

# Sustainability management research in the Arab world: a citation-based systematic literature review

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper presents a citation-based systematic literature review in the field of sustainability management for Arab countries. The aim is to assist potential researchers in this field to identify existing themes, gaps and other relevant information necessary for the further development of the research area.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A comprehensive list of keywords has been searched in the SCOPUS database to identify all the relevant articles in the field of sustainability management in Arab countries. After applying the relevant restriction criteria, manual screening of titles, abstracts and keywords was performed to identify the final sample. The final sample consists of 410 articles published in 218 different journals by 907 authors. Bibliometrix R-tool was used to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the selected articles.

**Findings** – Findings indicate a growing trend of publications on sustainability management in the generally understudied Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Besides publication trends, citation analysis presents citation trends, most influential journals and authors, and most cited articles on sustainability management in Arab countries. Theme identification is shown through analyses of conceptual and intellectual structures. Finally, social networks in the field are discussed.

**Practical implications** – Information presented in this paper informs interested researchers about the current state in the field, relevant sources of knowledge, important literature on the topic, relevant authors and other valuable particulars. This systematic literature review helps researchers make further valuable contributions to the field of sustainability management in Arab countries.

**Originality/value** – To the best of the authors' knowledge, this paper offers a first comprehensive citation-based systematic literature review on sustainability management in Arab countries.

**Keywords** Sustainability management, Arab countries, CSR, Systematic literature review

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Earlier, it was assumed that the sole responsibility of business organizations was to ensure the desired financial return to their owners. However, it did not take long until it was evident that blind following of the profit maximization strategy had to be limited by specific rules to protect the interests of other stakeholders (Carroll, 1991). Discussions on corporate performance involving aspects other than purely economic ones date from the first half of the 20th century (Carroll, 1979). Such an approach led to the development of the “corporate social responsibility (CSR)” term. CSR is the concept of business performance that involves the organization's economic, legal, ethical and discretionary (philanthropic) responsibilities (Carroll, 1979, 1991). However, recently the term CSR has been substituted with the synonymous concept of sustainability (Schaltegger, 2013).



Sustainability and sustainability management are among the main concepts that have gained popularity in the 21st century (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002; Schaltegger, 2013). Sustainability refers to social development towards wealth and equity while conserving the natural environment and cultural accomplishments for future generations. Mainly, corporate sustainability is defined as a three-dimensional construct involving economic, social and environmental sustainability (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002). Sustainable practices by companies that encompass all of these three aspects are often referred to as the “triple bottom line” (TBL; Faisal and Al-Josaiman, 2021). The concept is fundamental in the business environment since various profit-seeking entities omit other stakeholders’ interests. However, to prevent such occurrences, governmental bodies were formed to protect consumers, employees, the environment, etc. (Carroll, 1991).

Organizations desperately need careful sustainability management to respond to regulatory pressures (Carroll, 1991) and demands by more than ever aware consumers and other stakeholders. Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) assert that managers need to integrate business, natural and societal aspects of their organizations to manage corporate sustainability successfully. Hence, six main criteria are necessary to achieve corporate sustainability: eco-efficiency, socioefficiency, eco-effectiveness socioeffectiveness, sufficiency and ecological equity (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002). The importance of sustainability management on a global level has become even more significant as 193 countries agreed on the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, reduce inequality and protect the environment by 2030 (SDG, 2018). Obviously, both profit and not-for-profit organizations are expected to play a crucial role in achieving those extremely ambitious aims. Moreover, global movements interested in increasing companies’ accountability and transparency in terms of social and environmental performance (B Corporation, 2022) exert further pressure on organizations worldwide to comply with specific standards to achieve sustainability in its broader sense.

General intense emphasis on sustainability and its management has also led to increased scientific production on the topic. A quick Internet search using related keywords yields tens of thousands of relevant articles on the matter. However, most of the research on sustainability management aspects is performed in developed relative to developing countries (Gerged, 2021; Jamali and Karam, 2016). Regarding the Arab countries, similar research is even scarcer (Gerged, 2021). Moreover, Jamali *et al.* (2020) refer to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as an understudied region, especially CSR. Authors further assert that the region is primarily misunderstood due to the combination of the Western approach to CSR practices and the unique specificities of the countries in the MENA region. Namely, the region has unique and diverse social and institutional characteristics. For instance, countries in the region range from extremely poor to those among the wealthiest in the world, there are significant differences among their political systems, etc. Additionally, many countries rely on oil as a source of their economic wealth, which often opposes sustainability goals (Jamali *et al.*, 2020). Nevertheless, the literature on CSR in developing countries entered a period of significant growth in recent years (Jamali *et al.*, 2017).

To move forward and enable future contributions in sustainability management in Arab countries, there is a need to organize existing research accomplishments systematically. This approach would help authors identify existing themes, gaps and other relevant information necessary for further development. Several articles from Arab countries have already tried to organize some of the literature related to sustainability management. However, certain limitations exist. For instance, Faisal and Al-Josaiman (2021) wrote a recent literature review. The authors offer a systematic review of the literature on sustainable supply management in developing countries. However, apart from the sole focus on supply management, analysis shows that only two of the selected studies in this review were conducted in countries from the Gulf region.

Further, an extensive literature review performed by [Jamali et al. \(2020\)](#) focuses strictly on the role of institutions and their effects on CSR in MENA countries. Additionally, a literature review by [Jamali et al. \(2017\)](#) observes CSR from an institutional logics perspective. However, the study focuses on CSR in four developing countries, among which only one (Lebanon) belongs to the group of Arab countries.

Hence, to contribute to sustainability management in Arab countries, this paper offers a citation-based systematic literature review on the related research in the MENA region. However, the topic of sustainability or sustainable development is extensive and can be applied to multiple levels of analysis (e.g. regional, country, community, etc.). Since CSR is generally related to business entities, this review focuses specifically on the organizational level to provide precise information on sustainability management. The final sample of this study amounts to 410 articles on sustainability management in Arab countries.

After the introduction, this article explains the applied, systematic literature review methodology followed by citation analysis, theme identification, analysis of social networks and discussion and conclusion.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Articles selection process

Articles on sustainability management in Arab countries were retrieved from Scopus, which is among the most popular citation resources. Citation resource is a tool used to track research production and its impact. Research on citation resources shows that Scopus offers fewer inconsistencies in content verification and quality than the Web of Science database ([Adriaanse and Rensleigh, 2013](#); [Menegaki et al., 2021](#); [Asatullaeva et al., 2021](#)). Also, the authors assert that it has more comprehensive coverage ([Pranckute, 2021](#)) and more citation analyses ([Falagas et al., 2008](#); [Ahmad et al., 2020a, b](#)).

