

# From Responsibility to Resilience: A Comprehensive Review of Corporate Environmental Responsibility and Sustainable Business Practices

Nurfaznim Shuib<sup>1\*</sup>, Nurul Izzati Idrus<sup>2</sup>, Siti Murni Mat Khairi<sup>3</sup>, Karisma Sri Rayahu<sup>4</sup>, Najihah Azimi Ahmad Najib<sup>5</sup>, Mu'izzuddin Mat Nor<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, University Teknologi MARA Kedah Branch

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Vocational Studies Brawijaya University

<sup>5</sup>Department of Business Management and Accountancy Kolej Poly-Tech Mara Alor Setar

<sup>6</sup>Electrical Engineering Department SEA Asia Pacific Sdn. Bhd.

\*Corresponding author

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years, the urgency of addressing environmental degradation has intensified the call for businesses to adopt more sustainable practices. While Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) has become an established component of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding of how CER translates into sustainable business practices across diverse organizational contexts. This gap highlights the need to synthesize current research to clarify how CER contributes to long-term business resilience, stakeholder trust, and ecological stewardship. The aim of this study is to critically examine the relationship between CER and sustainable business practices by identifying consistent, rising, and novel themes emerging from the literature. The study employed a structured literature review approach, drawing on peer-reviewed publications indexed in Scopus. A thematic analysis was conducted to categorize findings into three levels: consistent themes, such as the enduring role of CSR and green innovation in sustainability; rising themes, including the growing focus on the link between sustainability practices and financial performance; and novel themes, notably Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) and corporate environmental governance in China. The findings indicate that CER serves as both a strategic imperative and a driver of innovation, with consistent themes underscoring the enduring relevance of CSR in aligning business goals with sustainable development. Rising themes suggest a stronger business case for sustainability, as organizations increasingly recognize financial gains associated with environmental responsibility. Meanwhile, novel themes expand the discourse by integrating human capital and regional governance into the sustainability agenda. The study carries both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it advances sustainability scholarship by integrating environmental governance, innovation, and organizational behavior perspectives. Practically, it highlights pathways for businesses to embed sustainability into core strategies, foster green corporate cultures, and align with global sustainability goals. These insights provide a foundation for future research exploring the multidimensional impacts of CER.

**Keywords**—Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) Sustainable Business Practices, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Green Innovation, Environmental Governance

## INTRODUCTION

The growing urgency of climate change, resource depletion, and environmental degradation has positioned corporate environmental responsibility (CER) as a central pillar of sustainable development. Organizations

across industries are increasingly compelled to embed environmental stewardship into their strategies, not merely as an ethical imperative but also as a driver of resilience and long-term competitiveness. The nexus between sustainability and business performance is no longer optional; rather, it is a prerequisite for firms seeking to thrive in an era of heightened stakeholder expectations, stringent regulations, and global sustainability commitments (Jashari Goga, 2025).

While corporate social responsibility (CSR) has traditionally emphasized philanthropy and social equity, its evolution into a strategic framework now emphasizes environmental sustainability as a key dimension. This shift highlights the symbiotic relationship between CSR and environmental practices, where firms adopting green innovation and waste reduction not only contribute to ecological preservation but also secure financial and reputational advantages (Basu & Basu, 2025; Liu et al., 2022). Past studies have consistently demonstrated that CER practices foster positive financial performance and stakeholder value creation (Mishra et al., 2024; Rathobei et al., 2024). However, despite the well-documented benefits, challenges remain in ensuring deeper integration of CER into organizational culture, particularly among small- and medium-sized enterprises where transparency and leadership capacity are often limited (Sarkis, 2025; Pereira, 2025).

Existing research has primarily examined the mediating role of green innovation in linking CER to corporate performance (Liu et al., 2022; Le et al., 2024) or explored sectoral and regional practices, such as China's government-driven green innovation (Khoshnaw et al., 2024) and India's waste-to-wealth strategies (Mishra et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the field lacks a comprehensive synthesis that integrates global perspectives, identifies cross-cutting themes, and maps emerging directions in CER and sustainable business practices. In particular, few studies systematically analyze the evolution of CER from a responsibility-based approach to a resilience-building framework, leaving a gap in understanding how firms can navigate volatility and complexity through sustainable strategies.

This paper aims to address this gap by conducting a comprehensive review of CER and sustainable business practices using Scopus AI as the primary data source. Specifically, the objectives are to (i) analyze the research landscape surrounding CER and sustainability, (ii) develop a concept map to visualize thematic clusters, (iii) identify leading scholars and topic experts shaping the discourse, and (iv) uncover emerging themes that will inform future research trajectories. By moving beyond fragmented studies, this review positions CER as a critical enabler of organizational resilience in the face of environmental, economic, and social disruptions.

