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Exploring the nexus between corporate social responsibility and employee green behaviour: a bibliometric and interpretive review

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Abstract: Nevertheless, over the past two decades, the scholarly focus on the role of corporate social responsibility initiatives in employee green behaviour has grown, and the relationship between the two is complex and shaped by social, psychological, and organisational factors. The current paper presents a comprehensive bibliometric discourse that traces the intellectual map of research on the corporate social responsibility and employee green behaviour relationship, identifies the most significant contributors and theories, and outlines promising directions for future research. Using bibliometric performance analysis and science mapping of 243 articles indexed in Scopus between 2005 and 2025, the study identifies an essential increase in publication activity, with hospitality and tourism as one of the main settings and Asia as a predominant research area. The results show clear clusters of theories and themes that shape the discourse on corporate social responsibility and employee green behavior, and they also reveal conceptual gaps and insufficient cross-disciplinary integration. Based on these findings, the paper proposes specific recommendations for future studies and practice-based methods to explain how corporate social responsibility can promote voluntary green behaviours among employees. Integrating key strands of the existing literature, this review contributes to theoretical knowledge. It provides recommendations to managers, human resources professionals, and policymakers who want to integrate corporate social responsibility practices into enterprise management to better involve employees in sustainability.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, employee green behaviour, sustainability, bibliometric, content analysis

1. Introduction

Researchers and practitioners are realising that high-level policies are not the only determinant of corporate environmental performance; employees' daily activities also need to be taken into account. As environmental concerns increase worldwide, organisations are increasingly under pressure to make environmental responsibility part of their organisational culture. International documents such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015) and national plans such as Vietnam's National Green Growth Strategy 2021–2030 (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2021) clearly state that employee participation is critical for the future of environmental sustainability. In this context, employee green behaviour (EGB), employees' environmentally responsible behaviour at work, has emerged as a primary focus in research and practice (Ones & Dilchert, 2012; Zaidi & Azmi, 2024).

EGB is a comprehensive concept which comprises in-role conduct, e.g., energy conservation and recycling, and extra-role behaviour, e.g., encouraging green behaviour in others or volunteering in environmental causes (Dumont et al., 2017; Norton et al., 2014). Although individual values and attitudes are clearly important, organisational-level drivers play a decisive role in shaping these actions. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is among the most influential drivers (Ahmed et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2022). Previously regarded as predominantly philanthropic or symbolic, CSR has become a comprehensive concept integrating ethical, social and environmental concerns into company strategy (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Yuan & Cao, 2022).

The history of this multidimensional perspective can be traced to the four-dimensional model of economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities, which formalised CSR as both a strategic and moral requirement (Carroll, 1999). Dahlsrud (2008) further condensed 37 definitions and identified five overlapping dimensions: economic, environmental, social, stakeholder, and voluntariness, supporting the multidimensionality of CSR across contexts. Building on this basis, this paper will take an integrative view of CSR, which mediates between the external social mandate and the internal responsibilities towards employees, and positions CSR as a focal antecedent of the EGB.

CSR research can be classified into three levels: macro (institutional and societal determinants), meso (organisational and strategic practices), and micro (individual perceptions and responses) (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Jones et al., 2017). Macro- and meso-level perspectives have traditionally dominated CSR research. However, micro-CSR is increasingly gaining interest, in particular its implications for employee behaviour, employee engagement and employee well-being (Glavas & Godwin, 2013; Rupp et al., 2006). Nevertheless, the psychological mechanisms and behavioural consequences of CSR at the staff level are disjointed and require further empirical development (Aukhoon et al., 2024; Gond et al., 2017).

Existing studies have examined multiple mediating and moderating mechanisms through which CSR influences EGB, including identification-based (Sabokro et al., 2021; Tian & Robertson, 2019), motivational, psychological (Afsar & Umrani, 2020; Jiang et al., 2025), and leadership-related factors (Rahman Khattak et al., 2021; Vlachos et al., 2013). While these studies demonstrate the behavioural relevance of CSR, the field remains fragmented across constructs, theories, and contexts (Ansari & Irfan, 2023; De Roeck & Farooq, 2018; Gond et al., 2017). As a result, current knowledge remains dispersed, limiting a comprehensive understanding of how organisational CSR strategies, managerial systems, and employee-level psychological processes interact in shaping green behaviour in the workplace.

This fragmentation is also reflected in the current review context. Previous review studies have primarily focused on CSR, sustainability, employee outcomes, or hospitality management separately (e.g., Cvetkoska et al., 2025; Low & Siegel, 2020; Peng et al., 2023; Trinh et al., 2025), rather than conceptualising the CSR–EGB nexus as a distinct intellectual domain. Consequently, the literature still lacks a comprehensive synthesis capable of integrating the dominant themes, theoretical orientations, and research streams shaping CSR–EGB scholarship.

To address this gap, this study offers a systematic bibliometric review of the CSR–EGB literature from 2005 to 2025. Using a combination of performance analysis and science mapping, the study aims to (1) examine the intellectual structure and development of CSR–EGB research; (2) identify influential contributors, dominant themes, and commonly used theoretical perspectives within the field; (3) suggest a research agenda that

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contributes to theoretical knowledge and practice; and (4) provide implications for managers, HR practitioners, and policymakers to promote green behaviour among employees through CSR initiatives.

Beyond providing a descriptive bibliometric overview, this study contributes theoretically by explaining the intellectual structure of CSR–EGB research and synthesising fragmented findings from organisational, managerial, and psychological perspectives. The review also discusses the dominant theoretical directions shaping the field and highlights key conceptual and contextual gaps for future CSR–EGB scholarship.

To achieve these goals, we respond to the research questions as follows:

RQ1: Which are the major intellectual frames, patterns of publication, and the contributors in CSR–EGB literature in the past 20 years?

RQ2: Which theories, central themes, and methodological strategies are most frequently used in the CSR–EGB literature?

RQ3: What research gaps exist in the current CSR–EGB literature, and what future directions can advance the field?

RQ4: What practical implications does CSR–EGB research hold for managers, HR professionals, and policymakers?

We use bibliometric methods with the Scopus database to examine the development of CSR–EGB scholarship systematically. The remainder of the paper describes the methodology, presents performance analysis and science-mapping findings, and discusses critical thematic clusters. We then elaborate on the findings, practical and policy implications, and conclude by suggesting a future research agenda for this fast-developing area.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

The paper utilises bibliometric analysis to investigate systematically the intellectual structure, thematic development, and research trends in the field linking CSR and EGB. Bibliometric techniques are highly effective in synthesising large amounts of scientific output and enabling reproducible, quantitative assessments of literature development over time (Donthu et al., 2021). Compared with traditional narrative reviews, bibliometric methods provide greater objectivity, clearer replicability, and the ability to visualise knowledge structures, showing how themes arise, develop, and overlap.

This study involves two parts of the bibliometric analysis. First, performance analysis identifies the most productive and influential authors, journals, institutions, and countries. Second, science mapping reveals intellectual, social, and conceptual structures by examining co-authorship, co-word, and co-citation patterns. Together, these components provide a multi-level understanding of how CSR encourages employees to behave pro-environmentally, an increasingly important concern for corporate sustainability strategies.