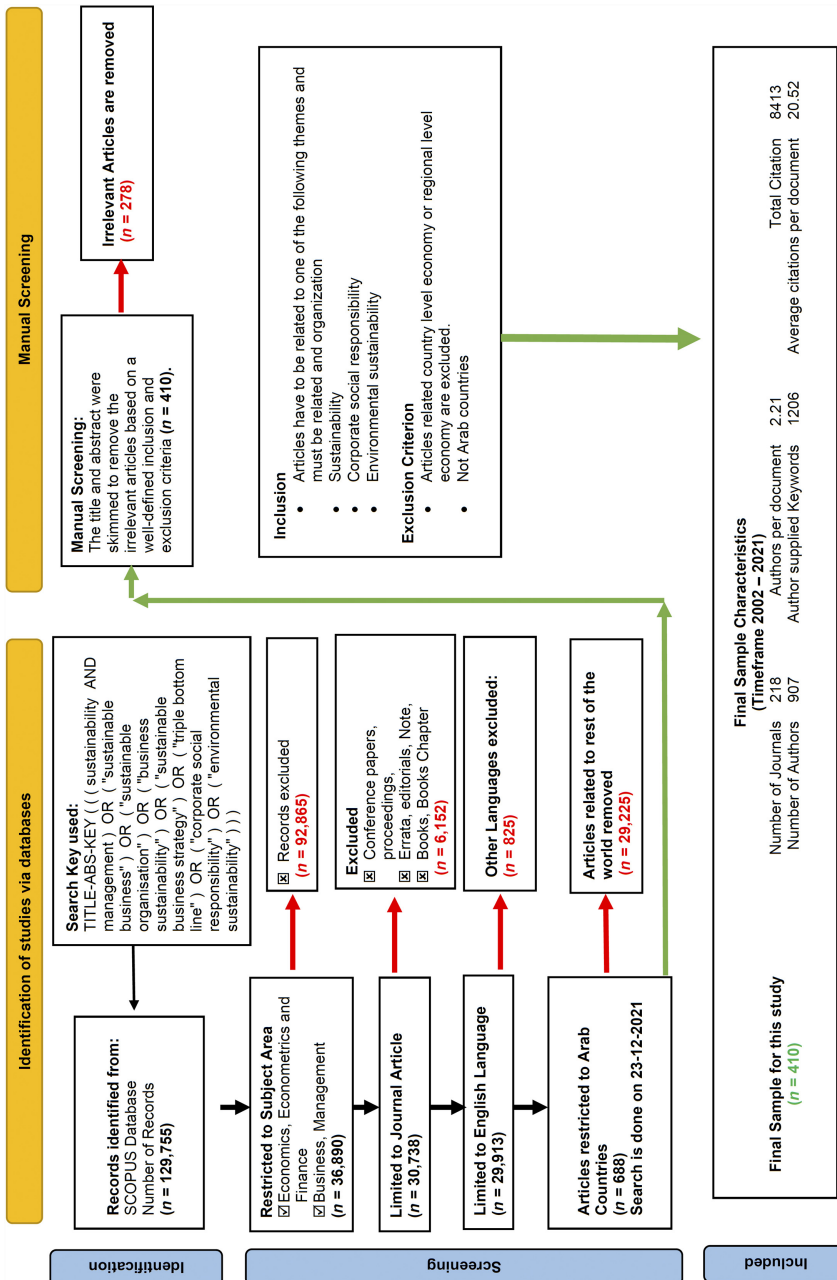
The article selection process is shown in [Figure 1](#). It started with the identification of studies via the Scopus database. To capture the relevant articles on sustainability management from an organizational perspective, the combinations of Boolean operators and terms such as “sustainability” AND “management” OR “sustainable business” OR “sustainable organization” OR “business sustainability” OR “sustainable business strategy” OR “triple bottom line” OR “corporate social responsibility” or “environmental sustainability” OR “greening” OR “green supply chain” OR “green human resource” OR “Green Business” OR “green corp\*” were used. This search yielded 129,755 Scopus publications.

Restricting the subject area to economics, econometrics, finance, business and management significantly reduced the number of publications to 36,890. Further, limiting the search to journal articles excluded conference papers, books, book chapters, etc. and led to a sample of 30,738 documents. After excluding articles written in languages other than English, the total number was further reduced to 29,913 articles. Finally, restricting the search to Arab countries led to a sample of 688 potentially relevant articles.

The manual screening was performed to determine which of these articles are truly relevant for this review. It involved reading their titles, abstracts and keywords. On the one hand, inclusion criteria specified that articles selected in the final sample focused on organizational level and any (social or environmental) aspect of sustainability. On the other hand, articles related to country- and regional-level economies or articles unrelated to Arab countries were excluded. Hence, manual screening led to the final sample of 410 relevant articles on sustainability management in Arab countries.

### 2.2 Analysis

Analysis in this citation-based systematic literature review is performed using the Bibliometrix R Package, a piece of software designed for quantitative research in



**Figure 1.**  
Article selection flow  
chart (PRISMA)

scientometrics and bibliometrics that offers a wide range of bibliometric analytical methods. Bibliographic data of 410 articles in the final sample was extracted in BibTeX form and imported in Bibliometrix R-tool for further examination.

Initial analysis showed that the selected articles date from the 2002–2021 period. Also, they were published in 218 different journals. Together, they have 907,850 different authors, which amounts to an average of 2.21 authors per document. Articles were cited in total 8,413 times, which translates to an average of 20.52 citations per document. The total number of author-supplied keywords amounts to 12,064.

2.3 Distribution of studies across countries

Table 1 shows the distribution of studies across countries. The largest portion of studies on sustainability management in Arab countries comes from Egypt (65), Jordan (65), United Arab Emirates (UAE) (62) and Saudi Arabia (52); 33 and 21 studies on the topic originate from Lebanon and Tunisia, respectively. Oman, Qatar and Dubai have 16 studies each. Palestine and Bahrein have 15 studies each while 13 studies originate from Morocco. Finally, as it is shown in the table, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Yemen and Algeria are among the least researched countries in the MENA region.

3. Citation analysis

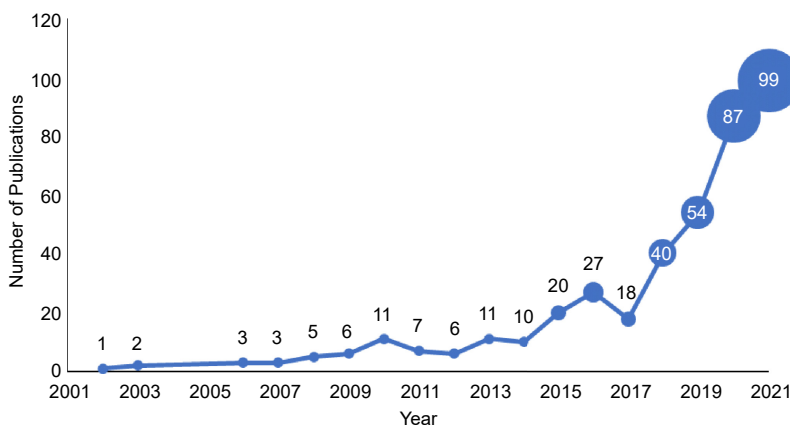
This section presents the results from citation analysis. It starts with publication and citation trends followed by top journals, authors and papers in sustainability management in Arab countries. Publication and citation trends provide information about the popularity of the field among researchers. Identification of the top journals, authors and papers shows the most relevant sources of knowledge related to sustainability management in Arab countries.