The contribution of this paper is threefold. First, it provides an integrative synthesis of CER and sustainable business practices that bridges theoretical insights with practical implications. Second, it develops a conceptual framework that maps how responsibility-driven practices evolve into resilience-oriented strategies. Third, it offers actionable insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers by highlighting key trends, research gaps, and future opportunities. In doing so, this paper not only extends the scholarly conversation on CER but also contributes to guiding sustainable corporate strategies in a rapidly changing global landscape.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the methodological approach employed for the review. Section 3 presents the findings, including thematic clusters, concept maps, and emerging research directions. Section 4 discusses theoretical and practical implications, while Section 5 concludes with key insights, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a systematic review approach utilizing Scopus AI as the primary data source to comprehensively examine the intersection of corporate environmental responsibility (CER) and sustainable business practices. The review was conducted on 25 September 2025, leveraging Scopus AI's advanced bibliometric capabilities, including its *Summary*, *Expanded Summary*, *Concept Map*, *Topic Experts*, and *Emerging Themes* functions. These features collectively provide an integrated framework for synthesizing existing scholarship, mapping thematic developments, and identifying future research trajectories within the domain.

The search process was guided by a carefully constructed Boolean search string to ensure both breadth and

specificity in capturing relevant literature. The final query was: ("corporate responsibility" OR "corporate social responsibility" OR "CSR" OR "business ethics") AND ("environmental" OR "sustainability" OR "eco-friendly" OR "green") AND ("business practices" OR "business strategy" OR "management" OR "operations") AND ("sustainable development" OR "sustainable practices" OR "environmental management" OR "resource management") AND ("stakeholder engagement" OR "community involvement" OR "transparency" OR "accountability"). This query was designed to capture interdisciplinary perspectives spanning management, sustainability, environmental studies, and corporate governance (Le et al., 2024; Sarkis, 2025).

The Summary function of Scopus AI provided a synthesized overview of key findings in the field, confirming the positive correlation between CER practices—such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and green innovation—and long-term business performance (Jashari Goga, 2025; Liu et al., 2022). The Expanded Summary enabled a more granular understanding of contextual variations across regions, including China’s government-led green innovation (Khoshnaw et al., 2024) and India’s waste-to-wealth strategies (Mishra et al., 2024). Together, these features formed the foundational evidence base for this review.

To visualize thematic clusters and relationships, the Concept Map function was used. This tool identified five main clusters: (i) CER and financial performance, (ii) CSR and environmental sustainability, (iii) green innovation as a mediating factor, (iv) stakeholder engagement and sustainable business models, and (v) leadership and transparency in sustainability integration. This mapping helped identify overlapping areas and less-explored intersections, especially concerning the shift from responsibility-driven frameworks to resilience-based strategies (Basu & Basu, 2025; Pereira, 2025).

The Topic Experts feature highlighted leading scholars and institutions shaping discourse in CER and sustainability. Recognized experts included Liu et al. (2022) on green innovation, Sarkis (2025) on China’s corporate environmental governance, and Mishra et al. (2024) on Indian CER practices. By pinpointing these scholars, the review establishes intellectual anchors and identifies potential avenues for cross-collaboration in advancing global sustainability research.

Finally, the Emerging Themes feature provided insights into nascent areas of inquiry, including circular economy practices, digital sustainability integration, and the role of artificial intelligence in advancing environmental accountability. These emerging themes suggest a paradigmatic shift toward resilience-building strategies that integrate CER into core business models rather than treating sustainability as a peripheral activity (Rathobei et al., 2024; Tessema, 2025). Fig.1 shows the Scopus AI analytical framework.

In summary, this methodological framework enables the study to achieve its fourfold aim: (i) analyzing the current research landscape of CER and sustainability, (ii) visualizing thematic clusters through concept mapping, (iii) identifying topic experts shaping scholarly debate, and (iv) uncovering emerging themes to inform future research directions. By employing Scopus AI’s multi-layered tools, this review transcends traditional narrative analysis and provides a structured, data-driven synthesis of the CER and sustainable business practices literature.

