

Bibliometric Analysis: Environmental, Social, and Governance in the Public Sector

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to comprehensively map the global research landscape of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) performance in the public sector and government from 2015 to 2025 using bibliometric analysis. Utilizing data from 231 articles sourced from the Web of Science database and analyzed with R Studio and VOSviewer software, this study identifies publication trends, key contributors, thematic evolution, and research gaps. Key findings reveal a very significant increase in research interest, with an annual growth rate reaching 40.97%. The journal Sustainability emerged as a dominant source, and China leads in publication volume, while countries like Egypt demonstrate high citation impact efficiency. Central themes such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), public sector, and government have evolved towards more specific issues including ESG performance, government subsidies, and the role of local government. Six main thematic clusters were identified, reflecting a focus on core global sustainability concepts, ESG performance in specific country contexts (China), governance (Bangladesh), the 2030 Agenda (Spain), and e-government (India). This study concludes a strong research dynamic and identifies crucial future research areas, including innovative financing mechanisms, SDG localization strategies, analysis of SDG interactions, broader stakeholder roles, climate resilience integration, and the development of long-term impact evaluation methodologies.

Keywords: ESG Performance, Public Sector, Bibliometric Analysis, Sustainable Development Goals, Research Trends

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan memetakan secara komprehensif lanskap riset global mengenai kinerja Lingkungan, Sosial, dan Tata Kelola (ESG) di sektor publik dan pemerintahan selama periode 2015-2025 melalui analisis bibliometrik. Menggunakan data 231 artikel dari basis data Web of Science yang dianalisis dengan perangkat lunak R Studio dan VOSviewer, studi ini mengidentifikasi tren publikasi, kontributor utama, evolusi tematik, dan celah penelitian. Hasil utama menunjukkan peningkatan minat penelitian yang sangat signifikan dengan tingkat pertumbuhan tahunan mencapai 40.97%. Jurnal Sustainability menjadi sumber dominan, dan China memimpin dalam volume publikasi, sementara negara seperti Mesir menunjukkan efisiensi dampak sitasi tinggi. Tema sentral seperti Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs), sektor publik, dan pemerintah telah berkembang ke arah isu yang lebih spesifik termasuk kinerja ESG, subsidi pemerintah, dan peran pemerintah daerah. Enam kluster tematik utama teridentifikasi, mencerminkan fokus pada konsep inti keberlanjutan global, kinerja ESG dalam konteks spesifik negara (China), tata kelola (Bangladesh), Agenda 2030 (Spanyol), dan e-government (India). Studi ini menyimpulkan adanya dinamika penelitian yang kuat dan mengidentifikasi area penelitian masa depan yang krusial, termasuk mekanisme pembiayaan inovatif, strategi lokalisasi SDGs, analisis interaksi antar SDGs, peran pemangku kepentingan yang lebih luas, integrasi resiliensi iklim, serta pengembangan metodologi evaluasi dampak jangka panjang.

Kata Kunci: Kinerja ESG, Sektor Publik, Analisis Bibliometrik, Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan, Tren Penelitian

1. Introduction

Global issues such as climate change, social demands, and a crisis of confidence have heightened the urgency for accountability and sustainable performance in the public sector. Climate change necessitates proactive and accountable environmental resource management and policies (Maschuroh & Priono, 2021), with the public sector playing a key role in mitigation and transparency (Sumantri, 2022). Social demands, amplified by crises like the pandemic, highlight the importance of government communication and public trust (Maulana et al., 2021; Wibowo et al., 2022), where accountability is

required to rebuild eroded confidence (Fahrimal et al., 2020). The crisis of confidence is also fueled by demands for transparency in financial management amidst inefficiency and allegations of corruption (Albahrudin et al., 2023), which can be mitigated through good governance (Firmansyah & Pamungkas, 2021). Therefore, strengthening accountability, including through public sector accounting reforms, becomes relevant for driving sustainable performance (Maschuroh & Priono, 2021) and building resilience, although further research is needed to optimize its impact on trust and performance (Qorib & Mulyani, 2024).

The Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework holds crucial relevance for the public sector in response to global challenges such as climate change, social dynamics, and the crisis of confidence. In the environmental aspect, ESG principles guide governments in formulating climate change adaptations that prioritize environmental health and resilience, a key element for mitigating health risks as emphasized by Macassa et al. (2022). This integration of ESG also strengthens the public sector's capacity to achieve global sustainability commitments, including those stipulated in the Paris Agreement (Kaushal et al., 2022).

Furthermore, in the social dimension, ESG addresses public demands for transparency and accountability in resource management. This principle encourages the public sector to facilitate inclusive citizen participation in decision-making, which not only contributes to the creation of public value but is also vital for building trust. Studies such as that by Muyomba-Tamale & Cunningham (2019) demonstrate that social accountability mechanisms can empower communities to demand more effective public services.

Regarding the crisis of confidence, the Governance pillar within ESG offers a solution by strengthening integrity and policy clarity. The implementation of ESG supports the formulation of more responsive public service strategies and sustainable management models that prioritize social responsibility, thereby alleviating public dissatisfaction (Alińska et al., 2018; Mwandu, 2023).

Thus, the adoption of ESG principles by the public sector is a fundamental strategic step. This framework enables governments not only to respond effectively to contemporary challenges but also to proactively build trust and create sustainable, accountable, and long-term-oriented public value.

The development of initial research post-2030 Agenda indicates a significant increase in attention to sustainability issues and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the context of the public sector and government (Oliveira et al., 2015). Various studies have begun to explore the implementation of SDGs at national and local levels (Boni, 2017; Moreira, 2018), the utilization of technology (Marcovecchio et al., 2019), determining factors for success (Mutiarani & Siswanto, 2020), capacity needs (MacDonald et al., 2020), and the importance of partnerships and accountability (El-Jardali et al., 2018; Abhayawansa et al., 2021). However, from the outset, a knowledge and preparedness gap was identified in the public sector (Oliveira et al., 2015), which was confirmed by subsequent studies regarding varied understanding (Bolton, 2021), coordination challenges (Soberón et al., 2020), low transparency in ESG/SDG reporting (Pizzi et al., 2020; Nicolò et al., 2023; Monteiro et al., 2024), and a knowledge synthesis that appears to lag behind other sectors (Meier, 2023; Kaur et al., 2025).

Although the research landscape continues to evolve with a deep focus on the interaction between government and corporate ESG performance (e.g., the impact of

subsidies, regulations, green procurement) (Zhang et al., 2023; Feng et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2023; X. Q. Wang et al., 2024) and the analysis of government sustainability performance itself (Morales-Casetti et al., 2024; Bisogno et al., 2024; Abderzag et al., 2024), a comprehensive mapping of the structure and evolution of the ESG performance research field specifically within the public sector is still lacking. Therefore, this study aims to use bibliometric analysis to systematically map the global research landscape on ESG performance in the context of the public sector and government during the crucial period following the adoption of the SDGs, from 2015 to 2024.

Specifically, a significant gap lies in the absence of a systematic or bibliometric review that explicitly focuses on an integrated analysis of the performance of the three ESG pillars (Environmental, Social, and Governance) within the unique context of the public sector/government. Many studies tend to highlight SDGs in general or only one of the pillars, while reviews that map the intellectual structure, main themes, and research development of holistic ESG performance in government remain limited (Sanina et al., 2024; Kaur et al., 2025). This mapping is crucial for understanding how this research field has developed, who the key actors are, what themes are dominant or neglected, and how its knowledge structure is formed.

To fill this gap and provide a comprehensive overview, this study proposes the following research questions:

1. What are the publication trends and the geographical and institutional distribution of research on ESG performance in the public sector/government during the 2015-2024 period?
2. Who are the most influential authors, journals, and institutions in this field?
3. What are the main themes and how have they evolved in the research on public sector/government ESG performance?
4. What are the future research prospects and research gaps related to the study of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) performance in the public sector/government?

Considering the current challenges, bibliometric analysis is chosen as the appropriate method to answer these research questions. This method allows for quantitative analysis and visualization of large-scale bibliographic data, thereby enabling the identification of publication patterns, measurement of author and source influence, tracking of thematic evolution through keyword and abstract analysis, mapping of collaboration and citation networks to uncover intellectual structure, and highlighting of primary focus areas as well as research gaps in the field of ESG performance in the public sector/government in an objective and systematic manner.