3.1 Publication and citation trend

Figure 2 shows publication trends in sustainability management in Arab countries. The production of articles was relatively modest in the period before 2015. It started in 2002 with

Country	Number of studies
Egypt	65
Jordan	63
United Arab Emirates	62
Saudi Arabia	52
Lebanon	33
Tunisia	21
GCC	18
Oman	16
Qatar	16
Dubai	16
Palestine	15
Bahrain	15
Morocco	13
Middle East	10
Iraq	9
Kuwait	9
Libya	8
Yemen	5
Algeria	1

Table 1.  
Distribution of studies  
across countries

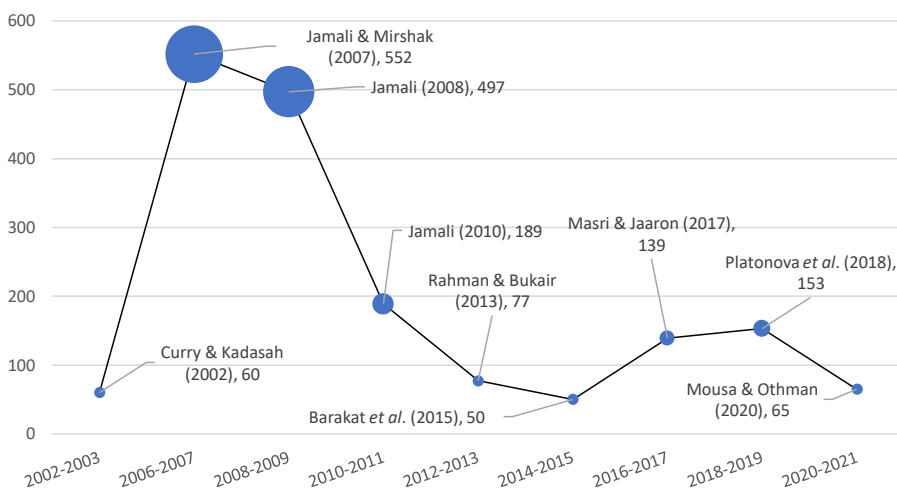


**Figure 2.**  
Publication trends

only one article. Moreover, there were no relevant articles on the topic between 2004 and 2005. The first significant increase was recorded in the year 2010 with 11 articles. Later, 2015 and 2016 yielded 20 and 27 articles on sustainability management, respectively.

Nevertheless, the number of publications in 2017 decreased to only 18. However, starting from 2018, the field entered a period of exponential growth. The production peak was recorded in the year 2021 when authors published 99 different papers. Such a trend indicates that the following years are expected to bring even more relevant articles on sustainability management in Arab countries.

Best papers on sustainability management in Arab countries are shown in [Figure 3](#). They are ranked based on total citations (TCs). The best paper for the 2002–2003 period is written by [Curry and Kadasah \(2002\)](#) with 60 citations. Their article discusses critical elements of total quality management (TQM) in terms of sustainability and presents a tool for TQM evaluation based on those elements. The research was performed in Saudi Arabia. As it is mentioned before, this systematic literature review did not identify relevant sustainability management papers in 2004–2005.



**Figure 3.**  
Best papers based on  
total citations

Further, the best paper for 2006–2007 is [Jamali and Mirshak \(2007\)](#), which was cited 552 times. The authors review the CSR literature in various contexts in this work before discussing the CSR approach among different companies from Lebanon. Similarly, the best paper in 2008–2009 was [Jamali \(2008\)](#), with 497 citations. This article adopts a stakeholder framework to analyze CSR among companies from Lebanon and Syria. Interestingly, the same author also published the most cited article in 2010–2011. [Jamali \(2010\)](#) is cited 189 times. It combines business society and international business political behavior literature to assess CSR among multinational companies in Lebanon.

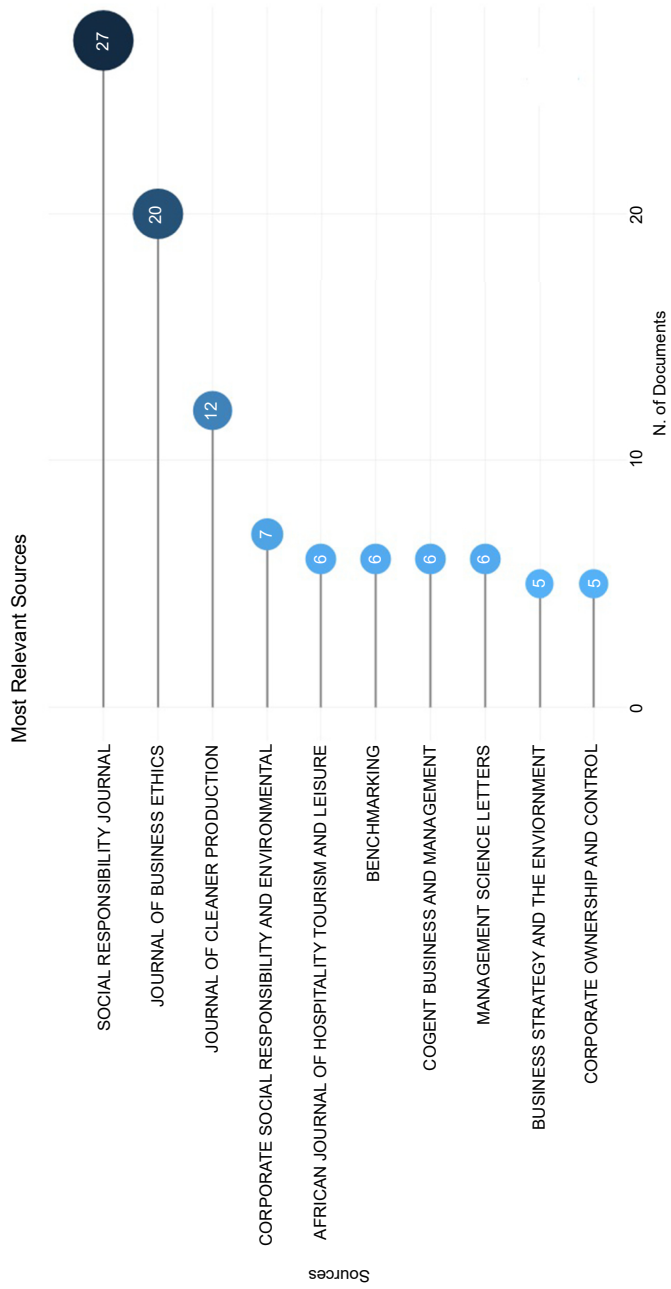
From 2012–2013, the best paper was written by [Rahman and Bukair \(2013\)](#) and has 77 citations until now. This paper investigates the relationship between Shariah supervisory board and CSR disclosure. The research is conducted on the sample consisting of Islamic banks operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The best paper in 2014–2015 is [Barakat et al. \(2015\)](#) cited 50 times. This paper is also concerned with CSR disclosure among Arab countries. Particularly, it examines the relationship between formal institutional factors and CSR disclosure among companies from Palestine and Jordan. The leading article for 2016–2017 is written by [Masri and Jaaron \(2017\)](#) and has a total of 139 citations. This paper is concerned with the relationship between green human resource management (GHRM) practices and environmental performance. The research is conducted among manufacturing companies from Palestine. [Platonova et al. \(2018\)](#) are the authors of the best paper for 2018–2019 that has been cited 153 times. This article investigates the impact of CSR disclosure on financial performance. The sample used in research consists of Islamic banks from the GCC. Finally, the article by [Mousa and Othman \(2020\)](#) is the most successful one from the 2020–2021 period, with 65 citations. It considers the relationship between GHRM practices and sustainable performance in the Palestinian healthcare sector.