While several bibliometric studies on CSR have relied on the Web of Science (Peng et al., 2023) or combined databases to broaden coverage and enable cross-validation (Trinh et al., 2025), this study intentionally uses Scopus alone to ensure methodological consistency and replicability. Scopus has extensive disciplinary coverage, high-quality metadata, and good integration with bibliometric tools, especially in the disciplines covered in this review: organisational behaviour, sustainability management, and employee psychology (van Eck & Waltman, 2014). Compared with Web of Science, Scopus generally provides broader coverage of journals in business, management, hospitality, and social sciences, which are core disciplinary areas within CSR–EGB research. Although combining databases may increase the overall number of records, it may also introduce duplicate records and inconsistencies in citation formats across databases, which can affect network consistency and reproducibility (Donthu et al., 2021). For these reasons, Scopus provides a coherent and reliable platform for mapping the intellectual structure of CSR–EGB research.

The PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021) are also applied in this review, using a transparent process to identify four phases of screening, eligibility, and inclusion that underpin the rigour and replicability of the article selection process. On the whole, with this design, it is possible to have a final, data-driven evaluation of a CSR–EGB research landscape and a clear platform upon which research direction in future can be established.

2.2. Data collection and analytical procedures

In light of the study's objectives, a systematic keyword strategy was employed to search the Scopus database through June 25, 2025 (2005-2025) to identify literature on the relationship between CSR and EGB. This step is used to guarantee transparency, replicability, and adherence to best practices in bibliometric research (Donthu et al., 2021).

To increase the breadth and depth of coverage, we developed a three-pillar search strategy to capture different dimensions of CSR-related environmental behaviour among employees, with keyword selection informed by established bibliometric domain-analysis principles (Chen & Xiao, 2016). TITLE-ABS-KEY fields of the Scopus database used as searches were restricted by the year 2005-2025 and only English-language journal articles and reviews. The search strategy encompassed into three thematic pillars representing different dimensions of CSR-related employee environmental behaviour:

Pillar 1: ("corporate social responsibility" OR CSR) AND (employee* OR worker* OR staff) AND ("green behaviour" OR "pro-environmental behaviour")

Pillar 2: ("corporate social responsibility" OR CSR) AND ("green initiatives" OR "green engagement" OR "green advocacy")

Pillar 3: ("corporate social responsibility" OR CSR) AND ("workplace green behaviour" OR "organisational green behaviour" OR "pro-environmental workplace behaviour")

The use of such a strategy led to 174 records (pillar 1), 7 records (pillar 2), and 230 records (pillar 3). After merging and eliminating duplicates and non-English records, 291 distinct records remained. These records were further filtered to exclude conference proceedings, book chapters, and retracted articles in order to maintain consistency in publication type and ensure comparability across peer-reviewed journal articles. The exclusion of conference proceedings and book chapters may have limited the inclusion of emerging discussions and recently developing themes within CSR–EGB scholarship. Following this refinement, 265 eligible journal articles remained.

Subsequently, abstracts (and full texts if needed) were screened to retain only studies that explicitly examined how organisational CSR initiatives relate to or stimulate employees' green or pro-environmental

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behaviour in workplace settings. Three researchers performed the screening independently and resolved discrepancies through discussion and consensus, resulting in a final dataset of 243 articles.

For transparency and replicability, we present the main VOSviewer settings used for all visualisations: version 1.6.20, full counting, and association-strength normalisation. For keyword co-occurrence (author keywords), the minimum occurrence threshold was set to three; for country-level co-authorship, the minimum number of documents per country was set to one. The PRISMA 2020 protocol (Page et al., 2021) guided the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion steps; with counts recorded for each stage above and a flow diagram presented in Figure 1.

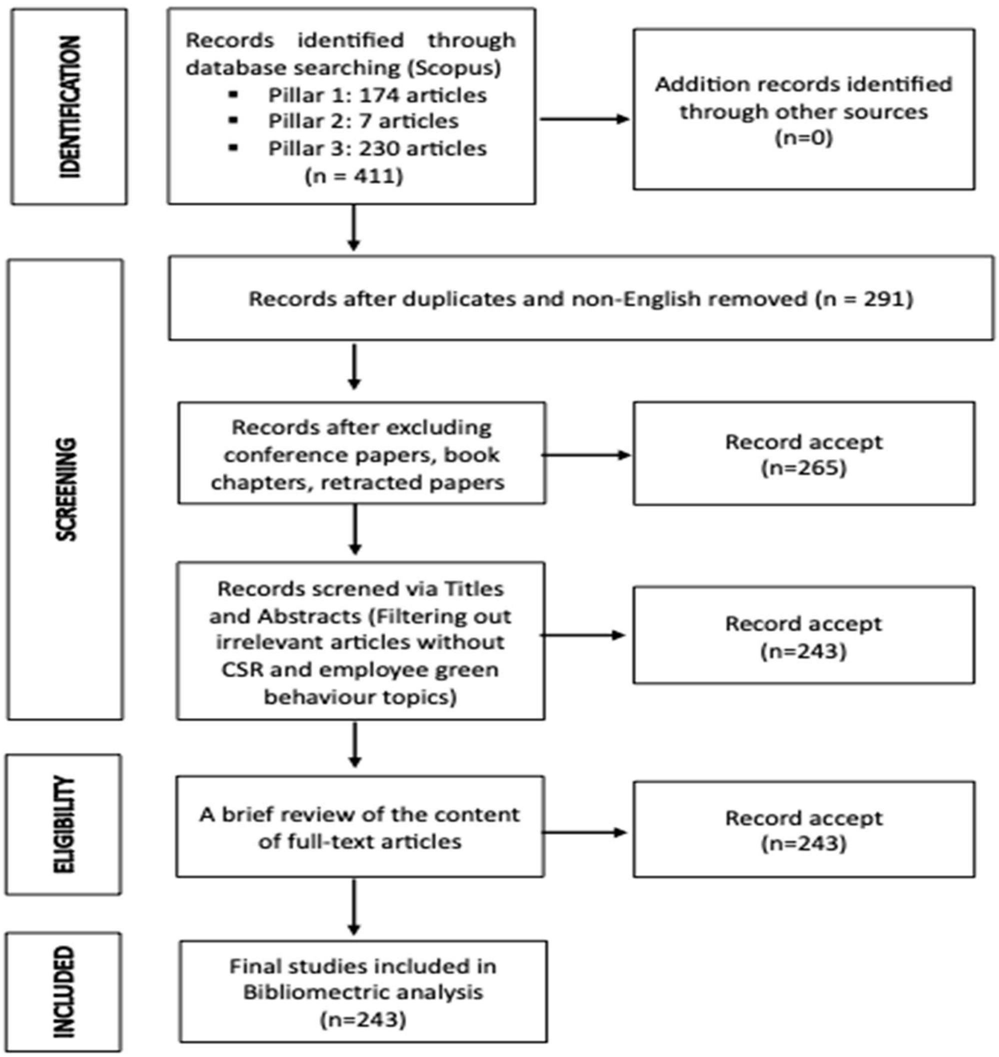

Figure 1. The procedure of the Bibliometric review using the PRISMA flow diagram

Source: Author's construction based on PRISMA flow diagram

3. Bibliometric analysis results

3.1. General descriptive analysis

This section presents a bibliometric overview of research articles exploring the link between CSR and EGB published from 2005 to 2025. The search window started in 2005; however, the first relevant publication was in 2009. Academic interest in the field has since been on an upward trend, driven by growing awareness of environmental sustainability in the workplace.

