

Comparative Bibliometric Analysis of Social Responsibility Related Literature in Romania and Hungary

Tomina Saveanu¹, Daniel Badulescu² and Mirabela Matei³

¹⁾²⁾³⁾ *University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania.*

E-mail: tsaveanu@uoradea.ro; E-mail: dbadulescu@uoradea.ro

E-mail: mmatei@uoradea.ro

Please cite this paper as:

Saveanu, T., Badulescu, D. and Matei, M., 2022. Comparative Bibliometric Analysis of Social Responsibility Related Literature in Romania and Hungary. In: R. Pamfilie, V. Dinu, C. Vasiliu, D. Pleșea, L. Tăchiciu eds. 2022. *8th BASIQ International Conference on New Trends in Sustainable Business and Consumption*. Graz, Austria, 25-27 May 2022. Bucharest: ASE, pp.320-327.

DOI: 10.24818/BASIQ/2022/08/042

Abstract

This paper investigates the trends in the publications on social responsibility in a comparative manner, the papers published on this topic in Romania and Hungary. Given the geographical proximity of these countries, and the cross-border collaboration supported through different European funded projects, we expected to find both cooperation and common approaches in the study of CSR in the two countries. To test these hypotheses, we conducted a bibliometric study on the papers published in scientific journals indexed in Clarivate – World-of-Science on the key words “corporate responsibility” and, respectively “Romania” and “Hungary”. We found a great variability both in terms of approaches, the number of published papers (221 in Romania and 64 in Hungary), the journals in which these papers are published. More, we can refute our hypothesis, as the collaboration in this area is rather limited. More, the approaches of these papers, analyzed using the WoS Viewer software, coming from Romania compared to the Hungarian context is very different. Given the increasing interest for the topic of social responsibility, we expect increasing collaboration in this area between the two countries.

Keywords

Social responsibility, CSR, Romania, Hungary, bibliometric analysis.

DOI: 10.24818/BASIQ/2022/08/042

Introduction

The research on social responsibility (SR) gained increasing attention from both academics and practitioners all over the world, with a high degree of variability. These differences are attributed to the variability of the legal framework (Saveanu, Badulescu and Badulescu, 2021a) as well as the cultural values and norms that shape the socially responsible behaviors (Matten and Moon, 2008; Aguilera et al., 2007). Even if these differences are well acknowledged in the studies on CSR practices - no systematic comparative study was conducted to analyze the different approaches in this field from an academic point of view. We intend to fill this gap with an analysis on the literature on social responsibility in Romania and Hungary.

As in both neighboring countries SR is primarily emphasized by practitioners, we expected to find some common studies, and/or similar approaches. However, our bibliometric analysis revealed large differences regarding the academic focus on SR. In our first section we introduce the general topic and then focus on information on SR in the two countries. After the second methodological part, we present, in the third section, our bibliometric study. The final concluding section summarizes the findings and highlights prospects.

1. Literature overview

The first use of the term “social responsibility” is attributed to Howard Bowen. In this publication of “Social Responsibilities of the Businessman” in 1953, Bowen argued for the importance that firms should pay attention to the impact they have on the society (Carroll, 1999). Given their power and the influence they have a large number of people, companies must promote social good. In his own words: business people “have the obligation to promote those policies, to make those decisions and to follow those directions of action that are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of society” (Bowen, 1953, p 6, apud Carroll, 1999 pp. 270). Starting with this first use of the concept we notice the normative dimension: CSR is not much about what companies do, but about what these should do. The problems of the power of companies in society, power that for some multinational companies might exceed that of governments, is emphasized in recent studies in this field (Matten and Moon 2005).

The main limitation of this initial approach stems from its normativity, which remained rather constant in many studies. Even now, this approach can be found in many practitioners’ definitions. Studies that focused on why firms should act upon these responsibilities revealed: gaining competitive advantage, gaining visibility and prestige, counteracting negative image in particular communities, gaining support from different groups, but also improving the financial performance. These are the main benefits studied for the socially responsible firms. Other benefits include those at the level of communities, through social and environmental actions and investments. One may consider the contribution of companies to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Subsequent evolutions of the concept brought the necessary clarifications and delimitations for a better operationalization (Carroll, 1999), especially towards the end of the 1970s. The construction of theories of social responsibility also appeared during this period. As we can see from Carroll (1999), the most numerous studies in this field were published in the 1970s and 1980s. However, theories often conflicted with each other, contradicted, or emphasized other dimensions, thus hindering theoretical evolution. The main problem of CSR definition, as concluded by Dahlsrud (2008) in his analysis of the 38 most frequent definitions of social responsibility, remains the normativity of the concept. More, it is not yet a consensus regarding an optimal social performance of firms. From a paradigmatic point of view, two main traditions are identified in the discussion on SR of organizations: business ethics and stakeholder management. These are supplemented by sustainable development insights that shaped the practitioners’ approaches towards CSR (Saveanu et al., 2021b).