### 3.2 Most influential journals

To identify important literature and share their contributions to it, future authors in the field of sustainability management in Arab countries need to be informed about the relevant journals that offer a wide range of publications on the topic and are also ready to accept new ones. Hence, [Figure 4](#) indicates the most relevant journals in the field based on the number of documents published. The source with the highest number of papers is the *Social Responsibility Journal*, which published 27 articles on sustainability management in Arab countries. The publications on the topic in this journal started in the year 2009. Second in [Figure 4](#) is the *Journal of Business Ethics*, with 20 publications since 2007. Beginning in 2015, the *Journal of Cleaner Production* has 12 publications on the topic.

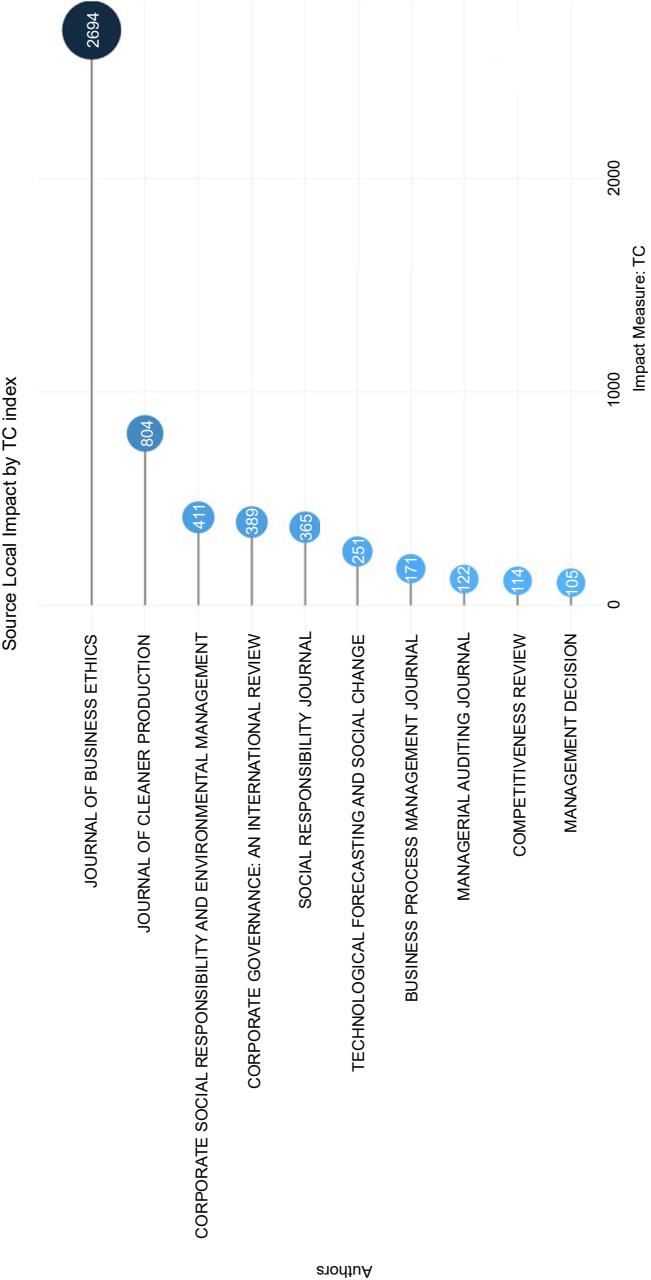
Although the number of publications is an important indicator, it is also essential for future authors to consider the total number of citations received by relevant articles in journals. Hence, [Figure 5](#) shows the most relevant journals based on TCs of articles on sustainability management in Arab countries. Although it is ranked as second based on the number of publications, the *Journal of Business Ethics* has by far the highest number of citations. Articles on sustainability management in Arab countries from this journal were cited 2,694 times. Additionally, the journal has the highest h-index of 14. The *Journal of Cleaner Production* is second in the figure with 804 citations and an h-index of 10. Articles on the topic that are published in *Corporate Social Responsibility* and *Environmental Management* have a total of 411 citations and an h-index of six.

The annual growth of publications on sustainability management in Arab countries in relevant journals is presented in [Figure 6](#). *Social Responsibility Journal* followed by *Journal of Cleaner Production* record the highest growth in publications over the recent period. However, recent growth in *Cogent Business and Management* journal publications has put this source in second place on this parameter. Namely, this journal has six publications on the

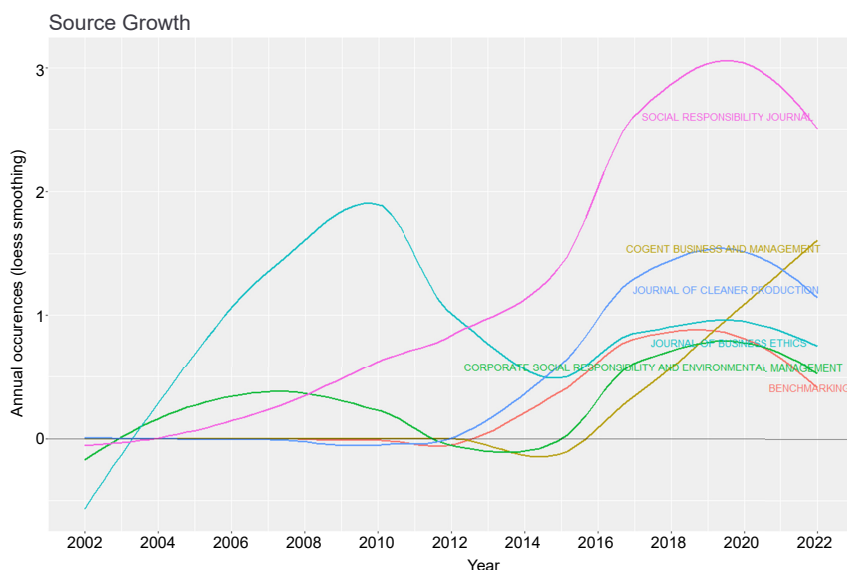


**Figure 4.**  
The most relevant  
journals based on  
number of documents





**Figure 5.**  
The most relevant  
journals based on total  
citations (TC)



**Figure 6.**  
Annual occurrences of  
the sustainability  
management in Arab  
countries articles in  
relevant journals

topic starting from 2019. It poses itself as one of the future leading sources considering the papers on sustainability management in Arab countries.

### 3.3 Most prolific authors

To enhance future collaborations and point out the relevant references, it is vital to identify prominent authors that have already impacted the field of sustainability management in Arab countries. Information presented in this sub-section will inform future researchers on whom to contact for help or cooperation in their field-related studies. Therefore, Table 2 presents the top 20 authors and their h-index, TCs, number of publications and publication start year. Dr. Dima Jamali, Dean of the College of Business Administration at the University of Sharjah, is conceivably the most successful author in the field of sustainability management in Arab countries. She has an h-index of 14, and her 15 articles on the topic were cited 2,365 times. Her first paper on the subject was published in 2007.

