

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACCOUNTING: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS WITH VOSVIEWER

Tran Thu Huong^{1,2}, Cao Thi Huyen Trang^{2,*}

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an increasingly important topic in the context of globalization and the growing demand for sustainable development. Along with this trend, Corporate Social Responsibility Accounting (CSR Accounting) is considered a vital tool that enables enterprises to record, measure, and disclose non-financial information to enhance transparency and credibility. This paper employs the bibliometric analysis method using data from the Scopus database, comprising 1,020 articles published during the 2015 - 2025 period, analyzed with the VOSviewer software. The analysis focuses on three main techniques: author co-citation, keyword co-occurrence, and thematic clustering of research topics. Through this approach, the paper identifies prominent research trends, influential scholars, and key academic gaps within the field of CSR accounting. Based on these findings, the author proposes several future research directions and practical implications for the development and implementation of CSR accounting practices in Vietnam.

Keywords: *Corporate Social Responsibility Accounting, Bibliometric Analysis, VOSviewer.*

¹Faculty of Accounting and Finance, Electric Power University, Vietnam

²School of Economics, Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam

*Email: caothihuyentrang@hauai.vn

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of deepening global economic integration and the relentless push for sustainable development, modern corporations are shifting their focus from maximizing profit to prioritizing stakeholder value. This transition mandates higher standards of transparency and accountability, elevating Corporate Social Responsibility Accounting into a strategic mechanism. CSR Accounting facilitates the recognition,

measurement, and disclosure of non-financial Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) information, supporting compliance with international sustainability reporting standards (GRI, IFRS S1-S2). However, in developing economies such as Vietnam, the misalignment between international standards and domestic regulatory frameworks creates a significant gap between theory and practice.

This study aims to elucidate the academic nature of this field, which is fundamentally built upon three key theoretical pillars: Legitimacy Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and Institutional Theory. While these theories underpin the motives for CSR disclosure, much prior research has disproportionately focused on the relationship between CSR and financial performance (CSR-FP), often neglecting the core accounting essence.

Therefore, this research employs a bibliometric analysis of 1,020 journal articles indexed in Scopus (2015–2025) to achieve three objectives: (1) Systematize and analyze research trends in CSR accounting; (2) Uncover scholarly trajectories and identify research gaps; and (3) Propose future research directions tailored for Vietnamese enterprises. The findings are expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the field's intellectual structure and offer practical implications for enhancing the quality of sustainability reporting.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Optimization framework

Bibliometric analysis was conducted using the Scopus database - one of the world's leading scientific indexes. The author selected English-language publications from 2015 through May 2025, including research articles, book chapters, review articles, and monographs. The search queried article titles and abstracts with the keywords/phrase ("CSR" OR "corporate social responsibility") AND accounting. To ensure topical

relevance, the scope was restricted to the subject areas Business, Management & Accounting; Social Sciences; and Environmental Science.

2.2. Information retrieval

Figure 1 illustrates the search and selection workflow used in this study. All retrieved documents were included in the bibliometric analysis. VOSviewer (version 1.6.20) was employed to construct and visualize bibliometric networks, including relationships among keywords and other related elements within the research domain.

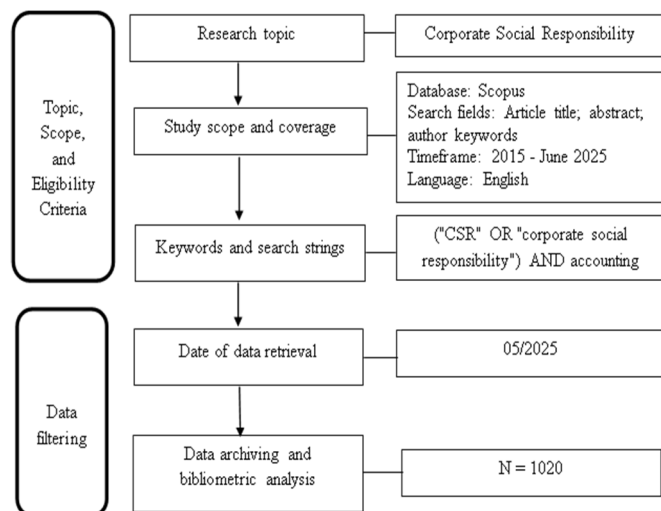


Figure 1. Identification of studies via databases and registers

Using a dataset of 1,020 studies, the author conducts a descriptive statistical analysis reporting annual publication counts, country-level outputs, and distributions by document type. These indicators provide readers with a concise overview of how CSR accounting research has evolved over time. Subsequently, the study employs VOSviewer (version 1.6.20) to map relationships among authors, keywords, and documents. Three science-mapping techniques are implemented: Author Co-citation Analysis (ACA), Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis, and co-occurrence analysis of author keywords. Together, these methods reveal the field's intellectual structure and inform future research directions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Descriptive bibliometric statistics