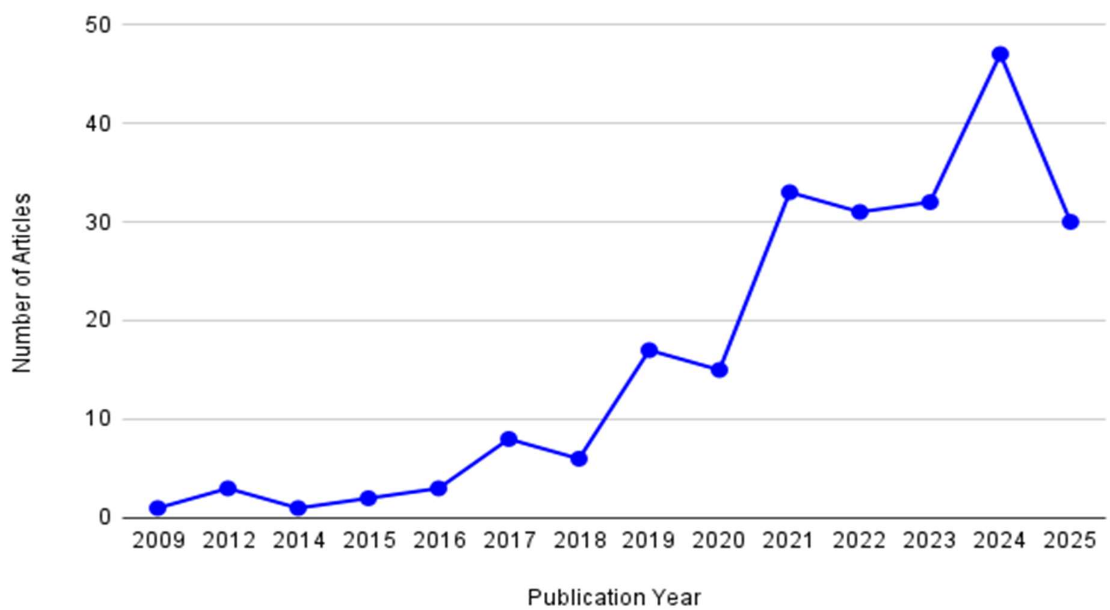

Figure 2. Annual publication trends on CSR and Employee green behaviour

Source: Authors' analysis

The trend of annual publication (Figure 2) indicates a slight increase in the first years, and the publications are distributed in single figures until 2015. This happened particularly in 2016, and thereafter, annual production remained higher but more turbulent. There were 47 publications in 2024, the highest number in the year. Already, in the first half of 2025, 30 articles were published, and 32 in 2023, which means a powerful recent movement.

There are only a couple of years with decreased output, 2020 and 2022. The number of publications registered each year since 2017 has been in double digits, with slight variation, indicating that academic interest in the CSR–EGB relationship is stable and increasing. Over 35 percent of all publications in the dataset are from the last three years (2023-2025), emphasizing the topic's growing significance. A more detailed look at the dynamics of the publications in the past five years is presented in Figure 3.

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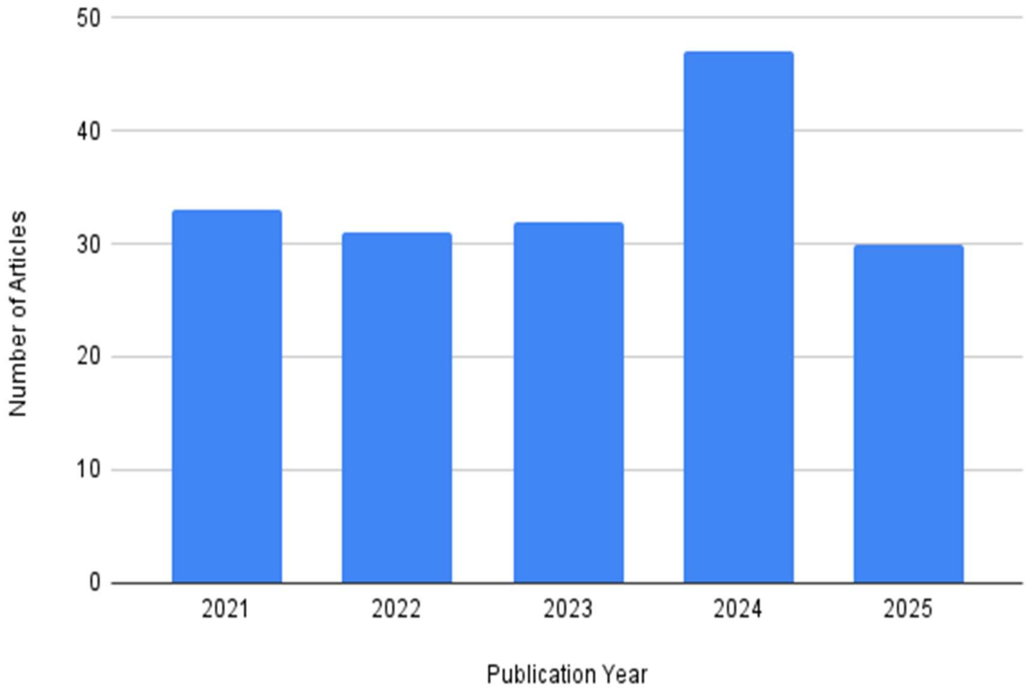

Figure 3. Latest publication trends on CSR and employee green behaviour

Source: Authors' analysis

The articles investigating the relationship between CSR and employee EGB have been published in 127 distinct journals. To identify the most influential publication outlets in this research area, we applied four criteria: (1) the highest number of total citations received by the journal based on relevant publications, (2) the highest number of CSR–EGB articles published in the journal, (3) the highest SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) (2024 release), and (4) the most recent Impact Factor (2025 release). The first and second criteria were derived from bibliometric data collected via Scopus-indexed publications. The third and fourth indicators were retrieved from the publicly accessible portal SCImago Journal and Country Rank (SCImago, 2024) and Clarivate Journal Citation Reports (2025), respectively.

