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A Descriptive Analysis of Corporate Social Responsibility Research: Evidence from Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Academics, professionals, and other industry stakeholders are beginning to recognise the significance of the expanding field of corporate social responsibility (CSR). But there is scant descriptive analysis performed using Web of Science (WOS) database. To our knowledge, this is the first study to describe via WOS to determine the breadth of CSR articles. Descriptive analysis was performed in Microsoft Excel with data requested from the WOS Core Collection. Between 1984 and 2022, we analysed all 1268 papers in the WOS database. The purpose of this study was to assess the state of CSR research in Malaysia and identify its future directions. We separated publication results by productive journals, primary authors, and countries of origin for our descriptive analysis. Our research may be at the front of efforts to disseminate and communicate important scientific findings to researchers so that they can make lasting contributions to society.

Contribution/Originality: This study aims to assess how far CSR studies have progressed and where they can develop in the future. Its goal is to add to the scant descriptive literature on CSR in emerging economies and, more specifically, in ASEAN nations.

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1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the voluntary acts and initiatives that a company takes to positively contribute to society and the environment (Ortas et al., 2015). It is a notion that highlights the obligation of corporations to think beyond profit and consider the well-being of stakeholders, communities, and the earth. It is a concept that emphasizes the obligation of organizations to look beyond profit and consider the well-being of stakeholders, communities, and the environment (Schwartz & Saiia, 2012). It is necessary to stress that, although the fact that CSR is a voluntary activity, many organizations are beginning to view it as a critical element of their long-term business plan. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities in Malaysia, like in many other countries, involve a variety of initiatives that businesses undertake to contribute to societal and environmental well-being. Malaysia has seen an increasing emphasis on CSR as firms recognize the value of responsible practices for both their brand and the betterment of the community. It is vital to note that specific CSR procedures differ by company size, industry, and corporate beliefs. The Malaysian government and numerous industry organizations frequently encourage and promote CSR efforts through rules and rewards. Furthermore, Malaysia has its own frameworks for sustainable development, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which act as a guiding foundation for many CSR projects in the country.

In the realm of CSR research, the topic has been conceptualized as a smart way to improve company reputation and ultimately result in increased profitability (Albuquerque et al., 2018). Therefore, it has been discovered that long-term CSR efforts boost shareholder value by lowering cash flow risk (Nguyen et al., 2020). This relationship is based on the idea that through the engagement of enduring investors, corporate social responsibility (CSR) functions as a strategic maneuver that mitigates risk and augments the company's overall worth. Furthermore, from the standpoint of operation management, operations that do not adhere to CSR standards may face the potential hazard of public exposure, particularly by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Consequently, such exposure can have adverse implications for a company's market share. This implies that the company will adopt CSR practices in its operations when the level of risk associated with non-compliance becomes significant or when the additional cost required for implementation becomes relatively minimal. (Bian et al., 2021). In the context of understanding the costs associated with CSR, scholarly literature suggests that the increase in these costs can be attributed to the business's objective of maximizing its overall value, as well as the managers' aspiration to project a benevolent image to stakeholders. Barnea and Rubin (2010) argue that stakeholders possess the ability to assess a company's CSR performance through the utilization of non-financial public information, thereby shifting the focus away from a purely financial cost-benefit analysis. This perspective highlights the multifaceted nature of the conflict surrounding CSR costs. Additionally, Endovitsky et al. (2021) contribute to this discourse by emphasizing the importance of considering alternative factors beyond financial considerations when evaluating the implications of CSR.

On the basis of the above-mentioned facts, the topic of CSR has garnered significant attention from both researchers and practitioners due to its practicality and relevance in the business realm. Numerous scholarly investigations have been conducted to explore the involvement of corporations in society and the correlation between CSR and various factors such as customer engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, firm performance, customer word of mouth, organizational citizenship behavior, and

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workplace attitudes and behavior This statement not only showcases the extensive scope and profound element of research on CSR, but also emphasizes the significance of this research and its implications for both management theory and practice.

Through the use of descriptive analysis, this study has the potential to shed light on the patterns and relationships that exist between CSR research journals, authors, and papers. A collection of literature reviews shows that there are not enough descriptive studies done on CSR research utilizing the Web of Science database. This is proven by the fact that there is a paucity of such studies. As a result, the purpose of our study was to fill in this gap and accomplish our primary objective, which was to define the landscape of CSR research in terms of the years, journals, authors, and countries.

