

The role of corporate social responsibility in organizational reputation: A systematic review and bibliometric analysis

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Abstract: This research addresses issues related to the adoption of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices by companies and their impact on corporate reputation. It is based on the premise that poor practices associated with CSR implementation can damage a company's corporate image and its market position. The objective was to determine the impact of corporate social responsibility on organizational reputation in light of existing scientific literature. To achieve this, a systematic literature review was conducted following the PRISMA protocol and the recommendations proposed by Petticrew and Roberts (and their adaptation by Gast et al. for application in social sciences). The study used the Scopus database, from which 176 initial documents were identified, and 96 were selected according to inclusion and exclusion criteria. The results show that when companies implement CSR authentically, they enhance public image perception, increase consumer trust, strengthen human talent management, and gain competitive advantages aligned with sustainability. However, strategies such as greenwashing negatively affect organizational credibility. In conclusion, CSR should be integrated into organizational culture and strategy to become a fundamental element of both reputation and corporate strategy.

Keywords: Business ethics, Corporate social responsibility, Organizational reputation, Stakeholders, Sustainability.

1. Introduction

In recent years, it has become evident that companies have begun to adopt a different vision of their business operations. It is no longer solely about pursuing economic gains. In the past, organizations tended to focus exclusively on selling and generating profits, without considering the impact their actions might have on their surrounding environment. This approach aligns mainly with the traditional view proposed by Friedman [1], who argued that the only social responsibility of a business was to increase its economic profits. However, this perspective was later challenged by Freeman [2], who introduced the concept of stakeholders, aimed at promoting the satisfaction of all parties involved in business activities, not only shareholders, but also customers, employees, suppliers, governments, and communities in general.

Currently, although companies recognize the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and attempt to incorporate it into their internal processes, in many cases, its implementation lacks transparency and genuine commitment. Sometimes it is limited to superficial practices, used more as a marketing strategy than as a true commitment to society and the environment. Organizations may carry out activities designed to project an image of social commitment without implementing significant changes within their structures. This practice is known as greenwashing, a term that refers to situations in which a company seeks to portray itself as environmentally responsible through campaigns or corporate reports. At the same time, its actions do not align with such claims, thus eroding the trust of stakeholders [3].

CSR emerges as a clear response to the need for ethical, responsible, and sustainable conduct. According to Carroll [4], CSR is composed of four key dimensions: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic; companies must consider all these levels to achieve genuine sustainability. Similarly, Dahlsrud [5] proposes five fundamental dimensions for understanding the scope of CSR: environmental commitment, social impact, economic performance, voluntary actions, and relationships with stakeholders. Through these elements, the author explains how organizations can implement CSR in a comprehensive manner aligned with the current needs of society.

It is from this new concept that business thinking has gradually begun to change, and more companies are becoming aware of and recognizing the importance of the impact they generate on society and, above all, on the environment. Aguinis and Glavas [6] after conducting extensive research on CSR, it is stated that CSR must be aligned with and integrated into the company's culture and operations so that these actions are authentic and effective rather than merely symbolic. Additionally, it is affirmed that CSR has a positive effect on employee satisfaction and engagement.

CSR is a concept that implies that organizations must act responsibly, making ethical decisions based on genuine principles aimed at protecting and respecting employees, society, and the natural environment, thus contributing positively to the community, the environment, and the places in which they operate. According to the International Organization for Standardization [7], a company acts in a socially responsible manner when it considers how its decisions and activities affect people and the environment. This means acting ethically, being transparent, and contributing to social well-being and environmental protection. Consequently, this vision aligns with the argument of Werther and Chandler [8] who state that CSR has become a fundamental component of current organizational strategy, as companies are increasingly aware that their role in society goes beyond obtaining financial benefits, integrating ethical and social values as essential elements of their operations.

This transformation in corporate behavior is not merely a matter of determining what is morally or ethically acceptable, but rather a practical expression of doing what is right. When companies make genuine social commitments, they achieve greater acceptance and identification from consumers. Generally, society values companies that act responsibly and demonstrate commitment to the environment and the community. For this reason, many people prefer to purchase products or services from companies that operate responsibly, consistently, and with concern for sustainable practices. Sen and Bhattacharya [9] explain that a company's social actions are effective only when they align with the public's perception of what constitutes a responsible organization. If consumers believe that a company acts sincerely, they are more likely to trust it and choose its products. However, if they perceive that the company's actions are not genuine, its reputation may be damaged, and trust diminished. For this reason, many companies have adopted social responsibility as part of their corporate strategy, aiming to enhance their image and reputation, thus maintaining competitiveness in the market. In this regard, Porter and Kramer [10] argue that social responsibility should not be viewed merely as a means to improve a company's image but as an opportunity to create value. They contend that organizations can achieve economic growth while simultaneously generating benefits for society and the environment, a concept they refer to as "shared value."