Distribution by document type

Across 2015 - 2025, the number of publications in CSR accounting increased markedly, reflecting the topic's strong momentum amid global pressures for transparency and sustainable development. Specifically, 2015 - 2017 saw relatively low output (about 50 - 70 papers per year), dominated by foundational studies and

theoretical models of CSR reporting. Publication counts rose sharply in 2018 - 2020, peaking at 120 papers in 2020, indicating heightened scholarly interest in the post-GRI/IFRS era of non-financial reporting. The period 2021 - 2023 stabilized at roughly 100 - 110 publications per year, as the field consolidated and expanded into new directions such as ESG disclosure, sustainability assurance, and the integration of accounting and management. Notably, 2024 recorded a rapid increase to nearly 190 papers - the highest of the decade - likely associated with the uptake of IFRS S1 and S2 (2023) on sustainability and climate-risk reporting, which spurred a surge in international outputs. Overall, the trend indicates a pronounced acceleration in CSR accounting - particularly after 2020-reflecting the topic's growing urgency in modern corporate governance and sustainable development.

Documents by year

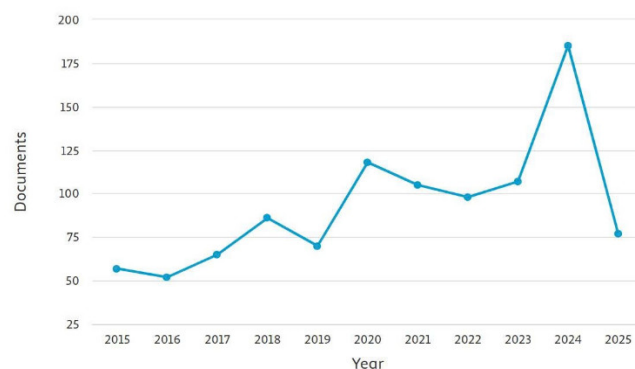


Figure 2. Distribution of journal articles, book chapters, reviews, and monographs (Data source from Scopus)

Publications by country

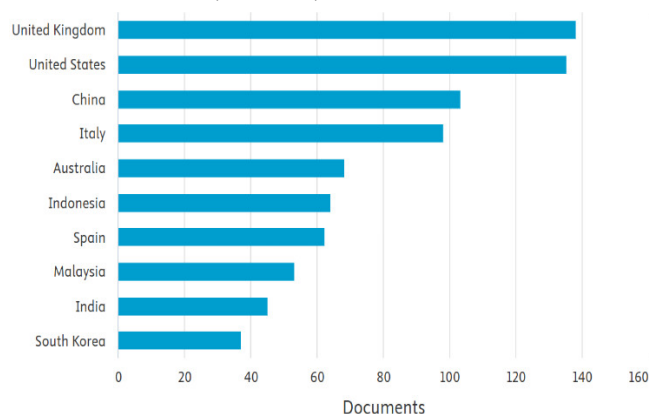


Figure 3. Publications by country (Data source from Scopus)

CSR accounting research is geographically uneven. The UK and US lead (≈ 140 publications each), reflecting their role in theory-building and reporting standards. China ranks third (>100), focusing on ESG disclosure -

especially in SOEs and manufacturing - followed by Italy with work on transparency and links to financial performance. Australia, Indonesia, and Spain broaden the map, while Malaysia, India, and South Korea - despite smaller totals ($\approx 35 - 55$) - are growing rapidly. Overall, the locus of research is shifting from the Europe - North America core toward Asia, creating opportunities for context-sensitive CSR/ESG models in emerging economies. Advanced economies still set the agenda, but wider participation signals continuing internationalization and demand for decision-useful non-financial transparency.

