustainable economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity, thereby aligning closely with the principles of sustainable development. Further, the impact of CSR on social welfare is scrutinized, where social welfare is defined as the well-being of communities influenced by corporate activities. This analysis encompasses CSR practices such as community engagement, environmental stewardship, and ethical labor practices, and their contribution to improving the quality of life for individuals and communities (Yevdokimova, et., al., 2019).

A methodologically robust approach, involving bibliometric analysis, is employed to map out the existing research landscape on CSR and sustainable development. This qualitative analysis technique is pivotal in identifying key trends, major themes, influential studies, and gaps in the existing research, offering a systematic and comprehensive overview of the academic discourse. Finally, the broader implications of this evaluation are highlighted, stressing its significance in the context of global challenges like climate change, social inequality, and economic disparity. Understanding the effectiveness of CSR in achieving sustainable development and social welfare is crucial not only for academicians and business leaders but also for policymakers and stakeholders in shaping a more equitable and sustainable future. In conclusion, this academic inquiry, enhanced by bibliometric analysis, presents a nuanced examination of CSR's role in harmonizing business objectives with societal needs, charting a course for a sustainable and socially responsible future.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Historical Development of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved significantly over the decades, becoming a pivotal aspect of contemporary business ethics and corporate governance. This evolution reflects a complex interplay of socioeconomic factors, ethical theories, and global trends. Historically, the roots of CSR can be traced back to the early 20th century, when initial discussions were primarily centered around the philanthropic efforts of corporations. However, the scope of CSR has expanded profoundly since then, encompassing not just philanthropy but also environmental stewardship, ethical labor practices, and sustainable development (Brennan, 2011; Idowu & Louche, 2011).

The genesis of CSR can be observed in the early industrial age, marked by the burgeoning of corporate influence and the subsequent societal expectations for ethical business conduct. This period witnessed the first instances of corporate philanthropy, a precursor to modern CSR (Sahlin-Andersson, 2006). The post-World War II era marked a significant shift, with the emergence of social movements emphasizing civil rights, environmental concerns, and labor rights, which substantially influenced corporate accountability and responsibility narratives (Farcane & Bureana, 2015; Chakrabarty & Bass, 2015). In the latter half of the 20th century, academic discourse began to rigorously explore CSR, leading to various theories and models that framed CSR within the context of corporate profitability, stakeholder theory, and ethical obligations. The seminal works of scholars such as Archie Carroll, who proposed the Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility, have been instrumental in shaping contemporary understandings of CSR (Madrakhimova, 2013; Cantrell, Kyriazis & Noble, 2015).

As globalization intensified in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, CSR transformed into a global phenomenon, with multinational corporations facing increased scrutiny over their impact on global issues such as climate change, human rights, and economic inequality. The adoption of international frameworks and principles, such as the United Nations Global Compact and the Sustainable Development Goals, further underscored the growing importance of CSR in the global business landscape (Anupam & Kiran 2013; Mazumder & Jayaseelan, 2016).

2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Welfare

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from a mere business catchphrase to a significant component of corporate strategy, impacting social welfare globally. This literature review critically examines the development, implementation, and impact of CSR on social welfare, drawing upon a range of scholarly sources. In this regard, the historical context and theoretical frameworks of CSR's genesis are rooted in the moral

and ethical obligations of corporations, a concept that has significantly evolved. Carroll (1991) presents the seminal 'Pyramid of CSR', advocating for a multi-faceted approach to CSR that balances economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. However, Friedman (1970) famously contended that a corporation's primary responsibility is to its shareholders. These opposing viewpoints highlight the ongoing debate on the extent of corporate responsibilities.

On the other hand, CSR's impact on Social Welfare often directly targets social welfare enhancement. Bhattacharya et al. (2008) illustrate how strategic CSR initiatives align corporate and societal interests, yielding mutual benefits. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives in genuinely contributing to social welfare is debated. Matten, and Moon, (2008), provide insights into the contribution of CSR to sustainable development, yet this relationship is complex and multi-dimensional, often varying across different socio-economic contexts. Furthermore, regarding CSR strategies and implementation, the integration of CSR into corporate strategy is nuanced and varies widely. Porter and Kramer (2006) argue for creating shared value, suggesting that the intersection of business and social needs can lead to more sustainable and impactful CSR. However, the implementation of CSR strategies is troubled with challenges, including aligning them with core business operations and measuring their impact effectively (McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006).

From a global perspective, CSR is not a one-size-fits-all solution; it varies significantly across cultures and regions. Pedersen, (2010), emphasizes the diversity in CSR definitions and practices, suggesting that global CSR strategies need to be adaptable to local contexts. This cultural and regulatory diversity poses challenges for multinational corporations in implementing uniform CSR policies. Meantime, measuring CSR impact a critical aspect of CSR is evaluating its impact on social welfare. While there are methodologies to assess CSR effectiveness, as discussed by Visser et al. (2010), these often lack standardization, making comparative analysis difficult. The subjective nature of 'social welfare' adds to the complexity of establishing clear, measurable outcomes. Corporate Motivations and Critiques of the motivations behind CSR initiatives range from ethical obligations to strategic business interests. However, there is a growing critique of CSR as a form of 'greenwashing' or corporate hypocrisy, where CSR is used to mask unacceptable business practices. This critique challenges the authenticity of CSR initiatives and raises questions about their real impact on social welfare.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Social Welfare represent integral facets within the contemporary business and societal landscape. CSR, as conceptualized by Carroll (1999), extends beyond mere economic considerations to encompass legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations, marking a paradigm shift toward stakeholder inclusivity and societal well-being. Porter and Kramer (2006) further enrich this narrative by introducing the notion of shared value, positing that businesses can simultaneously generate economic value and address societal challenges. The interplay between CSR and Social Welfare is underscored by a generally positive correlation with corporate financial performance as identified by Margolis and Walsh (2003), suggesting

that responsible business practices can yield mutually beneficial outcomes. Yet, the complexity of this relationship is highlighted by Brammer and Millington (2008), who notes the influence of external factors such as market conditions and the nature of CSR investments.