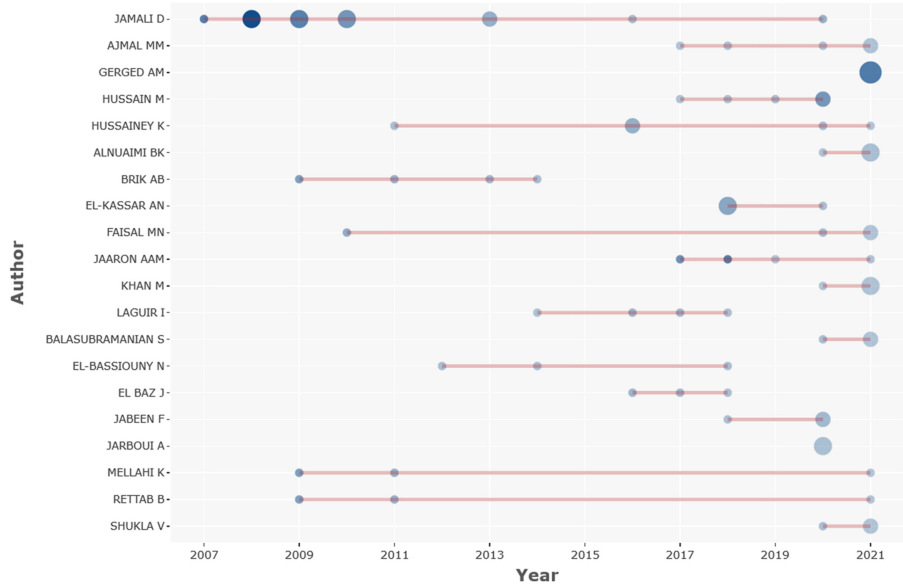
The second on the list is Dr. Mian M. Ajmal, Associate Professor at the College of Business, Abu Dhabi University. He has an h-index of three and five publications that are cited 15 times. He started to publish on the topic in 2017. The third author is Dr. Ali M. Gerged, Senior Lecturer at Faculty of Business and Law, De Montfort University. Interestingly, his five publications date from 2021 and have been cited 39 times. His h-index is 3. Dr. Matloub Hussain, Associate Professor at College of Business, Abu Dhabi University, is the fourth author. Starting from 2017, he has five publications on sustainability management in Arab countries that are cited 69 times. His h-index is 4. Finally, the fifth author from Table 2 is Dr. Khaled Hussainey, Professor at Faculty of Business and Law, University of Portsmouth. His h-index is also 4. Starting from 2017, he published five articles on sustainability management in Arab countries that have received 106 citations.

Figure 7 below contains the visual representation of the top 20 authors' production over time. Dr. Dima Jamali, Dr. Kamel Mellahi, Dr. Belaid Rettab, Dr. Mohd N. Faisal and Dr.

**Table 2.**  
The scientific impact  
and productivity of top  
20 sustainability  
management in Arab  
countries authors

Author	<i>h</i> _index	Total citation	Number of publications	Publication start year
Jamali D.	14	2,365	15	2007
Ajmal M.M.	3	15	5	2017
Gerged A.M.	3	39	5	2021
Hussain M.	4	69	5	2017
Hussainey K.	4	106	5	2011
Alnuaimi B.K.	2	5	4	2020
Brik A.B.	4	458	4	2009
El-Kassar A.N.	4	68	4	2018
Faisal M.N.	2	160	4	2010
Jaaron A.A.M.	2	290	4	2017
Khan M.	1	2	4	2020
Laguir I.	4	96	4	2014
Balasubramanian S.	1	6	3	2020
El-Bassiouny N.	3	65	3	2012
El Baz J.	3	89	3	2016
Jabeen F.	2	18	3	2018
Jarboui A.	2	5	3	2020
Mellahi K.	2	371	3	2009
Rettab B.	2	371	3	2009

Top-Authors' Production over the Time



**Figure 7.**  
Top 20 authors' production over the period

Khaled Hussainey have a notable flow of publications on sustainability management in Arab countries. Among others, the case of Dr. Ali M. Gerged should be considered as all of his five publications on the topic appeared in a single year (2021).

### 3.4 Most cited articles

Although the best articles for every two years based on the number of TCs are mentioned previously, this section will briefly discuss the most cited papers on sustainability management in Arab countries based on average citations per year (ACPY). This relative measure enables the objective comparison of articles published in different periods. The best articles based on ACPY are shown in Table 3 below.

Platonova *et al.* (2018) article has the highest ACPY of 38.3. As it is mentioned before, this paper discusses the relationship between CSR disclosure and financial performance in the GCC banking sector. Their findings suggest that CSR disclosure is positively associated with current and future financial performance.

Zaid *et al.* (2018) have been cited 37.3 on average per year. This article is concerned with the association between GHRM practices, green supply chain management (GSCM) practices and sustainable performance. Authors argue that GSCM practices mediate the positive relationship between GHRM practices and sustainable performance. The study is performed using a sample of Palestinian manufacturing companies.

Article written by Jamali and Mirshak (2007) has gathered 36.8 ACPY. It discusses approaches and philosophies towards CSR among companies from Lebanon. Authors assert the absence of a systematic and institutionalized approach toward CSR in the country.

Jamali (2008), with an ACPY of 35.5, examines the CSR approach among Syrian and Lebanese companies using the stakeholder framework. Authors assert companies from developing countries prioritize stakeholders based mainly on instrumental considerations. However, this is counter-balanced by normative responsibilities assumed toward the community as a stakeholder. Also, companies from developing countries systematically prioritize the limited number of stakeholder groups. Further, stakeholder management is influenced by the power, urgency and legitimacy of the stakeholder and the pressure it creates for an organization. Finally, multinational corporations are found to have steadier stakeholder management processes resulting in a focus on more stakeholder groups.

As is the case with Zaid *et al.* (2018), the article written by Mousa and Othman (2020; 32.5 ACPY) discusses the relationship between GHRM practices and sustainable performance. Based on the Palestinian healthcare sector research, the authors argue that GHRM practices are positively related to sustainable performance.

Masri and Jaaron (2017) article with an ACPY of 27.8 is also concerned with GHRM practices. Based on the sample of Palestinian manufacturing firms, authors initially identify existing GHRM practices and then find a positive relationship between them and environmental performance.

Jamali *et al.* (2008) article has an ACPY of 26.9 and is preoccupied with the relationship between corporate governance and CSR in Lebanon. Authors argue that corporate governance is among the crucial elements of CSR. Also, findings reached by this study imply the shift in focus from corporate governance conformity to CSR attention in developing countries.

Paper written by Hussain and Malik (2020) records 23.5 ACPY. Authors initially identify organizational enablers of circular supply chains and then examine their relationships with environmental performance based on UAE data. This study shows a positive relationship between enablers of circular supply chains and their environmental performance.

Aboelmaged (2018) reached an ACPY of 22.3 investigates drivers of sustainable manufacturing practices and their impact on competitive capabilities based on a sample of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from Egypt. Findings indicate the positive association of environmental pressures from stakeholders, management support and employee engagement with sustainable manufacturing practices. Further, those practices are found to be positively related to the competitive capabilities of SMEs.