Distribution of publications by document type

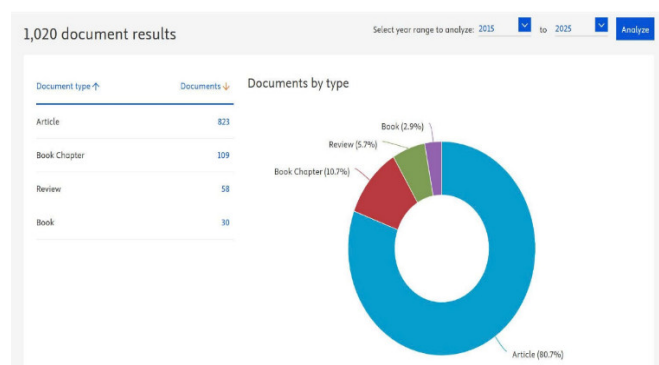


Figure 4. Document types in CSR accounting (Data source from Scopus)

The results indicate that most CSR accounting studies are published as journal articles ($n = 823$), representing 80.7% of total outputs. This profile underscores the field's primary channel for disseminating empirical and quantitative findings through reputable international journals. Book chapters follow ($n = 109$, 10.7%), largely appearing in collected volumes, handbooks, or interdisciplinary series spanning accounting, business ethics, and sustainable development. Review papers

account for 5.7% ($n = 58$), reflecting efforts to consolidate foundational knowledge, sharpen theoretical framing, and identify research frontiers. Monographs/books comprise 2.9% ($n = 30$), typically authored by leading scholars to extend academic debates or provide deeper theoretical treatments. Overall, this distribution evidences the field's high scholarly orientation, with journal articles serving as the dominant vehicle for knowledge diffusion and for shaping global research trajectories in CSR accounting.

3.2. Bibliometric Analysis Using VOSviewer

3.2.1 Author keyword co-occurrence network map

To systematize research trends on the topic, the author employed VOSviewer to visualize and analyze co-occurrence relationships among author keywords. The dataset-drawn from Scopus-comprises 1,020 scholarly documents. Co-occurrence analysis was conducted using a minimum frequency threshold of 10 occurrences. The results indicate that 34 keywords meet this criterion and are grouped into five major clusters, reflecting distinct approaches within the field.

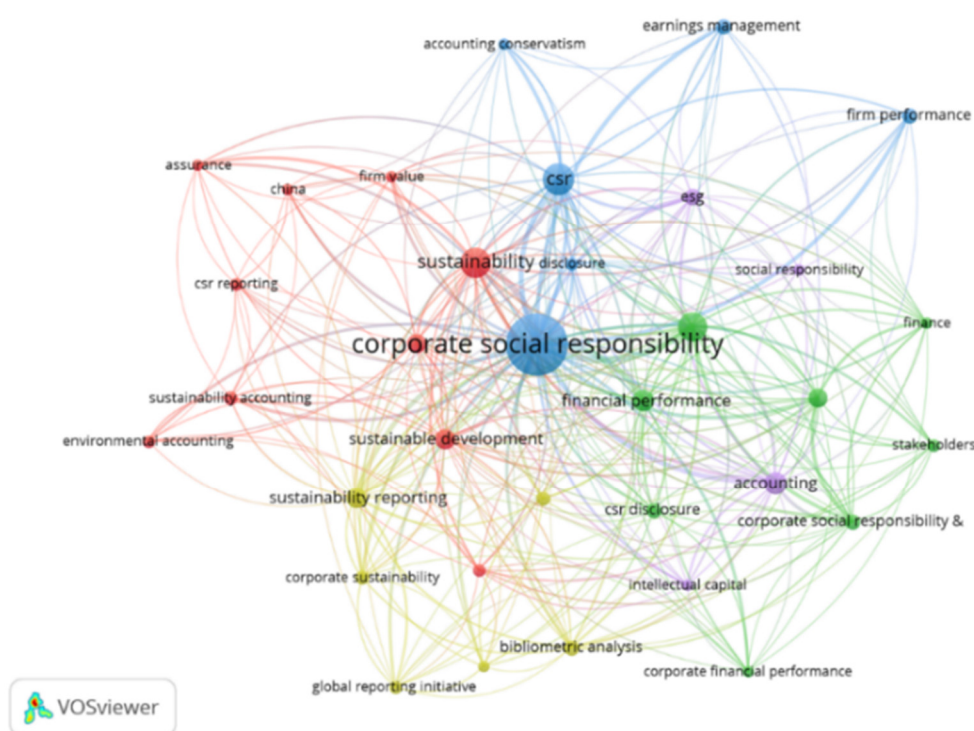


Figure 5. Author-keyword co-occurrence network map (Source: Analysis using VOSviewer software)

