

# Unveiling the Landscape of Corporate Social Responsibility Research: A Bibliometric Approach

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## Abstract

**Background:** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a critical concept which has undergone a drastic transformation in India. A large amount of literature has emphasized on the significance, dimensions and dynamics of corporate social responsibility. In other words, there have been numerous research papers reflected on corporate social responsibility in India. However, there are relatively less studies conducted on the bibliometric analysis of CSR as an instrument for corporate sustainability.

**Purpose:** The present bibliometric approach of research aims to analyse the corporate social responsibility topic, identifying influential authors and journals, publication trend and future research direction.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** A bibliometric analysis of 400 articles is conducted in the domain of CSR by extracting data from the database of Scopus with coverage period from 2014 to 2022 using VOS-viewer software and RStudio package, namely, biblioshiny and bibliometrix.

**Findings:** The main findings of the study reveal that 78.25% of the total articles (313 out of 400) are published in the last five years. The findings also show that "Sustainability (Switzerland)" is the most productive journal and 2020 is the most productive year. Additionally, Kruger P is the most contributing and the most cited author. Furthermore, the most productive countries in this domain are China, USA and Italy.

**Practical Implications:** This paper attempts to analyse the prominent trends in the journal concerning papers, authors, institutions and relevant keywords. The findings of the study facilitate the prospective researchers obtain a complete comprehension of the publication in this field.

**Research limitations:** The data required for the study only come from the Scopus-indexed documents with university limited access. Other databases such as springer, web of science, google scholar, etc. are not taken into consideration. Moreover, the data is available for the period from 2014 to 2022 only.

**Originality/Value:** The originality of this research is the comprehensive study of corporate social responsibility based on its objective and methodology. It also provides a scope for future research through in-depth analysis.

**Keywords:** *corporate social responsibility, sustainability, bibliometric analysis, VOS-viewer, biblioshiny, Scopus*

## Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (hereafter CSR) is a business approach that goes beyond profit-making and emphasizes an organization's responsibility to contribute positively to society and the environment. Companies engaging in CSR integrate social and environmental concerns into their business operations and interactions with stakeholders. This can manifest through initiatives such as ethical labor practices, environmental sustainability, philanthropy, and community development projects. CSR not only enhances a company's reputation but also plays a crucial role in building a more sustainable and equitable world. By aligning business goals with societal well-being, CSR fosters a sense of shared responsibility, contributing to a more conscientious and compassionate corporate landscape. According to Carroll A.B. (1991), the key principles of CSR include economic responsibilities, legal responsibilities, ethical responsibilities and philanthropic responsibilities.

According to section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, the following companies have to mandatorily contribute to society if those companies fulfil any of the three criteria during the immediately preceding financial year:

Companies having a turnover of Rs 1000 crores or above

Companies having a net worth of Rs 500 crores or above

Companies having a net profit of Rs 5 crores or above

All the companies shall spend at least 2% of the average net profit during the immediately preceding three financial years to implement CSR policy and projects under Schedule VII of the new Companies Act (Verma & Kumar, 2014, Dharmapala & Khanna, 2016, Gatti et al., 2018).

In order to address the research gap in this study, an in-depth analysis of the data collected from the Scopus database has been applied. This research article attempts to provide a holistic picture in the area of CSR and corporate sustainability. To achieve the key objectives of the study, the VOS-Viewer software and Biblioshiny software are used for visualizing and analyzing the trends in the domain of CSR.

The present study aims to provide a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the CSR research with respect to corporate sustainability to figure out the knowledge structure between these two topic areas. In order to achieve this objective, this research paper is well-structured into six different sections. **Section 1** provides an introduction to the research phenomenon. **Section 2** presents the review of literature regarding the current knowledge on CSR. **Section 3** highlights the key objectives of the study whereas **Section 4** focuses on the research methodology which is well explained with the help of a PRISMA flow diagram. **Section 5** presents the result analysis and interpretation which sheds light on the empirical evidence from bibliometric analysis. **Section 6** provides a concise summary of the main findings of the study along with limitations and recommendations for further research.

## Review Of Literature

### ***Bibliometric Analysis***

Bibliometrics is a relatively innovative methodology in comparison to the traditional review of systematic literature (Koseoglu et al., 2016). Bibliometric analysis presents the results of both qualitative and quantitative research and changes in any academic research field. Bibliometric analysis involves the analysis of the publication patterns of scientific production on a certain discipline (De Bakker et al., 2005). Pritchard (1969) has defined bibliometrics as the application of mathematical and statistical techniques to books and other means of communication. He is the one who introduced the term 'bibliometrics' from the works of Hulme (1923) and identified the significance of analyzing the bibliography of a particular research topic through statistical techniques. De Bellis (2009) reviewed that this term has continued to evolve ever since: various software tools have been developed and the concept has been extensively used with the motive of studying publication patterns. The gaps identified through bibliometric analysis provide insight into a relevant subject or topic for prospective researchers so that more quality studies can be produced. As a result, bibliometric analysis is significant for researchers to gain ideas about particular topics (Hood and Wilson, 2001). The resource used for bibliometric analysis is the bibliometric data which includes plethora of information such as annual scientific production, records of subject titles, relevant authors, most global cited articles, publication years, keywords and so on.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

Most of people around the globe reside in developing nations, each of which faces particular societal, political, and ecological problems (United Nations, 2013). These nations have had rapid industrial development, prompting the pursuit of policies aimed at increasing foreign investment, which is eager to begin taking advantage of tax breaks and low-cost labour. Although these tactics are sensible from an economic standpoint, they have negative consequences for society and the environment, such as the employment of child labour, low or unpaid pay, unequal career possibilities, issues with workplace health and safety, and increasing pollution (Tilt, 2016).