2. Literature Review

According to Chaffee (2017), the study acknowledges that the social aspect of corporate behavior can be traced back to ancient Roman Laws and persisted throughout the Middle Ages, influenced by the English Crown. Eventually, this concept was transferred to the American colonies, where corporations assumed a certain degree of social responsibility. While according to Harrison (1966), the influence of Christian theological philosophy and its methodology on social and moral norms was significant during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Moreover, their impact remains substantial in contemporary moral and social discourse. Victorian philanthropy changed society's view of social responsibility and laid the groundwork for modern corporate social responsibility. It also led to the creation of welfare schemes for the working class in Europe and the US (Carroll, 2008; Harrison 1966). In fact, the welfare programs implemented during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were formulated under a paternalistic ideology, aiming to ensure the well-being of workers and, in some cases, even exploring methods to enhance their standard of living (Carroll, 2008; Heald, 1970). In the 1920s and 1930s, when managers started trying to maximize profits while also meeting the needs of customers, employees, and the community, companies started to take on social and economic responsibilities. Later, during World War II, businesses were seen as having more social responsibilities (Carroll, 2008; Heald 1970).

There were little corporate efforts outside philanthropic endeavors during the post-World War II and 1950s era, which can be seen as a period of adaptation and shifting attitudes towards the subject of corporate social responsibility (Carroll, 2008). According to Bowen (1953), who believed that because large corporations at the time concentrated great power and that their actions had a real impact on society, they needed to change their decision-making to take this into account. This is perhaps the most notable example of the shifting attitude towards corporate behavior. Bowen (1953) stated that businesses should adhere to specified principles to perform their social obligations because their choices and deeds influence stakeholders, employees, clients, and society at large. According to Carroll (2008), Bowen (1953) may have been ahead of his time because of his innovative management style, which intended to improve the way businesses respond to their social impacts, and because of his contributions to the definition of corporate social responsibility. Bowen (1953) is known as the "Father of Corporate Social Responsibility" because his approach is relevant today. It was the first academic work to address the notion of social responsibility clearly (Carroll, 1999).

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Bowen (1953) and Levitt (1958) were considered pioneers of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Their works contributed to the theoretical development of CSR and its implications for organizational management. For example, Bowen (1953) tried to systematically address the ethical and social responsibilities that businesses have towards society beyond their profit goals. Contrarily, Levitt (1958) argued that focusing too much on social responsibility can be harmful to a company's core mission and profitability. Levitt (1958) acknowledged that a company has an ethical responsibility, but he argued that these obligations should be centered on providing customers with high-quality goods and services at fair prices. He believed that by fulfilling this fundamental function, a company contributes to society by creating jobs, driving economic growth, and meeting the needs of consumers. Since then, continuous efforts have been made to propose new perspectives and classifications that could improve the understanding of the CSR concept and contribute to its construction and application (Friedman, 1970; Freeman & Reed, 1983; Carroll, 1991; Lantos, 2001; Garriga & Melé, 2004; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Landrum & Ohsowski, 2018).

The construction of the CSR concept was mainly contributed by Friedman (1970) who presented a critical perspective on CSR, arguing that the primary responsibility of a business is to its shareholders and that the pursuit of social objectives by businesses could potentially harm their economic efficiency and distort their main objective -profit maximization. Friedman (1970) article has been both influential and controversial. While many have agreed with his perspective, there have also been numerous critics who have raised valid concerns and counterarguments.

The critics of Friedman's view argued that businesses have a broader responsibility and they advocated for a more balanced approach that considers both profits and social impact (Freeman & Reed, 1983; Carroll, 1991; Porter & Kramer, 2006). Freeman and Reed (1983) proposed a new definition of stakeholders which emphasizes that businesses should consider the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders. They have criticized Friedman's concentration on profit maximization, arguing that businesses have broader responsibilities and must consider the interest of various stakeholders including employees, customers, communities, and the environment. Carroll (1991) made the first attempt to categorize CSR by introducing the Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility, which includes economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. He has critiqued Friedman's viewpoint for ignoring the ethical and philanthropic aspects of CSR.