Following this multi-criteria analysis, Table 1 presents the top ten journals in which CSR- and EGB-related articles have been published. The *Journal of Business Ethics* stands out with the highest total citation count (1,090) and the strongest total link strength (43,552), establishing itself as a central publication in this field. *Sustainability (Switzerland)* published the most pertinent articles (31), indicating the platform's popularity among sustainability researchers in terms of productivity. The *Journal of Management* has the highest SCImago Journal Rank (SJR = 7.213) and a strong Impact Factor (9.0 in the 2023 release), indicating high academic prestige and journal quality. Critical academic outlets for the CSR-EGB scholarship are journals like *Business Strategy and the Environment*, *Corporate Social Responsibility & Environmental Management*, and *Journal of Cleaner Production*, which combine a high citation impact with robust index-based rankings.

Table 1. Top 10 journals where CSR and employee green behaviour articles are published

Journal	Citations	Published Articles	Total Link Strength	SJR (2024)	Impact Factor (Latest)
Journal of Business Ethics	1090	12	43552	2.624 (Q1)	6.7 (2025)
Journal of Cleaner Production	720	7	27455	1.981	10.0 (2025)
Sustainability (Switzerland)	662	31	24739	0.672 (Q1)	3.3 (2024)
Corporate Social Responsibility & Environmental Management	354	16	16958	2.134 (Q1)	9.1 (2025)
International Journal of Hospitality Management	234	6	12938	2.928 (Q1)	8.3 (2025)
Journal of Organisational Behavior	190	5	10463	3.804 (Q1)	6.8 (2022)
Business Strategy and the Environment	185	8	8002	3.666 (Q1)	13.3 (2025)
Journal of Management	173	11	9537	7.213 (Q1)	9.0 (2023)
Journal of Environmental Psychology	173	3	8422	2.208 (Q1)	7.0 (2024)
Journal of Business Research	169	4	8167	3.499 (Q1)	10.5 (2023)

Source: Authors' analysis

To identify the most influential contributors in the CSR–EGB domain, we focused on the most-cited authors whose work was published in reputable peer-reviewed journals specialising in sustainability, organisational behaviour, and corporate responsibility. As shown in Figure 4, the analysis revealed the ten most-cited authors based on cumulative citations. Notably, Ahmad and Afsar are among the few scholars who co-authored multiple studies that have become central to the literature, underscoring their lasting academic influence on employee green behaviour and micro-level CSR research.

Of the 243 identified articles examining the relationship between CSR and EGB, 208 have been cited at least once, accounting for 85.6% of the total sample. This indicates a strong level of scholarly engagement with the CSR–EGB nexus. Table 2 shows the ten most cited articles, which have received substantial scholarly attention within the CSR–EGB literature. Su and Swanson (2019) published the most cited article in the dataset, which has received 319 citations. The article is widely referenced in subsequent CSR–EGB studies, particularly within hospitality and employee green behaviour research. Seven of the top ten articles were written by two to three people working together, reflecting a common pattern of co-authorship within the field. This pattern suggests the important role of collaborative research in advancing CSR–EGB scholarship.

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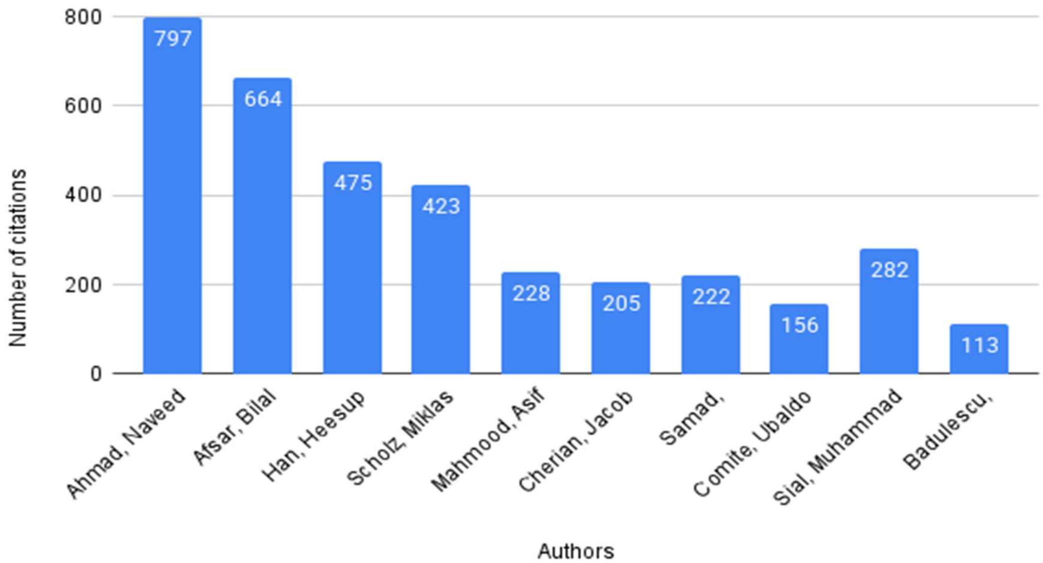

Figure 4. Top 10 most-cited authors in CSR and employee green behaviour

Source: Authors' analysis

Table 2. Top 10 cited articles on CSR and employee green behaviour

Title	Journal	Authors	Year	Citation Count
Perceived corporate social responsibility's impact on the well-being and supportive green behaviors of hotel employees: The mediating role of the employee-corporate relationship.	Tourism Management	Su L.; Swanson S.R.	2019	319
How and When Does Perceived CSR Affect Employees' Engagement in Voluntary Pro-environmental Behavior?	Journal of Business Ethics	Tian Q.; Robertson J.L.	2019	292
Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethical Leadership: Investigating Their Interactive Effect on Employees' Socially Responsible Behaviors.	Journal of Business Ethics	De Roeck K.; Farooq O.	2018	282
Corporate social responsibility and pro-environmental behavior at workplace: The role of moral reflectiveness, coworker advocacy, and environmental commitment.	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	Afsar B.; Umrani W.A.	2020	259

Title	Journal	Authors	Year	Citation Count
Impact of CSR and environmental triggers on employee green behavior: The mediating effect of employee well-being.	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	Ahmed M.; Zehou S.; Raza S.A.; Qureshi M.A.; Yousufi S.Q.	2020	230
Relationship between corporate social responsibility at the micro-level and environmental performance: The mediating role of employee pro-environmental behavior and the moderating role of gender.	Sustainable Production and Consumption	Ahmad N.; Ullah Z.; Arshad M.Z.; Kamran H.W.; Scholz M.; Han H.	2021	226
Examining the relationship between corporate social responsibility, performance, employees' pro-environmental behavior at work with green practices as mediator.	Journal of Cleaner Production	Suganthi L.	2019	213
Pro-environmental behaviour in the workplace and the role of managers and organization.	Journal of Cleaner Production	Wesselink R.; Blok V.; Ringersma J.	2017	206
Employees' corporate social responsibility perceptions and organisational citizenship behaviors for the environment: The mediating roles of organisational identification and environmental orientation fit.	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	Cheema S.; Afsar B.; Javed F.	2020	203
Activating employee's pro-environmental behaviors: The role of CSR, organisational identification, and environmentally specific servant leadership.	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	Afsar B.; Cheema S.; Javed F.	2018	202

Source: Authors' analysis

3.2. Co-authorship analysis based on countries

Figure 5 presents a country-level co-authorship network generated with VOSviewer. The map includes 61 countries, each represented by a circle whose size corresponds to the number of publications, and the thickness of connecting lines depicts the strength of co-authorship links. In line with van Eck and Waltman (2014), shorter distances and thicker lines indicate stronger collaborative ties.