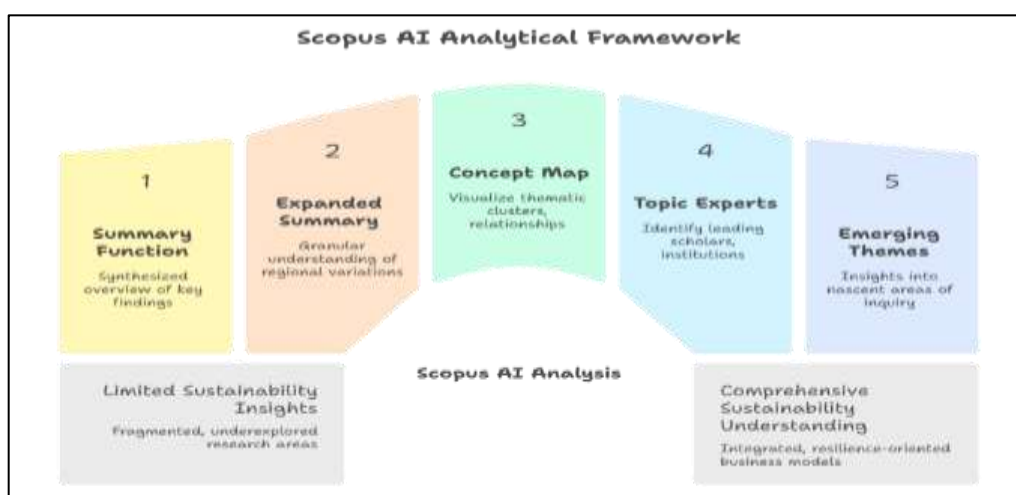


Fig. 1 Scopus Ai Analytical Framework

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## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The review of corporate environmental responsibility (CER) and sustainable business practices, conducted through Scopus AI on 25 September 2025, generated insights across four dimensions: *Summary and Expanded Summary*, *Concept Map*, *Topic Experts*, and *Emerging Themes*. Together, these outputs provide a multidimensional perspective on the state of knowledge, thematic developments, and future directions of the field.

### Summary and Expanded Summary

The review emphasizes that corporate environmental responsibility (CER) greatly boosts business longevity and resilience. Companies adopting sustainable practices like waste reduction, energy efficiency, and eco-marketing realize both environmental and financial gains (Jashari Goga, 2025; Nikiforova & Polyakov, 2024). These practices not only help businesses survive longer but also enhance brand reputation and stakeholder trust, strengthening competitive advantage in fast-changing markets (Mizrak, 2023). This confirms the positive link between CER and corporate financial performance (CFP), especially when sustainable manufacturing and recycling are part of the corporate strategy (Mishra et al., 2024; Reznik et al., 2025).

Moreover, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and CER together establish a symbiotic relationship between economic performance, environmental sustainability, and social equity. This synergy enhances resilience and long-term competitiveness while driving green innovation and technological progress (Basu & Basu, 2025; Le et al., 2024). Studies show that green innovation plays a crucial mediating role, linking CER initiatives with improved environmental outcomes and corporate growth (Liu et al., 2022; Khoshnaw et al., 2024). Thus, innovation-driven CER strategies enable firms to adapt to regulatory changes, meet customer demands, and strengthen their strategic position in the global market.

At the organizational level, sustainable business models emphasize the importance of stakeholder engagement and transparency. Effective stakeholder management not only fosters trust but also ensures that sustainability goals align with market expectations, thereby enhancing overall value creation (Rathobei et al., 2024; Borges et al., 2018). The adoption of agile and customer-centric approaches further enables companies to maintain flexibility, adapt to shifting market demands, and strengthen their relevance in increasingly sustainability-conscious industries (Tessema, 2025). In this sense, CER is not only a compliance-driven initiative but also a strategic mechanism for embedding sustainability into core operations.

From a regional perspective, the review reveals that CER practices manifest differently across economies. In China, CER implementation is closely tied to government-led initiatives and green innovation, which balance rapid economic growth with environmental priorities (Khoshnaw et al., 2024; Sarkis, 2025). In contrast, India demonstrates the impact of CER through waste-to-wealth practices, which simultaneously improve environmental performance and enhance financial outcomes (Mishra et al., 2024). These variations suggest that contextual factors such as regulatory environments, government support, and cultural expectations shape the effectiveness of CER strategies.

Despite the benefits, several challenges hinder the full integration of CER and sustainable practices. A key issue is the knowledge gap among corporate leaders, who often struggle to interpret and implement sustainable development principles effectively (Wankhar et al., 2021). Conceptual confusion also persists, as scholars and practitioners define CER using diverse frameworks, leading to inconsistencies in measurement and reporting (Ramya & Baral, 2024). Furthermore, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) frequently face resource constraints, which limit their capacity to adopt advanced sustainability practices. Addressing these gaps requires enhanced leadership, improved transparency, and the development of unified CER frameworks (Pereira, 2025).

Finally, emerging trends demonstrate a paradigm shift in CER, with firms increasingly relying on digital tools and technological solutions such as Green Building Information Management and the Green Internet of Things to monitor and reduce environmental footprints (Wankhar et al., 2021). In addition, employee engagement has become a critical factor, as organizations with strong CSR initiatives tend to foster higher levels of employee participation, community involvement, and organizational sustainability (Silva et al., 2025). These trends

underscore the transition of CER from a reactive responsibility to a proactive driver of resilience, ensuring that businesses can withstand future environmental, social, and economic uncertainties.

## Concept Map

The graph illustrates the conceptual linkages between Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) and Sustainable Business Practices, emphasizing their interconnected roles in advancing environmental stewardship, organizational performance, and long-term sustainability. At its core, CER serves as the foundation from which multiple dimensions of sustainability emerge, including environmental stewardship, stakeholder engagement, and the triple bottom line. These pathways demonstrate how CER influences not only ecological outcomes but also financial and social performance through mechanisms such as corporate-environmental performance and green innovation behavior.