2. Theoretical Framework

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) performance is an integrated framework whose relevance is increasingly recognized beyond the private sector,

extending into the public sector and governmental domain. This concept encompasses three fundamental pillars: Environmental (E), which pertains to the management of ecological impacts such as climate change and resource use; Social (S), which includes issues concerning stakeholder relations like human rights, labor conditions, and community impact; and Governance (G), which focuses on decision-making structures, transparency, ethics, and accountability. The evolution from the concept of social responsibility to ESG marks a shift towards a more concrete and structured measurement of impact, aligning with the global urgency emphasized by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the 2030 Agenda (Oliveira et al., 2015; Abhayawansa et al., 2021). For the public sector, ESG performance is crucial given the unique role of government as a regulator, provider of essential services, manager of natural resources and public assets, and as the entity responsible for implementing national and international sustainability commitments (e.g., Sharma & Parameswaran, 2023; Carvalho et al., 2024).

Several theories explain the drivers and dynamics behind the adoption and implementation of ESG performance by government entities. Institutional Theory highlights how pressures from the external environment—such as global norms (SDGs), civil society demands, or the practices of other nations (mimetic pressures)—and internal factors drive public organizations to adopt and institutionalize sustainable practices (Tetteh et al., 2023; Lauwo et al., 2022). Stakeholder Theory is relevant as governments have an exceptionally broad spectrum of stakeholders, ranging from citizens and taxpayers to the global community and future generations, to whom they must be accountable for their environmental, social, and governance quality (Abhayawansa et al., 2021; Yi et al., 2024; Raimo et al., 2025). Furthermore, Legitimacy Theory posits that strong ESG performance and reporting can be a strategy for governments to build, maintain, or repair their legitimacy and public trust (Monteiro et al., 2024; Nicolò et al., 2024). The Public Value perspective (Public Value Theory) can also be used to frame ESG performance as a fundamental contribution to the creation of long-term value for society as a whole.

Despite its growing recognition, the measurement of ESG performance in the public sector presents unique challenges distinct from the private sector. Defining meaningful and measurable performance indicators for the social and environmental impacts of public policies or services is often complex and long-term in nature. Moreover, the availability of consistent and standardized data remains a constraint in many jurisdictions, complicating efforts for performance comparison and aggregation (Erin et al., 2024; Kaur et al., 2025). Political factors can also influence how performance is defined, measured, and reported, adding a layer of complexity to objective assessment (Bolton, 2021). These measurement challenges underscore the need to understand how the research discourse on ESG

performance in the public sector has evolved and which areas have been, or have not been, explored in depth.

3. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative bibliometric analysis to map the research landscape, identify trends, key contributors, as well as dominant themes and under-researched areas within the specified domain of study. Data analysis and results visualization were conducted utilizing the R Studio and VOSviewer software. A series of methodological stages, from data collection to the interpretation of results, was systematically followed to answer the formulated research questions and to achieve the overall research objectives.

Data

The primary data for this bibliometric analysis were sourced from the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection database. The selection of WoS as the primary data source was based on several crucial considerations. The main reason for choosing WoS is its application of a high-quality, double-blind peer-review process (Trang et al., 2023), which safeguards the integrity, as well as the quantity and quality, of the data. Similar to Scopus, WoS is a comprehensive platform for bibliometric analysis (Pranckutė, 2021). However, the superiority of WoS data is often attributed to its more rigorous peer-review process compared to other platforms (Bahuguna et al., 2023), thereby ensuring the reliability and validity of the indexed publication data.

The data collection process was conducted in May 2025. A systematic search strategy was employed using a combination of relevant keywords, namely: (*ESG OR "Environmental Social Governance" OR "sustainable development goals" OR "SDGs"*) AND (*performance OR reporting OR disclosure OR metrics OR indicators OR assessment OR evaluation OR framework OR implementation OR adoption OR initiatives OR practices OR trends OR evolution OR development*) AND (*government OR "public sector" OR "public administration" OR "public service" OR "local government"*) to ensure comprehensive coverage of the literature. After the initial search, the results were refined using inclusion and exclusion criteria. Criteria such as document type (articles), publication period (2015–2025), and language (English) were applied to filter the results. This process yielded a final dataset of 231 articles relevant to the research focus.