It is also important to note that different theorists have proposed other concepts than the general one of corporate social responsibility: social performance, corporate citizenship, and sustainable development, each developed from different theoretical traditions. In order to comprise as many approaches as possible we search for the broadest concept, that of social responsibility.

1.1. CSR in Romania

Concerns regarding social involvement of organizations became more visible both for practitioners and for academicians in Romania in the past 10 years. It is mostly the effect of implementation of social responsibility policies by multinational companies (Ilies, 2011). Practitioners’ interests can be considered the engine of these type of actions in Romania. The academic community also focused on this topic with an increased interest and attention. Theoretical summaries highlight either the competitive advantages resulting from investments in CSR, as well as a systematization of CSR forms (Cizmaş and Stan, 2010); how to manage the relations with the stakeholders (Miron, Petcu and Sobolevski, 2011) or its contribution to sustainable development (Gănescu, 2012). A meta-analysis based on 186 scientific papers published on the topic of CSR in Romania in 2011-2015, especially from the field of accounting, has revealed that the most frequently researched topics are those related to CSR actions followed by CSR theoretical works (Lungu et al. 2016). Most empirical studies argue for advancement, interest and dedication towards social responsibility by Romanian firms (Obrad et al., 2011; Echevarria-Cruz et al. 2015; Hategan et al., 2018). Nevertheless, there are studies that attest the discrepancy between statements and actions when it comes to social responsibility (Ciuperca, 2011) and sometimes even between different statements (Baleanu, Chelcea and Stancu, 2011). There are several factors that explain this discrepancy: the mimetics that characterizes this field of activity (Baleanu, Chelcea and Stancu, 2011, Ilies, 2011), the communist legacy (Ciuperca 2011); lack of information and knowledge. A specific factor influencing the Romanian context is derived by the post-communist context, as in the previous period actions that now fall under CSR and are voluntary by nature were mandatory under the previous regime (Ciuperca 2011; Hatos and Stefanescu, 2017).

Fewer studies focus on barriers and facilitators of CSR implementation in CSR. An exception is a study proposed by Costache, Dumitrascu and Maniu (2021) based on 71 responses from managers of SMEs. The data revealed that the most prominent hindlers are related to lack of financial and human resources, while such an investment is promoted by the personal values and beliefs of employees and also by the need to promote a positive image in the community. Other studies on Romanian context reveal the effect of age (Badulescu et al., 2018), size (Badulescu et al., 2016) and the managerial value orientation (Saveanu et al, 2021b).

1.2. CSR in Hungary

CSR programs in Hungary are usually implemented as a result of shareholder initiative (whether foreign or domestic), even though in foreign-owned companies in Hungary the employee initiative is the second engine of CSR actions (Dóry, Harsányi and Porubcsánszki, 2019). Similar to those found in Romania, foreign-owned corporations are better organized and more innovative in their CSR programs, and the traditional forms of CSR (sponsorship, volunteering) although they remain the most popular, we find an opening towards new forms of CSR, such as skills-based volunteering in projects, long-term partnerships with non-profit organizations.

According to Gyóri et al. (2021) the current state of CSR policies in Hungary has been strongly influenced by Hungary's accession to the EU and subsequently by the adoption of the Hungarian National Action Plan on CSR. A peculiarity of these guidelines, also noted in the literature on this topic, is that responsible employment is the main vertical priority of the Action Plan, and, respectively, a secondary position of issues related to economic development and environmental protection.

The forms and holistic approach to CSR, the emergence and implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the issue of sustainability are themes that have emerged in the literature and practice of the last decade. The authors also note that, in Hungary, the pressure from stakeholders is weak, and they expect an increased state-level intervention and control over CSR issues. In addition, the motivational aspects of companies are not clear, and the transition from explicit to implicit CSR is only partially visible (Gyóri et al., 2021).

In this paper we investigate the more recent papers published on this topic in a concrete geographical area: Romania and Hungary, two neighboring countries in Eastern Europe. Given the similarities, (H1) we expect to find common research on the topic of social responsibilities published jointly by authors in the two countries, and also (H2) we expect similar themes approached in the two countries as highlighted in the clusters generated by WoS Viewer software.