The concept of "Creating Shared Value," was introduced by Porter and Kramer (2006), which suggests that businesses can simultaneously create economic value and address societal challenges. They argue that Friedman's perspective is outdated and that businesses should align their success with societal progress. On a global scale, United Nations introduced the Millennium Development Goal (MDG), which was later changed to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that require financial support from companies as the company's CSR is a part of the implementation of SDGs (Johan, 2021). Using SDGs, Landrum and Ohsowski (2018) conduct a content analysis of corporate sustainability reports to identify different worldviews on corporate sustainability. The present content analysis enables the categorization of companies into five distinct stages of corporate sustainability, namely compliance (characterized by a very weak level of sustainability), business-centered (exhibiting weak sustainability), systemic (demonstrating intermediate sustainability), regenerative (displaying strong sustainability), and coevolutionary (indicating a very strong level of sustainability).

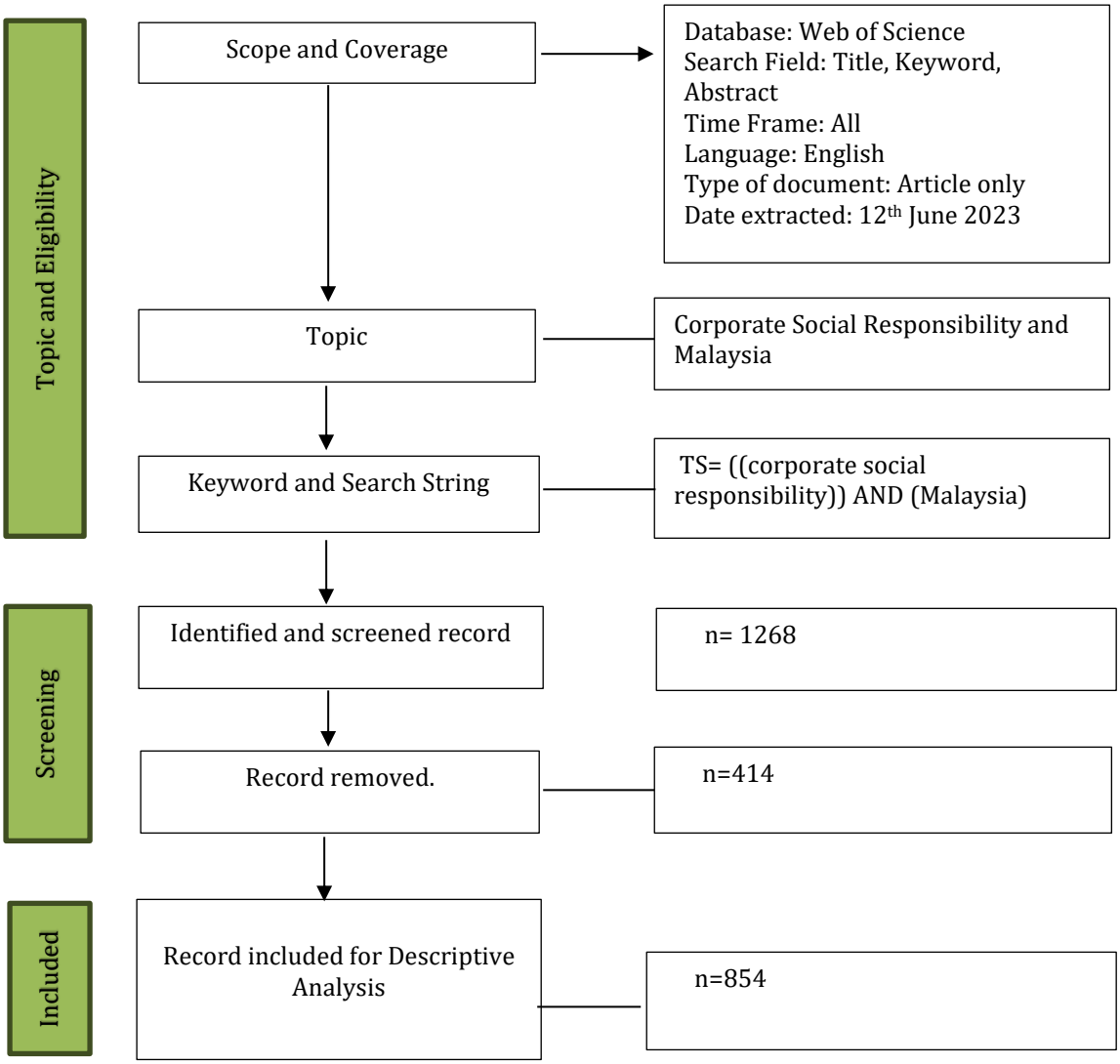
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Considering all of the above, this paper adds a descriptive analysis through the lens of WOS database in order to understand how scientific interest in CSR in Malaysia has evolved. The authors believe that either path would leave room for an academic debate that could propose new ways of relating business and society.