Notwithstanding the ostensibly positive facade of CSR, critical perspectives emerge. Banerjee (2008) cautions against the 'illusion' of CSR, contending that many initiatives might merely mask a relentless pursuit of profit, while Vogel (2005) underscores the market-driven limitations of CSR, suggesting that without stringent regulatory frameworks, CSR's contribution to Social Welfare may remain superficial. Despite these challenges, CSR is acknowledged as a catalyst for positive brand image, customer loyalty, and workforce excellence, indirectly fostering Social Welfare through economic stability and growth (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). The role of government is pivotal in this context, with Moon and deLeon (2007) emphasizing the necessity of supportive policies for embedding CSR into the corporate ethos and amplifying its societal impact.

Looking ahead, the discourse surrounding CSR and Social Welfare is poised for further evolution. Aguinis and Glavas (2019) advocate for a deeper understanding of the micro-foundations of CSR, focusing on individual and organizational dynamics, while Dentchev et al. (2018) call for interdisciplinary approaches to unravel the complex interplay between CSR, corporate governance, social welfare, and environmental sustainability. This ongoing dialogue underscores a collective pursuit of a more equitable and responsible corporate ethos, intertwining the prosperity of business with the broader fabric of societal well-being.

Moreover, the future directions and emerging trends of the future of CSR lie in addressing global challenges such as climate change and inequality. The rise of social entrepreneurship and sustainability as components of CSR points towards a more integrated approach. However, there remains a need for more rigorous research in this field to ascertain the true impact of CSR on social welfare. The research literature reveals a complex and multifaceted picture of CSR's role in enhancing social welfare. While there are instances of successful CSR implementations, the field is loaded with challenges, including measuring impact, ensuring authenticity, and adapting to diverse global contexts. Future research should focus on these areas to better understand and maximize the potential of CSR in contributing to social welfare.

2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development

The intertwining of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainable Development has become increasingly relevant in contemporary academic discussion. This review critically examines the evolving role of CSR in promoting sustainable development, analyzing theoretical frameworks, implementation strategies, and the broader implications for society and the environment. Theoretical foundations and evolution of CSR's role in sustainable development are rooted in its evolution from a purely philanthropic practice to a strategic business imperative. Carroll's CSR Pyramid (1991) and Friedman's (1970) economy-centric view provide foundational perspectives.

However, the shift towards sustainable development calls for a broader understanding, as highlighted by Visser (2010). This evolution reflects the growing recognition of the environmental and social impacts of corporate activities (Rahman, 2011; Shah 2013).

Integrating CSR with Sustainable Development strategies has been widely debated (Dixon, & Fallon, 1989). Porter and Kramer (2006) propose the concept of creating shared value, where companies can achieve economic success in ways that also benefit society. Moon and deLeon (2007) explores the alignment of CSR with sustainable development goals, emphasizing that CSR initiatives must go beyond philanthropy to integrate environmental and social considerations into core business strategies. In addition, the global perspectives and cultural contexts of CSR's role in sustainable development vary significantly across cultural and regulatory landscapes. Comparative studies, such as those by Dahlsrud (2008), reveal diverse interpretations and applications of CSR around the world. This diversity challenges multinational corporations to adapt their CSR strategies to local contexts while striving for global sustainability goals.

Meantime, a critical issue in linking CSR with sustainable development is the measurement of impact. Bhattacharya et al. (2008) discuss methodologies for assessing CSR initiatives, yet these often lack standardization and may not fully capture long-term sustainability impacts. This gap highlights the need for more robust and comprehensive metrics that align with global sustainability benchmarks. Corporate Motivations and Ethical Considerations of the motivations behind CSR initiatives are diverse, ranging from ethical commitments to strategic business objectives. Critiques of CSR, such as accusations of greenwashing, question the authenticity of corporate sustainability efforts. These critiques suggest a need for greater transparency and accountability in CSR practices to ensure they contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

Moreover, according to Fasoli, (2017), the future Directions, and emerging trends in the future of CSR in sustainable development are likely to be shaped by global challenges like climate change, resource scarcity, and social inequality. Emerging trends, including social entrepreneurship and impact investing, point towards innovative approaches to aligning business operations with sustainability goals. However, the need for empirical research to validate these approaches and assess their impact remains crucial. This review highlights the evolving nature of CSR within the context of sustainable development. The existing literature provides insights into how CSR has transitioned from a secondary concern to a central strategy for achieving sustainable development goals. Nonetheless, the effectiveness and genuineness of these CSR efforts are often questioned. The literature calls for a more integrated approach that goes beyond superficial compliance to embed sustainability into the core of business operations. There is also a critical need for empirical studies to better understand the long-term impacts of CSR on sustainable development across different industries and cultural contexts. The future of CSR in sustainable development joints on the ability of businesses to genuinely integrate social and environmental concerns into their strategies, thereby contributing to a more sustainable and equitable global economy (Mebratu, 1998).

The role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is pivotal in actualizing the principles of sustainable development (SD). CSR embodies the commitment of businesses to contribute to sustainable economic development by working with employees, their families, the local community, and society at large to improve their lives in ways that are both good for business and good for development. This aligns with the SD emphasis on the interconnected pillars of the environment, economy, and society, suggesting that corporations have a significant role to play in fostering inter- and intragenerational equity (Allen & Clouth, 2012).

According to Breuer, Janetschek, & Malerba, (2019), corporations, as integral stakeholders in the global landscape, are urged to adopt responsible behaviors and actions that resonate with the objectives of SD. This involves not just adherence to regulations but proactive engagement in resource management, ethical policy formulation, and educational initiatives that promote environmental stewardship, economic prosperity, and societal well-being. CSR initiatives can directly address the challenges highlighted in the paper, such as mitigating environmental issues like deforestation, and water and air pollution, and contributing to the alleviation of climate change and species extinction (Kolk, 2016).

Furthermore, according to Gossling-Goidsmiths (2018), CSR's role in promoting sustainable development is also about ensuring that business practices do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This means that companies must not only focus on profitability but also account for their environmental and social impact. By integrating CSR strategies with the core business operations, companies can contribute to sustainable human growth, aligning with the SD perspective of balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity.