On the other hand, sustainable business practices extend the scope of CER by operationalizing sustainability principles into practical strategies such as sustainable business models and alignment with sustainable development goals (SDGs). These practices are directly linked to critical global priorities, particularly renewable energy adoption and climate action, which reinforce the role of corporations in addressing pressing environmental challenges. The visualization underscores the dual relationship: while CER provides the ethical and strategic framework for corporate sustainability, sustainable business practices translate these commitments into measurable outcomes that support resilience, competitiveness, and global sustainability objectives. Fig 2. shows the Concept map.

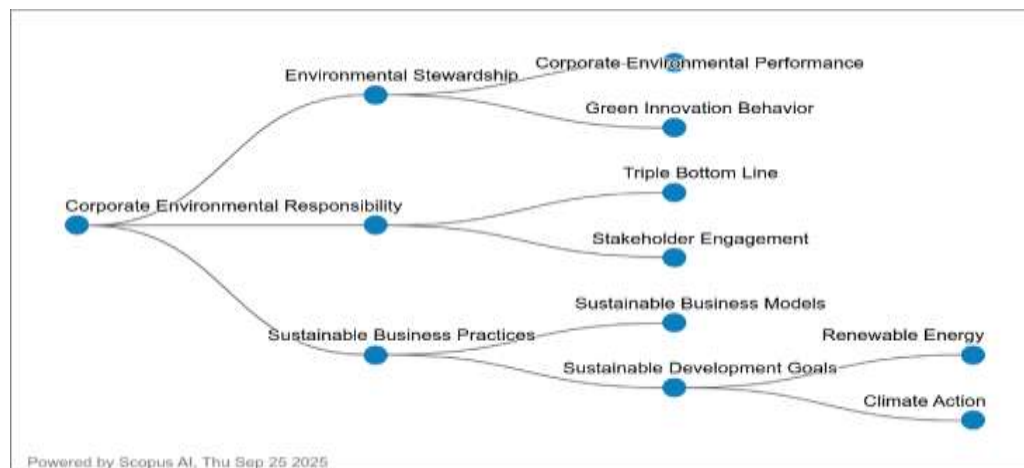


Fig 2. Concept Map

## A review of Corporate Environment Responsibility

Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) has become an essential dimension of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and is increasingly acknowledged as a strategic imperative for organizations navigating sustainability challenges in the global economy. The integration of CER into business models allows firms to generate both economic and environmental value, aligning organizational strategies with long-term sustainability goals. Recent studies have highlighted that CER not only contributes to environmental conservation but also facilitates cost savings, technological innovation, improved public reputation, and strengthened relations with governments (Wang, 2016). This convergence of ecological stewardship and business strategy underscores CER's relevance in promoting resilience and competitiveness in contemporary markets.

The adoption of CER is operationalized through diverse strategies and practices that prioritize environmental compliance and sustainability-oriented innovation. Companies are increasingly implementing Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) systems, eco-marketing approaches, and resource optimization initiatives to reduce their ecological footprint (Nikiforova & Polyakov, 2024). These practices represent a paradigm shift in corporate management, where sustainability is embedded not as a peripheral activity but as a central component of organizational strategy. Moreover, the structural integration of CER into business operations ensures that firms proactively address stakeholder expectations, thereby fostering long-term legitimacy and accountability

(Dimitropoulos & Koronios, 2021).

The financial dimension of CER has also attracted scholarly attention, with evidence indicating a positive correlation between environmental responsibility and corporate financial performance. For instance, research on U.S.-listed companies found that CER significantly enhanced financial outcomes, with CEO shareholding acting as a mediator in strengthening this relationship (Hachicha, 2024). This suggests that leadership commitment and ownership incentives play a pivotal role in translating sustainability efforts into tangible financial gains. The findings imply that CER should not merely be viewed as a compliance-driven obligation but as a strategic investment that contributes to shareholder value while addressing global environmental concerns.

From a regional perspective, CER is gaining prominence in emerging economies, particularly in China. Biopharmaceutical companies in China have demonstrated that environmental responsibility can be leveraged as a competitive strategy, integrating sustainability into their core operations to secure long-term market advantages (Li & Yu, 2011; Wei & Ruixiang, 2014). Additionally, supply chain dynamics have been identified as critical drivers of CER, with supply chain power exerting positive spillover effects on the environmental responsibility of both upstream and downstream partners (Luo & Xie, 2021). This vertical integration underscores the interconnected nature of corporate sustainability, where collaboration across supply chains amplifies the impact of environmental practices.