Analysis Method

A bibliometric analysis method was employed to analyze the collected publication data and answer the research questions. This approach follows the standard steps in bibliometric studies (Zupic & Čater, 2015) and involves two primary types of analysis—descriptive and relational—aimed at mapping how various ideas and research are interconnected within this field.

First, through descriptive analysis, trends in the growth of research volume over time were identified, and

the most prolific and influential authors, institutions, countries, and journals were determined.

Second, using relational analysis, the formation and evolution of research themes were mapped. This includes an analysis of influential works that are frequently co-cited to understand the underlying theoretical foundations, an analysis of co-occurring keywords to uncover major themes and their shifts, and the mapping of collaboration networks among researchers and institutions.

The results from these various analyses were then visualized as maps and diagrams, such as thematic maps or strategic diagrams illustrating central themes and their development, using software like VOSviewer and the biblioshiny package in R Studio. This entire process is designed to provide a clear and in-depth overview of the structure, relevance, conceptual framework, and existing as well as potential future research topics.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the results of the bibliometric analysis to map the research landscape of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) performance in the public sector. The analysis is divided into two stages: first, the presentation of research findings, which includes descriptive statistics, source and author productivity, the most influential documents, country contributions, and thematic mapping. Second, a discussion that provides a comprehensive interpretation of these findings and identifies research gaps.

Research Findings

In this section, the data and visualizations from the bibliometric analysis are presented objectively. Each subsection will highlight key findings from each analysis.

Descriptive Statistics Summary

The analysis was conducted on 231 articles published between 2015 and 2025. This dataset involves contributions from 721 different authors and was published in 149 publication sources. There is an average of 3.37 authors per document, of which 31.17% are the result of international collaboration, while 19 documents were written by single authors. One of the most significant findings is a remarkably high increase in research interest, with an annual growth rate of 40.97%.



Gambar 1. Informasi Utama

Publication Productivity

The development of the literature shows a rapid increase in the number of publications over the last five years (since 2019). Figure 1 illustrates the total contribution of each journal over time. The journal **SUSTAINABILITY**

exhibits the most prominent dominance with exponential growth, from 3 articles in 2020 to 31 articles in 2025. The journal **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT** also shows consistent growth, increasing from 2 articles (2020) to 8 articles (2025). Meanwhile, **FINANCE RESEARCH LETTERS** emerges as a more recent but rapidly growing contributor, from 2 articles (2023) to 6 articles (2025). Other journals such as **JOURNAL OF CLEANER PRODUCTION**, **JOURNAL OF PUBLIC BUDGETING ACCOUNTING & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**, and **PUBLIC MONEY & MANAGEMENT** also demonstrate a stable trend of increasing annual output.

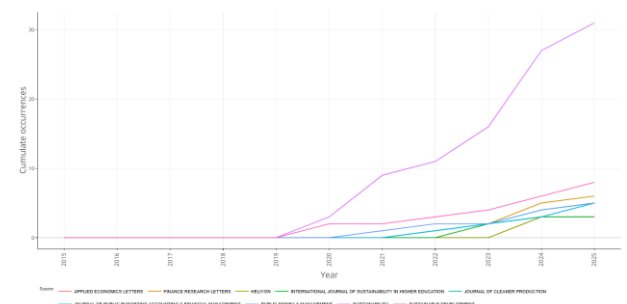


Figure 1. Sources' Production over Time

Author Productivity and Citation Impact

Figure 2 illustrates the annual productivity and citation impact patterns of the main authors. The graph shows a peak in productivity for authors like Aibar-Guzmán C and Rieiro-García M in 2023, as well as a more consistent publication pattern from Benito B over several years (2020, 2023-2025). Earlier published articles tend to have a higher citation impact, such as the works by Benito B, Raimo N, and Vitolla F (2020), which have each received 37 citations. Conversely, recent publications (e.g., from 2025) naturally have a lower total citation count.