Therefore, researchers underscore the complex relationship between CSR and sustainable development. While there is evidence of CSR initiatives contributing positively to sustainable development, significant challenges and criticisms remain. These include issues of measurement, authenticity, and adaptation to global and local contexts. Future research should focus on developing more robust methodologies for measuring the impact of CSR on sustainable development, understanding the motivations behind CSR initiatives, and exploring innovative strategies for aligning business practices with sustainability goals.

3. Methodology

Bibliometric analysis, a methodological approach grounded in the statistical examination of academic literature as initially proposed by Garfield (1955), offers a robust framework for scrutinizing scholarly documents. This analytical technique excels in processing extensive datasets over prolonged periods, adeptly revealing the evolving intellectual contours of a specific field, a task that might present substantial challenges when employing purely qualitative reviews (Casillas and Acedo, 2007).

The strength of bibliometric analysis lies in its capacity to systematically unravel and elucidate the intellectual architecture of a domain, providing a level of objectivity that is often unattainable through other analytical methods (Garfield, 1979).

Owing to its rigorous and comprehensive nature, bibliometric analysis has garnered significant attention and endorsement across a multitude of management research disciplines. Its applicability and relevance have been demonstrated through insightful studies in diverse fields such as sustainable development (Hassan et al., 2014; Quental & Lourenço, 2012; Zhu & Hua, 2017), sustainable consumption (Liu et al., 2017), lean concept integration and logistics management (Wichaisri & Sopadang, 2018), and the burgeoning areas of circular economy (D'Amato et al., 2017), green and sustainable innovation (Franceschini et al., 2016), and green manufacturing (Pang & Zhang, 2019). Furthermore, its utility extends to sectors including mainstream manufacturing (Caviggioli & Ughetto, 2019), sustainability (Fahimnia et al., 2015), finance (Xu et al., 2018), and tourism (Benckendorff and Zehrer, 2013), among others, showcasing its versatility and profound impact on scholarly research.

This study therefore employs bibliometric analysis to systematically evaluate the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in achieving sustainable development and social welfare. Bibliometric analysis is a statistical approach that allows for the qualitative evaluation of scientific literature, offering insights into the development, structure, and dynamics of a specific research field. Through this bibliometric analysis, the study aims to provide a detailed overview of the research landscape on CSR about sustainable development and social welfare. It will uncover the key trends, influential authors, major research themes, and gaps in the current literature, offering valuable insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers involved in these areas. This methodology section outlines a clear and comprehensive approach for conducting a bibliometric analysis on the topic of CSR's role in sustainable development and social welfare, ensuring a data-driven and objective assessment of the field.

4. Data Collection

The bibliometric analysis was conducted by gathering data from the Scopus database. The choice of Scopus for conducting bibliometric analysis is justified by its comprehensive coverage, focus on high-quality and peer-reviewed journals, advanced analytical tools, ease of access and use, and global recognition as a reliable source for scholarly data. The research targeted publications focusing on keywords such as "Corporate Social Responsibility," "Sustainable Development," and "Social Welfare". The time frame for the literature search was determined based on the emergence of CSR in academic research, extending to the most recent publications available and covering from 2009 to 2024. The publications were included based on the topic relevance, citation frequency, and publication in peer-reviewed journals. Exclusion criteria involve non-English publications, non-peer-reviewed articles, and publications not directly focusing on the intersection of CSR, sustainable development, and social

welfare. Using a bibliometric approach, this research scrutinizes a substantial corpus of literature, extracting 4,276 documents from the Scopus database, centered on the interplay between CSR, sustainable development, and social welfare.

5. Analysis Procedures

The research utilized the R Biblioshiny software for data analysis, using a descriptive analysis that involves evaluating the distribution of publications over time, identifying peaks in research activity, and examining the geographical distribution of the research. In addition, citation analysis assesses the most cited articles, authors, and journals in the field. It helps in understanding the impact and influence of specific works and researchers in the domain of CSR. Furthermore, Co-citation and Co-word analysis examine how frequently two documents are cited together, helping to identify foundational papers and emerging trends. Co-word analysis is used to analyze the co-occurrence of keywords within the literature, revealing the thematic structure and evolution of the field. Besides, Network Analysis Using tools like VOSviewer or CiteSpace, network analysis is conducted to visualize and analyze the relationships among authors, institutions, countries, and keywords. This helps in identifying the most influential contributors and research clusters. Content Analysis: Focusing on titles, abstracts, and keywords, this analysis will identify the most recurrent themes and concepts, offering insights into the focus areas and gaps in the existing research. Trend Analysis: This will involve identifying and analyzing the chronological development and the evolution of research trends over time, providing a historical perspective on the role of CSR in sustainable development and social welfare. To ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis, the study adheres to rigorous methodological standards, employing established bibliometric software and tools. The selection of databases, search terms, and inclusion/exclusion criteria is meticulously defined to capture a comprehensive and relevant body of literature.

6. Result and Discussion

The annual Scientific Production figure below 6.1 shows the number of articles published per year on a specific topic, which is assumed from the context of "Evaluating Corporate Social Responsibility in Achieving Sustainable Development and Social Welfare." From the data visible in the graph, there appears to be a general upward trend in the number of articles from the year 2009 to 2019, suggesting a growing interest and scholarly effort in researching the interplay between corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainable development, and social welfare. This could be due to several factors, such as an increased societal emphasis on sustainability and CSR, as well as more awareness and academic interest in how corporations can contribute to social welfare. However, there is a sharp peak in 2021, which could indicate a particular event, publication,

or trend that caused a significant spike in research output such as Covid-19. It would be worth investigating further to understand the reasons behind this peak, whether it was due to a large conference, a special issue in a journal, or perhaps a shift in policy or funding priorities. Following the peak, there is an equally sharp decline in 2022 and 2023. This decline could be caused by several factors, such as saturation of the topic, shift in research focus to other areas, or possibly external factors like budget cuts in academia or changes in publication patterns due to global events affecting research and publication processes, for example, a Covid 19 pandemic that led to economic recession. For a comprehensive discussion in a research setting, one would typically analyze the context of the publications, the journals in which they are published, citation counts to gauge influence, and any corresponding events or trends in the field of CSR and sustainability. It would also be important to look at the content of the articles to see if there is a shift in the discourse, methodology, or findings over the years.