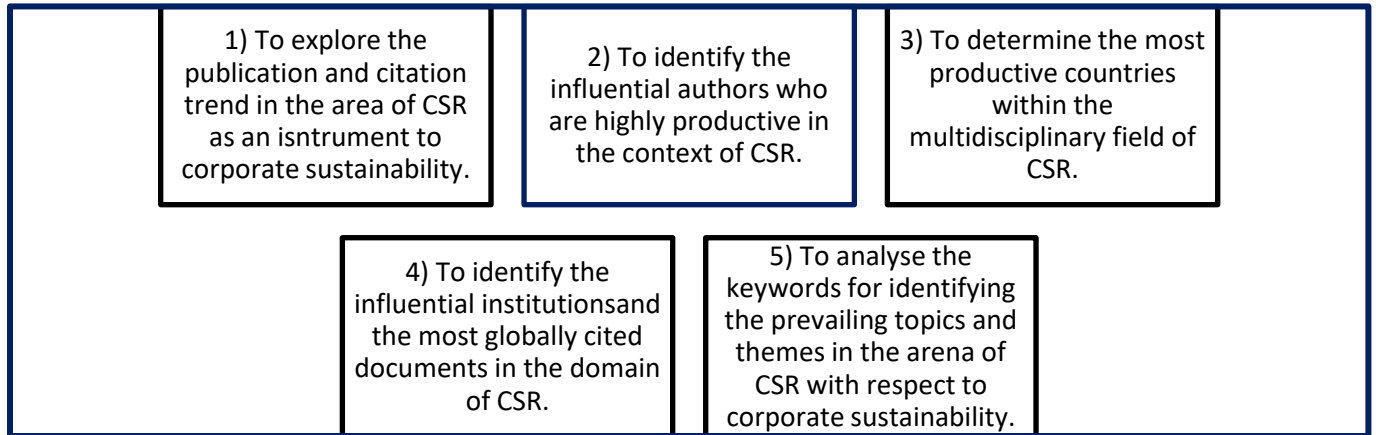
Hence, the concept of CSR has become important especially during conversations concerning the place of business in society, the notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) was created (Friedman, 1970; Carroll, 1979). The term "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) was coined in 1960 by Keith Davis, who defined it as "corporate decisions and actions for reasons at least partially beyond the direct economic or technical interest of the firm." Institutional theory has provided a definition for CSR. According to the institutional approach, corporate social responsibility encompasses not just voluntary efforts but also functions as a bridge connecting corporations with society. Strengthening the performance of enterprises through corporate social responsibility requires regulation and control (Jackson and Matten, 2012).

Completing corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the environment can give certain businesses a sustained competitive advantage (Hart, 1995). A key component of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is ethical behaviour, where companies are urged to follow not just business principles but also established social norms and ethical codes of conduct (Crane and Matten 2015). Xie and Zhou [21] look on how CSR affects customers' intentions to make purchases. They use five criteria to evaluate corporate social responsibility (CSR): safeguarding the rights and interests of consumers, participating in philanthropy and charitable giving, protecting the environment, and considering the interests of employees. Therefore, while making selections about what to buy, these socially conscious customers consider a company's social initiatives. The degree to which customers personally support CSR moderates the relationship between CSR and customer reactions (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). There are various ways to explain why companies choose to participate in corporate social responsibility (CSR). One is the commercial or business case for CSR, which argues that companies can gain a competitive edge and financial value by engaging in CSR (which includes corporate philanthropy) (Franklin, 2008). Secondly risk management involves

organisations minimising hazards to the community and the environment, such as natural disasters, child labour, and public scandals (Jenkins 2005). On the ethical front, organisations must adhere to stakeholder expectations and accepted standards (Crane and Matten 2015). Once R&D spending is controlled, which is another factor that affects financial prosperity, CSR has little effect on financial performance of the firms or the companies (McWilliams and Siegal, 2000). Even if both public and private Indian businesses are working in the CSR space, more attention needs to be paid to it. (Kumar, 2013).

### Objectives of The Study

The most significant objective of this present study is to outline a comprehensive quantitative analysis in the domain of CSR for corporate sustainability with coverage period from 2014 to 2022. The key objectives of the study are depicted in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:**  
Key Objectives of the study

### Research Methodology

#### Database

The database of Scopus is chosen as the most appropriate research platform for the purpose of data collection and its subsequent analysis as compared to the database of Web of Science (Nawaz et al., 2020). The Scopus database was introduced by Elsevier Science in the year 2004. It is a well-organized platform which contains all bibliographic information such as author affiliations, most cited documents, journals and other key details necessary for the purpose of analysis. Presently, Scopus contains 90 million entries in connection with 7000 publications in 105 countries (Elsevier, 2023). According to Elsevier, the content featured in Scopus are carefully examined and finally selected by the independent Scopus Content Selection and Advisory Board (CSAB) which is an international group of librarians, researchers and scientists who represent the major scientific disciplines. Interestingly, CSAB for Scopus is appointed by Elsevier (Aksnes et al., 2019). Additionally, Scopus is a database that provides bibliographic references in different disciplines such as science, technology, social science, arts, humanities and so on (Rahmawati et al., 2022). Furthermore, Scopus database includes a wide coverage of publications on various academic fields and is one of the largest repositories used by the researchers for data extraction since 2004. **Table 1** represents the most important details of the extracted documents from the Scopus database for the purpose of the present study.

**Table 1**

**Key details of the retrieved documents by Scopus**

DESCRIPTION	RESULTS
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	2014:2022
Sources (Journals, Books, etc.)	152
Documents	400
Annual Growth Rate %	14.49
Document Average Age	3.87
Average Citations per doc	35.89
References	1
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	764
Author's Keywords (DE)	1220
AUTHORS	
Authors	1014
Authors of single authored docs	55
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	61
Co-Authors per Doc	2.86
International co-authorships %	27.25
DOCUMENT TYPES	
Article	370
Review	30

**Search Term**

The search terms are limited to "Corporate Social Responsibility" and "Corporate Sustainability" as these two terms are central to the discussion of this research paper. It is done to make sure that the data collected is low contaminated and clearly reflect the academic field of CSR. The field of search are confined to the title of the topic (which include searching in "title", "abstract" and "keyword") with chronological filter for inclusion of relevant papers only. The present study included only those works published between 2014 and 2022. The reason behind choosing 2014 as the base year is due to the fact that the mandatory provisions of CSR under section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 came into effect on April 1, 2014.