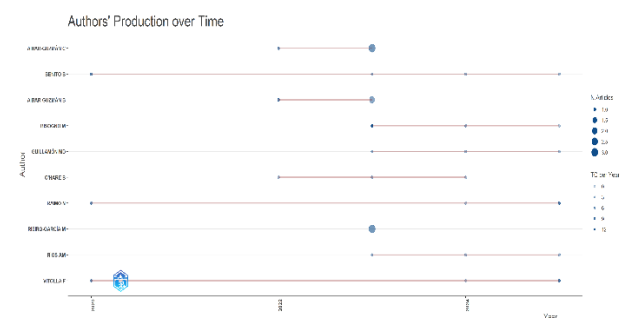


Figure 2. Authors' Production over Time

Most Globally Influential Documents

Figure 3 displays the top 10 most influential articles based on citation count. The work by ElMassah & Mohieldin (2020) titled "Digital transformation and localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" is the most cited (219 citations), underscoring the crucial role of technology in the implementation of SDGs at the local level. Other significant studies from 2020 include the work by Ilyas, Hu, & Wiwattanakornwong (143 citations) on the role of top management and government support,

and the analysis by Forestier & Kim (117 citations) on how governments tend to 'cherry-pick' specific SDGs. Earlier research explored the impact of country ESG ratings on borrowing costs (Crifo, Diaye, & Oueghlissi, 2017) and the role of universities (El-Jardali et al., 2018). More recent research delves into government accountability (Abhayawansa et al., 2021), the role of local governments (Masuda et al., 2022), and the influence of environmental uncertainty and government attention on ESG performance (W. Wang et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2024).

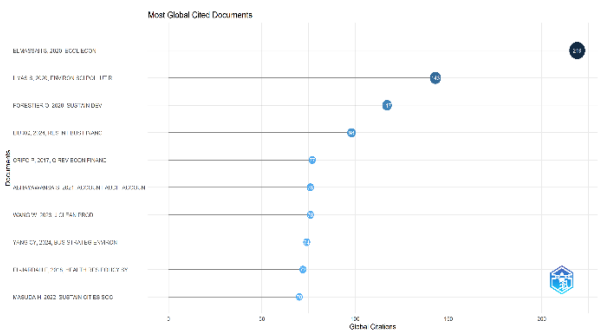


Figure 3. Most Global Cited Documents

Productivity and Citation Impact by Country

Table 1 presents comparative data on the productivity and impact of scientific publications from various countries. China demonstrates significant leadership in both publication volume (157 articles) and citation accumulation (742). On the other hand, several countries show high impact efficiency, where the number of citations received is relatively large compared to the number of articles. Examples include Egypt (2 articles, 219 citations), Italy (18 articles, 205 citations), and the Netherlands (8 articles, 155 citations). Other countries such as Spain, the United Kingdom, Australia, the USA, and others complete the picture of the distribution and influence of global research activity.

Table 1. Most Cited and Productive Countries

Country	Total Articles	Total Citations
CHINA	157	742
SPAIN	54	169
UNITED KINGDOM	35	109
INDIA	24	53
PAKISTAN	21	80
AUSTRALIA	19	146
ITALY	18	205
USA	17	110
CANADA	16	42
INDONESIA	14	33
JAPAN	14	102
NETHERLANDS	8	155

FRANCE	5	89
EGYPT	2	219

Thematic Map of the Research Landscape

The thematic map in Figure 4 categorizes research themes based on their degree of development (density) and relevance (centrality).

- **Upper-Left Quadrant (Niche Themes):** Themes such as "public sector," "government," and "e-government" are well-developed but have a specific focus.
- **Central Area (Emerging or Declining Themes):** Themes like "esg performance," "government subsidies," and "governance" represent research domains that are either developing or have not yet reached maturity.
- **Lower-Right Quadrant (Basic Themes):** The themes "sustainable development goals," "local government," and "2030 agenda" are highly relevant basic concepts that serve as a foundation.
- **Upper-Right Quadrant (Motor Themes):** Themes such as "sustainable development," "cities," and "development indicators" are mature and central driving themes in this field.
- **Key Highlight:** This thematic map visually distinguishes between foundational (Basic), driving (Motor), developing (Emerging), and specific-focus (Niche) themes, providing a comprehensive overview of the field's intellectual structure.