Despite its growing recognition, the implementation of CER continues to face challenges, particularly in resource-intensive industries such as automobile manufacturing. Studies in the Chinese automotive sector reveal that internal constraints, such as limited managerial awareness, and external pressures, including regulatory demands, complicate the adoption of CER (Zhang et al., 2021). To address these barriers, decision-making frameworks such as fuzzy modeling have been proposed to analyze and prioritize drivers of CER adoption. These findings highlight the need for continuous innovation in management tools and policy frameworks to enable industries to overcome structural challenges. Collectively, the evidence suggests that CER is both a necessity and an opportunity, positioning firms as key contributors to sustainable development while ensuring long-term financial and reputational benefits.

### **The relationship between Corporate Environmental Responsibility and Environmental Stewardship**

Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) has increasingly emerged as a critical dimension of sustainable business practices, integrating economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic considerations into corporate operations. As Wang (2016) emphasizes, CER is not limited to compliance with environmental regulations but also extends to proactive corporate strategies aimed at environmental protection and sustainability. This comprehensive approach reflects an organization's capacity to embed environmental accountability into its broader governance systems, thereby fostering responsible resource management and long-term ecological balance. CER thus forms the foundation upon which organizations transition toward more holistic models of environmental stewardship.

The concept of environmental stewardship is closely intertwined with CER, as it represents the translation of corporate policies into individual and organizational behaviors that actively safeguard the environment. Within firms, environmental stewards often emerge as employees whose values, attitudes, and behaviors reflect strong environmental concern, which in turn enhances both internal and external outcomes. Gabler et al. (2023) demonstrate that when employees perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with environmental values, they exhibit greater advocacy for their organization's environmental brand and contribute to higher customer satisfaction. This finding underscores how CER-driven initiatives create a culture of stewardship that permeates organizational structures, motivating employees to become active participants in sustainability goals.

The relationship between CER and environmental stewardship is further reinforced by the role of top management and leadership in shaping organizational eco-capabilities. Firms that prioritize CER often cultivate an environment where environmental values are embedded in decision-making processes, operational strategies, and leadership practices. Such alignment not only strengthens corporate environmental ethics but also translates into competitive advantage by creating capabilities that support sustainable innovation and resource efficiency (Gabler et al., 2023). This suggests that CER serves as a strategic enabler of stewardship by providing structural



and cultural mechanisms that empower employees to act as custodians of environmental well-being.

Importantly, the integration of CER into corporate strategy also demonstrates tangible benefits for financial performance, highlighting the dual value of stewardship. Hachicha (2024) provides evidence that CER initiatives positively influence corporate financial outcomes, especially when linked with broader CSR practices and CEO leadership engagement. These findings reveal that stewardship behaviors—whether at the managerial or employee level—do not merely represent ethical imperatives but also generate measurable returns in terms of profitability and organizational resilience. Thus, CER-driven stewardship exemplifies the alignment of environmental responsibility with economic viability, ensuring that sustainability becomes a driver of business success rather than a constraint.

Taken together, the literature suggests that CER functions as the institutional and strategic framework that enables environmental stewardship within organizations. CER establishes the policies, principles, and values that guide firms toward sustainable development, while stewardship represents the lived enactment of those principles by individuals and organizational units. This dynamic relationship ensures that sustainability is not only embedded in corporate mission statements but also actively pursued through daily practices, leadership decisions, and stakeholder engagement. By fostering both systemic accountability and grassroots engagement, CER and environmental stewardship collectively strengthen the capacity of firms to achieve sustainable business practices that contribute meaningfully to both ecological preservation and corporate competitiveness.

### **The relationship between Corporate Environmental Responsibility and Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has long been recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing social, ethical, and environmental obligations that businesses voluntarily integrate into their operations. Early scholarship emphasized CSR as a framework for balancing profit with broader societal interests, including stakeholder engagement and long-term sustainability (Windsor, 2006). Within this framework, environmental concerns were traditionally viewed as one component among many, yet increasing pressures from climate change, regulatory mandates, and stakeholder activism have brought environmental responsibility to the forefront of corporate strategy (Brin & Nehme, 2021). This evolution highlights how CSR provides the overarching structure while Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) represents a specialized, focused dimension within it.

CER, as a subsystem of CSR, places specific emphasis on corporate accountability for ecological impacts, positioning environmental protection as a central tenet of sustainable development. Wang (2016) argues that CER is not limited to compliance but extends to proactive practices guided by economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic principles. Unlike the broader scope of CSR, which may include philanthropy and social welfare, CER directly addresses issues such as pollution control, resource efficiency, and eco-innovation. By narrowing the CSR lens to environmental dimensions, CER strengthens the operationalization of sustainability strategies and creates measurable outcomes in ecological preservation, positioning it as an essential driver of corporate legitimacy in the global economy.

Legal mandates have also played a pivotal role in embedding CER within CSR frameworks. For instance, under India's Companies Act (2013), corporations are required to dedicate a portion of their profits toward social and environmental causes, thereby formalizing CSR obligations into enforceable practices (Tiwari, 2019). This legal institutionalization demonstrates how CSR, once largely voluntary, now encompasses mandatory CER practices that enhance corporate reputation and stakeholder trust. Firms that integrate CER into their CSR agendas not only comply with legal expectations but also enhance long-term value creation for shareholders by aligning business operations with societal and ecological needs.