The author keyword map reveals that the CSR accounting knowledge network for the 2015 - 2025 period is organized into five thematic clusters. Cluster (1) represents the foundational stream of CSR/sustainability reporting and assurance, emphasizing the measurement and disclosure of non-financial information. Cluster (2) analyzes the links between CSR/ESG and corporate performance, including firm value, cost of capital, and earnings management. Cluster (3) adopts a stakeholder-accounting lens, viewing CSR as a governance mechanism for building trust and value. Cluster (4) comprises meta-studies focusing on trends, knowledge networks, and methodologies; while Cluster (5) connects disclosure transparency with intellectual capital and non-financial value creation. Overall, this configuration reflects a shift from descriptive reporting toward integrated sustainability/ESG accounting, prioritizing disclosure quality and corporate value generation.

The keyword map indicates that CSR research has moved beyond ethical or managerial viewpoints to encompass interdisciplinary themes such as accounting, finance, risk management, and sustainable development. The results further suggest that future work will prioritize the standardization of ESG reporting, the integration of financial and non-financial accounting, and rigorous assessment of CSR's long-term effects on firm value.

3.2.2. Author Co-Citation Analysis

The author co-citation analysis reveals that the intellectual structure of CSR accounting is shaped by three dominant research schools. Each school embodies a distinct approach - ranging from management - strategic perspectives, to accounting-oriented disclosure, and social/sustainability accounting. Central scholars exhibit strong co-citation linkages that collectively define the field's theoretical foundations, methodological orientations, and developmental trajectories.

Author co-citation analysis (ACA) indicates that the intellectual structure of CSR accounting has evolved around three major research schools, representing distinct yet mutually reinforcing approaches.

(1) Management-Strategic CSR. This school emphasizes CSR as a governance instrument and a strategic resource, providing the theoretical foundations for embedding social responsibility into sustainable business models [1, 2].

(2) Accounting-CSR Disclosure. This stream elucidates the role of accounting in the measurement, disclosure, and assurance of social-environmental information, thereby enhancing corporate transparency and legitimacy [3-5].

(3) Social and Sustainability Accounting. Anchored in accountability frameworks and sustainability reporting standards, this school extends inquiry from financial accounting to social accounting and broader sustainability performance [6-9].