2. Methodology

In order to select the information, we searched for papers published in academic journals indexed in Clarivate World-of-Science data base. The key words were “social responsibility” – in abstract and Romania/Hungary in all fields. We selected only article type of paper, and filtered only the economic and environmentally related journals, looking also for the fields with a high number of articles. Consequently the final selected Web of Science categories were: Business, Management, Economics, Environmental Sciences, Environmental Studies, Green Sustainable Science Technology, Metallurgical engineering, Religion, Social Sciences Interdisciplinary, Ethics, Public Environmental Occupational Health, Education Research, Business Finance, Mathematics Interdisciplinary Applications, Communication, Engineering Environmental, Geography, Law, Materials Sciences Textiles, Public Administration, Engineering Chemical and Political Science. Though some of the categories seem less relevant for such a study, as religion, after looking at the abstracts of the papers we concluded that these are relevant for our endeavor and consequently kept.

The search on the Romanian papers in relevant journals extracted 221 papers, while the same search on Hungary resulted in only 64 papers. This rather large difference may be explained both by the different sized between countries, the different relevance of Clarivate indexed papers for academia in the two countries, along with the different opportunities in the two countries (national Clarivate indexed journals).

The data obtained was analyzed using WoS Viewer software which, depending on the criteria introduced, identifies common key words and based on the interrelatedness (co-occurrence) between these creates clusters of approaches or papers using correlated words. The clusters are grouped on different colors in the graphical result of this analysis. The strength of the correlation between two words is highlighted by the distance of the line between two words. The size of an item/label indicates its prominence in the cluster.

3. Analysis

3.1. Trends in social responsibility publications in the two countries

The 221 papers published on Romanian SR, were published in a total of 55 Journals indexed in Clarivate WoS. However, more than half (132 papers) were published in 5 Journals. We list below, table no. 1, the first 10 journals in which papers on social responsibility in Romania were published. We can consider that these journals, and their editorial and review policies, greatly shape this field of study in Romania.

Regarding the years of publication, we can notice a general increase in number of papers: as in 2008 (the first year of publication of a paper non the search criteria) there were 6 papers published and in 2021 there were 21.

Table no. 1. List of Top 10 Journals publishing papers on social responsibility in Romania

	Name of the Journal	No. of papers
1	AMFITEATRU ECONOMIC	52
2	SUSTAINABILITY	45
3	METALURGIA INTERNATIONAL	16
4	TRANSFORMATIONS IN BUSINESS & ECONOMICS	10
5	QUALITY-ACCESS TO SUCCESS	9
6	ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING AND MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	6
7	CURRENT ISSUES IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: AN INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATION	5
8	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND PUBLIC HEALTH	4
9	CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE	3
10	ECONOMIC COMPUTATION AND ECONOMIC CYBERNETICS STUDIES AND RESEARCH	3

Source: authors own analysis on data from WoS database

The maximum number of published papers was in 2020, when, out of the 30 papers, 16 were published in Sustainability Journal. The detailed presentation of this evolution is presented in the figure no. 1 below.