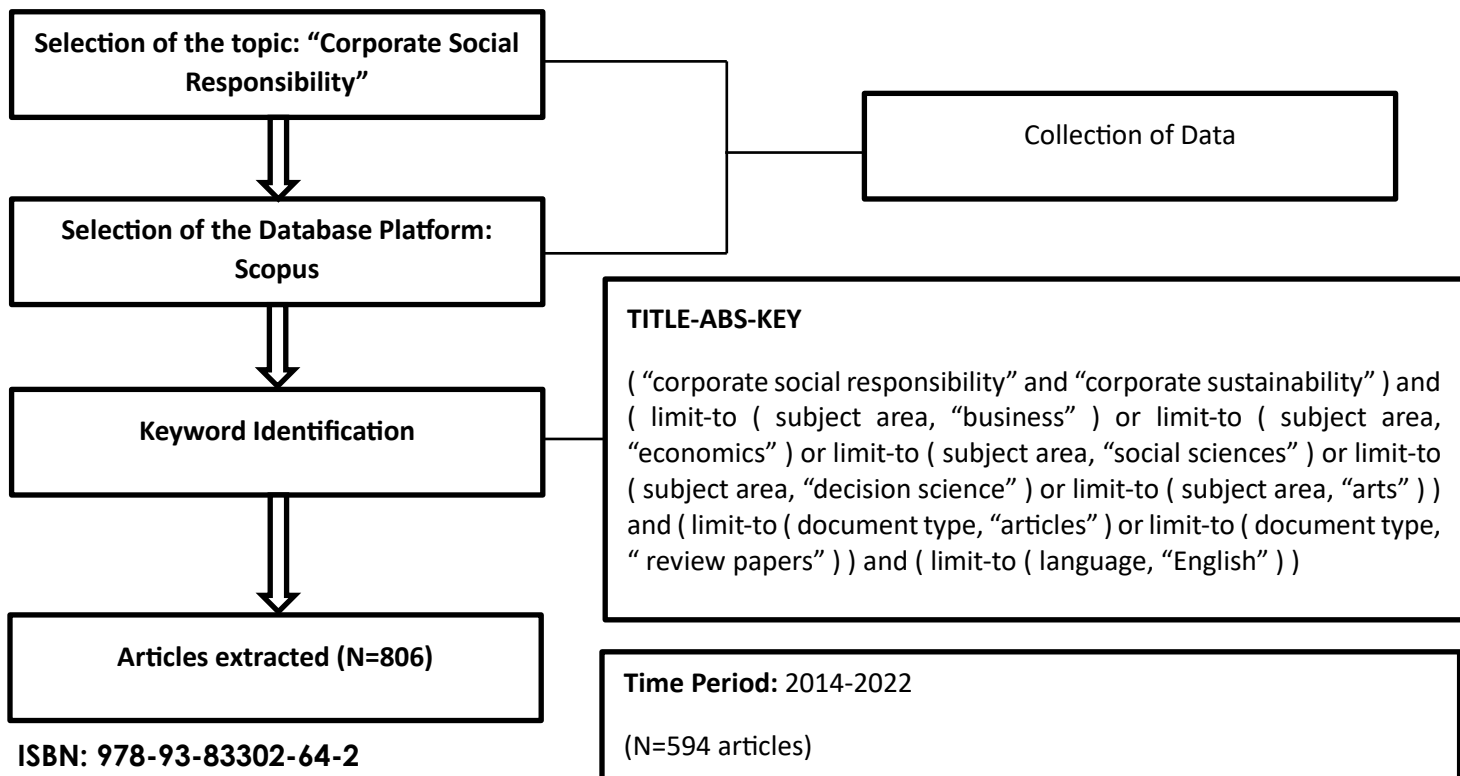
**Source of Data**

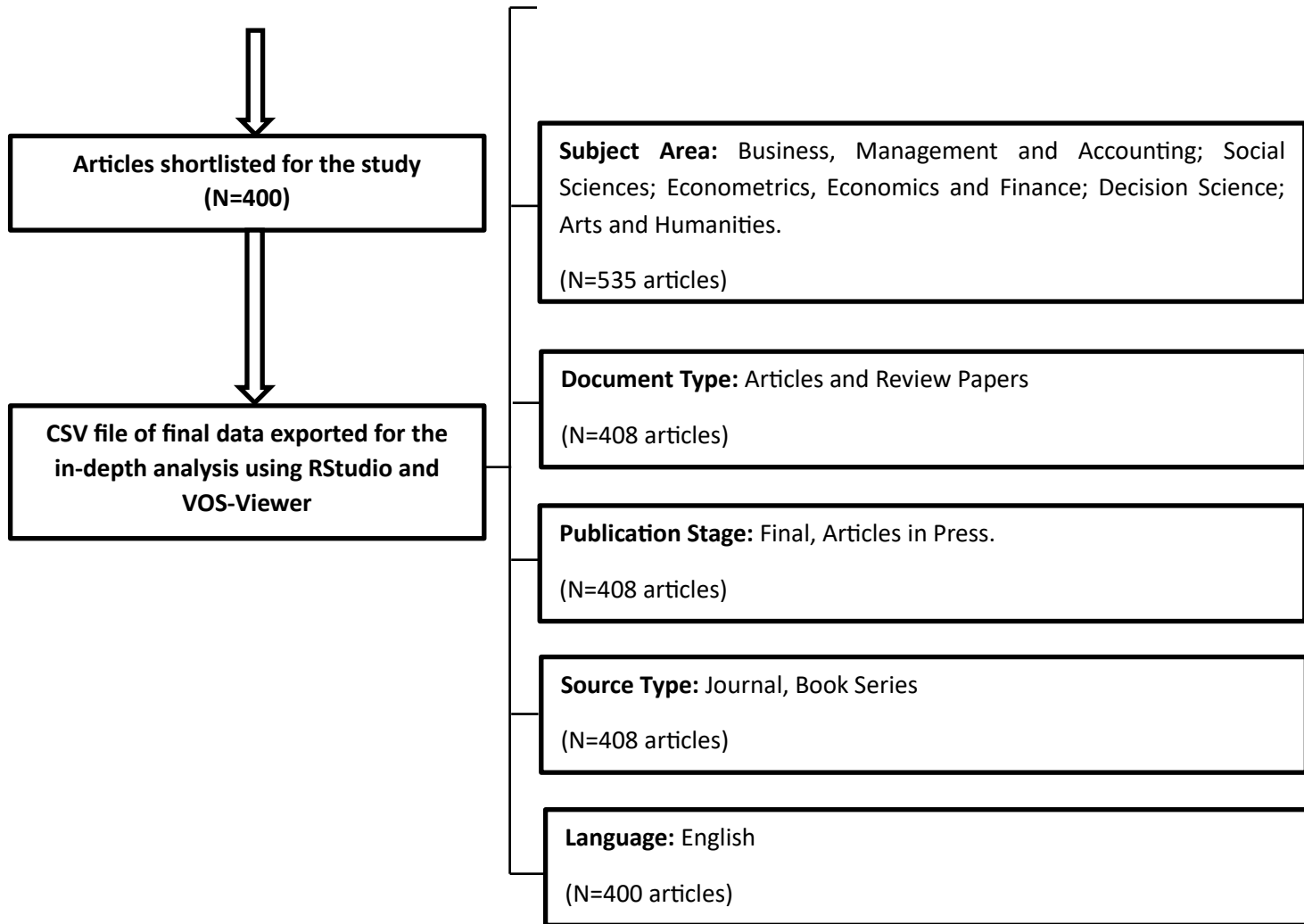
The present study extracted the data from the database of Scopus with the search term title-abs-key ("corporate social responsibility" and "corporate sustainability") and (limit-to (subject area, "business") or limit-to (subject area, "economics") or limit-to (subject area, "social science") or limit-to (subject area, "decision science") or limit-to (subject area, "arts and humanities")) and (limit-to (document type, "articles") or limit-to (document type, "review papers")) and (limit-to (language, "English")). The extracted data was subsequently scrutinized in stages as shown in **Figure 2** which illustrates the PRISMA framework. PRISMA is an acronym for "Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses" (Selcuk, 2019). The PRISMA flow chart primarily focuses on summarizing the screening process. It helps in defining how the articles are limited, specifying the screening criteria and identifying the research materials. A

grand total of 806 research papers is extracted from the database of Scopus at the initial search that meet the criteria of year, source type, document type, keyword, subject area, publication stage and language. Since the data collected for the study are only obtained from 2014 to 2022, 212 research papers are eliminated due to the year parameter. After the filtration of subject area, source type and type of document, 408 papers are included from consideration for this study. However, only research papers written in English language are considered. This resulted in the inclusion of a total of 400 documents which are extracted from the Scopus database for the purpose of bibliometric analysis. As a result of the filtering out of 806 research papers mentioned above, 406 papers are eliminated for the purpose of the study and thereby focused only on the remaining 400 papers. On the whole, a dataset of 400 documents with coverage period from 2014 to 2022 are obtained for analysis (collected on September 10, 2023).

