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Mapping the Landscape of Responsible Management: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract. *This study conducts a bibliometric analysis of responsible management research published between 2020-2024, examining 245 articles from the Web of Science database. Using a combination of citation analysis, network visualization, and keyword mapping, we investigate the field's current state and emerging trends across multiple disciplines, including business economics, education, social sciences, engineering, and operations research. Our findings reveal three key insights. First, citation patterns show a concentration of influence in a small number of journals, with the International Journal of Management Education emerging as the dominant platform, publishing 25 articles compared to other journals' five or fewer. Second, network analysis identifies distinct research communities, with established scholars forming central nodes while emerging researchers develop specialized niches, highlighting the field's collaborative nature and potential for cross-disciplinary integration. Third, keyword analysis uncovers fifteen distinct research streams, from sustainable tourism to AI ethics, clustered around three main themes: leadership and HR practices, CSR and supply chain management, and sustainability education. The analysis reveals both the field's maturity and its evolving nature, with traditional areas like sustainable tourism and CSR remaining prominent while new themes around AI ethics and ESG integration emerge. Our findings suggest that while responsible management research is addressing crucial business challenges, there is a need for broader dissemination channels and increased cross-disciplinary integration. This study contributes to the understanding of responsible management's theoretical landscape and provides direction for future research, curriculum development, and practical implementation of responsible management principles in an increasingly complex business environment.*

Keywords: Responsible Management Education, Bibliometric Analysis, Sustainability, Management Ethics, Leadership.

Introduction

This study investigates the current literature on responsible management and offers a comprehensive perspective on the interrelationships among its diverse components. By paying attention to the Web of Science data from 2020 to 2024, a bibliometric analysis was performed. The article is structured around three primary objectives. Primarily, we determined the articles with the highest number of citations, the most significant publications, and how the topic evaluated. Secondly, we performed a citation analysis the VosViewer software was used. Thirdly, we conducted a keyword analysis and qualitative assessment on the same most cited 50 publications.

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Purpose behind this third objective is to identify what exactly are the topics addressed in the works on responsible management.

The document is structured into the subsequent sections. Section 2 contains the literature review, section 3 presents the methodology, section 4 articulates and analyzes the findings, and section 5 summarizes the outcomes.

Literature Review

Responsible management education has significantly evolved in recent years, moving beyond its traditional ethical focus to embrace broader sustainability concerns. This shift represents a fundamental change in how academic institutions approach and integrate responsible business practices into their educational frameworks (Sen, 2024). The concept on responsible management has evolved beyond traditional corporate social responsibility frameworks (Laasch et al., 2020). Research demonstrate that this emerging field operates through three distinct dimensions: management practices, organizational learning, and alternative frameworks, while spanning from individual to societal levels.

Mapping the field establishes responsible management as a unique discipline integrating ethics, sustainability, and social responsibility (ERS). Research suggests that existing approaches intended to enhance responsible management education (RME) might not be producing the meaningful effects on students that educators hope for. Business schools are expected to produce graduates who are both willing and equipped to implement responsible management practices. By better understanding what works and what doesn't in teaching responsible management, we can more successfully prepare future business leaders who will act ethically and responsibly (Maloni et al., 2021). Research suggests that training for the framework of Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) should be done not only intellectually but also behaviorally, which is not yet the case for the majority of training programs (Hauser, 2020). Thus, frameworks are being developed to ensure proper development of individuals, both independently and interdependently (Laasch et al., 2023). However, there are studies raising a red flag that many business schools and professors might not be taking sustainability education seriously enough, and joining PRME could be an important first step in changing this (Eustachio et al., 2024).

Research has consistently demonstrated that effectively implemented Responsible Management initiatives can significantly enhance a company's competitive position within its industry sector (Kim & Austin, 2020). This advantage becomes particularly evident when examining consumer demographics: Millennials and Gen Z showcase a positive response towards reactive CSR practices, while the opposite is applied when they perceived the philanthropic initiatives of companies as being reactive only. Research indicates that this pattern holds particularly true during corporate crises or challenging periods. Studies find that while the relationship between Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors and financial performance in Europe is inconsistent across metrics, implementation approach matters significantly. Proactive integration of responsible management practices yields better financial outcomes than reactive measures, though both outperform inaction. Notably, formal structures like CSR committees and external CSR auditing can negatively moderate ESG performance effects on financial indicators (Candio, 2024).