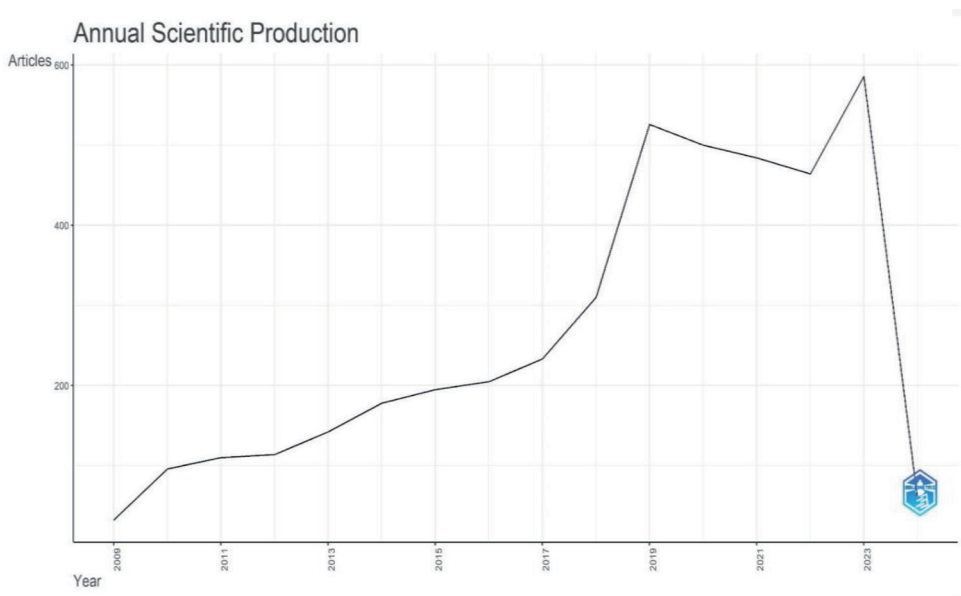


Figure 1. Annual Scientific Production

6.1 Most Relevant Sources

The analysis of the most relevant sources illustrates the distribution of documents related to “Evaluating Corporate Social Responsibility in Achieving Sustainable Development and Social Welfare” across various academic journals and conference series (Figure 2). The vertical axis lists the names of the sources, which appear to be scholarly journals and conference proceedings. These sources may indicate where research on the given topic has been published. The horizontal axis quantifies the number of documents published, which suggests the volume of research output in each source. The size of the bubbles corresponds to the number of documents

published in each source, providing a visual representation of the quantity of research from each one. The journal “Sustainability (Switzerland)” clearly has the largest number of documents, with a count of 366, indicating that it is a leading source for research on CSR in the context of sustainable development and social welfare. This could suggest that the journal has a broad scope, high publication frequency, or particular focus on the topic. Other notable sources include “Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management” with 235 documents and “CSR, Sustainability, Ethics and Governance” with 210 documents. These journals are highly specialized in the field and contribute significantly to the scholarly discourse on CSR and sustainability. The “Journal of Cleaner Production” and “Business Strategy and the Environment” also have substantial contributions to the field, as indicated by their relatively high document counts of 101 and 97 respectively. From this data, we can work out which journals are the most prolific in terms of publishing research on CSR and sustainable development. For researchers in the field, these journals might be the first point of call for both publishing their work and searching for recent studies to inform their research. The prominence of these sources also indicates that they are likely to have a significant impact on the field, shaping both academic debate and practical application in the areas of CSR and sustainability. Furthermore, this chart can help identify trends in publishing and development of the field over time. If this data is broken down by year, it might show shifts in focus among these sources or emerging journals and conferences in a particular area. For a deeper analysis, one would need to consider factors like the impact factor of the journals, the number of citations each document receives, and the relevance and quality of research being published. The breadth of topics covered within these publications could also be of interest; while they all publish on CSR and sustainability, they may have different emphases or approaches to the subject matter.