Pirani and Arafat (2016) research food waste management among hotels and restaurants in UAE, and their article has an ACPY of 20.5. Authors argue that serving style and timing,

Ranking	Cited by	ACPY*	Title	Authors	Source title	Year
1	153	38.3	The impact of corporate social responsibility disclosure on financial performance: evidence from the GCC Islamic banking sector	Platonova E., Asutay M., Dixon R., Mohammad S.	Journal of Business Ethics	2018
2	149	37.3	The impact of green human resource management and green supply chain management practices on sustainable performance: an empirical study	Zaid A.A., Jaaron A.A.M., Talib Bon A.	Journal of Cleaner Production	2018
3	552	36.8	Corporate social responsibility (CSR): theory and practice in a developing country context	Jamali D., Mirshak R.	Journal of Business Ethics	2007
4	497	35.5	A stakeholder approach to corporate social responsibility: a fresh perspective into theory and practice	Jamali D.	Journal of Business Ethics	2008
5	65	32.5	The impact of green human resource management practices on sustainable performance in healthcare organizations: a conceptual framework	Mousa S.K., Othman M.	Journal of Cleaner Production	2020
6	139	27.8	Assessing green human resources management practices in Palestinian manufacturing context: an empirical study	Masri H.A., Jaaron A.A.M.	Journal of Cleaner Production	2017
7	376	26.9	Corporate governance and corporate social responsibility synergies and interrelationships	Jamali D., Safieddine A.M., Rabbath M.	Corporate Governance: An International Review	2008
8	47	23.5	Organizational enablers for circular economy in the context of sustainable supply chain management	Hussain M., Malik M.	Journal of Cleaner Production	2020
9	89	22.3	The drivers of sustainable manufacturing practices in Egyptian SMEs and their impact on competitive capabilities: a PLS-SEM model	Aboelmaged M.	Journal of Cleaner Production	2018

**Table 3.**  
Top 20 papers based  
on average citations  
per year (ACPY)

(continued)

Ranking	Cited by	ACPY*	Title	Authors	Source title	Year
10	123	20.5	Reduction of food waste generation in the hospitality industry	Pirani S.I., Arafat H.A.	Journal of Cleaner Production	2016
11	257	19.8	A study of management perceptions of the impact of corporate social responsibility on organizational performance in emerging economies: the case of Dubai	Rettab B., Brik A.B., Mellahi K.	Journal of Business Ethics	2009
12	19	19.0	Exploring the value management critical success factors for sustainable residential building – a structural equation modeling approach	Kineber A.F., Othman I., Oke A.E., Chileshe N., Zayed T.	Journal of Cleaner Production	2021
13	36	18.0	Boardroom nationality and gender diversity: implications for corporate sustainability performance	Zaid A.A.M., Wang M., Adib M., Sahyouni A., Abuhijleh T.F.S.	Journal of Cleaner Production	2020
14	228	17.5	Peculiar strengths and relational attributes of SMEs in the context of CSR	Jamali D., Zanhour M., Keshishian T.	Journal of Business Ethics	2009
15	260	17.3	Corporate social and environmental responsibility in Asian countries and other geographical regions	Baughn C.C., Bodie N.L., McIntosh J.C.	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	2007
16	17	17.0	Factors affecting corporate environmental disclosure in emerging markets: the role of corporate governance structures	Gerged A.M.	Business Strategy and the Environment	2021
17	189	15.8	The CSR of MNC subsidiaries in developing countries: global, local, substantive or diluted?	Jamali D.	Journal of Business Ethics	2010
18	31	15.5	Ownership types, corporate governance and corporate social responsibility disclosures: empirical evidence from a developing country	Alshbili I., Elamer A.A., Beddewela E.	Accounting Research Journal	2020

*(continued)***Table 3.**

Table 3.

Ranking	Cited by	ACPY*	Title	Authors	Source title	Year
19	61	15.3	On the relationship between corporate governance and firm performance: evidence from GCC countries	Pillai R., Al-Malkawi H.-A.N.	Research in International Business and Finance	2018
20	43	14.3	The impact of women leaders on environmental performance: evidence on gender diversity in banks	Birindelli G., Iannuzzi A.P., Savioli M.	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	2019

Note(s): \* ACPY = average citations per year

type of food and accuracy of estimation of the number of customers significantly increase food waste. The authors also introduce the sustainable performance indicator for food service in the hospitality sector and recommend ways to reduce food waste.

[Rettab et al. \(2009\)](#) article has an ACPY of 19.8 and discusses the relationship between CSR and organizational performance on the Dubai (UAE) sample. Results of the study show that CSR is positively related to financial performance, employee commitment and corporate reputation.

[Kineber et al. \(2021\)](#), with 19 ACPY, is concerned with exploring critical success factors for implementing value management in sustainable residential building projects in Egypt. The findings they reached suggest that stakeholders and knowledge are critical success factors for value management.

[Zaid et al. \(2020\)](#) article has 18 ACPY and investigates the relationship between board diversity and corporate sustainability performance on data from Palestine. Results show the positive but insignificant positive relationship between national and gender diversity and corporate sustainability performance.

Research performed by [Jamali et al. \(2009\)](#) reached 17.5 ACPY. It is preoccupied with CSR among SMEs in the Lebanon context. This article discusses particular CSR orientations among SMEs in this developing country, compares them to multinational corporations and draws relevant implications.

[Baughn et al. \(2007\)](#) article records 17.3 ACPY. Although this article is not directly related to some Arab countries, it uses the Middle East region for comparison purposes. The paper is concerned with aspects of CSR performance among firms from 15 Asian countries. Those aspects are compared to other world regions, including the Middle East.

[Gerged \(2021\)](#) investigates the relationship between internal corporate governance mechanisms and corporate environmental disclosure in a Jordanian context and has 17 ACPY. Findings suggest that board size and independence, CEO duality and foreign ownership positively relate to corporate environmental disclosure. Also, institutional ownership, managerial ownership and ownership concentration have negative relationships with corporate environmental disclosure.

Article by [Jamali \(2010\)](#) has reached an ACPY of 15.8. It discusses CSR orientations of multinational corporations' subsidiaries in the Lebanese context. Findings suggest that some global CSR patterns are also present in the domestic country. However, some CSR patterns are also diluted by unique characteristics of the domestic market and subsidiaries.

Research performed by [Alshbili et al. \(2020\)](#) has an ACPY of 15.5. This article discusses the relationships between ownership types, corporate governance and CSR disclosures on a Libyan sample. Although relationships between board size and the presence of CSR

The paper written by [Pillai and Al-Malkawi \(2018\)](#) has 15.3 ACPY. It examines the relationship between internal corporate governance mechanisms and firm performance based on a sample from GCC countries. Findings indicate that factors including government shareholdings, audit type, the board size, CSR and leverage impact firm performance in many of the GCC states.

Finally, [Birindelli et al. \(2019\)](#) discuss the impact of women leaders on environmental sustainability in the banking sector in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. The article has reached 14.3 ACPY. Findings show a nonlinear relationship between women directors and environmental performance, which is shaped by women chief executive officers (CEOs). Hence, gender diversity in leadership positions is a significant driver of environmental sustainability in the banking sector.

This section presents network analysis in sustainability management in Arab countries. It is a statistical method of identifying themes in the literature, the similarity of the content, knowledge structures, etc. that helps authors in the field to determine future research avenues (Anwar *et al.*, 2021). It contains a conceptual structure with word cloud co-word analyses that show the most used keywords and pairs of words that appear in the research on sustainability management in Arab countries. Also, it discusses intellectual structure design using the co-citation analysis that indicates the references jointly used in the existing studies.