Responsible innovation mediates the relationship between CSR, Environmental Management (EM), and competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SME). The mediation is driven by stakeholder inclusion, anticipation of future trends and risk responsiveness (Hadj, 2020). Investments in green innovation initiatives and research and development (R&D) significantly strengthen a firm's competitive position in multiple ways. These practices enhance corporate reputation, optimize labor-related expenses, enable distinct product differentiation strategies, elevate product quality standards, and ultimately lead to expanded market share gains (Bataineh et al., 2024). One topic that is highly present in the field is the relationship between responsible initiatives and financial performance.

CSR initiatives are shown to have a positive impact on an organization's financial performance. However, this relationship is not uniform across all contexts - it is significantly moderated by several organizational factors including the size of the firm, the level of industry competition, and the effectiveness of corporate governance structures. The study further identifies key mediating mechanisms that explain how CSR activities translate into improved financial outcomes, specifically through enhanced corporate reputation, increased customer satisfaction levels, and strengthened employee commitment to the organization (Ye et al., 2021).

While there is a widespread perception that AI integration in responsible Human Resource Management reduces bias by eliminating human subjectivity, recent research challenges this assumption. Studies indicate that this belief lacks empirical validation. In fact, researchers argue that promoting AI as an unbiased alternative in HRM practices could be considered irresponsible, as it may encourage industry-wide adoption based on unsubstantiated claims. This premature acceptance of AI in HR processes, without proper validation of its purported benefits, raises concerns about responsible implementation practices (Bujold et al., 2024). Research demonstrates that effective AI implementation requires adherence to key ethical principles: fairness, transparency, beneficial outcomes, robust governance, collaborative development, reliability, privacy protection, algorithm transparency, focused application, and security measures. Using this framework, organizations like H&M have established comprehensive risk assessment protocols for their AI solutions, ensuring each implementation undergoes thorough evaluation before deployment (Wang et al., 2020).

Research points to a fundamental transformation in responsible management studies. While operational excellence remains crucial for business survival in today's dynamic environment, organizations must now integrate responsible practices across their entire value chain. Modern corporate responsibility has evolved into a multifaceted concept that bridges internal organizational efficiency with external impact. This requires companies to simultaneously address resource sustainability and diverse stakeholder interests, while maintaining a long-term perspective that considers future generations. Such an approach marks a significant departure from traditional management paradigms (Skačkauskienė, 2022).

Methodology

Using ISI Web of Science, a Boolean search was performed to find articles containing "responsible management" in their keywords. The search was narrowed to English-language articles published between 2020 and 2024 across relevant fields including business economics, education, social sciences, engineering, and operations research. This yielded 245 articles for analysis. The selection of these specific fields was deliberate, as responsible management intersects with multiple disciplines, reflecting its complex and interdisciplinary nature.

The study had three main goals. First, it identified the most cited articles and tracked how responsible management research has evolved - this was crucial for understanding which works have had the greatest influence on shaping the field. Second, it analyzed citation patterns to understand how authors are connected and what research clusters exist, including only papers with at least 10 citations - this analysis revealed key collaborative networks and dominant research communities in the field. Third, it examined keywords and research themes, focusing on keywords that appeared at least 10 times to identify major trends - this helped map out the primary areas of focus and emerging topics in responsible management research. Due to the large number of articles reviewed, not all sources were listed in the bibliography to avoid overwhelming detail. Instead, the complete reference list can be found in the related PhD thesis.

Findings and discussions

The initial analysis focused on identifying the most viewed articles, key publications, and tracking the topic's evolution. When examining the top 10 most cited papers (Table 1. The most cited articles on "responsible management" (2020-2024)), "A Model of Destination Loyalty" emerged as the most influential, with 86.67% more citations than the tenth-ranked paper "Influencing Mechanism of Tourist Social Responsibility Awareness on Environmentally Responsible Behavior." Most of these highly-cited works were published in 2020 and 2021, suggesting growing academic interest in responsible management during this period, with continued research momentum through 2022. The analysis revealed that sustainable business practices, environmental responsibility, and organizational citizenship behavior were dominant themes across multiple sectors.