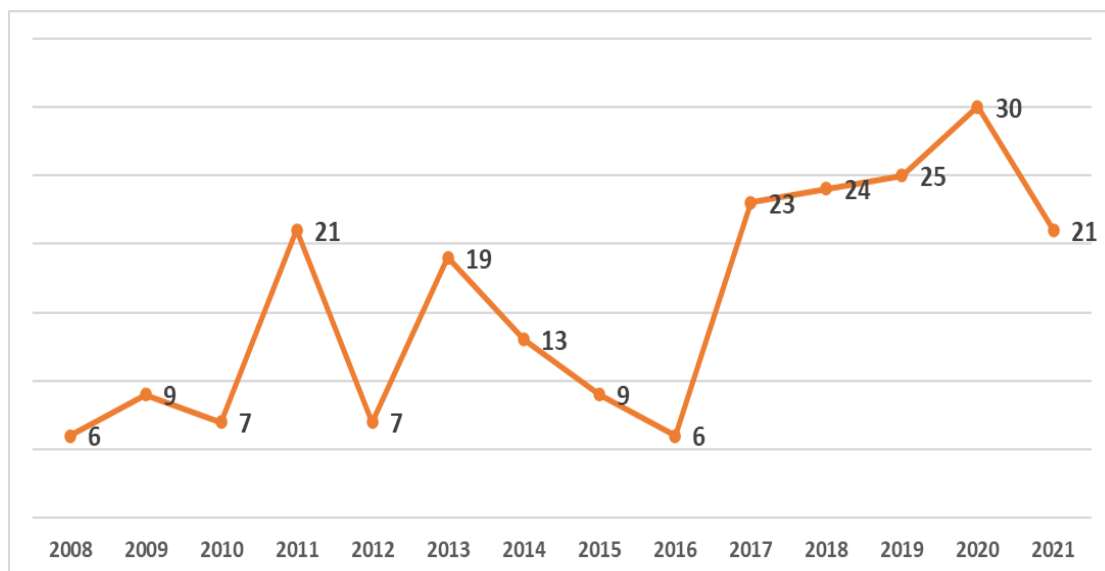


Figure no. 1. Number of papers per year of publication on SR and Romania

Source: authors own analysis on data from WoS database

Most papers are authored by Romanians, with a rather small openness towards collaboration. Foreign authors looking at the Romanian social responsibility context is also rather small. The structure of authorship is the following: 178 papers are authored by Romanians, 33 have mixed authorship added 3 papers authored by Romanian and Hungarian authors. Only 7 papers on SR and Romania were authored by foreign authors.

As we can see, the collaboration between Romanian and Hungarian authors on the topic of social responsibility is still at an early stage. Most of the papers are authored by Romanian academics (over 70%), and a small part as collaborations.

The 64 papers on CSR in Hungary are published in a total of 41 scientific journal indexed in Clarivate WoS. 33 of these journals published a single article. The top ten journals in order of number of articles published is listed below in table no. 2. While the concentration of papers is not similarly concentrated as in the case of Romania, this analysis still reveals the strong impact of Sustainability journal has in this field of study.

Table no. 2. List of Top 10 Journals publishing papers on social responsibility in Hungary

No.	Name of the Journal	No. of papers
1	SUSTAINABILITY	9
2	CIVIL SZEMLE	4
3	MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT OF INNOVATIONS	4
4	INTERNATIONAL J. OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH & PUBLIC HEALTH	3
5	JOURNAL OF EAST EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT STUDIES	3
6	POLISH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES	3
7	PUBLIC FINANCE QUARTERLY-HUNGARY	2
8	REVUE D ETUDES COMPARATIVES EST-OUEST	2
9	ACTA POLYTECHNICA HUNGARICA	1
10	CARPATHIAN JOURNAL OF EARTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES	1

Source: authors own analysis on data from WoS database

The time frame in which these papers were published is longer than in the results for Romania. The first paper meeting our search criteria was published in 1998. Also, it may be noticed from the Figure no. 2, a steadier increase in number of papers published, with a peak in the last year of 18 papers.

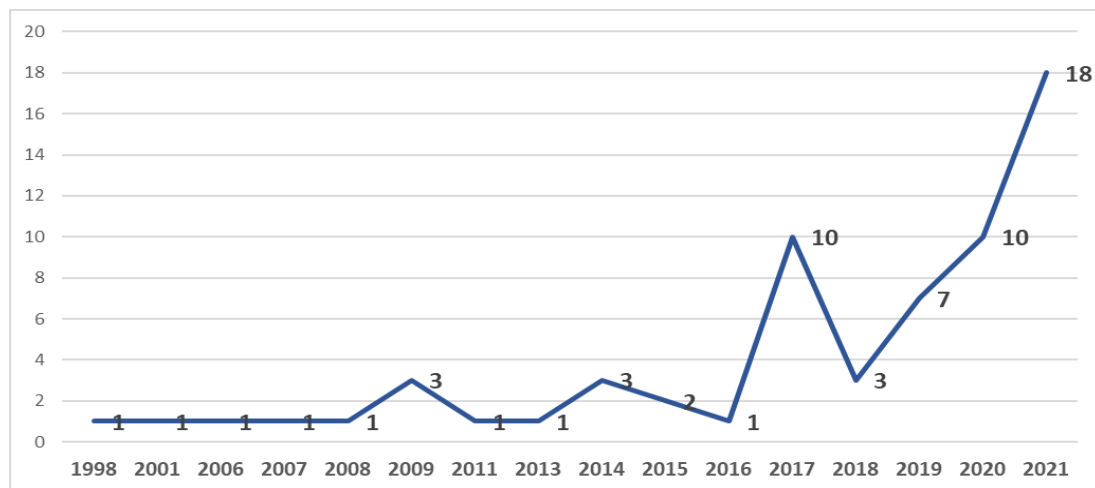


Figure no. 2. Number of papers per year of publication on SR and Hungary

Source: authors own analysis on data from WoS database

Regarding authorship, we can notice that the contribution of foreign authorship, along with papers authored by international collaboration between Hungarian academics along with academics from other countries (mostly Eastern-European) is much stronger compared with author affiliations in the case of papers published on social responsibility and Romania. In details we can say that 31 of the published papers are authored by Hungarians, 17 have mixed authorship adding 3 authored by both Hungarian and Romanian authors, 11 are authored by foreigners adding 1 authored by Romanian authors.