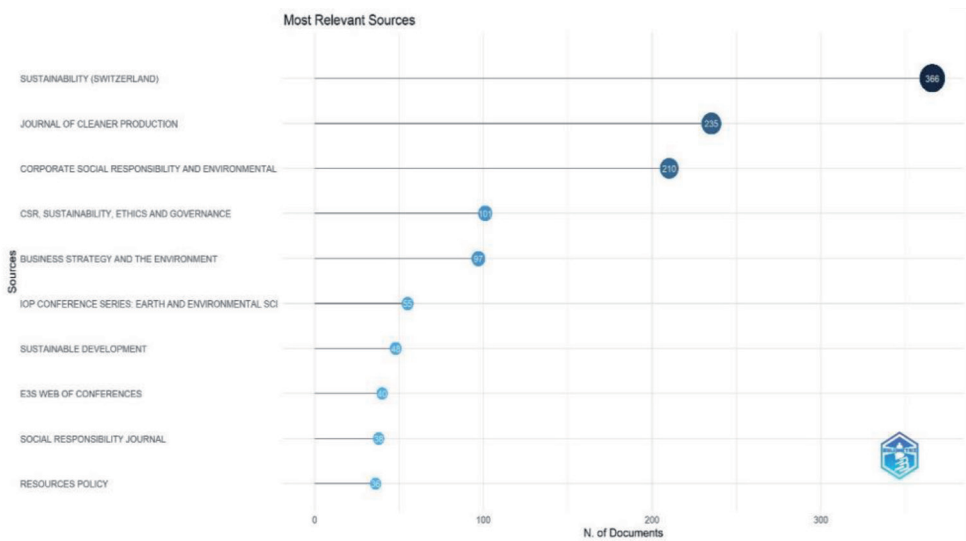


Figure 2. Most Relevant Sources

6.2 Core Sources by Bradford's Law

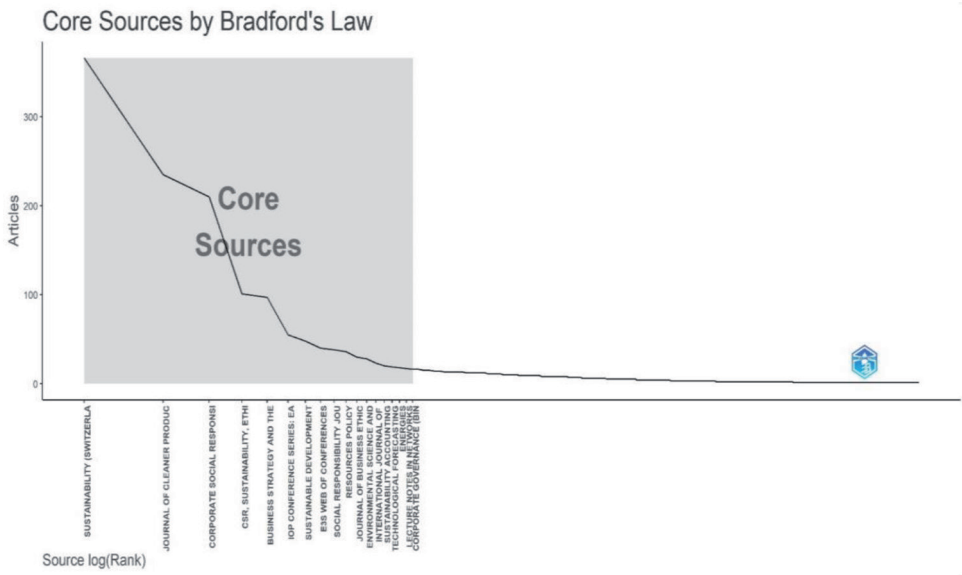


Figure 3. Core Sources by Bradford's Law

Figure 3 below titled Core Sources by Bradford's Law depicts the distribution of articles across various sources in the field of "Evaluating Corporate Social Responsibility in Achieving Sustainable Development and Social Welfare," arranged according to Bradford's Law of Scattering. Bradford's Law is a pattern that is often observed in bibliometrics, which suggests that the core literature on a specific topic is contained in a relatively small number of sources. According to this law, scientific publications are distributed in such a way that a few journals contain the majority of published articles (the core), while the remaining journals publish fewer and fewer papers as one moves away from this core. In the graph, the vertical axis represents the number of articles, and the horizontal axis represents the logarithmic rank of the sources. The 'Core Sources' area, shaded in gray, indicates where the most critical journals or sources fall under Bradford's Law. These are the journals that publish the most articles on the topic and are considered essential reading for anyone conducting research in this area. From the graph, it appears that journals such as "Sustainability (Switzerland)," "Journal of Cleaner Production," "Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management," and a few others form the core sources of literature. These journals have the highest number of articles published on the topic and are therefore the most influential in the field according to Bradford's Law. The steep initial slope of the line indicates that there are a few sources with a very high number of articles; it then quickly tapers off as one moves to sources with fewer articles. This pattern is typical of a Bradford distribution, where a small core of journals is responsible for the bulk

of the articles, followed by a long tail of journals with progressively fewer articles. The analysis of sources according to Bradford's Law can help researchers and librarians to identify the most influential journals in a field, which can be especially useful for literature searches, collection development, and research evaluation. It also helps in understanding the publication dynamics in a field, such as the concentration of research output and the dispersion of knowledge across different publications. For those involved in evaluating CSR's role in sustainable development and social welfare, this graph suggests that they should focus their attention on the core journals for the most significant findings and discussions in the field. It also implies that while many journals are publishing on this topic, a relatively small number form the critical body of knowledge.

6.3. Most Relevant Affiliations

The Most Relevant Affiliations Figure 4 below shows various academic institutions and the number of articles associated with each that relate to the research topic "Evaluating Corporate Social Responsibility in Achieving Sustainable Development and Social Welfare." The horizontal axis represents the number of articles, and the vertical axis lists the affiliations, which seem to be universities and possibly research institutions. The size of the bubbles correlates to the number of articles published by researchers from these affiliations, providing a visual representation of each institution's contribution to the field. The chart shows that two affiliations, both labeled as "Not Reported," have the highest number of articles tied to them, with 30 articles each. This indicates that there are a significant number of articles for which the author's institutional affiliations have not been disclosed or recorded in the database from which this information was drawn. This could be due to various reasons such as the nature of the publication, the preference of the authors, or a limitation in the data collection process. Following these are specific universities with a substantial number of articles, such as the University of Salamanca and the University of South Australia, each with 24 and 23 articles respectively. This suggests that these institutions are active in the field of CSR and sustainable development, possibly indicating a strong research focus or specialization in these areas.

The presence of universities from different parts of the world, such as Curtin University, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the University of Zaragoza, and others, with articles ranging from 18 to 22, reflects global academic interest in CSR as it relates to sustainable development and social welfare. This diverse geographical representation may also reflect different regional approaches to CSR and sustainability research. To discuss this result in a broader context, one might consider the research environment, funding availability, and strategic priorities of the listed institutions. For instance, universities that have dedicated research centers for CSR or sustainability might be expected to produce more scholarly work in this domain. Institutional collaborations and the presence of key researchers or thought leaders at these universities can significantly contribute to the volume of publications. The table

in Fig.6.4 can be particularly useful for researchers looking for potential collaborations, academic programs, or expert opinions in the field of CSR and sustainable development. It provides insights into which institutions might be leading in research and could serve as a guide for identifying where influential and high-impact work is being conducted. However, to fully understand the significance of these affiliations, one would also need to consider the impact of these articles, e.g. how often they are cited, and also the quality of the research, as quantity alone does not provide a complete picture of an institution's influence in the field.