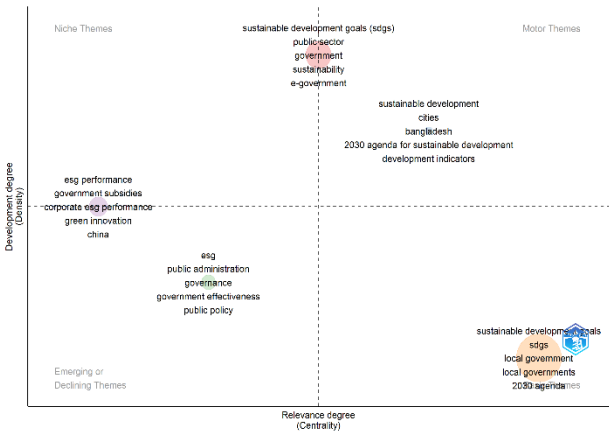


Figure 4. Thematic Map

Thematic Evolution of Research

Figure 2 presents the shift in research focus across three periods.

- **2015-2022 Period:** Dominant themes included "government" and "sustainable development goals (sdgs)."

- **2023-2024 Period:** A diversification of themes occurred, where "sustainable development goals" remained central, and significant new themes emerged, such as "esg performance," "corporate esg performance," and "government effectiveness."
- **2025 and onwards Period:** These themes transformed into more specific focuses like "government subsidies," "local government," and "financing constraints."
- **Key Highlight:** This evolutionary analysis clearly demonstrates the research dynamics, shifting from general concepts related to SDGs and government to a more specific focus on ESG performance, and further deepening into implementation issues such as the role of local government and financing constraints.

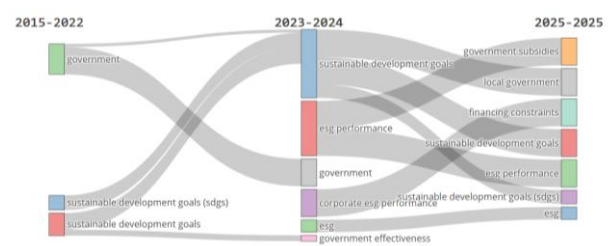


Figure 2. Thematic Evolution

Network Visualization and Thematic Clusters

Figure 3 displays a keyword network map grouped into six main thematic clusters:

- **Yellow/Orange Cluster (Core):** Focuses on the core concept of "sustainable development goals" and its links to the public sector, governance, and local government.
- **Red/Pink Cluster (ESG Performance):** Highlights "corporate esg performance" and its relationship with "government subsidies" and "innovation," often in the context of China.
- **Light Green Cluster (Governance):** Centers on "governance," "public administration," and "government effectiveness," with case studies from Bangladesh.
- **Sky Blue Cluster (2030 Agenda):** Emphasizes the implementation of the "2030 agenda" by "local governments" and "cities," with a focus on Spain.
- **Purple Cluster (Digitalization):** Centers on "e-government" and "localization," with a probable context of India.
- **Key Highlight:** This network visualization successfully groups the literature into coherent thematic clusters, mapping the relationships between the core concept of SDGs and specific issues such as ESG performance, green innovation, public governance, and e-government across diverse geographical contexts.