Table 1. The most cited articles on "responsible management" (2020-2024)

Article Title	Author	Publication	Publication Year	Times Cited in WOS	Times Cited in all Databases
A model of destination loyalty: integrating destination image and sustainable tourism	Lee, Say Wah; Xue, Ke	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	2020	112	115
Socially responsible human resource management and hotel employee organizational citizenship behavior for the environment: A social cognitive perspective	Zhao, Hongdan; Zhou, Qiongyao	International Journal of Hospitality Management	2021	102	103
Being sustainable: The three-way interactive effects of CSR, green human resource management, and responsible leadership on employee green behavior and task performance	He, Jie; Morrison, Alastair M.; Zhang, Hao	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	2021	100	102
Innovation ecosystems for meeting sustainable development goals: The evolving roles of multinational enterprises	Nylund, Petra A.; Brem, Alexander; Agarwal, Nivedita	Journal of Cleaner Production	2021	84	86
How and When Does Socially Responsible HRM Affect Employees' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors Toward the Environment?	Zhao, Hongdan; Zhou, Qiongyao; He, Peixu; Jiang, Cuiling	Journal of Business Ethics	2021	81	81
A call for action: The impact of business model innovation on business ecosystems, society and planet	Snihur, Yuliya; Bocken, Nancy	Long range Planning	2022	65	67

Article Title	Author	Publication	Publication Year	Times Cited in WOS	Times Cited in all Databases
Promoting employee green behavior in the Chinese and Vietnamese hospitality contexts: The roles of green human resource management practices and responsible leadership	Luu Trong Tuan	International Journal of Hospitality Management	2022	62	62
Reactive and proactive pathways to sustainable apparel supply chains: Manufacturer's perspective on stakeholder salience and organizational learning toward responsible management	Roy, Vivek; Silvestre, Bruno S.; Singh, Shubham	International Journal of Production Economics	2020	62	66
Managing Supplier Social and Environmental Impacts with Voluntary Versus Mandatory Disclosure to Investors	Kalkanci, Basak; Plambeck, Erica L.	Management Science	2020	62	67
Influencing mechanism of tourist social responsibility awareness on environmentally responsible behavior	Luo, Wenbin; Tang, Pei; Jiang, Li; Su, Ming Ming	Journal of Cleaner Production	2020	60	64

Source: Authors' own research.

The analysis of major publications between 2020-2024 revealed a notable concentration pattern, with only nine journals publishing five or more articles on responsible management − a surprisingly low number given the field's importance. The International Journal of Management Education stands out as the dominant publisher with 25 articles, demonstrating a remarkable 400% difference compared to journals with just 5 publications. This substantial gap illuminates the hierarchical nature of research dissemination in the field. The concentration becomes even more striking when examining the broader publication landscape: 87.68% of journals published only 1-2 articles, while 75.36% contributed just a single publication to the topic. This highly uneven distribution pattern, detailed in Figure 1. Leading journals on responsible management research and in Table 2. Distribution of Research Publications Across Journals (2020-2024), reveals that while many journals occasionally publish research on responsible management, only a select few consistently serve as primary platforms for knowledge dissemination. For researchers and academics focusing on sustainability and responsible management, this publication landscape presents important strategic implications: targeting these leading journals may offer the most effective pathway for maximizing research impact and visibility in the field, though this concentration also raises questions about the diversity of perspectives in the discourse.

Table 2. Distribution of Research Publications Across Journals (2020-2024)

Number of papers published per journal:	1	2	3	4	5	7	15	25
Count of journals with each number of papers:	104	17	4	4	5	2	1	1

Source: Authors' own research.

Figure 1. Leading journals on responsible management research

Source: Authors' own research.

Finally, we analyzed the topic's evolution through yearly citation patterns. Our findings revealed a distinct downward trajectory, with peak citations occurring in 2020, surpassing 900 across all databases while showing slightly lower numbers in Web of Science (WOS). This downward trend persisted through 2021 and 2022, before showing a more pronounced decline in 2023 and 2024. Notably, aggregate citations across all databases consistently exceeded WOS-specific counts throughout each year, suggesting substantial scholarly engagement beyond WOS's scope. The marked decrease in citations for 2023 and 2024 aligns with typical citation accumulation patterns, where older publications naturally gather more citations over time. As shown in Figure 2. Annual Citation Trends (2020-2024): Total Citations in All Databases vs. Web of Science (WOS), while research from 2020-2022 demonstrated strong citation impact, the recent decline reflects both the natural citation lifecycle and varying database coverage patterns.