3. Materials and Methods

Descriptive analysis is a valuable tool for offering a comprehensive examination of data, identifying patterns, trends, and relationships, and enabling a deeper understanding of the underlying issues being studies (Babin & Zikmund, 2015). This analysis has been regarded as a statical method employed to summarize and elucidate the main features of a given dataset or a set of research findings. Figure 1 presents the methodological framework that was used for this particular study.

Figure 1: Methodological framework



In order to elucidate our research inquiry, we employed the utilization of Excel as a tool to visually represent descriptive analyses pertaining to the quantity of publications, published journals, authors, universities/institutes, and countries/regions. We employed the Web of Science (WOS) database, provided by Clarivate Analytics, to

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perform a comprehensive exploration of scholarly literature for the purpose of conducting a descriptive analysis. In our research endeavor, we made the deliberate decision to select the WOS as our preferred database, prioritizing it over other prominent databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and Scopus. This choice was motivated by the exceptional efficacy demonstrated by WOS in the extraction of bibliographic data from search results, as highlighted by Azra et al. (2022). Publications that have undergone indexing by the esteemed WOS demonstrate a commendable level of data quality, surpassing that of alternative database platforms. Consequently, they provide the most reliable and authenticated information available.

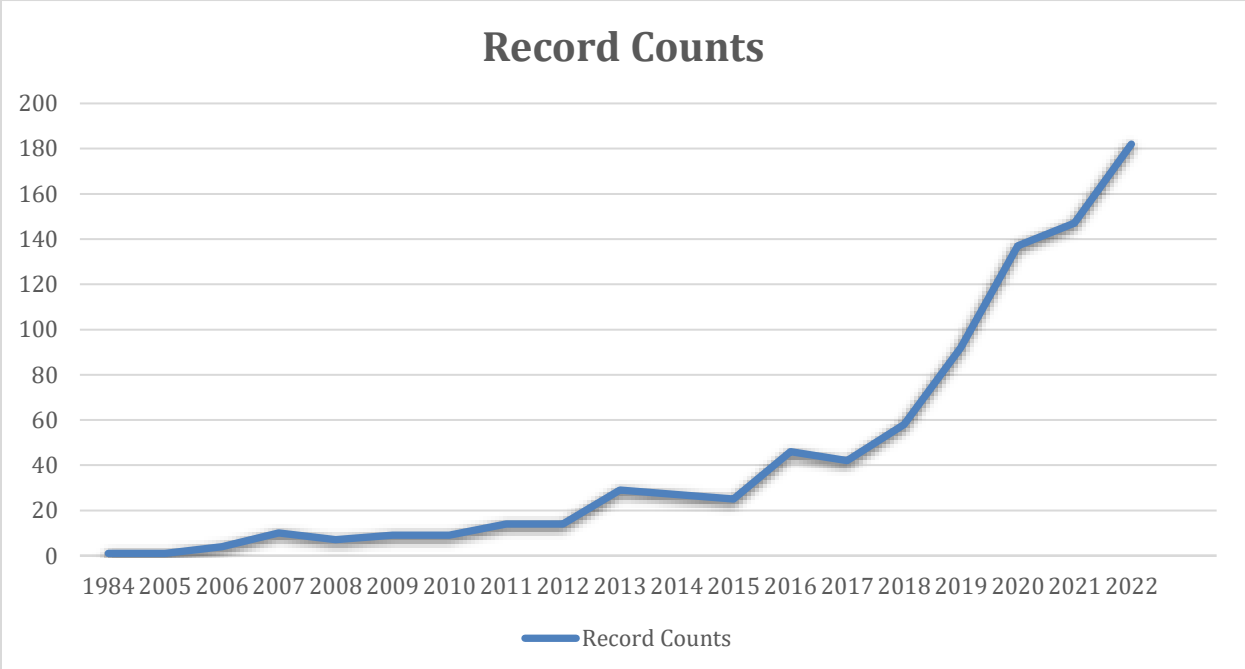
The titles, abstracts, and keywords of the papers were carefully examined, as part of a thorough screening procedure. Furthermore, the configuration of the WOS database was specifically tailored to prioritize the "TS" field. Only original research articles between 1984 and 2022 were included in the search while editorials, books, book chapters, commentaries, and theoretical papers were excluded. Additionally, scholarly articles written in languages other than English were excluded from the study.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1. Growth of Scientific Production