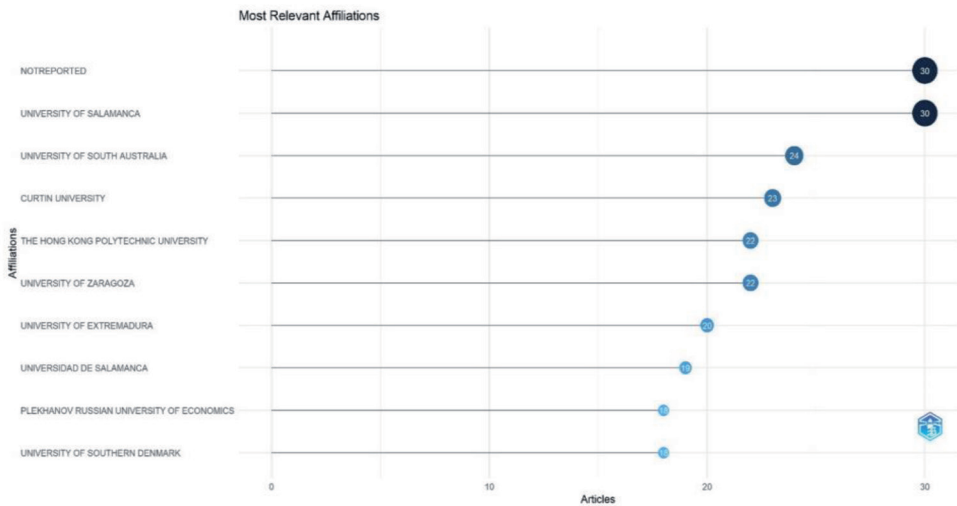


Figure 4. Most Relevant Affiliations.

6.4 Corresponding Author's Countries

Figure 5 below, The “Corresponding Author’s Countries” bar chart, shows which countries are producing research on the topic of corporate social responsibility and its impact on sustainable development and social welfare. The two shades represent the nature of research collaboration. Teal bars indicate single-country publications, where the research is likely to be conducted within national borders, reflecting the work of authors from the same country. Coral bars represent multiple-country publications, which are the result of international collaboration. China tops the chart with the highest overall number of documents, indicating a strong interest and research output in this area from Chinese scholars. Notably, China’s research leans more toward single-country publications. Spain is also a major contributor, with an even distribution between single- and multiple-country publications, suggesting a balance between national research and international cooperation. The United States shows a strong inclination towards international collaboration, given the substantial proportion of multiple-country publications. This could reflect the country’s extensive academic networks and its role in global research partnerships.

Other countries like the United Kingdom, Italy, and India also contribute significantly, with both national and international publications, which indicates the existence of active research communities engaged in these topics. Australia and Poland, while having fewer publications, show a similar pattern of national and international research activity. The presence of multiple-country publications for many countries signals a trend of cross-border partnerships in research, which can enrich studies with diverse perspectives and expertise. This collaborative approach might be particularly relevant for the research topic at hand, as corporate social responsibility and sustainable development are issues that cross national boundaries and benefit from a multinational perspective. Overall, the chart reflects the global nature of research into corporate social responsibility, sustainable development, and social welfare, and the varying degrees to which countries engage in this discourse both within their borders and in collaboration with international peers. Figure 5.

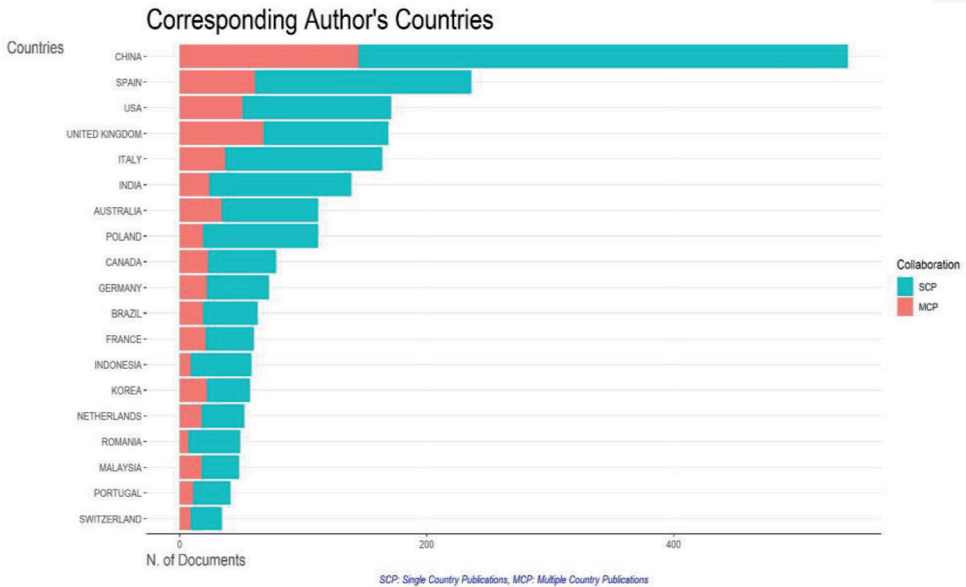


Figure 5. Corresponding Author's Countries

6.5 Word Cloud

The word cloud in Figure 6 below visualizes the frequency of terms associated with the research topic "Evaluating Corporate Social Responsibility in Achieving Sustainable Development and Social Welfare." In a word cloud, the size of each word represents its frequency or importance in the context from which the data was drawn, typically a set of documents or text corpus. In this word cloud, the terms "corporate social responsibility" and its acronym "CSR" are prominently featured, indicating they are central to the topic and likely to appear most often in the related

literature. The significant size of “economic and social effects” suggests that the impact of CSR on both economic and social spheres is a major focus of discussion within the field. Other notable terms include “sustainability,” “planning,” “social aspects,” “environmental management,” and “environmental economics.” The presence of these terms underscores the multidisciplinary nature of CSR, encompassing economic, environmental, and social dimensions, and highlights the intersection of CSR with sustainability practices and strategies. Additionally, words like “China,” “stakeholder,” “decision making,” and “corporate governance” imply specific areas of interest within the broader topic. The mention of “China” might reflect a significant amount of research or case studies focused on Chinese industry and business practices about CSR. “Stakeholder” and “decision making” point to the consideration of various interest groups and the process by which decisions are made in corporate settings regarding social responsibility. “Corporate governance” indicates that the structure and policies guiding corporations are also a focus in the context of CSR. Overall, the word cloud suggests that the literature on CSR is concerned with how corporate practices affect broader economic and social outcomes, the role of sustainability within corporate strategies, and the implications for both environmental management and economic systems. It also points to a geographical focus and the importance of incorporating various stakeholders in discussions.



Figure 6.