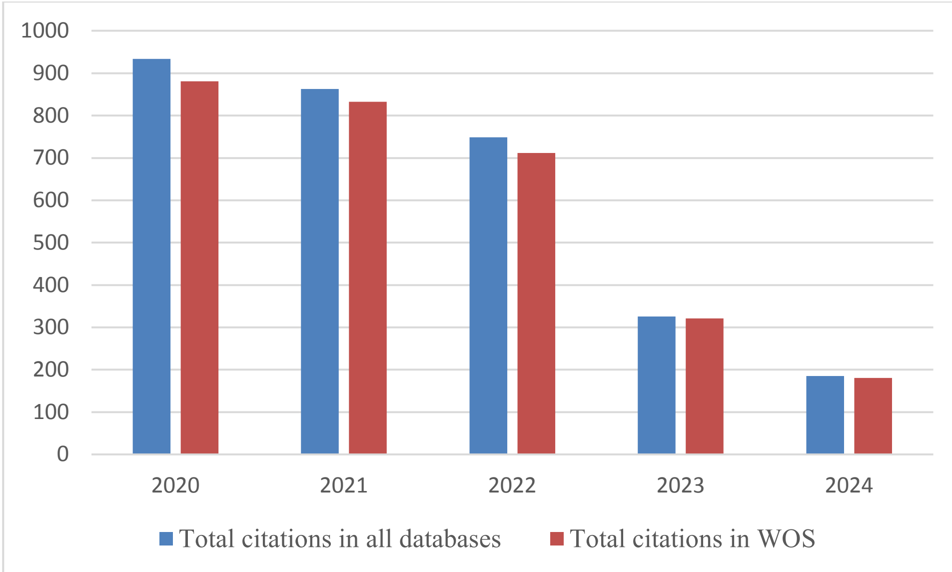

Figure 2. Annual Citation Trends (2020-2024):
Total Citations in All Databases vs. Web of Science (WOS)

Source: Authors' own research.

For our second objective, we employed VOSviewer to conduct a citation analysis examining the relationships between different authors based on citation links, highlighting research impact, collaboration patterns, and thematic clusters. This analysis revealed several key observations that illuminate the structure of the field Figure 3. Citation Analysis.

The red cluster, centered around Mousa (2020, 2023) and Montle (2020), emerged as the most interconnected group - this suggests that their research area has significant influence and demonstrates strong internal collaboration. The orange cluster, with Hogdal (2021) at its core, functions as a bridge between different research groups - this indicates that their work has cross-disciplinary impact and is cited across multiple research domains. The green cluster, which includes Laasch (2020) and Gherardi (2022), shows robust internal collaboration but fewer external connections - this pattern suggests a more specialized or isolated research niche.

The visualization also highlighted emerging research trends in the field. Authors from 2022 and 2023, such as Hueske (2022), Huebscher (2022), and Moratis (2022), are represented by smaller nodes - this indicates they are still in the process of accumulating citations, though these newer studies could become significant as they gain recognition within the academic community. Conversely, certain authors, such as Huebscher (2022) and Hueske (2022), appear in smaller, less connected clusters - this implies their research is either highly specialized or still developing its citation network.

Overall, this citation analysis illuminates several critical aspects of the field. Highly cited authors such as Mousa and Montle serve as central figures, while bridging scholars like Hogdal facilitate connections between different research areas − this network structure reveals both the field's established core and its emerging branches. The presence of smaller, less connected clusters suggests developing research streams that may grow in importance over time - this insight can help researchers identify influential works, explore potential collaborations, and track the evolution of research topics within the academic landscape.