### Analytical Tool

According to Aria, M and Cuccurullo, C (2017), Bibliometric is nothing but an R-tool used for the sole purpose of comprehensive science mapping analysis. During the search, the entire information extracted from the database of Scopus is exported as CSV (comma separated values) file for the purpose of bibliometric analysis. Software tools like VOS-Viewer and the R packages (Biblioshiny and Bibliometix) are used to investigate this CSV file. R is an open-source software which operates in an integrated environment that consists of open algorithm, open graphic software and open library. Biblioshiny in R Studio is a free software that has been extensively utilized for the data analysis in the current study. Biblioshiny is an online data analysis platform which make use of the fundamental bibliometric data. On the other hand, Bibliometrix provides the entire scientific content analysis and data processing (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). The data collected is also transferred to the VOS-Viewer software for creating network visualization maps. this software has the potential to analyze the knowledge structure through integrating network visualization and automatic cluster labelling for further analysis. VOS-Viewer facilitates the visualization of the dataset for easy comprehension due to its strong interface for evaluating the bibliometric data (Cobo et al., 2011). The following figure illustrates the data extraction process from the Scopus database for the current study with the help of a PRISMA flow diagram.





**Figure 2:**

PRISMA FLOW CHART – Data Retrieval Process for Bibliometric Analysis

## Result Analysis and Discussion

### *Publication Trend Analysis*

**Table 2** indicates the number of publications per year with coverage period from 2014 to 2022. The number of articles per year represent the publication trend whereas the mean total citation per year represents the citation trend. The average citation per article was highest at 107.87 in the year 2016. CSR articles published are the most cited papers with an average citation per year of 13.48 in 2016. It indicates that the articles published are considered highly exceptional. However, there is a decline in the number of average citations per year after 2018 because of the the subpar quality of the research output produced annually in this domain.