Furthermore, many corporations are strategically reconfiguring CSR as a tool for competitive advantage, with CER serving as a critical pillar of this strategy. Sharma et al. (2023) highlight how CSR activities increasingly target sustainable development goals (SDGs), such as environmental protection, sanitation, and poverty eradication. Within this trend, CER initiatives—such as green supply chains, carbon reduction programs, and eco-friendly product development—form the backbone of corporate sustainability agendas. By embedding CER within CSR, firms simultaneously strengthen their brand reputation, attract environmentally conscious

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consumers, and meet rising expectations from regulators and investors.

Taken together, the literature indicates that CER has evolved from being a subset of CSR to becoming a defining element of corporate sustainability. While CSR provides the broader strategic umbrella that integrates economic, social, and environmental considerations, CER operationalizes the environmental dimension in ways that directly influence both corporate performance and ecological outcomes. The convergence of CSR and CER thus reflects a paradigm shift in business practices: companies no longer treat environmental responsibility as peripheral but as integral to strategic decision-making and sustainable value creation. This comprehensive integration strengthens the role of businesses as active contributors to global sustainability agendas while reinforcing their long-term resilience in an environmentally conscious economy.

### **The relationship between Corporate Environmental Responsibility and Sustainable Business Practices**

Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) has emerged as a critical driver of sustainable business practices (SBPs), reflecting the growing recognition that organizations must align their operations with ecological sustainability. CER extends beyond regulatory compliance by requiring companies to embed environmental objectives into their strategic vision and business models. As Nikiforova and Polyakov (2024) highlight, modern corporations are increasingly adopting practices such as eco-innovation, waste reduction, and resource efficiency to minimize their environmental footprint while transitioning toward greener business models. This shift underscores the intrinsic connection between CER and SBPs, where environmental protection is viewed as an enabler of long-term competitiveness and resilience.

A fundamental dimension of CER is its role in shaping corporate sustainability strategies that influence both internal operations and external stakeholder relationships. For example, Willness and Jones (2013) argue that environmentally responsible organizations adopt practices such as “greening” the supply chain, conducting environmental awareness campaigns, and implementing sustainable production methods. These initiatives not only mitigate ecological harm but also enhance corporate reputation and attract environmentally conscious employees. Consequently, CER provides the structural foundation upon which SBPs are built, translating environmental commitments into tangible practices that enhance organizational legitimacy and market appeal.

The evolution of CER also reflects a broader transformation in corporate responsibility, moving from a narrow focus on environmental management to a comprehensive engagement with sustainability issues in society. In the Finnish context, Mikkilä et al. (2021) document how industries shifted from compliance-oriented environmental policies to adopting sustainable business models aimed at addressing broader sustainability challenges, such as climate change and social well-being. This evolution illustrates how CER and SBPs are intertwined: CER provides the environmental focus, while SBPs extend this focus into a holistic approach that integrates environmental, social, and economic sustainability goals.

Moreover, CER has become increasingly embedded within the broader framework of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), with sustainable business practices serving as a key operational outcome. Singh and Yadav (2024) emphasize that CSR encompasses environmental, ethical, philanthropic, and economic responsibilities, thereby situating CER as one of its central pillars. By operationalizing CER within CSR agendas, companies establish sustainable business practices that balance profitability with responsibility toward society and the environment. This alignment ensures that sustainability is not treated as a peripheral activity but rather as a strategic priority shaping decision-making processes across the corporate hierarchy.

Finally, the integration of green practices into human resource management and organizational culture has reinforced the CER–SBP relationship. Sun et al. (2023) show that green human resource management, coupled with green CSR initiatives, significantly enhances sustainable performance while strengthening corporate image. This evidence demonstrates that CER-driven practices create synergies across organizational domains, embedding sustainability into both operational systems and corporate values. Ultimately, CER provides the ethical and strategic impetus for sustainable business practices, enabling companies to achieve long-term ecological stewardship while maintaining competitive advantage in a global economy increasingly defined by sustainability imperatives.



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## Topic Expert

The insights from leading topic experts provide valuable perspectives on the relationship between Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) and sustainable business practices, particularly in the context of the *Do No Significant Harm* (DNSH) principle. Among the most influential figures, Roberto Cerchione stands out as a highly cited scholar with extensive contributions to the field of sustainability. With over 5,900 citations and an h-index of 45, Cerchione's work demonstrates how corporate sustainability frameworks can be operationalized to balance organizational performance with ecological stewardship (Cerchione, 2021). His research emphasizes the DNSH principle as a guiding approach for firms seeking to integrate sustainability into decision-making processes, ensuring that environmental harm is not an unintended consequence of corporate initiatives. This directly supports the broader discourse on CER, as it provides firms with actionable frameworks that connect sustainability strategies with resilience.

