

ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMES (AIJBES)

www.aijbes.com



PHILANTHROPY TRENDS IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND FOOD BANK: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 30.06.2025 Revised date: 21.07.2025 Accepted date: 18.08.2025 Published date: 01.09.2025

To cite this document:

Derahman, R., Zakaria, N., Hamid, H. A., Yusof, N., Yasin, I. R., & Hamzah, S. A. S. (2025). Philanthropy Trends In Corporate Social Responsibility And Food Bank: A Bibliometric Analysis. Advanced International Journal of

Abstract:

This study explores emerging trends and research patterns in the intersection of philanthropy, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and food banks through a bibliometric analysis. In recent years, CSR activities have increasingly incorporated philanthropic initiatives, particularly in addressing food insecurity through partnerships with food banks. However, a comprehensive understanding of scholarly output and thematic evolution in this domain remains limited. To address this gap, we analyzed literature indexed in the Scopus database, employing bibliometric techniques to map the development, key contributors, and intellectual structure of the field. Using VOSviewer software, we conducted co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence analyses to visualize research clusters and collaboration networks. The initial dataset comprised over 800 documents, which were refined to 763 records after data cleaning and normalization using OpenRefine. The findings show a significant rise in publications over the past decade, highlighting the growing academic and practical interest in the synergy between CSR and philanthropic food assistance. Prominent themes include

Business Entrepreneurship and SMEs, 7 (25), 72-86.

DOI: 10.35631/AIJBES.725006

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sustainable development, corporate governance, stakeholder engagement, and social innovation. The analysis also identifies key authors, institutions, and countries driving research in this area. Despite growing attention, the field remains fragmented, indicating opportunities for deeper interdisciplinary collaboration and theoretical integration. This study adds to the literature by providing a systematic overview of the research field and proposing avenues for future inquiry. The findings can support academics, practitioners, and policymakers in understanding the evolving role of corporate philanthropy in food systems and developing strategies that align CSR goals with societal impact.

Keywords:

Philanthropy, Corporate Social Responsibility, Food Bank

Introduction

Philanthropy is essential to the operations and long-term sustainability of food banks, which are essential in addressing food insecurity. Food banks rely heavily on donations from individuals, corporations, and government agencies to distribute food to those in need. These donations are not limited to food items but also include financial support, which is vital for purchasing food and maintaining operations (Bucknum & Bentzel, 2018; Ataseven et al., 2018). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can similarly be defined as the actions and decisions taken for reasons at least partly away from the company's direct technical or economic interest (Acharya, 2020). The involvement of corporations, particularly in the US and Canada, has led to the corporatization of food banks, where large food firms donate surplus food, often for tax relief and waste management purposes (Riches, 2022)(Lohnes & Wilson, 2018). This relationship, while beneficial in terms of resources, also raises questions about the effectiveness of food banks in tackling the underlying causes of food insecurity and their role within the broader food system.

Food banks have evolved beyond merely distributing surplus food to engaging in activities that promote community food security and food justice. Some food banks have initiated programs such as gleaning, gardening, and farming to empower communities to meet their own food needs (Vitiello et al., 2015). These initiatives reflect a shift towards building local capacity and reducing dependency on food aid. However, the effectiveness of these programs can be limited by the food banks' dependence on middle-class volunteers and charitable contributions, which may not always match the needs of the food-insecure communities they support (Vitiello et al., 2015)(Nayak & Hartwell, 2023). Additionally, food banks face operational challenges, such as ensuring equitable distribution of food, managing perishable items, and adapting to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. This highlighted the need for diversified supply lines and strong interorganizational relationships (Sengul Orgut & Lodree, 2023) (Bradley, 2023).

Despite their critical role, food banks are often seen as a temporary solution to food insecurity rather than a means to address its underlying causes. The literature suggests that while food banks provide immediate relief, they may inadvertently perpetuate dependency and fail to tackle structural issues such as poverty and inequality (Ghys, 2018) (Loopstra, 2018). Alternatives like community markets, which adopt a social economy approach, aim to provide more sustainable solutions by offering affordable food options and promoting community resilience (Sonnino, 2012). These markets, along with enhanced food bank models, seek to

address food insecurity more holistically by focusing on social and economic empowerment rather than just emergency food aid (Gamso, 2024).

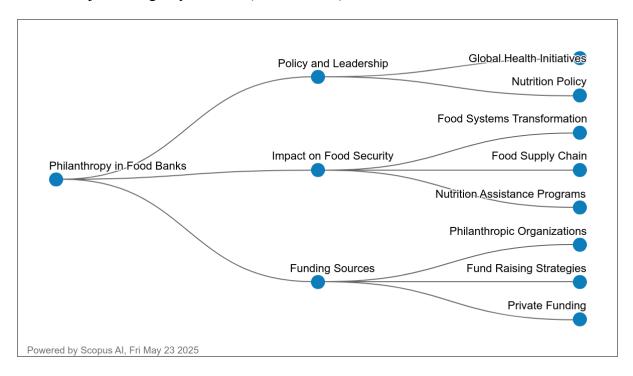


Figure 1: Overview of Philanthropy

Research Question

Based on the mentioned problem, this study is carried out to answer these research questions:

RQ1: What are the philanthropy and corporate social responsibility trends according to the year of publication?