**Table 2**

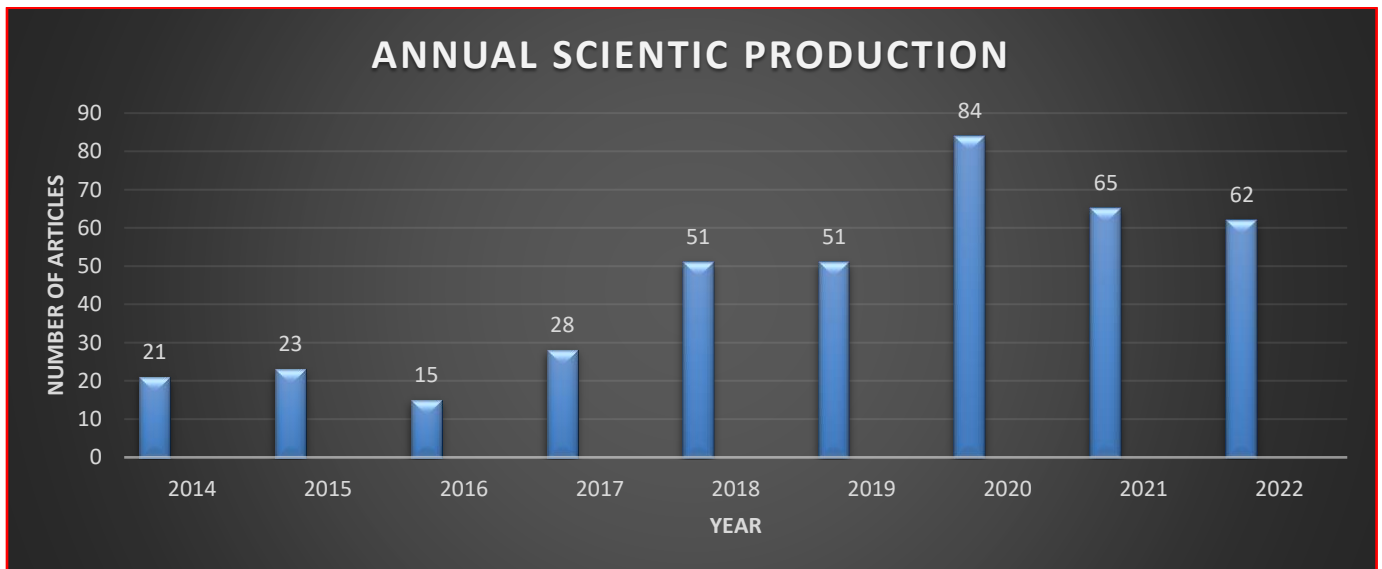
*Details about the publication and citation trends*

Year	Number of Articles	Mean Total Citation per Article	Mean Total Citation per Year
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2014	21	65.48	6.55
2015	23	75.04	8.34
2016	15	107.87	13.48
2017	28	25.43	3.63
2018	51	55.78	9.30
2019	51	40.96	8.19
2020	84	30.15	7.54
2021	65	14.54	4.85
2022	62	8.27	4.14

In order to analyze the development trend of CSR with respect to corporate sustainability, the number of publications over the years are summarized and illustrated in Figure 3. According to the data collected, it is observed that 78.25% of the total articles (313 out of 400) are published in the recent 5 years (2018-2022). This precisely reflects the novelty of the research in the domain of CSR and corporate sustainability. The figure also shows that there is a steady increase in the arena of CSR from 2016 to 2020. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, there has been a regular decline in the number of articles published in the field of CSR after 2020.



**Figure 3:**  
Number of publications over years

### Source of Publication

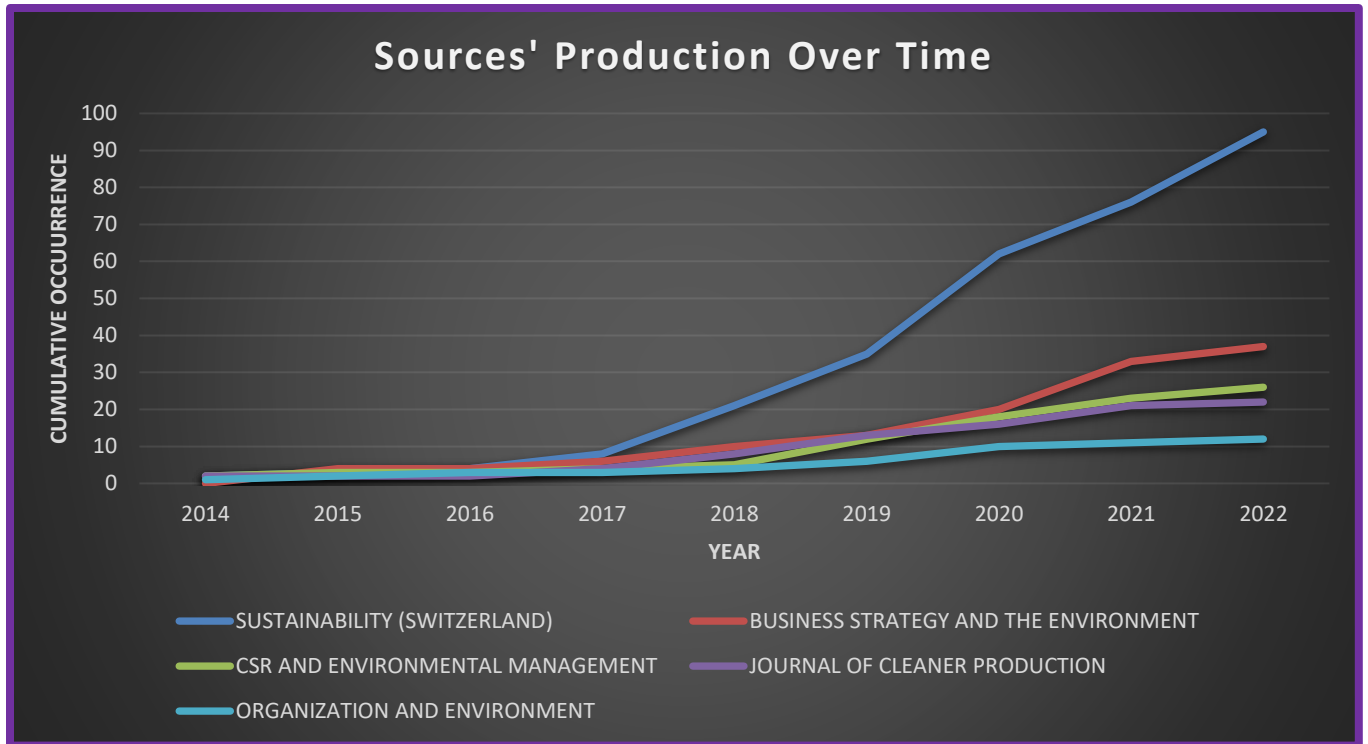
This section explains the distribution of publications from various journals. **Table 3 and Figure 4** highlights the top relevant journals that have published articles within the multidisciplinary field of CSR. It is observed that 400 articles related to the topic are published in 152 journals with coverage period from 2014 to 2022. The most productive journal is found to be "Sustainability (Switzerland)" which published of 23.75% articles of the data collected from the Scopus database, followed by "Business Strategy and the Environment" (9.25%), "Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management" (6.50%),