6.6 Words' Frequency over Time

Figure 7 below on the Words' Frequency over Time shows the cumulative occurrences of specific terms related to “Evaluating Corporate Social Responsibility in Achieving Sustainable Development and Social Welfare” from 2009 to 2024. The lines represent different terms and their trends over the years. The term “Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR)” has the highest frequency, with a steep upward trend starting around 2016, indicating a significant increase in discussions or publications related to CSR in recent years. This trend may reflect a growing emphasis on CSR in the corporate world and academia, possibly in response to increasing public awareness and demand for responsible business practices. “Sustainability” also shows a consistent upward trend, highlighting the importance of this concept in discussions over time. The increasing trajectory suggests that sustainability remains a key focus in the context of CSR, perhaps due to the ongoing global challenges like climate change and resource depletion. “Corporate Social Responsibility” and “Sustainable Development” both

exhibit steady growth in frequency, reinforcing their continued relevance and the close relationship between these concepts in literature. “China” shows a notable rise in frequency from 2016 onwards, which could be attributed to China’s growing role in the global economy and its increasing engagement with CSR and sustainability issues, reflecting the country’s efforts to address environmental and social challenges linked with its rapid economic growth.

“Economic and Social Effects” and “Environmental Management” follow lower trajectories but still show an increase over time, indicating that these facets of CSR are gaining traction in scholarly and practical contexts. “Stakeholder,” “Social Aspects,” and “Planning” have relatively lower frequencies but still exhibit upward trends, suggesting that stakeholders’ roles, social considerations, and planning in CSR are gaining attention, although they may not be as central as other terms. Overall, table 6.7 indicates that there is a growing body of literature and discussion focusing on CSR and its relationship with sustainability and development. The terms’ increasing frequencies reflect an expanding recognition of the importance of these topics in both corporate sector and broader societal context. The data also suggest that there is a geographical element to these discussions, with China being a point of focus, which may relate to the country’s influence on global economic and sustainability issues.

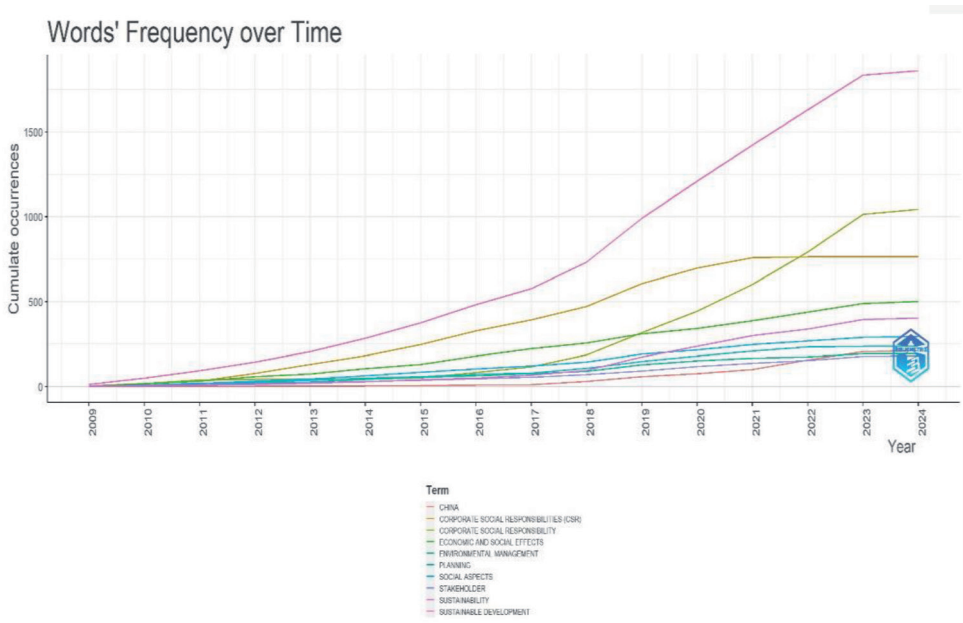


Figure 7.

6.7 Trend Topics

The Trend Topics Figure 8 visualizes the evolution of various terms related to “Evaluating Corporate Social Responsibility in Achieving Sustainable Development

and Social Welfare” across a timeline. Each term’s presence is depicted by horizontal lines interrupted by bubbles whose size corresponds to the term’s frequency in a given year. The chart reveals the ebb and flow of different concepts over time. For instance, terms like “corporate social responsibility” and “sustainability” show a persistent presence throughout the years, indicating their central role in the ongoing discourse. Other terms like “green economy” and “wellbeing” emerge more strongly in certain periods, possibly aligning with global events or shifts in policy and public attention that bring these issues to the forefront. China’s prominence in certain years may reflect specific initiatives or developments in that country related to CSR and sustainability. Likewise, the appearance and growth of terms such as “sustainable development goal” suggest an alignment with international efforts like the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The increasing size of bubbles for terms such as “corporate strategy” and “management” in later years could indicate a shift towards more strategic and management-focused discussions within the CSR realm. This might be a response to the increasing complexity of implementing CSR in a way that is both effective and aligned with broader business objectives. The presence of specific terms like “carbon footprint,” “information technology,” and “green IT” in recent years points to the integration of environmental concerns with technological advancements, and “electronic commerce” reflects the growing attention to CSR in the digital economy. Overall, the chart provides a dynamic overview of the thematic landscape surrounding CSR and sustainable development, highlighting the issues that have gained traction over time and suggesting the direction in which academic and practical discussions are heading. It underscores the multifaceted nature of CSR and its interconnection with various sectors and global challenges.