During the temporal span from 1984 to 2022, a comprehensive compilation of 1268 scholarly articles pertaining to CSR research in Malaysia has been documented within the esteemed Web of Science Core Collection (WOSCC), as visually represented in Figure 2. The proliferation of scholarly publications has exhibited a remarkable surge commencing in the year 2011, culminating in its zenith in 2022. The observed upward trajectory in research endeavors can plausibly be attributed to the burgeoning need for comprehensive investigations in the realm of CSR.

Figure 2: Number of research articles relating to CSR area published annually since 1984.



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The field of CSR research has exhibited consistent growth over the years and is expected to continue to do so for several reasons. CSR study is growing because of pressures from the external parties, demands from stakeholders, financial concerns, and the realization that doing the right thing is not only good for society but can also lead to long-term business success (Yuan et al., 2019). As businesses try to solve difficult social and environmental problems, CSR research can help them to do so in a way that is both sustainable and responsible. Academic researchers conduct research on CSR in order to offer empirically supported perspectives on the drivers, impacts, and barriers related to the implementation of CSR initiatives by corporations. The discoveries made by the researchers can provide valuable insights for businesses in formulating efficacious CSR strategies that not only yield advantages for society and the environment but also foster sustained business prosperity.

4.2. Main Authors

Malaysia emerges as a preeminent nation in the area of CSR research, owing to its proliferation of esteemed academic institutions that exhibit a dedicated focus on this domain. The scholarly publications that academics actively reference serve to demarcate the parameters of a given area of study. Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the most prominently referenced publications in the realm of CSR research.

Table 1: Top productive authors regarding on CSR research

Top authors for CSR research	Number of articles	Affiliations	% of 854
Azlan Amran	36	Universiti Sains Malaysia	4.215
Rusnah Muhamad	17	Universiti Malaya	1.991
Mehran Nejati	14	Universiti Sains Malaysia	1.639
Jiseon Ahn	11	Taylor's University	1.288
Woon Leong Lin	11	Taylor's University	1.288
Ramayah Thurasamy	10	Universiti Sains Malaysia	1.171
Faizah Darus	9	Universiti Teknologi MARA	1.054
Jo Ann Ho	8	Universiti Putra Malaysia	0.937
Corina Joseph	8	Universiti Teknologi MARA	0.937
Thian Song Ong	8	Multimedia University Malaysia	0.937
Say Keat Ooi	8	Universiti Sains Malaysia	0.937
Ming-Lang Tseng	8	Asia University	0.937
Noor Hazlina Ahmad	7	Universiti Sains Malaysia	0.82
Muhammad Ali	7	Universiti Kuala Lumpur	0.82
Kaveh Asiaei	7	Monash University	0.82
Hasnah Haron	7	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia	0.82
Fathyah Hashim	7	Universiti Sains Malaysia	0.82
Hafiza Aishah Hashim	7	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu	0.82
Qian Long Kweh	7	Universiti Tenaga Nasional	0.82
Kumaran Rajandran	7	Universiti Sains Malaysia	0.82
Mohammad Hassan Shakil	7	Taylor's University	0.82
Haslinda Yusoff	7	Universiti Teknologi MARA	0.82
Mustaffa Mohamed Zain	7	Universiti Teknologi MARA	0.82
Akmalia Mohamad Ariff	6	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu	0.703
Nazli A Mohd Ghazali	6	International Islamic University Malaysia	0.703