"Journal of Cleaner Production" (5.50%), and "Organization and Environment" (3.00%). These are the most reputed publishers and the top journals in the domain of CSR as an instrument to corporate sustainability.

**Table 3**  
***Most Relevant Sources based on the theme***

<b>SOURCES</b>	<b>NUMBER OF ARTICLES</b>
Sustainability (Switzerland)	95
Business Strategy and the Environment	37
Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	26
Journal of Cleaner Production	22
Organization and Environment	12
Journal of Business Ethics	11
Sustainable Development	7
Social Responsibility Journal	6
International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology	4
Long Range Planning	4



**Figure 4:**  
Growth of the sources

### Affiliation Analysis

**Table 4** presents the institution distribution of 400 articles in the area of CSR and corporate sustainability exported as CSV file from the database of Scopus to perform bibliometric analysis. It depicts that Concordia University in Canada contributes the maximum number of 12 articles, followed by Indian Institute of Foreign Trade and Santanna School of Advanced Studies from Europe with 11 and 10 articles respectively. Along with other institutions that are depicted in the given table, it is found that 7 out of top 10 institutions are located in Europe which contribute more than 70% of article outputs. This implies that universities in Europe have more focus in the context of CSR.

**Table 4**  
*Distribution of institutions with the most publications (top 10)*

Affiliation	Country	Continent	Articles
Concordia University	Canada	North America	12
Indian Institute of Foreign Trade	India	Asia	11
Santanna School of Advanced Studies	Italy	Europe	10
University of Sao Paulo	Brazil	South America	10
Valahia University	Romania	Europe	10

Democritus University of Thrace	Greece	Europe	9
University of Aveiro	Portugal	Europe	9
Leuphana University of Luneburg	Germany	Europe	8
Technical University of Denmark	Denmark	Europe	8
Erasmus University	Netherlands	Europe	7

### Geographical Distribution Analysis

A country/region analysis has been conducted to explore the most productive countries within the multidisciplinary field of CSR with respect to corporate sustainability. Researchers from 65 different countries contributed to publication in the retrieved documents from the database of Scopus. The most productive countries in the field of CSR and corporate sustainability are listed in **Table 5**. Interestingly, China and USA have the highest similar number of publications of 99 and 98 followed by Italy (87), Spain (67) and Brazil (50). This bibliometric analysis also reveals that European countries publish maximum number of articles in the domain of CSR.

**Table 5**  
**Most Productive Countries (top 10)**

Country	Frequency	%	Continent
China	99	24.75	Asia
USA	98	24.50	North America
Italy	87	21.75	Europe
Spain	67	16.75	Europe
Brazil	50	12.50	South America
India	50	12.50	Asia
Portugal	50	12.50	Europe
UK	49	12.25	Europe
Canada	48	12.00	North America
Germany	44	11.00	Europe

### Keyword Analysis

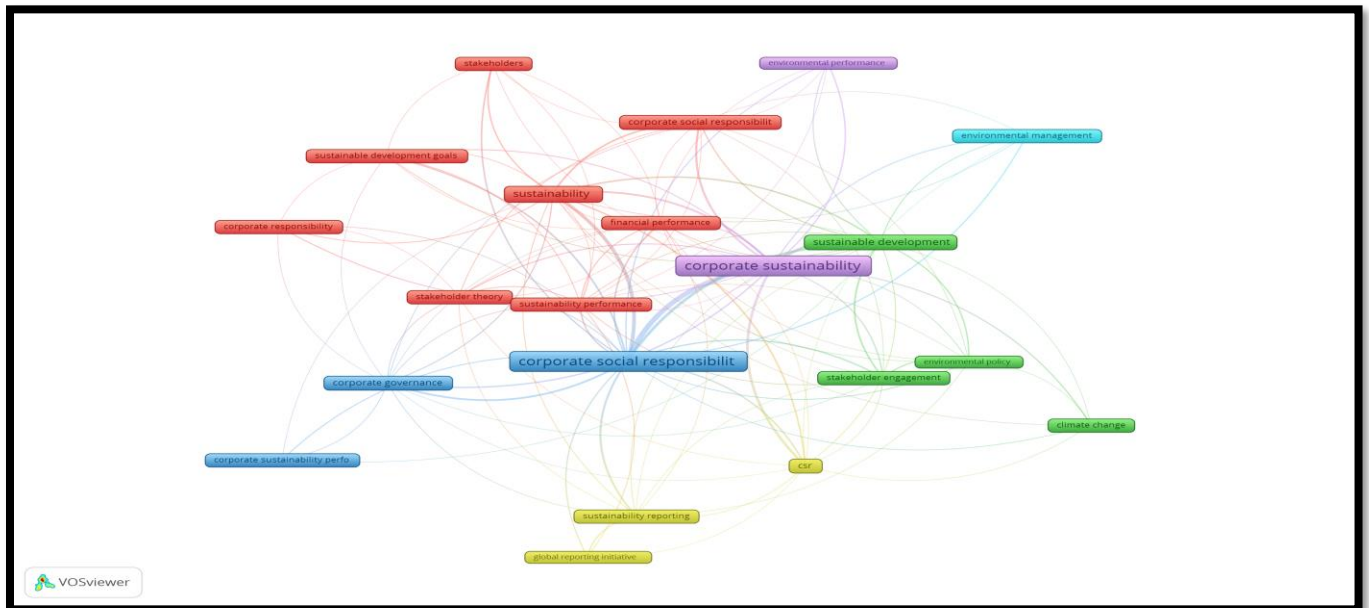
Keyword analysis highlights the author's keyword co-occurrences and development of the theme with help of VOS-Viewer software. From the 21 keywords the author employed in the domain of CSR and corporate sustainability, six clusters are formed. Each cluster represent different number of subject keywords. The specifics of the clusters are presented in **Table 6**. The fact that cluster 1 in Table has the most keywords which indicates that researchers from across the globe are paying more attention to this