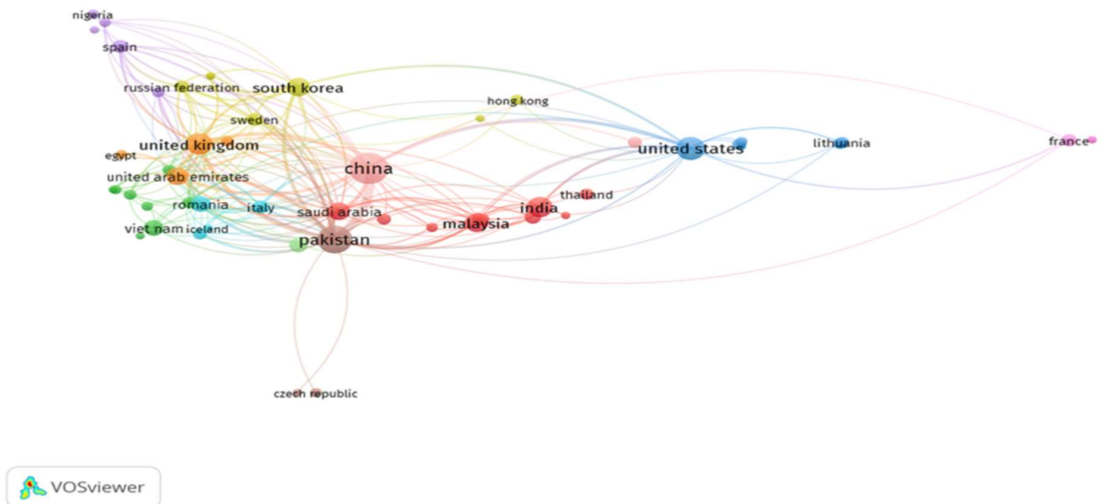

Figure 5. Network visualization of country-level co-authorship articles

Source: Authors' analysis

The clusters are pointed out using colour-coded groupings. China, Pakistan, and the United States are at the middle of the logarithmic scale based on the number of publications and the level of cooperation. China has good co-authorship relations with Pakistan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Pakistan works in collaboration with Italy, Romania and Australia. America has strong international partnerships with China, India, Malaysia, and South Korea. Examples of cross-regional interaction include countries like Romania, Italy, and Pakistan, which form one cluster, and South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the Russian Federation, which form another

As shown in Table 3, China has the highest position with 85 publications in the list of 10 contributing countries, with Pakistan as the next (57), America (34), the United Kingdom (27) and South Korea (18). The list is topped up by India (23), Saudi Arabia (16), the United Arab Emirates (14), Australia (9) and Sweden (6). Despite China producing the most publications, Pakistan follows suit. It shows better results in terms of citations and international cooperation, indicating its growing influence in CSR-EGB.

Some countries, such as South Korea, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia, have many publications, yet not as many as others. However, they have strong co-authorship links, indicating well-established collaboration networks. For example, Saudi Arabia has a total link strength of 45, which is higher than that of countries with more documents but weaker network positioning. In explanation, the academic impact and visibility depend on collaboration, not just the amount of work done.

Table 3. Top 10 countries with published articles on CSR and employee green behaviour (based on total citations)

Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
Pakistan	57	2982	106
China	85	2629	90

Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
United States	34	1698	24
United Kingdom	27	1429	43
South Korea	18	1104	34
India	23	737	10
Australia	9	592	12
United Arab Emirates	14	512	31
Sweden	6	473	22
Saudi Arabia	16	452	45

Source: Authors' analysis

In general, the network shows that research is becoming more global. Countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe are working together on both regional and cross-continental levels. This shows how important CSR and environmentally friendly behaviour among employees are becoming in international academic discussions.

3.3. Keywords Co-occurrence network analysis

This section presents the distribution of keywords within each cluster during the analysis period, based on the terms found in the 243 articles indexed in Scopus. Prior to the co-occurrence analysis, a manual data-cleaning process was implemented to standardize similar keywords and merge spelling variations and synonymous terms (e.g., "behavior" and "behaviour") in order to improve consistency in the keyword mapping process. A systematic collection and filtering of author keywords was then performed using a minimum occurrence threshold of three, which helped exclude infrequent keywords while retaining conceptually relevant terms related to the main research themes. This plan has helped identify the major research hotspots across the entire review period. The visualization using VOSviewer (Figure 6) identified a network of 58 keywords and 250 links, which has a combined link strength of 768. The mapping can reveal conceptually consistent patterns in the literature and help identify established and emerging issues.

The larger circles in the visualization indicate more frequent keywords, and shorter lines and line thickness indicate stronger conceptual relationships (van Eck & Waltman, 2014). To make the labels more readable, others were left out. Representative keywords within each cluster were identified based on keyword frequency, co-occurrence link strength, and conceptual relevance within the network structure generated by VOSviewer. Keywords related to country contexts and methodologies were retained, providing a comprehensive view of the field's theoretical and practical variety. These procedures provide a systematic basis for the subsequent cluster-based content analysis, which examines in more detail the thematic patterns, theoretical orientations, and emerging opportunities identified through this bibliometric review. The analysis groups the most frequent keywords into eight thematic clusters (described in Table 4). The thematic labels for

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each cluster were derived interpretatively from the dominant keywords and the conceptual linkages identified among the grouped terms.