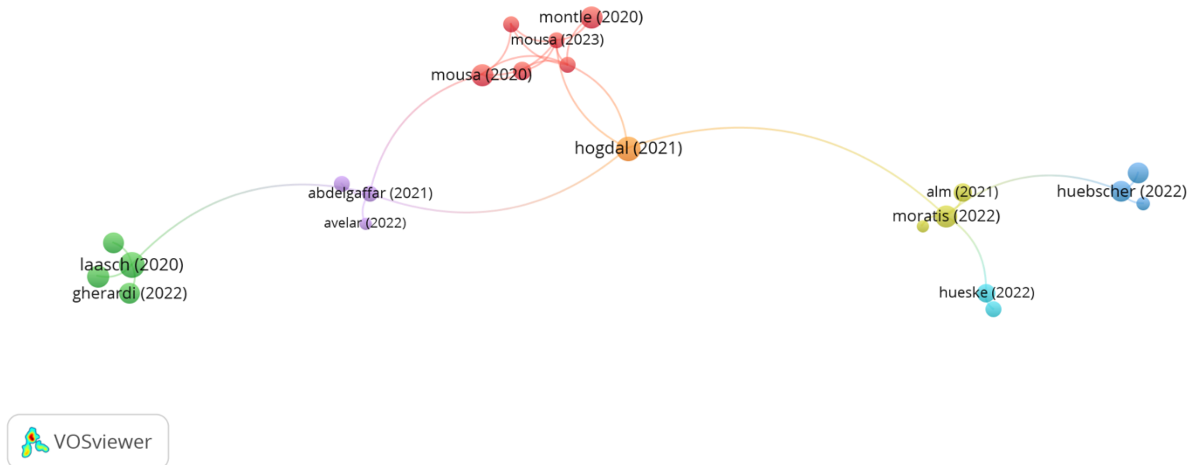

Figure 3. Citation Analysis

Source: Authors' own research.

The third objective involved conducting an in-depth analysis of the papers, beginning with a keywords analysis using VOSviewer. This analysis revealed three distinct but interconnected thematic clusters - each highlighting different aspects of responsible management research Figure 4. Keywords analysis.

The red cluster emerged with a clear focus on performance, leadership, and social responsibility − this includes terms such as "performance," "responsible leadership," "behavior," and "socially responsible human resource management." The presence of methodological terms like "antecedents" and "mediating role" − this indicates that researchers in this cluster frequently examine causal relationships and mediation effects within organizational contexts, particularly in relation to leadership styles and HR practices' influence on corporate social responsibility outcomes.

The blue cluster centered on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and supply chain management − this is evidenced by keywords such as "corporate social responsibility," "framework," "innovation," and "supply chain management." The strong connection to terms like "responsibility" and "management" − this suggests researchers are taking a strategic approach to studying CSR implementation in business operations, particularly within supply chain contexts.
The green cluster concentrated on sustainability and responsible management education - this is demonstrated through key terms including "sustainability," "sustainable development," "responsible management education," "ethics," and "business schools." The prominence of "PRME" (Principles for Responsible Management Education) and "education" − this highlights the growing academic interest in how business schools can promote sustainability principles through their management curricula.

The analysis illuminates three major research themes: corporate leadership and HR practices (red cluster), CSR and supply chain management (blue cluster), and sustainability and education (green cluster) − this reveals the multifaceted nature of responsible management research. The substantial interconnections between these clusters − this demonstrates how sustainability, corporate responsibility, and leadership are deeply intertwined, collectively influencing both business performance and educational practices. These insights provide valuable direction for identifying key research topics, recognizing emerging trends, and discovering potential areas for future investigation in responsible management and sustainability.