subject. This means that the keywords in Cluster 1 have received more attention from the discipline of CSR.

**Table 6**  
*Clusters of CSR and corporate sustainability*

Cluster	Number of Keywords	Keywords
1	8	Corporate responsibility; corporate social responsibility; financial performance; stakeholder theory; stakeholders; sustainability; sustainability performance; sustainable development goals
2	4	Climate change; environmental policy; stakeholder engagement; sustainable development
3	3	Corporate governance; corporate social responsibility; corporate sustainability performance
4	3	CSR; global reporting initiative; sustainability reporting
5	2	Corporate sustainability; Environmental performance
6	1	Environmental management

A network visualization map has been created using VOS-Viewer software which allows the research scholars to gain an insight on the trending research and future direction through the construction of bibliometric networks. **Figure 5** clearly depicts the occurrence of 21 keyword network analyses on the basis of the threshold at a minimum of 8 occurrences. On the whole, keyword network analysis helps the prospective researchers in identifying unexplored research areas in the field of CSR.

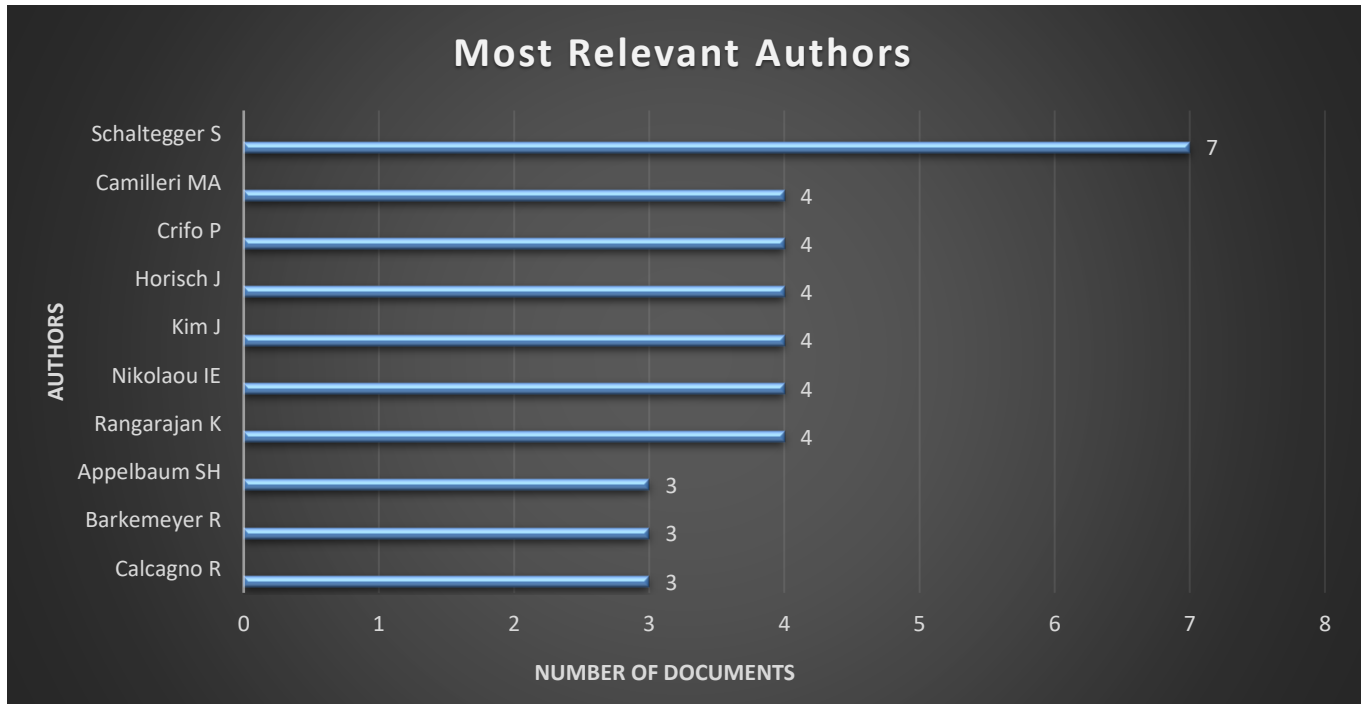


**Figure 5:**

### Network Visualization Map (VOS-Viewer)

#### Author Wise Publication

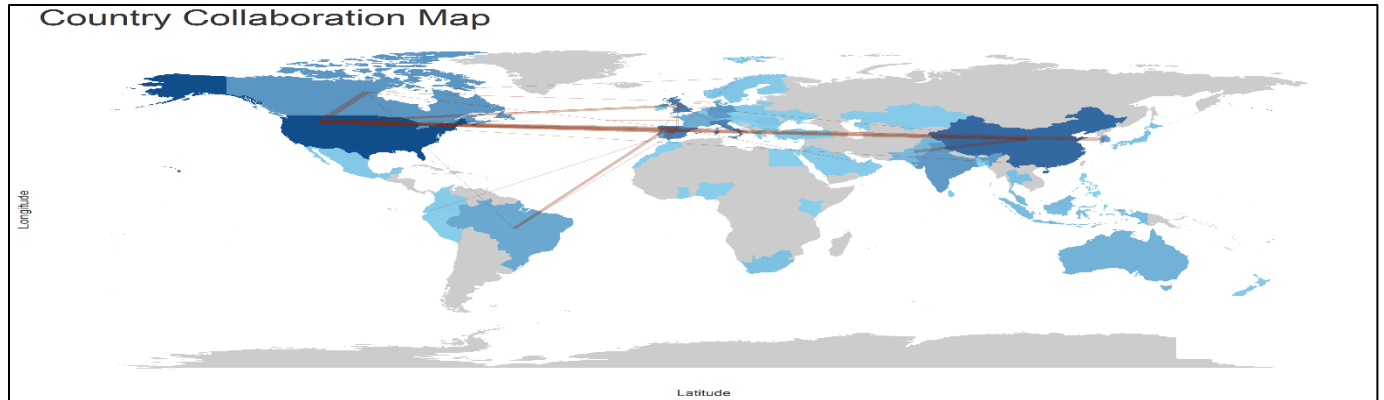
**Figure 6** shows author-wise articles in the context of CSR and corporate sustainability. The authors with the most research articles in this domain are Schaltegger S, Camilleri MA and Crifo P respectively. Prospective researchers who are interested to research in this area of get valuable insight while reviewing the work of these prominent authors. Moreover, it aids them to comprehend the topic in a better way.



**Figure 6:**  
Documents by Author

#### World Map

**Figure 7** shows county's collaborative world map which represents the most important collaborations among numerous countries in the domain of CSR. From the world map, it is found that China and USA have maximum collaboration in this subject area followed by UK and Spain. Authors in China have 22 joint publications with authors in other countries including 4 with USA authors, 4 with Pakistan authors and the remaining 14 collaborations with authors in 12 different countries. However, India has minimum collaboration in this area of research. Thus, collaboration world maps compare research projects in different countries which facilitates in identifying barren research areas.



**Figure 7:**  
Collaboration World Map

### Citation

This section analyses the CSR related papers that have received the maximum citations. The top 10 referenced documents are presented in **Table 7**. Bibliometric analysis played a significant role in identifying the most globally cited documents with respect to CSR and corporate sustainability.

**Table 7**  
**Most Globally Cited Documents**

Document Title	Citations	Author(s) and Year	Journal	Country
Corporate goodness and shareholder wealth	560	Phillip Kruger (2015)	Journal of Financial Economics	Switzerland
Clarifying the meaning of Sustainable Business: Introducing a Typology from Business-as-Usual to True Business Sustainability	430	Dyllick et al., 2016	Organization and Environment	Switzerland
Corporate Sustainability: First Evidence on Materiality	426	Khan et al., 2016	American Accounting Association	USA
Defining and measuring Corporate Sustainability: Are We There Yet?	304	Mintiel et al., 2014	Organization and Environment	Switzerland
Do environmental, social and governance activities improve corporate financial performance?	287	Xie et al., 2019	Business Strategy and the Environment	Japan