**4.1.1 Word cloud analysis.** World cloud analysis identifies the most frequently used keywords within the articles on sustainability management in Arab countries, which helps authors of future studies to identify the existing themes in the research and potential research gaps. Those keywords are presented in [Figure 8](#) below. Apart from the word “sustainability”, “corporate social responsibility” or other forms of this term, including “corporate social responsibility (CSR)” and “CSR”, are the most frequently used keywords in considered articles as they appear cumulatively 186 times. Further, the word “corporate governance” was used in 33 papers. The rest of the most frequently used keywords are related to countries.



**Figure 8.**  
The most frequent  
keywords

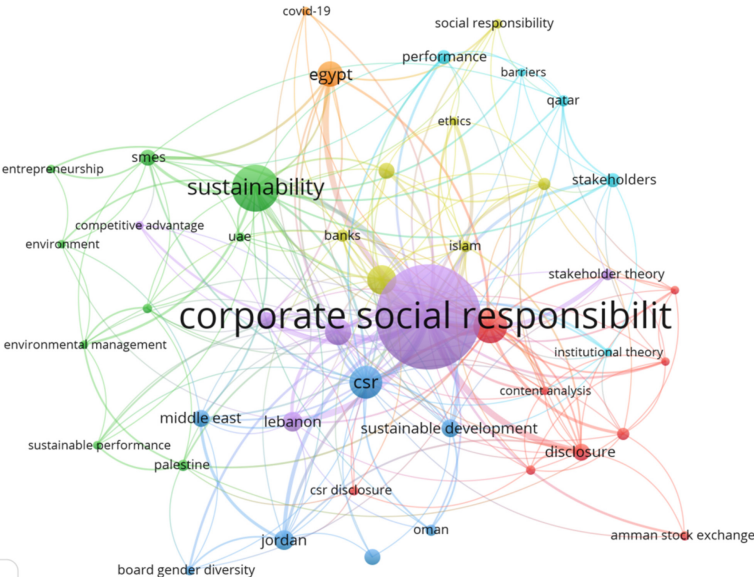


Hence, the term “Saudi Arabia” is mentioned 27 times, “developing countries” showed up in 23 articles, while “Egypt”, “Lebanon” and “Jordan” appeared 22, 17 and 16 times, respectively. Other keywords included in the selected articles are “Middle East”, “sustainable development”, “United Arab Emirates”, “environmental sustainability”, “financial performance”, “green supply chain management”, etc.

*4.1.2 Co-word analysis.* Co-word analysis is used to recognize the groups of terms that appear together in articles on sustainability management in Arab countries. Analysis of such term groups helps future authors identify existing research themes and potential gaps that could be approached. Hence, the visual representation of word clusters is shown in [Figure 9](#). The most significant word cluster is the one that involves “corporate social responsibility”, “Lebanon”, “stakeholder theory” and “competitive advantage”. The second word cluster is related to the sustainable performance of enterprises and includes the following terms: “sustainability”, “SMEs”, “entrepreneurship”, “environment”, “environmental management”, “sustainable performance”, “Palestine and “UAE”. Third cluster combines gender perspective and sustainability: “CSR”, “sustainable development”, “Middle East”, “Jordan”, “Oman” and “board gender diversity”. Fourth group of terms is related to disclosure of CSR practices and consists of the following terms: “content analysis”, “disclosure”, “CSR disclosure” and “Amman Stock Exchange”. Fifth relevant cluster contains “performance”, “barriers”, “Qatar” and “stakeholders”. Sixth cluster is related to ethics and religion aspects of sustainability: “ethics”, “Islam”, “social responsibility” and “banks”. Finally, the only two significant words from the seventh cluster are “Egypt” and “COVID-19”.

*4.2 Intellectual structure*

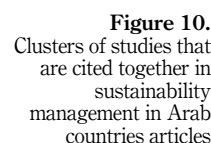
*4.2.1 Co-citation analysis.* According to [Koseoglu and Parnell \(2020\)](#), co-citation analysis helps determine the connections between relevant references in a field that identifies relevant



**Figure 9.**  
Clusters of words that  
appear together in  
sustainability  
management in Arab  
countries articles



The second cluster contains articles on CSR in the Asian context. For instance, the article written by [Rizk and Debeljak \(2008\)](#) discusses the Islamic perspective on business and ethics. However, many of the articles are mainly concerned with CSR disclosure. For instance, [Haniffa and Cooke \(2005\)](#) investigate the effect of culture and governance on corporate social reporting in Malaysia. Similarly, [Khan et al. \(2013\)](#) consider the relationship between corporate governance and CSR disclosure in the Bangladeshi context. Additionally, [Menassa \(2010\)](#) writes about CSR disclosures in the banking sector of Lebanon.



5. Social networks

This section discusses social networks among authors in the field of sustainability management in Arab countries. It is concerned with analyzing research collaboration groups and presents the country collaboration map. Analysis of social networks informs future authors about the collaboration groups of researchers that can be contacted for help or cooperation on future works in the field.

5.1 Research collaboration

Significant author collaboration networks in the field of sustainability management in Arab countries are shown in Figure 11. For instance, analysis shows that Dr. Jamali does not have any permanent collaboration group. Rather, she either works alone (e.g. Jamali, 2008; Jamali, 2010) or in short-term teams (e.g. Jamali et al., 2008; Jamali et al., 2009).

Further, a significant collaboration network consists of professors from the College of Business Administration, Abu Dhabi University, Dr. Mian M. Ajmal, Dr. Mehmood Khan and Dr. Matloub Hussain and their students (at the time of research collaboration) Bader K. AlNuaimi and Amal Alameeri. Another social network involves Dr. Anis Ben Brik, Dr. Belaid Rettab, Dr. Kamel Mellahi, Dr. Chad W. Autry and LaDonna M. Thronton. Although Dr. Rettab and Dr. Mellahi together are members of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, this collaboration group is fairly international as all its members are academicians in different countries or universities (in Qatar, UAE, United Kingdom [UK] and USA). The third collaboration network in the field of sustainability management in Arab countries includes Dr. Amer Al Fadli, Dr. John Sands, Dr. Claire Beattie, Dr. Gregory Jones and Dr. Domenico Pensiero. Although Dr. Al Fadli is a Professor at American University in Emirates,