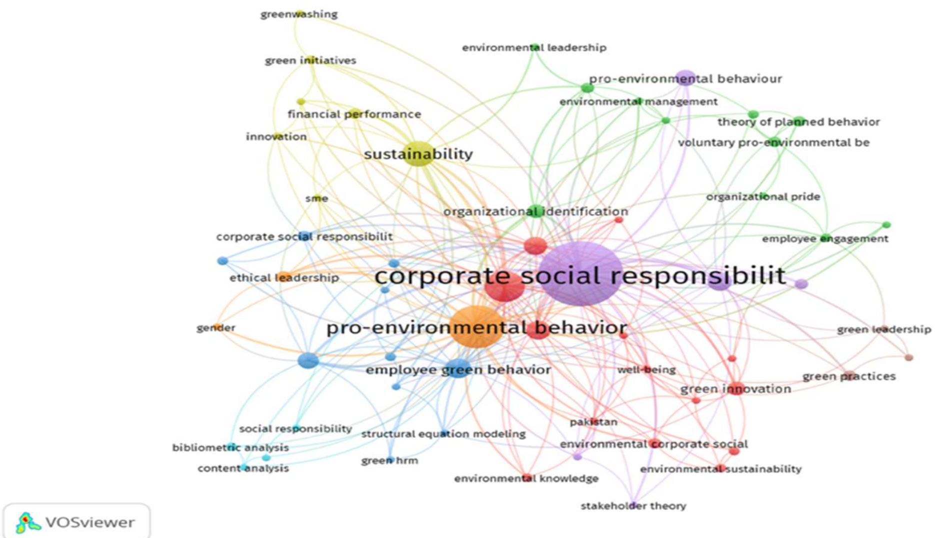

Figure 6. Keyword co-occurrence network of CSR and employee green behaviour

Source: Authors' analysis

The bibliometric mapping reveals eight interconnected theme clusters that define the conceptual structure of CSR–EGB research. Cluster 1 relates CSR to innovation, sustainability and employee well-being, especially in the hospitality and other service industries. Cluster 2 examines the psychological and motivational determinants of pro-environmental action using theoretical frameworks, such as the theory of planned behaviour and organisational identity. Cluster 3 was related to social identity theory, cultural contexts and values, and included a large number of studies from China and research on green HRM. Cluster 4 deals with contradictions between financial performance and sustainability, including greenwashing and concerns for SMEs. Cluster 5 emphasizes green organisational culture and alignment with stakeholders, as well as the notions of green HRM and shared vision. Cluster 6 includes many methodological approaches, as it represents the increasing use of bibliometric and content analysis, as well as social media data, to trace CSR scholarship. Cluster 7 focuses on the moral and ethical scope, investigating the roles of ethical leadership and gender in the development of green behaviours. Lastly, Cluster 8 links green practices and leadership with enhanced organisational performance, with a focus on sustainable leadership as a strategic result generator.

Table 4. Overview of keyword clusters identified in the CSR–EGB literature

No. of cluster	Main keywords	Key themes
1 (red)	*CSR, environmental commitment, green innovation, sustainable development, hospitality*	Linking CSR to innovation, sustainability, and employee well-being, especially in service industries

No. of cluster	Main keywords	Key themes
2 (green)	*climate change, employee engagement, theory of planned behaviour, organisational identification*	Psychological and motivational drivers of pro-environmental actions, explaining belief-to-action mechanisms
3 (blue)	*social identity theory, environmental performance, China, green HRM*	The role of social/moral values, cultural contexts, and group identity in adopting green behaviour
4 (yellow)	*sustainability, financial performance, greenwashing, SMEs, innovation*	Tensions between green claims and financial performance, and authenticity risks
5 (purple)	*green HRM, stakeholder theory, green shared vision*	Developing a green-oriented organisational culture and stakeholder alignment
6 (cyan)	*bibliometric analysis, content analysis, social media*	Analytical and methodological approaches to map CSR research evolution
7 (dark pink)	*ethical leadership, gender, pro-environmental behaviour*	Moral leadership styles and gender dynamics in fostering green workplace behaviour
8 (brown)	*organisational performance, green practices, green leadership*	Sustainable leadership as a pathway to improved business outcomes

Source: Authors' analysis

The co-occurrence analysis, therefore, pinpoints eight thematic groups with extensive theoretical and contextual aspects of the CSR–EGB study. Taken together, these clusters provide an integrated overview of the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of CSR–EGB research. They also serve as the analytical foundation for the subsequent interpretive synthesis, which consolidates the identified themes into three broader theoretical orientations: moral-relational, managerial-behavioural, and cognitive-intentional perspectives.

4. Discussion

4.1. Content analysis: a review of the literature on corporate social responsibility and green behaviour

Based on the eight thematic clusters identified above, this section moves beyond descriptive mapping to provide an interpretive synthesis of the theoretical processes linking CSR and EGB. The co-occurrence analysis presented in Section 3.3 helped identify thematic relationships, conceptual overlaps, and emerging research directions within the CSR–EGB literature. Building upon these thematic connections, the following discussion synthesizes the identified themes into three broader intellectual perspectives: moral-relational, managerial-behavioural, and cognitive-intentional. Several "bridge" keywords, such as leadership, innovation, green HRM, and organisational identification, lie at the intersection of these clusters, signalling interdisciplinary connections between moral, managerial, and cognitive research traditions in the CSR–EGB domain.

Moral-relational tradition

The tradition regards CSR as a moral and interpersonal process through which organizations build trust, fairness and purpose among the workers. This stream, based on social exchange theory (SET) and social identity theory (SIT), views CSR as a psychological contract that elicits feelings of reciprocity, belonging, and organisational identification (De Roeck & Farooq, 2018; Kim et al., 2019). When employees believe their organizations to be socially responsible, they internalize this and make it part of their moral identity. They engage in green behaviours voluntarily, even when they do not have to. CSR intentions are transformed into specific actions through mediation processes that include perceived organisational justice and psychological climate (Ahmad et al., 2021). This moral reciprocity reinforces the CSR–EGB relationship in the hospitality context, where the collectivist norms and sensitivity to interpersonal relations are typically dominant (Tian & Robertson, 2019). Ethical leadership and moral identity are also among the recent studies that examine the relational channels through which CSR values are instilled in daily organisational operations (Afsar & Umrani, 2020).

Managerial-behavioural tradition

The second line of research adopts CSR as a set of organisational practices that define how sustainability values can be integrated into the daily work life. The study, based on the frameworks of behavioural management and human resources, shows that CSR may provide a managerial basis to embed environmental responsibility into policies and routines (Raza et al., 2021; Sabokro et al., 2021). Employees feel engaged and empowered through CSR-related activities such as responsible leadership, green HRM and a shared sustainability vision. Thus, they are motivated to introduce innovation and resilience into organizations (Ahmad et al., 2021). Simultaneously, recent discussions have highlighted conflicts between authentic and performative CSR, with symbolic practices or greenwashing diminishing worker trust and reducing anticipated behavioural outcomes (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). Those problems are identified as research directions emerging in the sphere of CSR–EGB and should be investigated in more detail.

In practice, and notably in the hotel industry, where CSR signals are especially vulnerable, CSR can be utilised as a strategic way to harmonise the quality of service, the employee well-being, and environmental performance, and at the same time, as an ethical base. Nevertheless, the bulk of the evidence is derived from East Asian settings, raising concerns about the cultural generalisability and the need to examine the dynamics of CSR–EGB in under-researched countries (Farooq et al., 2022).

Cognitive-intentional tradition

The third and stronger tradition is concerned with cognitive and motivational processes which elucidate how the perceptions of CSR become transformed into green behaviour. Based on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), social cognitive theory, and norm activation theory, the stream focuses on the role of the attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and green self-efficacy of employees mediating the CSR–EGB relationship (Su & Swanson, 2019; Tian & Robertson, 2019). CSR is therefore presented as not only a social cue but a cognitive stimulus and one that drives belief systems and behavioural intentions. Recent studies extend this logic to digital and gamified CSR initiatives that motivate participation in pro-environmental programmes, as well as sustainability-oriented knowledge-management systems that strengthen collective learning and self-efficacy. This tradition is evolving methodologically, frequently employing multilevel modelling and structural equation modelling to depict complex dynamics. These findings collectively suggest that cognition and motivation are important processes that sustain green behavior over time.