On the other hand, organizational reputation has gained increasing relevance within companies. It can be understood as a set of opinions, perceptions, and evaluations that different stakeholder groups develop toward a company. In this regard, Fombrun [11] explains that having a good organizational reputation becomes one of the most important and valuable assets a company can achieve, not only because it generates trust and loyalty among customers but also because it attracts talented individuals who wish to work for the organization and strengthen its competitive position in the market. According to Aguilera et al. [12], when employees perceive that their company behaves responsibly, a greater sense of belonging and higher motivation emerge, which positively influence productivity and the overall organizational climate within the firm.

Furthermore, Chun [13] explains that a company's reputation can be observed from three different perspectives. First, it can be seen as having an economic value, since it may influence investors' decisions and, consequently, affect the firm's financial structure. Second, it relates to how reputation is perceived and managed by the company's leaders. Third, it encompasses the image and perception that customers and the public have of the organization. In conclusion, reputation does not depend solely on financial performance or internal operations; it is also strongly influenced by what people say and feel about the company.

Roberts and Dowling [14] state that corporate reputation is primarily based on how a company is perceived according to its past actions, the available information about it, and the expectations generated regarding its future behavior. They also add that a strong reputation enables organizations to gain more competitive and sustainable advantages, thereby increasing consumer trust. A company's reputation is directly related to what people think, feel, and say about it, not only customers, but also employees, suppliers, shareholders, competitors, and society as a whole.

In fact, such opinions are shaped by factors such as the quality of the products or services offered to the public, how the company interacts and communicates with stakeholders, and whether it acts transparently, ethically, and with genuine social commitment. According to Dowling [15], reputation is built by combining corporate identity with public expectations, meaning that consistency between what an organization communicates and what it actually does is essential.

For companies, having a strong reputation can be highly beneficial, as it fosters customer trust in the organization and its offerings. Internally, employees tend to feel proud of belonging to the company, which enhances their motivation and improves internal processes. A good reputation also positions the company as an attractive partner for strategic alliances, helping it to reach new audiences, expand into other markets, and strengthen its market position. However, achieving a positive image or reputation is not an easy or instantaneous process. It must be built gradually through consistent decision-making and, above all, coherence between the company's values and its actions.

Based on the foregoing, the objective of this study is to determine the impact of CSR on organizational reputation in light of the existing scientific literature.

2. Methodology

This study seeks to contribute to academic knowledge through the review and analysis of existing scientific literature on the specific topic. To achieve this, a systematic review is employed, understood as a rigorous method that allows information to be compiled, organized, and analyzed in a clear and structured manner to answer a defined research question [6]. To guide this process, the study follows the methodological recommendations of Petticrew and Roberts [16], established for the development of reviews in the social sciences. This method consists of six steps that serve as a guide throughout the entire process. Additionally, the study adheres to the Page et al. [17] protocol, which is used to provide greater clarity and transparency to systematic reviews, and is described below. The steps applied in this research are outlined accordingly.

Step 1: Formulation of the research question. The first step in this process was to define the main question guiding the study, as follows: *What type of impact does Corporate Social Responsibility have on the reputation of organizations?*

Step 2: Selection of information sources and search criteria. To identify the necessary information, the Scopus bibliographic database was used, as it is considered a reliable source. The terms employed were: Corporate Social Responsibility; Business Social Responsibility; Organizational Reputation; Enterprise; Business; Companies. The following search equation was applied, using only the English translations of the specific terms: (corporate social responsibility OR business social responsibility OR corporate social responsibility) AND (organizational reputation) AND (companies OR enterprises OR business).

Step 3: Definition of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Certain criteria were established to determine which documents would be included or excluded. These included: review period (2000–2023); document type (articles and book chapters); and language (English and/or Spanish). Additionally, only those documents available in full-text versions were included in this study.

Step 4: Bibliometric analysis. Given the relevance of bibliometric analysis [18], descriptive statistics were used to examine different aspects such as authors, affiliated institutions, and countries of publication, among other factors. This approach helps to better understand trends and how knowledge on the central research topic has evolved.

Step 5: Methodological quality assessment of the publications. To evaluate the reliability and methodological rigor of all documents included in the review, eleven quality criteria proposed by Petticrew and Roberts [16] and later adapted by Gast et al. [19] for application in the social sciences, the assessment of each criterion was based on the clarity of its definition and fulfillment within the document: if the criterion was not well defined, it was assigned a value of 0.0; if defined but unclear, a value of 0.5; and if clearly defined and well explained, a value of 1.0. Since there were eleven criteria, the total score could range from 0 to 11. Only documents that scored at least 6.0 points in the quality assessment were included in the final analysis [20]. Once all defined criteria were applied, the results were presented following the guidelines established in the Page et al. [17] protocol, as illustrated in Figure 1.