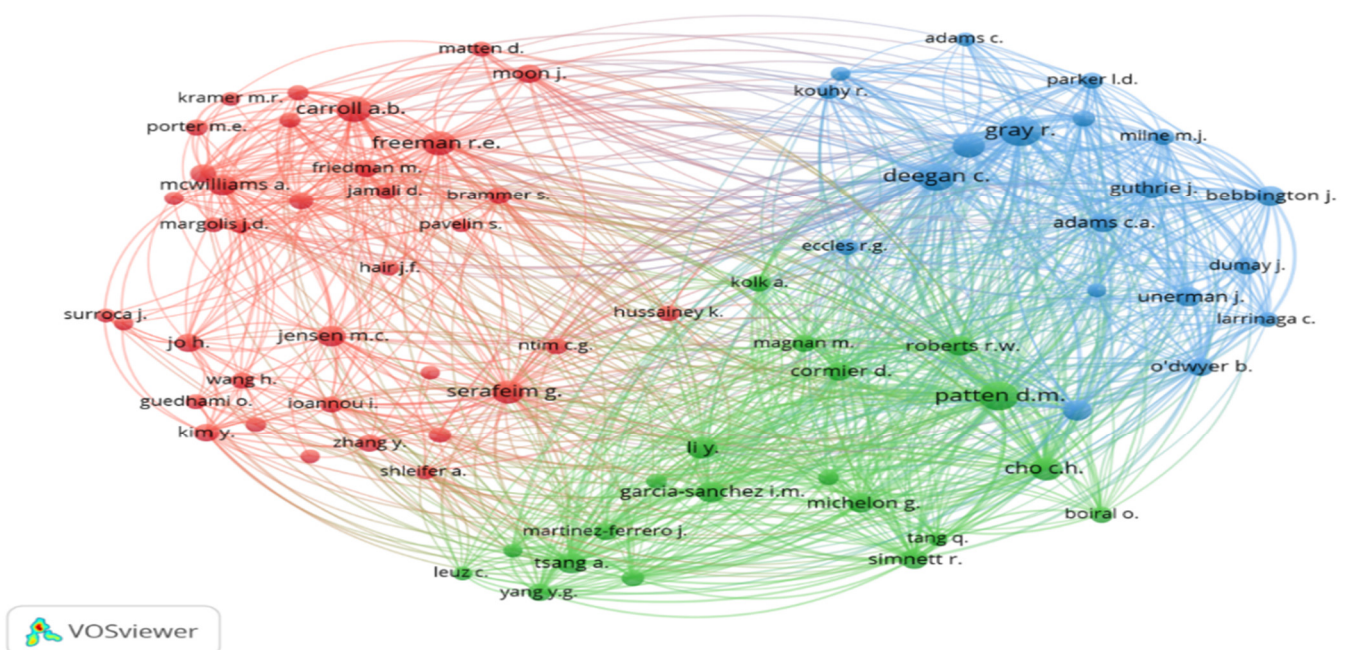


Figure 6. Author co-citation network map in CSR accounting (Source: Analysis using VOSviewer software)

These schools are interwoven rather than isolated, collectively forming an interdisciplinary knowledge

structure spanning accounting, finance, management, and sustainable development. Notably, Rob Gray, Craig Deegan, and R. Edward Freeman emerge as central scholars with the highest co-citation linkages, acting as bridges between managerial theory and social-accounting practice.

Overall, the ACA results suggest that CSR accounting has progressed from ethical-descriptive origins toward a theorized and increasingly quantitative phase that aims to measure value created for stakeholders and society. This maturation provides a robust platform for future research on integrating CSR within accounting systems and sustainability/ESG reporting.

3.2.3. Keyword Analysis and Research Themes

represented by a large node in a central position, underscoring its primacy within CSR accounting research. The keywords are grouped into five principal thematic clusters, reflecting the field's salient research trajectories.

Keyword co-occurrence analysis identifies five principal thematic clusters in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) accounting field, orbiting the core concept of "corporate social responsibility". This configuration reflects the discipline's interdisciplinarity and its continuous paradigm shift from traditional CSR reporting towards sustainability accounting and integrated ESG reporting. The clear developmental trajectory shows an increasing focus on disclosure quality and sustainability assurance, tightly linking the subject to