Synthesis of three intellectual traditions in CSR–EGB research

Drawing on previous CSR–EGB studies (Farooq et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2025; Song et al., 2026; Su & Swanson, 2019), we employ the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) to integrate the three traditions. Within this view, perceived CSR acts as the stimulus, triggering employees' perceptions of fairness, belonging, and moral meaning; psychological and identity processes constitute the organism that shapes interpretation and motivation; and green behaviour is the response expressed through everyday environmental actions.

Collectively, these traditions show how thinking about CSR–EGB has evolved from moral and relational explanations that describe why employees are driven to act, to managerial and behavioural mechanisms that explain how organisations facilitate and sustain such behaviour, and cognitive–intentional perspectives that clarify how beliefs and self-efficacy convert purpose into action. By embedding SET, SIT, and TPB within an SOR logic, this framework connects micro-level psychological mechanisms with broader organisational systems and ethical orientations, providing a multi-level perspective on how CSR practices influence green behaviour at work.

This synthesis also lays the groundwork for the analysis of future trends, which examines how these intellectual directions evolve across organisational, departmental, and individual levels.

4.2. Emerging themes and recent developments in corporate social responsibility and employee green behaviour research

The overlay visualisation map presented in Figure 7 illustrates the temporal progression of dominant keywords shaping the scholarly landscape.

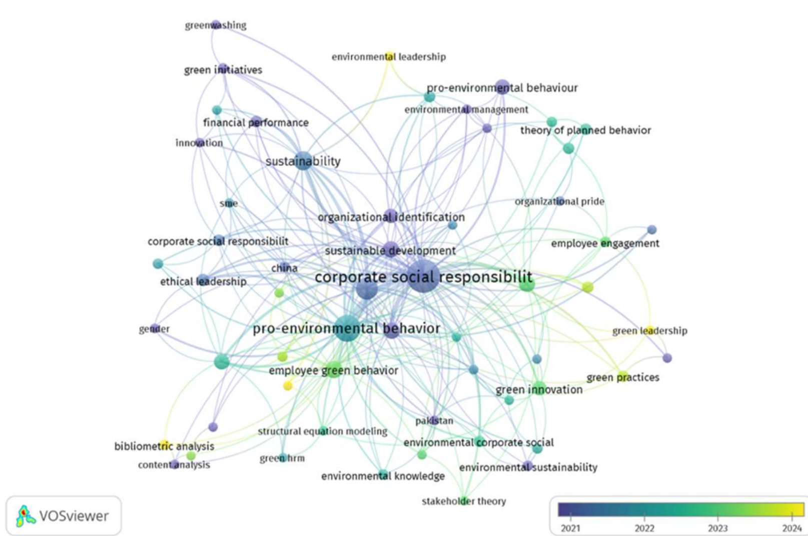

Figure 7. Overlay map of CSR and employee green behaviour keywords co-occurrence

Source: Authors' analysis

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Darker shades represent earlier research streams, while the transition to lighter tones indicates more recent focal points. Notably, in the 2021–2024 period, research has converged on more sophisticated, multi-level themes that provide opportunities to advance theory and practice, some highlighted keywords mentioned such as *green organisational identity*, *green shared vision*, *green innovation*, *green leadership*, *green HRM*, *employee engagement*, *theory of planned behavior*, *personal values*, *green identity*, *stakeholder theory*, *hospitality*, *social media*, *responsible leadership*, *green practices*, *environmental leadership*, and *bibliometric analysis*. Based on recent studies, several emerging themes have gained increasing attention within the CSR–EGB literature.

Future research at the organisational level (meso) should deepen understanding of how green organisational identity and shares sustainability visions are embedded across organisational systems (Raza et al., 2021; Sabokro et al., 2021). Recently, studies suggest that green innovation and stakeholder-orientated CSR practices may strengthen organisational resilience and long-term sustainability capabilities (Ahmad et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2021). This growing emphasis reflects increasing expectations for CSR to move beyond symbolic commitment and become integrated into leadership processes, stakeholder relationships, and everyday organisational practices. Responsible and environmental leadership styles therefore remain important drivers that align employee behaviour with sustainable organisational goals (Alharthi & Alghamdi, 2024). Overall, these developments indicate that CSR–EGB research is gradually shifting toward more integrated organisational approaches to workplace sustainability.

At the middle-management and departmental levels (meso-micro bridge), green HRM and departmental green leadership are increasingly viewed as important mechanisms for embedding sustainability into everyday organisational practices (Alharthi & Alghamdi, 2024; Sabokro et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). This growing emphasis reflects a broader shift from symbolic CSR initiatives toward more institutionalised and participatory forms of sustainability management within departments (Thu & Quynh, 2024). Recent studies also highlight employee engagement and social media-based CSR communication as emerging tools for strengthening knowledge sharing and participation in green initiatives (Min et al., 2024). Taken together, these developments suggest that departmental CSR research is gradually moving toward more integrated approaches that connect leadership, employee engagement, and sustainability-orientated organisational routines.

At the micro level (individual level), psychological and behavioural mechanisms remain an important research frontier within CSR–EGB scholarship. Recent studies increasingly emphasise personal green identity, self-efficacy, moral emotions, and voluntary green citizenship as important drivers of employee green behaviour (He et al., 2021; Min et al., 2024; Raza et al., 2021; Sabokro et al., 2021). This growing attention reflects a broader shift toward understanding green behaviour as a psychologically embedded and value-driven process shaped by both organisational and individual influences. Mixed and longitudinal approaches may therefore provide deeper insight into how these cognitive and emotional mechanisms sustain green behaviour over time.

Hospitality remains a salient empirical context due to its high employee turnover, customer-facing service environment, and increasing sustainability pressures (AlSuwaidi et al., 2021; He et al., 2021). However, CSR–EGB research remains concentrated in a limited number of countries, while emerging economies such as Vietnam, Bangladesh, Romania, and Malaysia continue to receive comparatively less attention (Maniu et al., 2021; Patwary et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2024; Vu et al., 2025). Greater comparative research across under-represented regions and non-service sectors may improve contextual generalisability and contribute to more context-sensitive models of CSR-driven employee behaviour. This diversification also reflects the growing integration of CSR initiatives into digital workplaces, hybrid work systems, and broader ESG-orientated organisational practices.

Taken together, the overlay map indicates that the CSR–EGB research is heading toward multi-level integration, in which organisational strategy, departmental systems, and individual psychology are considered parts of a green ecosystem. Future studies may further focus on new settings, new analytical techniques (e.g., machine-learning-based bibliometrics), and inter-level theoretical synthesis to enhance conceptual rigour and managerial relevance.

4.3. Research gaps and future direction in corporate social responsibility and green behaviour

Based on the previous analysis of keyword co-occurrence and content, this study review shows both advancements and current shortcomings in understanding the connection between CSR and EGB. Despite the significant increase in studies on this subject, there are still a few critical gaps.