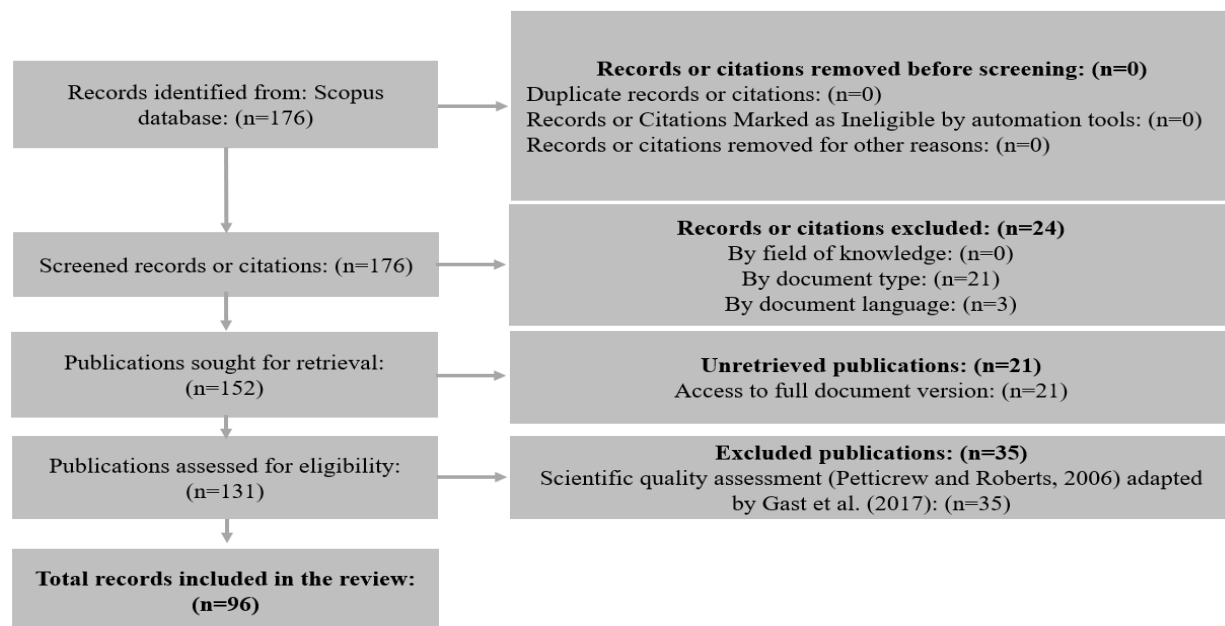


Figure 1.
Flow diagram of the document selection process (PRISMA Protocol)

After applying the entire selection process as previously defined, a total of 96 records were selected from the 176 documents initially retrieved from the Scopus database. These records met all the established criteria for inclusion in this review. Table 1 presents the list of these documents, including information such as the ID assigned within this review, the corresponding citation (which can be cross-checked with its respective reference), and the number of citations.

Table 1.
Documents Included in the Systematic Review

ID	Cited	Cited by	ID	Cited	Cited by
1	Rettab, et al. [21]	344	49	Zeler and Capriotti [22]	15
2	Parsons, et al. [23]	188	50	Chen, et al. [24]	15
3	Reverte, et al. [25]	176	51	Guo, et al. [26]	13
4	Singh and Misra [27]	165	52	Cha and Rew [28]	12
5	Kim and Park [29]	144	53	Capriotti and Zeler [30]	12
6	Behrend, et al. [31]	131	54	Susanty, et al. [32]	12
7	Gras-Gil, et al. [33]	128	55	Javed, et al. [34]	12
8	Garcia-Sanchez, et al. [35]	119	56	Yang, et al. [36]	12
9	Othman, et al. [37]	119	57	Kuipers and Schonheit [38]	11
10	Coldwell, et al. [39]	117	58	Arpan [40]	11
11	Bartley and Child [41]	114	59	Castro-González, et al. [42]	10
12	Taghian, et al. [43]	113	60	Rahim and Omar [44]	10
13	Walker, et al. [45]	111	61	Tyagi [46]	10
14	Kucharska and Kowalczyk [47]	105	62	Hussain, et al. [48]	9
15	Hillestad, et al. [49]	100	63	Mahenthiran, et al. [50]	9
16	Rim, et al. [51]	95	64	Park, et al. [52]	9
17	Hyun, et al. [53]	91	65	Geng, et al. [54]	7
18	Oelze, et al. [55]	83	66	Barrio-Fraile and Enrique-Jiménez [56]	7
19	Agarwal, et al. [57]	79	67	Srisuphaolarn and Assarut [58]	7
20	Arikan, et al. [59]	76	68	Zhuk, et al. [60]	6
21	Huang, et al. [61]	70	69	Scodanibbio [62]	6
22	Cycyota, et al. [63]	65	70	MATE, et al. [64]	6
23	Almeida and Coelho [65]	65	71	Blanco-González, et al. [66]	5
24	Rolland and O'Keefe Bazzoni [67]	64	72	Ali, et al. [68]	5
25	Maignan, et al. [69]	60	73	Hassan, et al. [70]	4
26	Georgallis [71]	51	74	Grigore, et al. [72]	4
27	Popescu [73]	50	75	Khan, et al. [74]	4
28	Gallego-Álvarez, et al. [75]	46	76	Gianecchini [76]	4
29	Dashwood [77]	45	77	Mapa, et al. [78]	4
30	Lemke and Petersen [79]	44	78	Soewarno, et al. [80]	4
31	Zhang, et al. [81]	43	79	Zhang and Jiang [82]	3
32	Chatzoglou, et al. [83]	40	80	Draper [84]	3
33	Cherian, et al. [85]	39	81	Cheah and Lim [86]	3
34	Bharadwaj and Yameen [87]	28	82	Wang, et al. [88]	3
35	Kantabutra and Avery [89]	28	83	Vveinhardt, et al. [90]	3
36	Halter and de Arruda [91]	27	84	Sindhi, et al. [92]	2
37	Siomkos, et al. [93]	27	85	Szegedi, et al. [94]	2
38	Giacomini, et al. [95]	26	86	Lake and Conduit [96]	2
39	Obrad and Gherheş [97]	25	87	Piwowar-Sulej, et al. [98]	2
40	Ringham and Miles [99]	24	88	Derevianko [100]	2
41	Moura-Leite and Padgett [101]	23	89	Blaha, et al. [102]	2
42	Popa and Salanță [103]	22	90	Koch and Viererbl [104]	1
43	Alakent and Ozer [105]	21	91	Khan [106]	1
44	Singhapakdi, et al. [107]	21	92	Chang, et al. [108]	1
45	Kamran, et al. [109]	18	93	Boffa, et al. [110]	1
46	Lewis and Carlos [111]	16	94	Stone and Joseph [112]	0
47	Agarwal, et al. [113]	16	95	Gorondutse [114]	0
48	Chou, et al. [115]	15	96	Govender and Smit [116]	0