Multinational Enterprises and the Sustainable Development goals: An institutional approach to corporate engagement	267	Zanten et al., 2018	Journal of International Business Policy	Netherlands
The sustainability balanced scorecard: A systematic review of Architectures	233	Hansen et al., 2016	Journal of Business Ethics	Germany
Corporate governance and board of directors: the effect of a board composition on firm sustainability performance	229	Naciti et al., 2019	Journal of Cleaner Production	Italy
The impact of Sustainability Practices on Corporate Financial Performance: Literature Trends and Future Research Potential	217	Alshehhi et al., 2018	Sustainability	Switzerland
New Challenges for corporate sustainability reporting: United Nations' 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and sustainable development goals	212	Tsalis et al., 2020	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	Greece

## Conclusion And Discussion

### *Main findings and contributions*

The core objective of the study is to present the bibliometric analysis of the articles extracted from the Scopus database in the field of CSR as an instrument to corporate sustainability. The study used bibliometric analysis technique to conduct publication trend analysis, affiliation analysis, country analysis and keyword analysis on the CSR related literature in the Scopus database from 2014 to 2022. Software tools like the R packages and VOS-Viewer are used to performing the quantitative analysis and visualizing the knowledge map of the CSR research. There are mainly five findings with respect to this current study. Firstly, the annual scientific production of research in CSR related to corporate sustainability shows an increasing trend from 2016 to 2020. Secondly, the source of publication analysis found that the top 3 influential publishers in the topic area of CSR are Sustainability (Switzerland), Business Strategy and the Environment and Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management respectively. Thirdly, Schaltegger S, Camilleri MA and Crifo P are the influential authors who are highly productive in this domain. Fourthly, Concordia University and Indian Institute of Foreign Trade are the most influential institutions. The geographical distribution analysis identified that China and USA have the maximum number of publications. Lastly and more importantly, keyword analysis has been performed with the help of VOS-Viewer to identify the future research direction. Thus, on the basis of the bibliometric analysis, this study facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the knowledge structure between CSR and corporate sustainability.

### Limitations and future research



The present study also has some limitations. The main limitation is that the data collected for the study is extracted from the Scopus database (September 10, 2023), therefore, data from other databases or collected at different times shows different results (Zemigala, 2019). In order to overcome this limitation, the data can be obtained from other reputable databases like Web of Science and Google Scholar. Additionally, the data analysis failed to cover all available documents as this study limited the search criteria to ["Corporate Social Responsibility"] and ["Corporate Sustainability"]. Furthermore, the study has taken into account only those documents written in English language. To conclude, this bibliometric analysis precisely reflects the current status and future research direction in the domain of CSR and corporate sustainability.

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