To begin with, although hospitality and tourism remain the dominant research contexts, existing studies mainly focus on large or luxury hotel chains and culturally specific environments (Farooq et al., 2017). Smaller firms and frontline employees remain comparatively underexplored despite their important role in translating CSR initiatives into everyday green practices (Kim et al., 2019). Research beyond hospitality is also still limited, particularly in environmentally intensive sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare, and education. This concentration suggests that the CSR- EGB scholarship has largely evolved in customer-facing service settings, where employee behaviour becomes highly visible in sustainability implementation and service delivery.

Second, the research on CSR–EGB is still geographically concentrated in a few Asian countries, especially China, Pakistan and South Korea (Ahmad et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2019). This regional concentration may reflect the effects of collectivist cultural contexts and relational organisational norms, where social identification and interpersonal dynamics have a greater impact on employee green behaviour. In contrast, research in Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America is relatively limited. In Vietnam, for example, CSR–EGB studies remain scarce and are still largely concentrated in hospitality settings despite increasing sustainability pressures and green transformation initiatives (Farooq et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2025).

Third, the use of keywords indicates that the research remains inclined toward well-developed concepts such as green human resource management, sustainability, and ethical leadership. These are definitely critical themes, but others, such as diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), gamification, and greenwashing, are only lightly addressed (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). Greater attention to these new areas can be more systematic, helping to understand how CSR programmes can be more participatory and captivating and possibly involve hybrid or remote workplaces. Still, empirical evidence remains scarce (Aukhoon et al., 2024).

Fourth, the connections among CSR, knowledge management, and green innovation are becoming increasingly popular. This indicates a research frontier in which digital CSR campaigns, shared learning, and eco-innovation initiatives can contribute to more sustainable employee behaviours (Jabbour & Jabbour, 2016; Kim et al., 2019). But even most studies rely on cross-sectional surveys, which limit understanding of dynamics over time. This methodological concentration may also constrain the field’s ability to explain how employee green behaviour evolves, stabilises, or changes in response to long-term CSR implementation. Qualitative, ethnographic, and longitudinal research designs may thus generate a more in-depth view of how green innovation, as facilitated by CSR, unfolds in practice and day-to-day work practices.

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Fifth, researchers have primarily relied on SET, SIT, and TBP, and more recent studies have invoked the social cognitive theory (De Roeck & Farooq, 2018). These models have been used to describe how the perception of CSR can motivate workers, but they are commonly utilised in isolation, which might reduce their effectiveness in capturing complexities (Rupp et al., 2013). As a result, the current literature still struggles to explain how organisational CSR practices, social pressures, leadership influences, and employees' cognitive processes interact to shape green behaviour across different organisational contexts. Future theorising may therefore benefit from integrating these perspectives with broader approaches such as institutional logics and stakeholder-salience theory (Afsar & Umrani, 2020; Aguinis & Glavas, 2012).

5. Conclusion

This review sought to provide a synthesised and coordinated understanding of the relationship between CSR and EGB through a combination of bibliometric analysis and in-depth content review. Using Scopus-indexed literature, the study mapped the intellectual structure, thematic development, and emerging directions of CSR–EGB scholarship.

The findings indicate that CSR–EGB research has expanded rapidly in recent years, particularly within hospitality and tourism contexts. The literature remains strongly associated with themes such as sustainability, green human resource management, and ethical leadership, while newer issues such as DEI, gamification, and greenwashing are beginning to receive increasing scholarly attention. More broadly, the review suggests that CSR–EGB scholarship is gradually evolving toward a more integrated and multi-level understanding of workplace sustainability, where organisational systems, leadership processes, and employee psychology are increasingly examined as interconnected dimensions of green behaviour.

5.1. Implications

The review suggests several implications for managers, HR practitioners, and policymakers to transform CSR initiatives into substantial and sustainable EGB. CSR initiatives that are suitable for employees' values, such as sustainability, fairness, and inclusive practices, may help strengthen organisational belonging, trust, and voluntary green behaviour. In this sense, organizations should foster environments where employees feel connected to broader ethical and sustainability goals.

In the hospitality and tourism industry, frontline employees play a crucial role in the implementation and credibility of CSR initiatives (Kim et al., 2019). Therefore, the development of more participatory and empowering sustainability programmes could be advantageous to managers and HR practitioners, as this would allow employees to take an active role in shaping green activities and workplace practices. Such approaches may contribute to trust, organisational legitimacy and long-term commitment towards sustainability goals (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). Moreover, technology-based CSR campaigns, gamified projects, and digital knowledge-sharing systems may contribute to maintaining employee engagement in green behaviour in hybrid or remote workplaces (Jabbour & Jabbour, 2016; Kim et al., 2019).

From a research perspective, CSR–EGB scholarship remains concentrated in a limited number of countries, particularly China, Pakistan, and South Korea (Ahmad et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2019), while Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America remain comparatively underexplored (Farooq et al., 2017; Hong et al., 2024). Future studies may therefore examine how local regulations, cultural practices, and stakeholder pressures influence employees' green behaviour across different contexts. Greater attention should also be given to non-service sectors such as healthcare and manufacturing, where CSR initiatives may operate differently from hospitality settings. Finally, the dominance of cross-sectional survey designs and single-theory approaches suggests the need for more longitudinal, ethnographic, and theoretically integrated perspectives to better explain how organisational systems, social pressures, and individual motivations interact in shaping CSR-driven green behaviour (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Rupp et al., 2013).

5.2. Limitations

This review is not without limitations. First, the bibliometric and content analyses provided a systematic, comprehensive method for covering the literature on CSR-EGB. It is based on Scopus indexing, which is exhaustive but may nevertheless fail to capture the coverage of studies published in non-indexed or localised journals. As a consequence, some of the local or practice-based views might be under-represented.

Second, this review was limited to articles in English. Even though English is used as a global academic language, this will necessarily introduce bias into the language, and valuable research published in other languages would be omitted, especially in places where CSR and green behaviour are heavily dependent on local culture. Future research may use multilingual databases to develop an inclusive perspective.

Third, bibliometric measures (e.g., the presence of a keyword, citation frequency, etc.) cannot reflect the depth of scholarly discussions. Writers may choose specific keywords or resources based on personal connections, institutional demands, or academic trends, which can bring about bias. To reduce potential bias, the study employed multiple search pillars, independent screening by multiple researchers, manual standardization of keywords and transparent inclusion criteria as per the PRISMA framework. Moreover, artificial impact can be artificially generated by self-citations (Zupic & Čater, 2015).

Fourth, keyword clustering does not readily reflect the changes in the research terrain on a year-by-year basis but only highlights broad thematic patterns in the research environment. CSR–EGB is a developing sphere, and monitoring changes in themes, theoretical frameworks, or research questions annually may help the researcher understand its dynamic development. This gap might be filled by using temporal bibliometric methods.

Finally, given the interdisciplinary and socially embedded nature of CSR–EGB research, quantitative bibliometric techniques alone may not provide a sufficiently nuanced understanding of the field. Future research may therefore combine bibliometric analysis with qualitative content analysis or critical interpretive synthesis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of CSR–EGB scholarship (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

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