Step 6: Category analysis. The categories identified were derived from the review process of the selected documents. Their formulation was based on the central research question, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2.
Work Categories.

Question	Categories
What type of impact does Corporate Social Responsibility have on the reputation of organizations?	Contributes to Market Management
	Supports Human Talent Management
	Increases Consumer Trust
	Contributes to Social Development
	Facilitates Decision-Making
	Generates Competitive Advantage
	Drives Innovation
	Enhances Corporate Reputation
	Optimize Resource Management
	Promotes Sustainability
	Reduces Operational Risks

3. Results

The following section presents the results obtained from the research process, which was developed based on the proposed methodology, beginning with the bibliometric analysis and followed by the category analysis.

3.1. Bibliometric Analysis

Based on the information retrieved from the Scopus database, Figure 2 illustrates the number of documents published annually during the period considered in the review. At first glance, four noticeable peaks can be observed, representing the years with the highest number of publications.

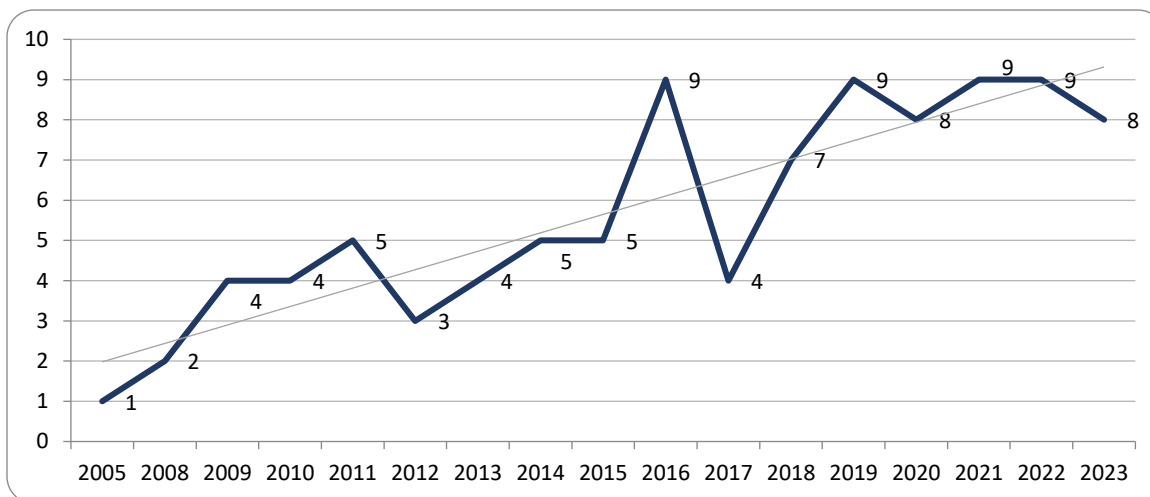


Figure 2.
Number of Documents per Year.

During the period from 2005 to 2023, a gradual increase can be observed in the early years. Starting in 2018, there is a noticeable upward trend, reaching the highest number of publications in 2019, 2021, and 2022, with nine documents each year.