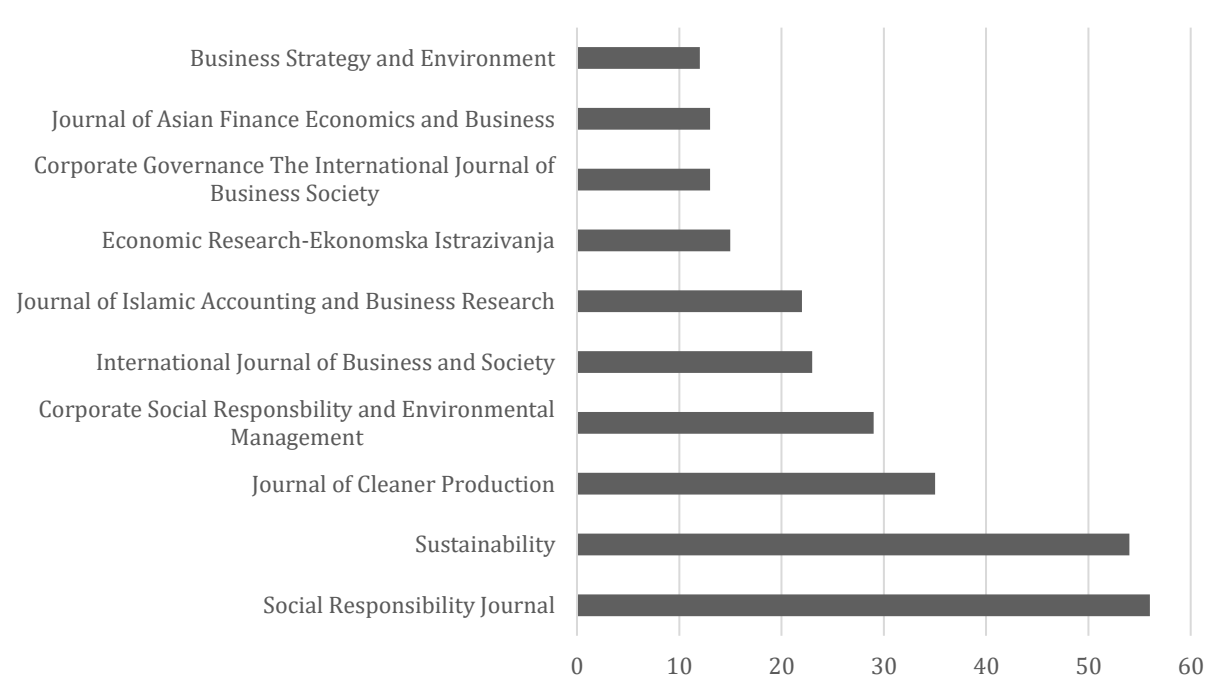
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The most influential authors are Azlan Amran from Universiti Sains Malaysia with 36 articles, followed by Rusnah Muhamad from Universiti Malaya with 17articles, and in third place is Mehran Nejati, again from Universiti Sains Malaysia, with 14 articles. Malaysia is home to a number of universities and academic institutions that have successfully established specialized research centers and programs dedicated to the study of CSR and sustainable development. These academic institutions provide specialized courses, engage in research activities, and establish collaborations with the corporate sector in order to advance the adoption of responsible business practices. According to Rahman et al. (2019), higher education institutions have encountered significant institutional pressures on a global scale to adopt socially responsible practices. The existing body of literature that has provided theoretical and conceptual direction in this domain primarily consists of research on CSR.

4.3. Productive Journals

Figure 3 depicts the ranking of the ten most prolific journals based on the total number of publications.

Figure 3: Number of publications from the top ten journals containing research on CSR published between 1984 and 2022.



A total of suitable papers was identified from 854 journals. Among the journals considered, Social Responsibility Journal exhibited the highest number of publications, totaling 56. Following closely behind, Sustainability showcased 54 publications, while Journal of Cleaner Production had a slightly lower count of 35 publications. The average number of articles produced by most journals throughout the course of 38 years (1984-2022) was 4.68. These journals possess a strong reputation and enjoy widespread recognition among the academic community, rendering them indispensable platforms for researchers and scholars to share their discoveries and contribute to the progression of CSR knowledge.

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4.4. Trends in Countries

In the research area pertaining to CSR realm, a total of 25 countries have successfully contributed between 1984-2022. Table 2 shows the list of countries working on the CSR research and development.

Table 2: Number of countries around the world associated with scientific productions.