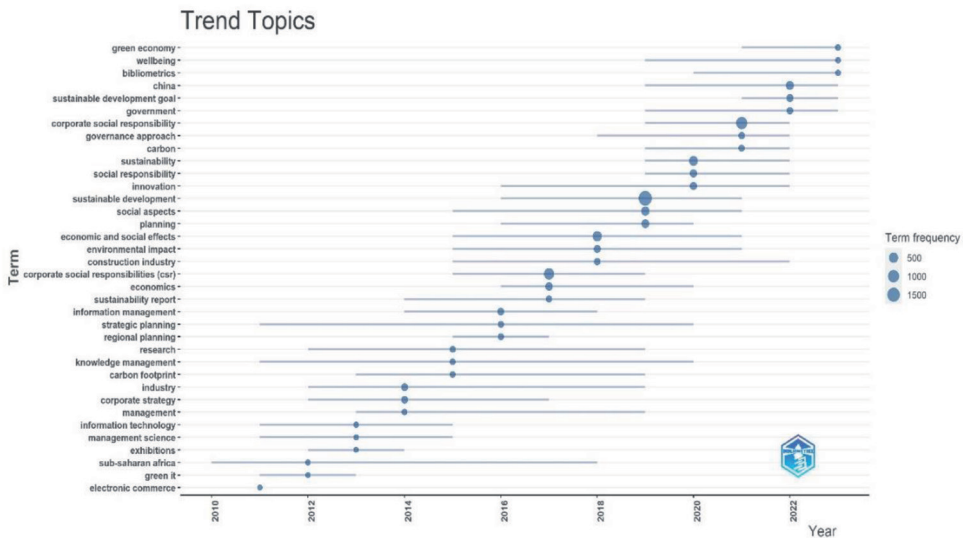


Figure 8

7. Research Findings

This research delves into the complex relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its pivotal role in advancing sustainable development and social welfare. Through an extensive analysis of publication trends, key academic journals, foundational literature, contributions by affiliations, global research efforts, thematic term frequencies, and evolving trend topics, we have extracted a rich narrative that not only defines the current state of CSR research but also projects its future path. The upward trend in CSR-related publications from 2009 to 2019, with a significant peak in 2021, highlights the growing academic and practical interest in leveraging CSR for global sustainability challenges. This peak, largely attributed to global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, showcases the quickness of the CSR community in addressing emergent global challenges. However, the observed decline post-2021 suggests a need for transformation and a shift in focus within CSR research, possibly due to factors like topic saturation or shifts in global economic conditions.

Prominent journals such as “Sustainability (Switzerland)” have emerged as key platforms for disseminating CSR research, indicating focused pools of knowledge that are crucial for anyone delving into CSR and its intersections with sustainability. These journals, identified through Bradford’s Law, underscore the vital sources of CSR discourse and their role in shaping future explorations in the field. A practical example of this can be seen in the efforts of companies like Unilever and Patagonia, which have been lauded for their CSR initiatives aimed at promoting sustainability. Unilever’s Sustainable Living Plan, which aims to decouple business growth from environmental impact, demonstrates how corporations can lead in sustainability while maintaining profitability. Patagonia’s commitment to environmental and social responsibility, including its pledge to donate 1% of sales to the preservation and restoration of the natural environment, exemplifies the integration of CSR into the corporate attitude and business strategy (Schillmann, 2020; Smith, 2021; Kpoku, 2021; Kandpal et.al., 2024).

The global aspect of CSR research is further illuminated through the analysis of affiliation contributions and geographic dissemination, showing a broad-based recognition of CSR’s importance across different cultural and economic contexts. The research output from countries like China and institutions such as the University of Salamanca highlights the diverse approaches to CSR research and its relevance across various regions. For instance, the collaborative efforts between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Tsinghua University in China on sustainable urbanization projects provide a tangible example of how academic institutions can influence CSR practices and sustainable development through research and collaboration (Li, 2022; Zeng, 2023). Thematic analyses reveal an evolving focus on sustainability, economic impacts, and strategic management within CSR discourse. The emergence of terms related to technological advancements and green economy indicates a research community that is responsive to global challenges and eager to explore innovative CSR strategies. An excellent example of this is the adoption of green IT practices

by companies like Google and IBM, which have significantly reduced their carbon footprints by implementing energy-efficient data centers and promoting renewable energy sources (Naim, 2021; Abdullah & Lim, 2023; Hoosain et al, 2023; Nagarathinam et. al, 2024). This not only demonstrates the potential of integrating environmental concerns into corporate strategies but also highlights the role of technology in advancing CSR goals.

8. Limitations of the Study

Research on evaluating Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in achieving sustainable development and social welfare has several limitations, including the scope of literature which may not capture all geographic regions, languages, or recent developments in CSR practices. Methodological diversity across studies creates challenges in comparability and generalization of findings, while the reliance on self-reported corporate data raises concerns about their reliability and potential for greenwashing. The complexity and varying interpretations of CSR, sustainable development, and social welfare concepts may lead to conceptual ambiguities, and the focus on specific industries or regions might limit the applicability of the conclusions. Moreover, assessing the direct impact of CSR initiatives is inherently challenging due to the difficulty in isolating their effects from those of factors. Addressing these limitations in future research requires a broader, more inclusive approach that encompasses a variety of methodologies, sources, and contexts.

9. Conclusion

The bibliometric analysis of the academic discourse on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) related to sustainable development and social welfare reveals a substantial and escalating engagement with these themes. The literature has grown significantly, especially from the mid-2010s onwards, suggesting an increasing scholarly focus on the integration of CSR within the broader context of sustainability and social impact. Terms like “CSR,” “sustainability,” and “sustainable development” have not only remained prominent but also shown a marked increase in frequency, highlighting the centrality of these concepts in academic investigations. This scholarly attention is manifested in the diversity of the discourse capturing the multifaceted nature of CSR. From strategic management to environmental impact, the literature encompasses a range of topics showing the complexity and cross-sectoral relevance of CSR. Increasing prominence of regions like China underscores the geographical dimension of CSR research, pointing to a global acknowledgment of CSR’s importance in different economic and policy contexts. The real-world effectiveness of CSR strategies in promoting social welfare and sustainable development has emerged as a key concern. The literature suggests a shift towards embedding CSR in the core business strategy, recognizing its potential

to contribute to environmental sustainability and economic growth. Discussions around “green IT” and “carbon footprint” reflect an increased awareness of the environmental implications of corporate activities and a concerted effort to mitigate adverse impacts. In essence, the academic landscape of CSR is characterized by a rich and evolving dialogue that connects theoretical perspectives with practical implementations. The discourse not only adapts to the changing global sustainability challenges but also proactively aligns with international development objectives and continues to refine its strategies, ensuring that CSR remains a critical element in achieving sustainable development and enhancing social welfare in a rapidly changing world.

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