Regarding the types of documents through which research results in this specific field of knowledge are published, Figure 3 presents the findings, distinguishing between journal articles and book chapters. Journal articles are the predominant type of publication.

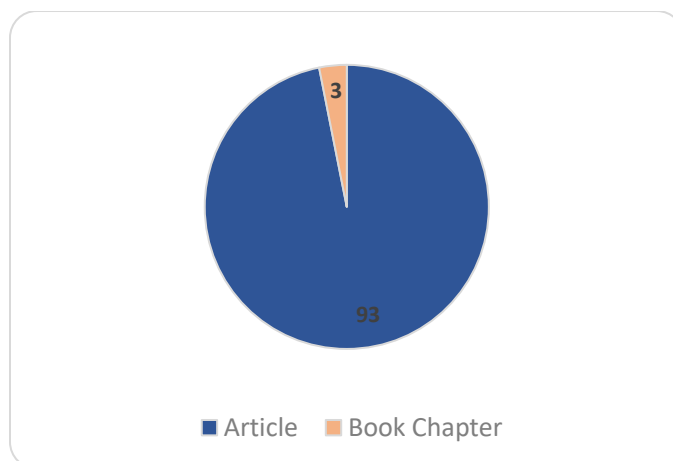


Figure 3.
Documents by Type.

Of the documents analyzed, 93 correspond to journal articles (97%), while only 3 correspond to book chapters (3%). This indicates that journal articles constitute the predominant format for publications related to this topic, whereas book chapters represent a minimal proportion.

Figure 4 presents the number of documents published by country, highlighting the top ten nations with the greatest contribution to publications in this specific field of knowledge.

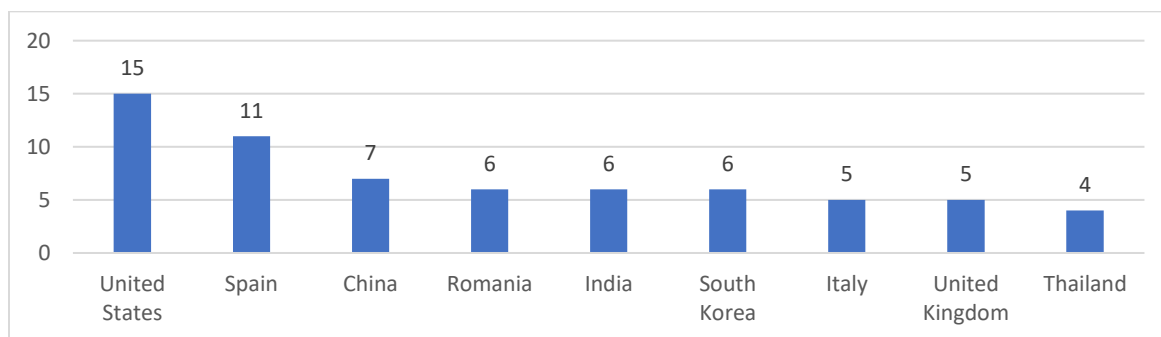


Figure 4.
Documents Published by Country.

The United States leads with the highest number of publications, totaling 15 documents, followed by Spain with 11 publications and China with 7. Romania, India, and South Korea each registered 6 publications. Notably, no countries from Latin America or Oceania appear in the top ten.

Regarding the number of documents published by authors, Figure 5 identifies the main contributors who have contributed to the development of this field of knowledge through their published works.

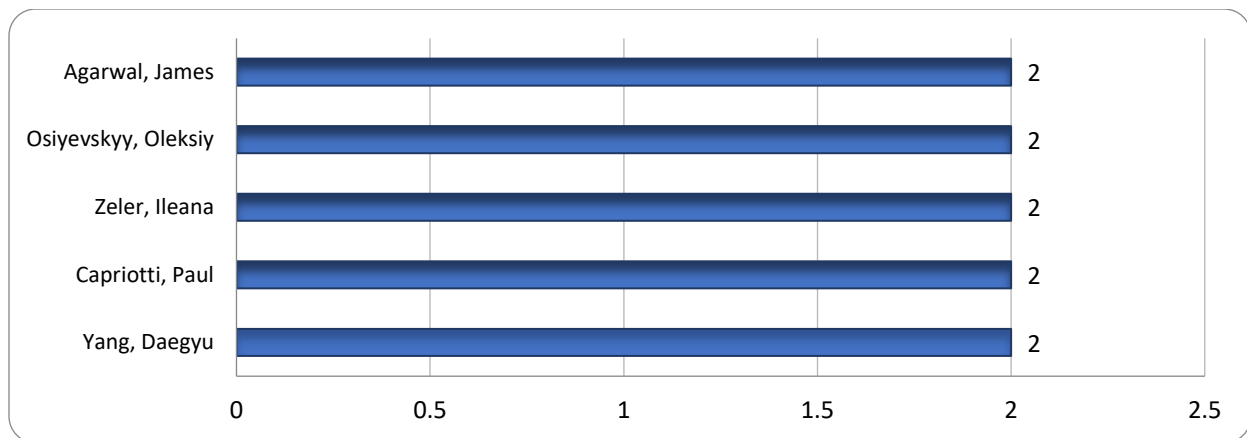


Figure 5.
Number of Documents per Author

Within the set of reviewed documents, a total of 264 unique authors were identified, of which 98.1% participated in only one article. The figure mainly highlights the five authors (1.9%) who stood out for having contributed more than one publication each. However, it can be stated that no single author dominates this specific field of knowledge.