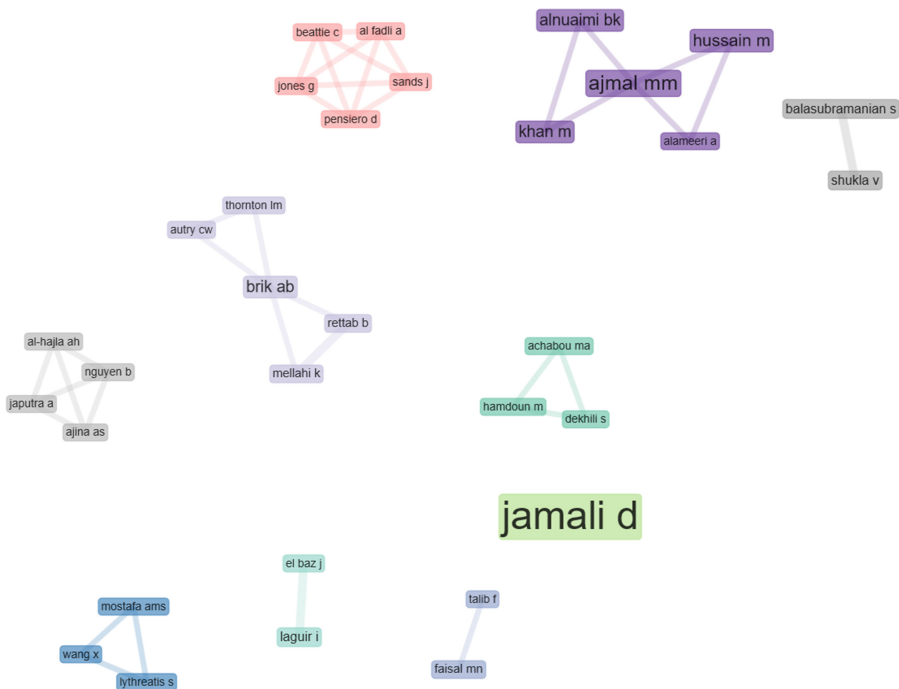


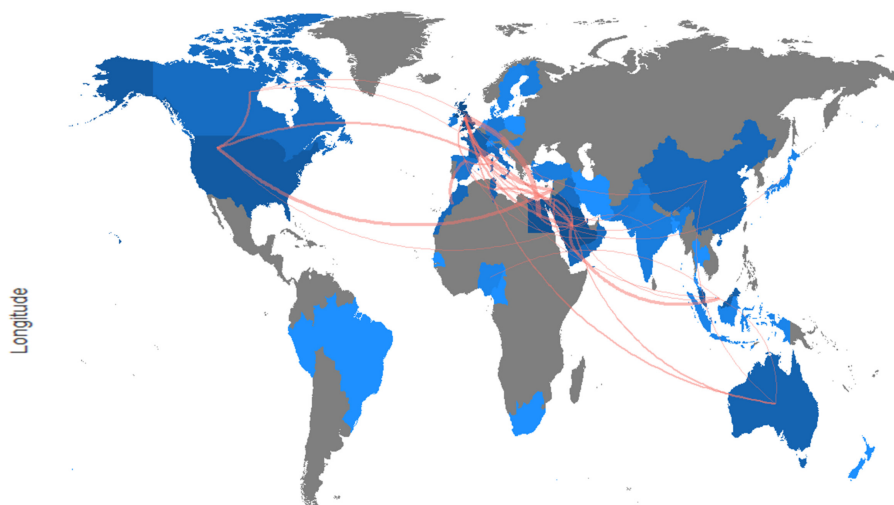
Figure 11.  
Author collaboration  
networks

he has a PhD from the School of Commerce, University of Southern Queensland, to which all members of this network are associated. The following collaboration network is more heterogeneous as its members (Dr. Ahmed S. Ajina, Dr. Arnold Japutra, Dr. Bang Nguyen, Dr. Sharifah F. S. Alwi, and Dr. Ali H. Al-Hajla) are associated with universities in Saudi Arabia, Australia, China and the UK. Dr. Mohamed A. Achabou, Dr. Sihem Dekhili and Dr. Mohamed Hamdoun from two universities in France and one from Tunisia make up another collaboration network. Also, Dr. Sophie Lythreatis, Dr. Xiaojun Wang and Dr. Ahmed M. S. Mostefa extend the collaboration between the two universities in the UK. Finally, there are three pairs of researchers that collaborate on sustainability management in Arab countries research. Namely, Dr. Sreejith Balasubramanian and Dr. Vinaya Shukla work together as members of Business School at Middlesex University of Dubai and Middlesex University London, respectively. Also, Dr. Jamal El Baz and Dr. Issam Laguir extend collaboration between universities from Morocco and France. Finally, Dr. Mohd N. Faisal and Dr. Faisal Talib perform relevant research together from their respective universities in Qatar and India.

Figure 12 shows the country collaboration map. Authors from various countries all over the world collaborate to perform research on sustainability management in Arab countries. It should be noted that there are significant contributions from authors working in non-Arab countries, such as the USA, Canada, France, UK, Australia, China, etc. However, as is shown in Figure 11, there is still a substantial number of countries whose authors have not yet been involved in research on the topic.

## 6. Conclusion and discussion

Although the literature on CSR (and similar aspects of corporate sustainability) is recently characterized by an increasing trend (Jamali *et al.*, 2017), the MENA region is still considered to be understudied in this sense (Jamali *et al.*, 2020). Considering the ever-growing emphasis on the integration of business (Huang and He, 2019; Palalic *et al.*, 2021; Wright and Dana, 2003), natural and societal aspects of organizations (Dylick and Hockerts, 2002), both



**Figure 12.**  
Country  
collaboration map

practitioners and academicians have the responsibility to understand and apply corporate sustainability. Therefore, to enable and enhance future improvements in the field, this citation-based literature review systematically organized existing literature on sustainability management in Arab countries. Information presented in this paper informs interested researchers about the current state in the field, relevant sources of knowledge, important literature on the topic, relevant authors and other valuable particulars.

Initially, the paper presents citation analysis indicating that the interest in sustainability management in Arab countries among researchers has been substantially growing in recent years. Besides presenting citation trends in the field, citation analysis pointed out the most influential journals that future authors on sustainability management can consider when publishing their papers. Moreover, the analysis points out the most prolific authors in the field of sustainability management in Arab countries who can be approached for collaboration and whose literature should be considered by future authors in the field. Additionally, the paper discusses the most cited articles to which future researchers should pay specific attention when building the theoretical backgrounds of their studies.

Next, theme identification (network analysis) is performed. It discusses conceptual and intellectual structures present in the field. Analysis of the conceptual structure indicates the most frequently used keywords that appear alone or together with their pairs in the literature. Such information informs future researchers about the existing themes in the field and helps them identify potential research gaps. Analysis of the intellectual structure in the field shows the papers that are cited together in the analyzed literature. This allows future authors in the field identify the relevant literature used as a background for sustainability management research in Arab countries.

Finally, analysis of the social networks present in the field informs researchers about the relevant groups and locations of experienced authors that can be contacted for collaboration or help in future studies considering sustainability management in Arab countries.

We hope that this systematic literature review will help researchers make further valuable contributions to the field of sustainability management in Arab countries.

### *6.1 Limitations and future research*

However, we know that the sole citation-based systematic literature review is not substantial enough to comprehensively capture the sustainability management research's essence in Arab countries. Hence, we urge future studies to perform next-level literature reviews in the field with a more complex approach, such as detailed content analysis of various narrower aspects of sustainability management in Arab countries.

Additionally, analysis in this paper indicated that the examination of sustainability management in Arab countries is mainly related to the broad concept of CSR. Apart from encouraging authors to further empirically investigate this concept and variables related to it, there is a need for a narrower approach to sustainability management. For instance, the corpus of the literature analyzed in this paper significantly fails to emphasize the environmental aspects of the sustainability to a needed extent. Therefore, this paper calls for future research on sustainability management in Arab countries that will investigate the specifics of green corporate efforts, green supply management, environmental protection and its relevance for businesses, etc. Additionally, we invite authors to emphasize the interconnectedness of economic, social, and environmental goals and consequences that characterize the organizations in Arab countries as those are the aspects that truly make up the phenomenon of sustainability management. Finally, we call for increased research on sustainability management in Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Yemen and Algeria since the analysis has shown that these countries from the MENA region lack research on the topic compared to Egypt, Jordan or Saudi Arabia.

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