In contrast, Viviana Sicardi represents an emerging scholar in the domain of corporate sustainability. Although her research career is at an early stage, with no citations and a developing publication record, her focus on the DNSH principle offers a fresh perspective on the evolving role of environmental stewardship in corporate contexts (Sicardi, 2025). Her initial contributions highlight how businesses, particularly new entrants and small firms, can adopt sustainable practices that are environmentally neutral or beneficial. While her influence is currently limited compared to more established scholars, her work indicates a growing academic interest in embedding sustainability principles within corporate strategy. Such emerging voices are vital for advancing novel approaches and expanding the scope of CER research to incorporate new methodological and practical insights.

Similarly, Renato Passaro has made significant contributions to the understanding of sustainable business practices, with over 1,800 citations and an h-index of 22. His work on the DNSH principle underscores the necessity for organizations to adapt their operations in ways that align with environmental sustainability without compromising business performance (Passaro, 2020). Passaro's perspective strengthens the linkage between CER and resilience, demonstrating that sustainable business models not only mitigate ecological harm but also enhance organizational adaptability in the face of environmental and market challenges. This dual focus on environmental protection and corporate competitiveness makes his scholarship particularly relevant for businesses navigating the complexities of global sustainability demands.

Taken together, the expertise of Cerchione, Sicardi, and Passaro illustrates both the maturity and dynamism of the field of CER. Established scholars such as Cerchione and Passaro provide robust frameworks and empirical validation for embedding sustainability principles in corporate operations, while emerging researchers like Sicardi contribute innovative perspectives that expand the conversation to new contexts. Their collective focus on the DNSH principle reinforces its importance as a normative standard for sustainable business practices, ensuring that corporate actions actively avoid ecological harm.

Overall, the contributions of these topic experts highlight the growing intellectual foundation of CER and its critical role in shaping sustainable business practices. The integration of DNSH principles into corporate decision-making underscores a broader transition from compliance-driven environmental management to proactive, value-driven sustainability. By drawing upon the established influence of senior scholars and the innovative input of emerging voices, the field continues to evolve toward more comprehensive approaches to CER, offering both theoretical advancements and practical implications for global business sustainability.

## Emerging Themes

The results from the analysis of emerging themes highlight the dynamic evolution of Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) and its intersection with sustainable business practices. These themes can be categorized into consistent themes, rising themes, and novel themes, reflecting both the maturity and ongoing diversification of scholarly and practical interest in this area.

A consistent theme identified is the enduring relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development. CSR has long been integrated into business strategies to balance economic,

environmental, and social objectives, and it continues to play a pivotal role in shaping corporate sustainability agendas (Brin & Nehme, 2021; Windsor, 2006). The persistence of this theme underscores the view that CSR initiatives are not only reputational tools but also mechanisms to foster stakeholder engagement, environmental stewardship, and contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This indicates that CSR remains a cornerstone of sustainability research and practice, reflecting its adaptability to global challenges such as climate change and social inequality.

### **Consistent Theme**

Another consistent theme lies in the convergence of corporate sustainability and green innovation. Businesses increasingly recognize that innovation is essential to achieving environmental performance and maintaining competitive advantage in a global market where sustainability is a strategic priority (Le et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2022). The literature suggests that green innovation functions as both a driver of environmental responsibility and a mediator between sustainability practices and business outcomes (Khoshnaw et al., 2024). This alignment reflects a paradigm shift in which sustainable technological advancements and green-oriented processes are not optional but integral to modern business operations, cementing their role as a recurring focus within CER studies.

### **Rising Theme**

The rising theme of corporate sustainability practices and financial performance illustrates the growing interest in quantifying the economic implications of sustainability. Scholars and practitioners alike are increasingly focused on understanding how sustainability initiatives influence corporate financial outcomes, such as profitability, operational efficiency, and risk management (Mishra et al., 2024). Evidence suggests that firms that embed sustainability into governance frameworks often report cost savings, enhanced efficiency, and long-term financial stability (Hachicha, 2024). The momentum of this theme indicates that sustainability is no longer perceived solely as a moral obligation but as a core determinant of financial resilience and shareholder value.

Among the novel themes, Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) has emerged as a crucial frontier. Research highlights how HR practices—such as green recruitment, sustainability training, and employee engagement—shape organizational culture and drive environmental performance (Sun et al., 2023). This development signals an important extension of sustainability into the human capital dimension, where employees are viewed as key actors in embedding environmental values and advancing corporate responsibility. The novelty of Green HRM suggests that businesses are beginning to acknowledge the synergies between people management and environmental goals, paving the way for a more holistic approach to CER.

### **Novel Theme**

Finally, the novel theme of corporate environmental governance in China reflects the regional dimension of CER. Studies emphasize how Chinese companies are navigating the complex interplay of regulatory reforms, international standards, and market pressures to develop innovative pathways toward sustainability (Sarkis, 2025). This theme highlights the unique role of governance structures and national policy frameworks in shaping corporate approaches to sustainability, particularly in rapidly industrializing contexts. The novelty and rising importance of this theme underscore the global heterogeneity of CER, pointing to the need for context-specific governance models that align with both local regulations and global sustainability norms.