While the publication of papers on SR and Romania by Romanian authors was of 80.54%, the publication of papers on SR and Hungary by Hungarian authors is of 49.21%, as presented in Table no. 3.

The one paper written by Romanian authors on a comparison between Romania and Hungary (Hatos and Stefanescu, 2017), was developed partly as a consequence of a cross border cooperation project – the data presented in the article were extracted from a joint database. However, though numerous similar projects

3.3. Bibliometric analysis of Hungarian literature on CSR

The bibliometric study was conducted in the same manner as in the Romanian literature, however the analysis on titles and abstracts, identifies 45 words that occurred at the minimum threshold of 5. The results are presented in the figure no. 4.

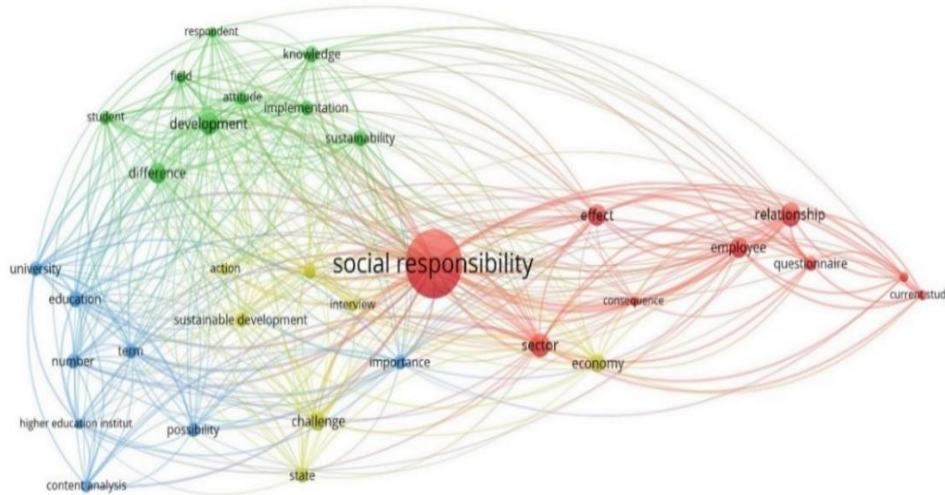


Figure no. 4. Cluster analysis of titles and abstracts of WoS papers on SR and Hungary

Source: authors own analysis on data from WoS database

Items: Cluster 1- red (9 items): consequence, current study, effect, employee, questionnaire, relationship, sector, **social responsibility**, structural equation model; Cluster 2 - green (9 items): attitude, **development**, difference, field, implementation, knowledge, respondent, student, sustainability; Cluster 3 - blue (8 items): content analysis, **education**, higher education institution, importance, number, possibility, term, university; Cluster 4 - yellow (7 items): action, **challenge**, economy, interview, opportunity, state, sustainability sustainable development.

The Hungarian studies are also grouped in four clusters. The first is somewhat similar to the first Romanian cluster as it comprises of empirical quantitative studies on SR. The second approach focus on sustainability and development, the third on education and SR of higher education, and the last on qualitative approaches of the challenges of sustainable development.

Conclusions

In this study we aimed at identifying common research and common approaches regarding SR in Romania and Hungary. However, as revealed by the data presented, the collaboration between authors in the two countries on the topic of SR measured as co-authorship of papers indexed in WoS Clarivate database is limited. More, the cluster analysis of topics (titles and abstracts) also highlighted great diversity. In both countries we can find on cluster of papers focusing on quantitative studies on SR, yet in the case of Hungarian studies we could notice a stronger orientation towards sustainability and a focus on educational institutions, while in the Romanian we can find studies on the effect of SR on firm performance and the social and economic impacts of SR.

In order to create a more detailed picture of the collaboration and the similarities and differences between approaches on this topic, future studies should include papers indexed in different scientific databases. In Hungary there is a stronger relevance of Scopus database. Also, to highlight the realities of SR in the two countries a more in-depth study of the joint papers is recommended.

Acknowledgment

The research has been funded by the University of Oradea, within the Grants Competition "Scientific Research of Excellence Related to Priority Areas with Capitalization through Technology Transfer: INO - TRANSFER - UO", Project No. 318/2021.

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