R	Countries/Regions	NP	%Tt
1	Malaysia	771	90.281
2	Pakistan	93	10.89
3	Australia	74	8.665
4	China	72	8.431
5	Indonesia	56	6.557
6	England	54	6.323
7	Saudi Arabia	40	4.684
8	United States	34	3.981
9	Bangladesh	32	3.747
10	Taiwan	27	3.162
11	India	22	2.576
12	United Arab Emirates	20	2.342
13	Iran	18	2.108
14	Yemen	18	2.108
15	Nigeria	16	1.874
16	Qatar	14	1.639
17	Canada	12	1.405
18	Italy	12	1.405
19	Vietnam	12	1.405
20	New Zealand	11	1.288
21	Oman	9	1.054
22	South Africa	9	1.054
23	South Korea	9	1.054
24	Thailand	9	1.054
25	Brunei	8	0.937

Abbreviations: R: rankings; NP: aggregate count of scholarly articles pertaining to corporate social responsibility, % Tt: proportion of articles within the search vectors relative to the overall count of articles within those same search vectors.

The following countries have emerged as the leading contributors in terms of publications within this specific study domain, comprising the top 10 positions. Malaysia was the most frequent publisher (771), followed by Pakistan, Australia, China, Indonesia, England, Saudi Arabia, United States, Bangladesh, and Taiwan. The observed outcome could potentially be attributed to the fact that both Malaysia and Pakistan possess a greater abundance of resources, thereby enabling them to engage in more extensive scientific analyses. In light of the aforementioned circumstances, we ardently advocate for the augmentation of international scientific research exchanges and collaborations in the forthcoming times. Thus, the dedication of Malaysia to CSR, the robust backing from the government, active involvement of businesses, academic institutions, and the broader society have collectively played a significant role in establishing its prominence within the field of CSR research. Through its ongoing efforts to enhance its comprehension and application of CSR, Malaysia exhibits the capacity to emerge as an exemplar for nations aspiring to adopt sustainable and ethical business approaches. It is crucial to acknowledge that the prevalence of CSR publications within a

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given country may fluctuate over time as a result of evolving research priorities, funding opportunities, and global patterns. In addition to the aforementioned contributions, various countries and regions have actively engaged in the field of CSR research, thereby making substantial progress in enhancing our comprehension of ethical and sustainable business strategies.

5. Conclusions and Limitation of Study

The main objective of this study was to ascertain the scope of research on CSR by examining several factors such as publication years, journals, authors, nations, and institutions involved in this field. This research is an important resource for academicians, government officials, and business leaders since it sheds light on the present climate for CSR studies.

Our study relied solely on Web of Science (WOS) databases, which are prone to publication bias. Nevertheless, WOS is widely acknowledged for its elevated publication standards due to its specialized focus on science and social sciences. Additionally, WOS surpasses other databases in terms of both database size and breadth of coverage (Gavel & Iselid, 2008). To the best of our knowledge, this study represents a pioneering effort in conducting a comprehensive descriptive analysis and differentiation of the data pertaining to CSR studies conducted in the context of Malaysia. Notwithstanding its elucidation of the progress in CSR research development and its establishment upon a scientific framework, this study does possess certain limitations. In regard to our search methodology, we exclusively incorporated scholarly articles that have been published in the English language, thereby excluding works such as books, conference papers, abstracts, notes, and commentaries, among others. It is worth noting that our chosen keywords may have been overly broad, thus potentially explaining the significant proportion of research findings that were not directly pertinent to the specific elements of CSR.

The study has some flaws, notably its reliance on a single database and the possible biases introduced by an automated technology used for data analysis. Taken as a whole, this study shows how important it is to keep researching the topics connected to CSR and to work with people from different fields in CSR research in order to solve its complex problems and take advantage of its many opportunities while meeting the needs of many stakeholders.

6. Recommendations

In order to enhance the comprehensiveness of future descriptive research, it is recommended to incorporate additional databases such as Scopus and the Directory of Open Access Journals for the purpose of article retrieval and indexing. This approach will enable the inclusion of a diverse range of scholarly papers. Our results imply that further research in studying the CSR topic would be beneficial. These scholarly research endeavors make a valuable contribution to the overall progress of CSR practices in Malaysia. These studies can help corporations, politicians, and other stakeholders create more successful CSR policies that promote sustainable development and social well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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