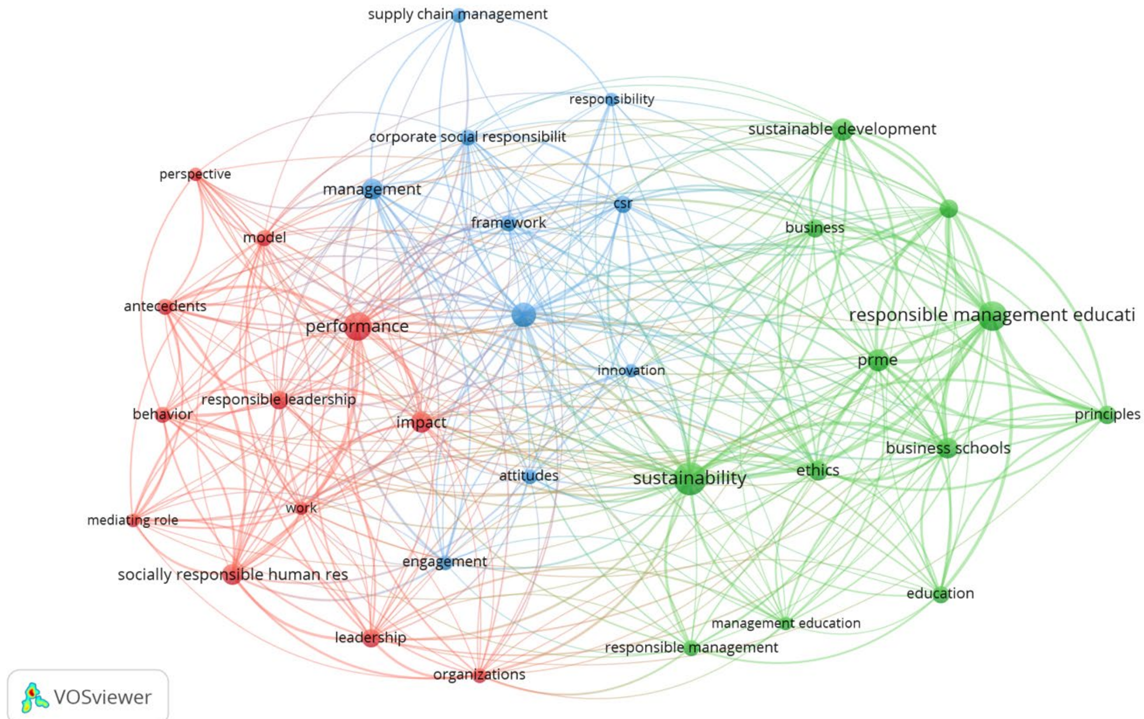

Figure 4. Keywords analysis

Source: Authors' own research.

The analysis of the top 50 most cited articles across these diverse research streams offers significant insights into the field of responsible management. The classification reveals how responsible management intersects with multiple business domains and disciplines, demonstrating the field's broad impact and interdisciplinary nature. This helps identify which areas are receiving the most scholarly attention and research investment. From a theoretical development perspective, focusing on the most cited articles allows us to trace how foundational concepts in responsible management have evolved, with each research stream representing a distinct theoretical contribution to the field. This classification helps identify theoretical gaps and potential areas for future research. The practical implications are equally important, as these streams reflect real-world business challenges and priorities in implementing responsible management. The diversity of topics, ranging from tourism to AI ethics, demonstrates how responsible management principles are being applied across various industries, helping practitioners identify relevant research for their specific sector or challenge. The inclusion of streams like "AI and Emerging Technologies" and "ESG & Sustainable Finance" highlights contemporary challenges, while the presence of "Sustainability Change Agents & SDGs" reflects alignment with global sustainability goals, showing how the field is evolving to address new business and societal challenges. From an educational perspective, this classification helps educators understand what content should be included in responsible management education, providing a framework for developing comprehensive curricula and guiding the development of specialized courses or programs. The research direction implications are particularly valuable, as the classification helps researchers position their work within the broader field, identifies potential areas for cross-stream collaboration, and highlights both well-established and emerging areas of study. This comprehensive analysis serves multiple stakeholders: researchers planning future studies, educators developing curricula, practitioners seeking evidence-based solutions, policy makers understanding business sustainability trends, and students navigating the field of responsible management (Table 3. Research stream of the 50 most cited papers on "responsible management").

Table 3. Research stream of the 50 most cited papers on "responsible management"

Research stream	Paper
Sustainable Tourism & Destination Management	(Lee, SW & Xue, K, 2020)
	(Holgado, M, Macchi, M & Evans, S, 2020)
	(Gurzawska, A, 2020)
	(Mathew, PV & Nimmi, PM, 2022)
Green Human Resource Management & Employee Behavior	(Zhao, HD & Zhou, QY, 2021)
	(Zhao, HD, Zhou, QY, He, PX & Jiang, CL, 2021)
	(Tuan, LT, 2022)
	(Igwe, PA, Okolie, UC & Nwokoro, CV, 2021)
Corporate Social Responsibility & Business Model Innovation	(He, J, Morrison, AM & Zhang, H, 2021)
	(Snihur, Y & Bocken, N, 2022)
	(Jacobs, BW & Singhal, VR, 2020)
	(Bapat, D, 2020)
Sustainable Supply Chain Management & Stakeholder Engagement	(Roy, V, Silvestre, BS & Singh, S, 2020)
	(Zhang, Z, Wang, J & Jia, M, 2022)
	(Sorribes, J, Celma, D & Martínez-Garcia, E, 2021)
	(Seraphin, H & Thanh, TV, 2020)
Responsible Management Education & Higher Education	(Oviedo-Trespalacios et al, 2023)
	(Palma-Ruiz, JM, Castillo-Apraiz, J & Gómez-Martínez, R, 2020)
	(Mousa, M, Massoud, HK, Ayoubi, RM & Abdelgaffar, HA, 2020)
	(Montle, I, Gallo, PJ & Antolin-Lopez, R, 2020)
	(Guo, XL, Cheng, LH & Yu, YG, 2022)
Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) & Sustainable Finance	(Luo, WB, Tang, P, Jiang, L & Su, MM, 2020)
	(Mihalic, T & Kuscer, K, 2022)
	(Pirson, M, 2020)
	(Rehman, ZU, Shafique, I, Khawaja, KF, Saeed, M & Kalyar, MN, 2023)