Taken together, these emerging themes demonstrate that while CSR and green innovation remain foundational elements of sustainability discourse, new directions such as Green HRM and regional governance approaches are enriching the landscape. The evolution of these themes reflects a progressive deepening of CER research, emphasizing not only environmental stewardship but also organizational culture, governance mechanisms, and financial performance as integral components of sustainable business practices.

## **CONCLUSION**

This review highlights the evolving trajectory of Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) and sustainable business practices through the analysis of consistent, rising, and novel themes. The findings reveal that CSR and

sustainable development, as well as the integration of corporate sustainability and green innovation, remain enduring pillars of both scholarly research and corporate practice. Their consistent presence demonstrates the long-term recognition of CSR as a mechanism for balancing economic, social, and environmental objectives, and of green innovation as a catalyst for achieving environmental performance and competitive advantage. In addition, the rising theme of corporate sustainability practices and financial performance underscores the growing evidence that sustainability initiatives are not merely ethical choices but also drivers of efficiency, profitability, and risk mitigation. Furthermore, novel themes such as Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) and corporate environmental governance in China expand the scope of CER by highlighting the importance of organizational culture, employee engagement, and regional governance frameworks in shaping sustainable outcomes.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Theoretically, this review reinforces the multidimensional nature of CER by demonstrating its convergence with innovation, governance, and human resource management. The consistent themes contribute to strengthening established frameworks of stakeholder theory, resource-based view, and institutional theory, which explain how firms derive legitimacy and competitive advantage from sustainability practices (Brin & Nehme, 2021; Liu et al., 2022). The rising theme bridges sustainability with corporate finance theory by providing evidence that environmental and social investments can generate measurable economic returns (Mishra et al., 2024). The novel themes, particularly Green HRM, extend the theoretical boundaries by linking sustainability to behavioral and cultural dimensions, suggesting that human capital is as critical as technological and strategic innovation in advancing CER. Collectively, these insights call for integrative theoretical models that combine environmental governance, innovation management, and organizational behavior to capture the complexity of CER in diverse contexts.

### **Practical Implications**

From a practical perspective, the findings emphasize that CER is no longer a peripheral or voluntary activity but a strategic imperative for business resilience and growth. Companies are encouraged to embed CSR and sustainability initiatives deeply into their strategies, not only to comply with regulations but to build long-term trust with stakeholders and secure competitive advantage (Le et al., 2024). The growing recognition of the financial benefits of sustainability provides strong justification for corporate leaders to view sustainability as a source of value creation rather than a cost center (Hachicha, 2024). Moreover, the emergence of Green HRM highlights the necessity for managers to cultivate environmentally conscious cultures through recruitment, training, and employee engagement, thereby mobilizing the workforce as agents of sustainability (Sun et al., 2023). In regions such as China, where governance structures are rapidly evolving, businesses should align their strategies with national sustainability agendas and international standards to remain competitive in global markets (Sarkis, 2025).

### **Limitations**

Despite these contributions, this review has several limitations. First, while the themes identified provide valuable insights, the analysis is limited to the scope of existing literature available in databases such as Scopus. This may overlook relevant studies published in other languages or regional outlets, potentially biasing the findings toward English-language and internationally visible research. Second, the categorization of themes as consistent, rising, and novel is inherently interpretive and may vary depending on analytical methods or inclusion criteria. Third, the review is limited by its reliance on secondary data, which constrains the ability to capture evolving practices in real time, particularly in fast-changing contexts such as digital transformation or regulatory reforms.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research can build upon this review in several directions. First, empirical studies should test the hypothesized relationships identified in this study, such as the links between CSR initiatives, stakeholder engagement, and financial performance, or between Green HRM practices and employee-driven sustainability

outcomes. Second, comparative cross-national research could deepen understanding of how cultural, institutional, and regulatory contexts influence the adoption and effectiveness of CER practices. Third, more interdisciplinary studies are needed to integrate insights from environmental sciences, organizational psychology, and digital technologies to better explain the evolving dynamics of CER. Finally, longitudinal studies tracking the trajectory of novel themes such as Green HRM and environmental governance across industries could provide valuable evidence on how these themes mature into consistent areas of sustainability research and practice.

### Closing Remark

In sum, this review underscores that Corporate Environmental Responsibility is not static but continuously evolving, shaped by both enduring commitments and emerging innovations. By integrating CSR, green innovation, financial performance, human capital, and governance into a coherent framework, this study contributes to advancing both scholarly discourse and practical strategies for achieving sustainable development. The findings affirm that the path to sustainability lies not in isolated initiatives but in holistic approaches that align corporate strategies with environmental stewardship, stakeholder engagement, and long-term value creation.

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