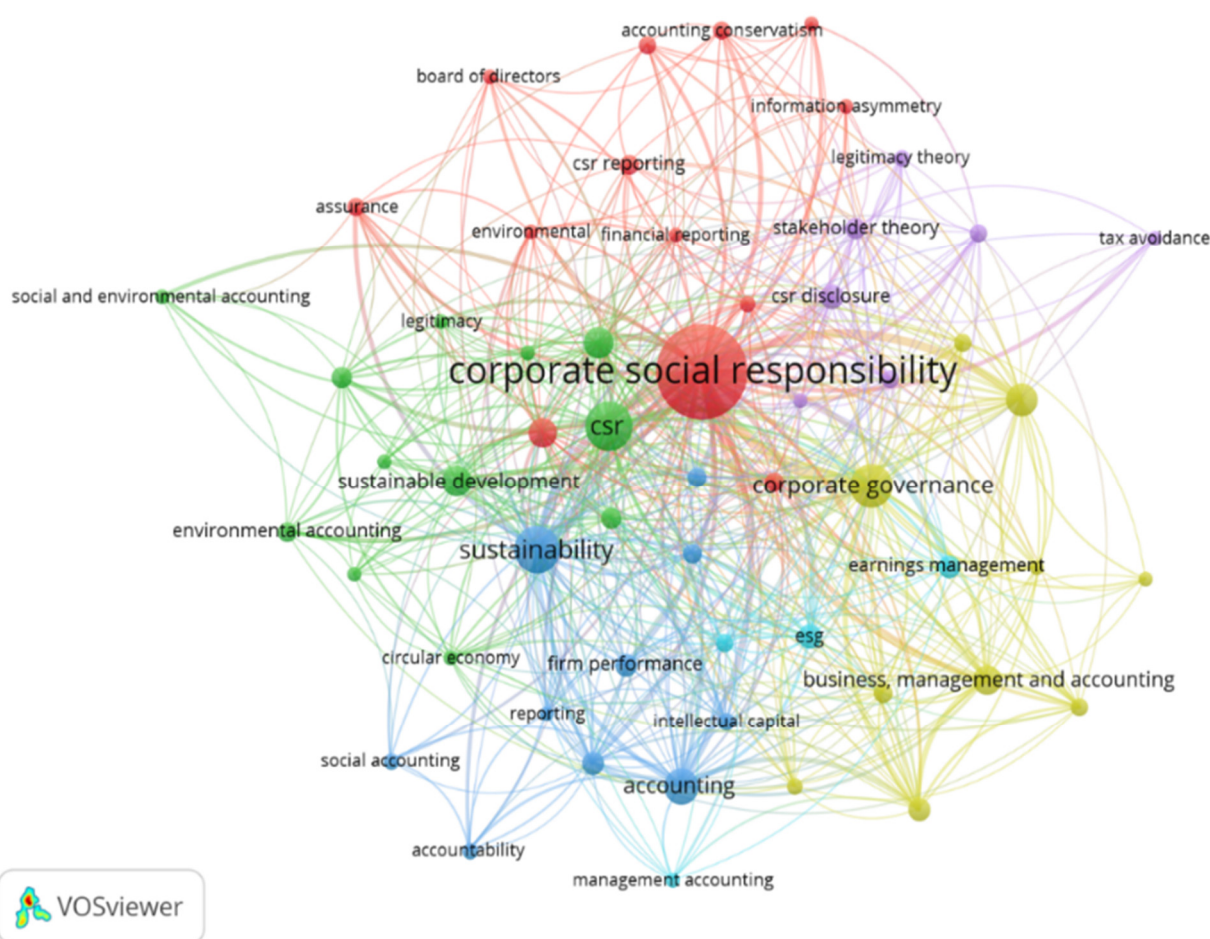


Figure 7. Keyword co-occurrence network map of corporate social responsibility accounting (2015 - 2025) (Source: Analysis using VOSviewer software)

Using bibliometric analysis with VOSviewer, this study sets a minimum threshold of 10 keyword occurrences, identifying 56 keywords and visualizing them in a co-occurrence network. The analysis shows that "corporate social responsibility (CSR)" has the highest frequency,

corporate governance and firm financial performance. Notably, post-2020, carbon/climate topics and ESG governance emerged as catalysts, driving the shift from mere disclosure to the requirement for reliable and comparable reporting. Methodologically, the field is evolving from descriptive analysis toward advanced quantitative techniques (such as PLS-SEM, QCA, and machine learning) to assess narrative content and test the

economic consequences of disclosure quality. Future research is anticipated to concentrate on ESG assurance, Scope 3 emissions, and sector-specific standardization to enhance decision-usefulness.

4. CONCLUSION

A bibliometric analysis employing author co-citation, keyword co-occurrence, and thematic clustering techniques elucidates the intellectual structure and dominant research trajectories in corporate social responsibility (CSR) accounting. The findings affirm that CSR accounting is inherently interdisciplinary, integrating perspectives from accounting theory, business ethics, corporate finance, and sustainable development.

The study detects substantial alignment between author clusters and topical themes, indicating a relative stability of the field's core theoretical schools. Several notable insights emerge:

First, there is a persistent gap in the application of accounting theory. The incorporation of accounting principles into the measurement, recognition, and reporting of social-environmental information within financial accounting systems remains underexplored. Much of the extant literature emphasizes associations between CSR and financial performance, while giving insufficient attention to the accounting substance of non-financial information.

Second, research contexts are imbalanced. Scholarship is concentrated in developed economies, whereas developing countries-where transparency and the standardization of CSR information remain pressing challenges-receive comparatively limited attention.

Building on these observations, the study advances several priorities. The research focus should shift toward developing economies such as Vietnam, where firms face mounting pressures to provide sustainability disclosures even as accounting systems and regulatory frameworks are not yet fully harmonized. Future studies should emphasize:

(1) Assessing industry-specific CSR accounting practices and developing integrated CSR accounting models that recognize, measure, and present environmental, social, and economic elements within a coherent framework;

(2) Estimating the effects of CSR on operational outcomes and stakeholder behavior;

(3) Leveraging digital technologies and data analytics in CSR accounting.

In parallel, the adoption of mixed-methods designs (combining quantitative and qualitative approaches) is recommended to enhance the rigor and depth of empirical evidence. Advancing CSR accounting is not a purely technical accounting endeavor; it underpins corporate sustainable strategy. Future research should pursue integrated CSR-ESG accounting models linked to digital infrastructures, independent assurance, and supportive national policies, thereby fostering reliable reporting systems and enabling Vietnamese enterprises to develop along green, transparent, and internationally competitive pathways.

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