Research stream	Paper
Sustainability in Manufacturing & Circular Economy	(Laasch, O, Moosmayer, D, Antonacopoulou, E & Schaltegger, S, 2020)
	(Hogdal, C, Rasche, A, Schoeneborn, D & Scotti, L, 2021)
	(Anlesinya, A & Amponsah-Tawiah, K, 2020)
	(Haski-Leventhal, D, Pournader, M & Leigh, JSA, 2022)
Ethical concern, AI and Emerging Technologies	(Ielasi, F, Capelli, P & Russo, A, 2021)
	(Molthan-Hill, P, Robinson, ZP, Hope, A, Dharmasasmita, A & McManus, E, 2020)
	(Feng, ZW, Xiao, TJ & Robb, DJ, 2021)
	(Lee, DD, Fan, JH & Wong, VSH, 2021)
Workplace Ethics, Employee Well-being & HR Practices	(Moratis, L & Melissen, F, 2022)
	(Gherardi, S & Laasch, O, 2022)
	(Alm, K, Melén, M & Aggestam-Pontoppidan, C, 2021)
Responsible Leadership & Organizational Performance	(Hübscher, C, Hensel-Börner, S & Henseler, J, 2022)
	(Reuter, E, 2022)
	(Zhou, QY & Zheng, XS, 2024)
Sustainability & Financial Risk Management	(Corriveau, AM, 2020)
	(Liu, DY, Gu, KY & Hu, WH, 2023)
	(Nguyen-Phuoc, DQ, Nguyen, NAN, Nguyen, MH, Nguyen, LNT & Oviedo-Trespalacios, O, 2022)
Social Impact of Corporate Actions	(Mubushar, M, Rasool, S, Haider, MI & Cerchione, R, 2021)
	(Mousa, M, 2021)
	(Maloni, MJ, Palmer, TB, Cohen, M, Gligor, DM, Grout, JR & Myers, R, 2021)
Government Policies & Sustainable Business Practices	(Hueske, AK, Pontoppidan, CA & Iosif-Lazar, LC, 2022)
	(Tsui, AS & McKiernan, P, 2022)
	(Damert, M, Koep, L, Guenther, E & Morris, J, 2021)
Sustainability Change Agents & SDGs	(Nylund, PA, Brem, A & Agarwal, N, 2021)
	(Kalkanci, B & Plambeck, EL, 2020)

Source: Authors' own research.

Conclusions

Our bibliometric analysis of responsible management research (2020-2024) demonstrates the field's dynamic evolution and growing complexity through the examination of 245 articles. The study reveals several significant insights that have important implications for both theory and practice.

First, our citation analysis uncovered a notable concentration of scholarly influence, with the International Journal of Management Education emerging as the dominant publication venue. While this concentration indicates the establishment of dedicated platforms for responsible management research, it also highlights the need for broader dissemination channels to enhance the field's reach and impact. The strong citation activity during 2020-2021, followed by natural decline patterns, suggests a maturing research area with established foundational works.

Second, the network analysis revealed a rich tapestry of research communities, characterized by both established scholars forming central nodes and emerging researchers developing specialized niches. This structure indicates a healthy evolution of the field, where new perspectives and approaches are being integrated with established theoretical frameworks. The identification of bridging scholars and interconnected research clusters suggests growing opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Third, our thematic analysis identified three main research pillars: leadership and HR practices, CSR and supply chain management, and sustainability education, alongside fifteen distinct research streams. This diversity reflects the field's comprehensive approach to addressing contemporary business challenges, from sustainable tourism to AI ethics. The emergence of new themes, particularly around technology and ESG integration, demonstrates the field's responsiveness to evolving business needs and societal expectations.

While comprehensive, this study has several limitations that suggest directions for future research. First, the focus on English-language publications may have excluded valuable contributions from other linguistic contexts. Future studies could expand the analysis to include multilingual research to provide a more global perspective. Second, the five-year timeframe, while capturing recent developments, could be extended in future research to better understand long-term evolutionary patterns in the field.

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