Regarding the number of documents published by funding sources, no funder supported more than one published document, despite a total of 176 publications being identified. This finding indicates a dispersion of funding agencies within this specific field, showing that none of them has yet established a consolidated presence in the area.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of documents by institutional affiliation, highlighting the universities with the greatest contribution to the field studied. This information provides insight into the concentration of academic production within certain institutions.

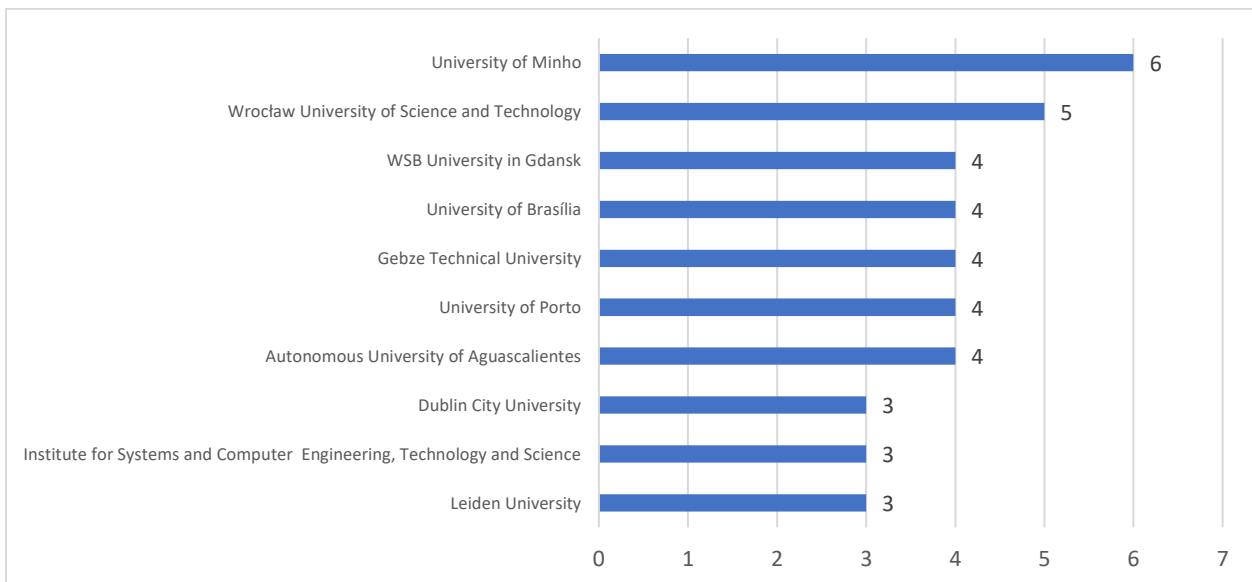


Figure 6.
Distribution of Documents by Institutional Affiliation.

It can be observed that the University of Minho leads the list with six publications, followed by Wrocław University of Science and Technology with five. In an intermediate position are institutions such as the Autonomous University of Aguascalientes, the University of Porto, Gebze Technical University, the University of Brasília, and WSB University in Gdansk, each contributing four documents. Finally, universities such as Leiden University, Dublin City University, and the Institute for Systems and Computer Engineering, Technology, and Science have three publications each. Overall, the figure shows a diverse participation of institutions from different countries, although with a more prominent presence of European and Latin American universities.

Figure 7 presents the most frequently occurring keywords in the analyzed articles. This allows us to identify the most extensively studied topics and reveals the relationships among the terms used in this field.