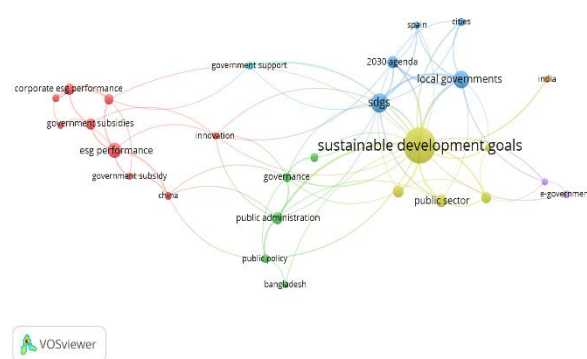


Figure 3. Network Visualization

Although this network visualization presents a rich thematic map, some areas or keywords appear to have potential for further exploration, indicating possible research gaps relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One such area is a deeper investigation into **"financing constraints,"** particularly concerning innovative financing mechanisms beyond government subsidies to support the SDGs, such as blended finance or the role of impact investing. Furthermore, the concept of **"localization,"** while present, offers space for more comprehensive studies on effective adaptation strategies for SDG-related public services in various cultural contexts and the challenges of building local capacity to support them sustainably. Research that explicitly analyzes the interactions, synergies, and potential trade-offs among specific SDG targets also appears to be underdeveloped, given that "SDGs" often appears as a general umbrella concept. Additionally, the role of broader stakeholders—such as civil society organizations, local communities, and private sector involvement beyond just ESG reporting by large corporations—throughout the entire cycle of SDG planning, implementation, and monitoring could be a focus for more in-depth research. Another important aspect is the integration of more specific keywords related to community and ecosystem resilience and climate change adaptation strategies as crucial elements in achieving the SDGs, which may not yet be dominantly represented. Lastly, the development of methodologies for long-term impact evaluation and the analysis of factors determining the sustainability of SDG-related interventions also show potential as under-explored areas in this keyword network, moving beyond the measurement of short-term effectiveness or performance.

Discussion

The research findings collectively indicate a field of study that is not only rapidly developing but also undergoing thematic maturation. The annual growth rate of 40.97% confirms that ESG performance in the public sector has transitioned from a niche topic to a mainstream research area. This is supported by the diversification of publications across various reputable journals, indicating widespread academic recognition.

The identified thematic evolution, from general concepts to more specific and measurable issues, reflects

a natural progression in a research field. Initially, the literature focused on introducing concepts like the SDGs and the role of government in general. Now, research has shifted to analyzing concrete implementation mechanisms, such as the effectiveness of government subsidies, green innovation, and corporate ESG performance influenced by public policy. The network and thematic cluster analysis reinforce this, showing how core concepts are connected to specific case studies and policy contexts in various countries like China, Spain, and Bangladesh.

Although this research landscape is rich, the network analysis also highlights areas with potential for further exploration that could constitute research gaps. Some of these are:

- **Innovative Financing Mechanisms:** Beyond "government subsidies," more in-depth studies on "financing constraints" and innovative solutions like blended finance or impact investing are still limited.
- **SDG Localization Strategies:** The concept of "localization" offers room for comprehensive studies on the adaptation of SDG-related public services in various cultural contexts and the challenges of building local capacity.
- **Interactions Among SDG Targets:** Research that explicitly analyzes the synergies and trade-offs among various specific SDG targets in the public sector can be further developed.
- **Role of Stakeholders:** The involvement of non-governmental stakeholders, such as civil society organizations and local communities, in the SDG planning and implementation cycle is an under-explored area.
- **Resilience and Climate Adaptation:** The integration of resilience and climate change adaptation concepts as crucial elements for achieving the SDGs at the governmental level is not yet fully dominant.
- **Long-Term Impact Evaluation:** The development of methodologies for evaluating the long-term impact of SDG-related interventions, beyond measuring short-term performance, is a promising area of research.

5. Conclusion

This study comprehensively achieves its objective of mapping the intellectual landscape and research evolution of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Performance in the public sector. The main findings confirm that this field of study is in a phase of exponential growth and maturational transition. This is marked by a clear shift in thematic focus: from discussions of broad global frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), research is now moving towards more specific and technical implementation issues, such as ESG performance measurement, the impact of subsidies, and the role of local governments. Furthermore, the network

analysis reveals a duality in the research landscape: on one hand, there is a high concentration of productivity in certain countries like China, but on the other, research impact and influence are globally dispersed and highly contextual, with local priorities shaping unique and distinct research clusters in each region.

The most important implication of this mapping is the identification of several urgent and strategic research gaps for exploration. The existing landscape shows a need to move beyond the "what" and "where" of ESG research towards understanding the "how" and "why" specific mechanisms succeed. Therefore, the future research agenda must prioritize several key areas: (1) Finance and Policy, by delving into innovative financing models and long-term impact evaluation methodologies for government interventions; (2) Localization and Integration, by designing effective SDG adaptation strategies at the local level and integrating climate resilience into the ESG framework; and (3) Participatory Governance, by expanding the analysis of stakeholder roles beyond the government. By filling these gaps, future research can provide more policy-relevant contributions and accelerate the effective application of ESG principles in the public sector globally.

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