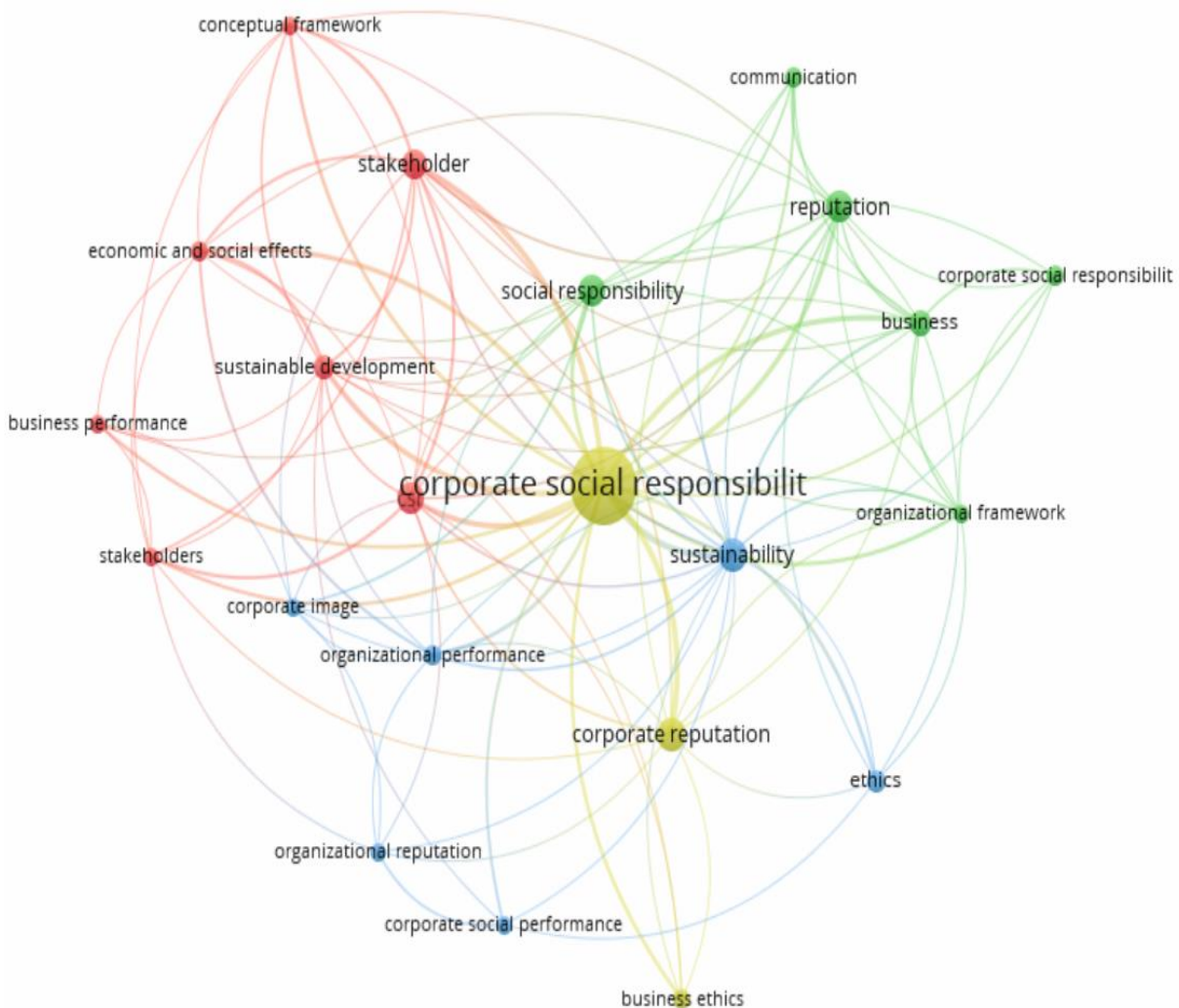


Figure 7.
Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis.

The most frequently occurring term is *corporate social responsibility*, which is the most widely used and the one that connects with all other terms. The figure also shows how other important concepts—such as sustainability, corporate reputation, stakeholders, ethics, and communication are positioned around it. These terms are grouped by color, representing themes from different perspectives, yet all interconnected. Some clusters focus more on sustainability and performance, others on ethics and reputation, and others on social and economic effects. This demonstrates that CSR is not studied from a single perspective, but rather through multiple interrelated approaches.

3.2. Analysis of Categories According to the Findings

The following section presents the categories identified after the documentary analysis conducted based on the formulated research question. These categories enable the identification of certain similarities among the reviewed articles, thereby facilitating a clearer understanding of the impact that CSR has on organizational reputation.

Table 4.
Summary of CSR According to Its Impact.

What type of impact does Corporate Social Responsibility have on the reputation of organizations?	Number of documents	ID
Enhances Corporate Reputation	25	1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 12, 19, 38, 41, 42, 47, 48, 55, 66, 68, 71, 72, 79, 84, 87, 88, 90, 93, 95
Supports Human Talent Management	12	5, 6, 10, 23, 24, 39, 59, 67, 75, 81, 82, 83
Generates Competitive Advantage	12	8, 32, 33, 37, 46, 56, 70, 73, 77, 85, 92, 94
Increases Consumer Trust	10	16, 25, 26, 45, 49, 52, 53, 58, 62, 78
Promotes Sustainability	10	14, 17, 18, 27, 28, 35, 50, 54, 60, 64
Facilitates Decision-Making	9	20, 22, 29, 36, 57, 63, 69, 76, 96
Optimize Resource Management	6	21, 31, 40, 74, 89, 91
Contributes to Market Management	4	13, 34, 43, 86
Drives Innovation	3	3, 15, 65
Reduces Operational Risks	3	30, 51, 61
Contributes to Social Development	2	44, 80

As shown in the results, the most representative category in this classification indicates that CSR enhances corporate reputation. This category includes 25 documents (26.04% of the total analyzed), supporting the idea that CSR aligns with strengthening the organization's image and prestige among its various stakeholders.

Other noteworthy categories within the analysis, which demonstrate how CSR has increasingly become a strategic tool in organizational management, are supporting human talent management (12.50% of the total analyzed) and generating a competitive advantage (12.50% of the total analyzed). These findings highlight that CSR not only contributes to improving the external image of the organization but also enhances its internal functioning and strengthens its position in the market.

Within the classification, it is also noteworthy that CSR increases consumer trust (10.42%) and promotes sustainability (10.42%), each supported by ten documents. These findings reveal a highly positive perception among the general public and a strong commitment to the surrounding environment. On the other hand, other categories, such as decision-making (9.38%), resource optimization (6.25%), and contribution to social development (2.08%) include a smaller number of related research documents. Nevertheless, they remain significant, as they contribute to better decision-making, more efficient resource utilization, and stronger community support, even though they have received comparatively less attention in the literature.

4. Discussion

The results obtained from this research clearly demonstrate that CSR has a real and highly significant impact on the reputation of organizations. When analyzing the main research question regarding the type of impact generated by CSR, the most prominent finding was the idea that it *"enhances corporate reputation."* This clearly confirms what Fombrun [11] had already stated, that reputation is one of the most valuable assets a company can possess. In other words, maintaining a positive image should not be regarded as a minor concern, but rather as a strategic resource for any organization.

Consequently, this finding aligns with Carroll's [4] proposition that companies acting ethically, legally, and socially build a solid image among their various stakeholders. It is not only about *doing business*, but also about *how* business is conducted, and it is precisely in this regard that CSR makes a substantial difference.

The analysis also revealed that other key aspects include how CSR *"supports human talent management"* and *"generates competitive advantage."* This result aligns with Aguilera et al. [12], who explain that employees feel more motivated and prouder to work for organizations that act responsibly, thereby improving the work environment while simultaneously strengthening the company's competitive position. This notion also corresponds with Porter and Kramer's [10] argument that CSR should not be perceived as an expense but rather as an opportunity to create shared value that benefits both the organization and society.

Regarding the category *"increases consumer trust,"* the findings are consistent with Sen and Bhattacharya [9], who argue that customers value companies more when they perceive their social actions as genuine. This stands in stark contrast to organizations whose practices merely seek to simulate commitment; the effect is entirely different, as illustrated by the concept of *greenwashing* described by Delmas and Burbano [3]. According to their theory, such practices generate distrust and significantly weaken an organization's reputation. In this regard, the results support Dowling's [15] assertion that reputation is built when there is coherence between what a company claims and what it actually does.

Finally, the results also indicate that CSR *"promotes sustainability"* and *"facilitates decision-making,"* which aligns closely with Aguinis and Glavas [6], who affirm that social responsibility must be deeply integrated into an organization's culture and strategy to be truly effective. Although other categories, such as *"contributes to social development"* or *"drives innovation,"* appeared less frequently in the research, they remain relevant, as they demonstrate how CSR can contribute to other dimensions that have been less explored.

5. Conclusions

Regarding the impact that CSR has on organizational reputation, several categories were identified that help to understand how CSR has become a fundamental and highly relevant element in shaping society's perception of organizations. The data collected throughout this research makes it clear that when companies implement CSR practices, the result is not only an improvement in their corporate image but also the generation of trust among clients, suppliers, partners, and society as a whole.

Additionally, the findings reveal that CSR is not limited to enhancing a company's external image; it also exerts a direct impact within the organization. Employees tend to feel more motivated and prouder to belong to a company whose actions are primarily guided by socially responsible behavior. These internal dynamics manifest in the creation of a better work environment for employees and, in operational terms, in higher productivity. This demonstrates that organizational reputation is built both externally toward customers and internally with the company's own workforce.

Likewise, the results show that CSR becomes a competitive advantage when organizations apply it consistently and authentically. Companies that adopt CSR as an integral part of their culture and strategy manage to differentiate significantly in the market, foster consumer trust, and maintain stronger relationships with their stakeholders. Conversely, companies that use CSR merely as a façade risk losing credibility and damaging their reputation through practices such as *greenwashing*.

Ultimately, CSR should not be viewed as an additional expense but rather as a strategic investment for the organization. Its benefits go far beyond merely achieving legitimacy in the eyes of society; in fact, CSR also helps to motivate human talent, build customer trust, and strengthen the company's long-term sustainability. Therefore, when an organization integrates social responsibility into its culture and daily decision-making processes, it not only reinforces its reputation but also ensures a more solid, ethical, and sustainable path toward future growth.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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