RQ2: What are the most cited articles?

RQ3: What are the top 10 countries based on the number of publications?

RQ4: What are the top popular keywords related to the study?

RQ5: What is the co-authorship by country's collaboration?

Thus, this paper aims to understand and analyse scientific literature by quantifying its output in publications.

Methodology

Bibliometrics involves gathering, organizing, and analyzing bibliographic data derived from scientific publications (Alves et al., 2021; Assyakur & Rosa, 2022; Verbeek et al., 2002). Regarding basic statistics, for example, identifying publishing journals, publication years, and leading authors (Wu & Wu, 2017), bibliometrics also involves more advanced techniques like document co-citation analysis. A thorough literature review demands a careful, iterative process of selecting appropriate keywords, searching the literature, as well as conducting an in-depth analysis. This methodology helps create a comprehensive bibliography and ensures reliable results (Fahimnia et al., 2015). With this in mind, the study emphasized high-impact publications, as they offer valuable insights into the theoretical frameworks shaping the research field. To maintain data accuracy, Scopus was used as the primary source concerning

data collection (Al-Khoury et al., 2022; di Stefano et al., 2010; Khiste & Paithankar, 2017). Furthermore, to ensure quality, the study focused solely on articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals, intentionally excluding books and lecture notes (Gu et al., 2019). Publications were gathered from Elsevier's Scopus, which is recognized for its extensive coverage, spanning from 2020 to December 2023, for further analysis.

Data Search Strategy

The research utilized a screening process to identify the search keywords for retrieving articles. The study began by searching the Scopus database with online TITLE-ABS-KEY (philanthropy AND (food AND bank) OR corporate AND social AND responsibility) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "ECON") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "ENVI")), assembling 832 articles. Afterwards, the query string was revised so that the search terms "philanthropy" OR "food bank" should be focused on students as learners. This process yielded 763 results, which were additionally scrutinized to include only research articles in English. Subject and article reviews were also excluded. The final search string refinement included 763 articles, which were used for bibliometric analysis. The table below is the research string used to analyse the data in the publication.

TABLE 1: The Search String.				
	TITLE-ABS-KEY (philanthropy AND (food AND bank) OR			
	corporate AND social AND responsibility) AND (LIMIT-TO (
	SUBJAREA , "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI")			
	OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "ECON") OR LIMIT-TO (
Scopus	SUBJAREA, "ENVI"))			

The above search string was used in the Scopus database, supported by advanced Boolean logic, and the search was limited to several fields. The search process was also limited to certain criteria, which are shown in Table 2 below. This process has been conducted, and several criteria were utilized in order to specify the data search.

TABLE 2: The Selection Criterion In Searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Subject	Business Management	Economic, Environmental
	Social Science	Science

Data Analysis Using Vosviewer

VOSviewer is an intuitive bibliometric software established by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman at Leiden University, Netherlands (van Eck & Waltman, 2010, 2017). It is widely used for visualizing and analyzing scientific literature, specializing in creating network visualizations, clustering related items, and generating density maps. The software's versatility enables the analysis of co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence networks, offering researchers a thorough understanding of research landscapes. Its interactive interface, along with regular updates, supports efficient and dynamic exploration of large datasets.

VOSviewer's ability to compute metrics, customize visualizations, and integrate with various bibliometric data sources makes it a valuable resource for scholars seeking insights into complex research domains.

One of the standout features of VOSviewer is its capacity to transform intricate bibliometric datasets into visually interpretable maps and charts. With a focus on network visualization, the software excels in clustering related items, analyzing keyword co-occurrence patterns, and generating density maps. Researchers benefit from its user-friendly interface, enabling both novice and experienced users to effectively explore research landscapes. VOSviewer's ongoing development keeps it at the cutting edge of bibliometric analysis, providing valuable insights through metric calculations and customizable visualizations. Its capacity to adapt to various types of bibliometric data, such as co-authorship as well as citation networks, makes VOSviewer a versatile and significant tool for researchers addressing to obtain a deeper understanding and meaningful insights within their fields of research.

Datasets comprising bibliometric metadata—such as publication year, document title, author identity, source journal, citation frequency, and associated keywords—in PlainText format were retrieved from the Scopus database for the period spanning 2004 to December 2024. These datasets were subjected to analysis using VOSviewer software (version 1.6.19). Employing VOS clustering and visualization techniques, the software facilitated the generation of bibliometric maps. Unlike the traditional Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) approach, VOSviewer adopts a layout optimization algorithm that situates items in a low-dimensional space, wherein the spatial proximity between items reflects the degree of their relatedness and similarity (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Hence, VOSviewer is similar to the MDS approach (Appio et al., 2014). However, unlike MDS, which mainly calculates similarity metrics, for example, Jaccard indices as well as cosine, VOS implements a more suitable method for normalizing co-occurrence frequencies, such as the Association Strength (AS_{ij}), which is measured as (van Eck & Waltman, 2007):

$$AS_{ij} = \frac{C_{ij}}{w_i w_i},$$

where it is "proportional to the ratio between on the one hand the observed number of co-occurrences of i and j and on the other hand the expected number of co-occurrences of i and j under the assumption that co-occurrences of i and j are statistically independent" (van Eck & Waltman, 2007).

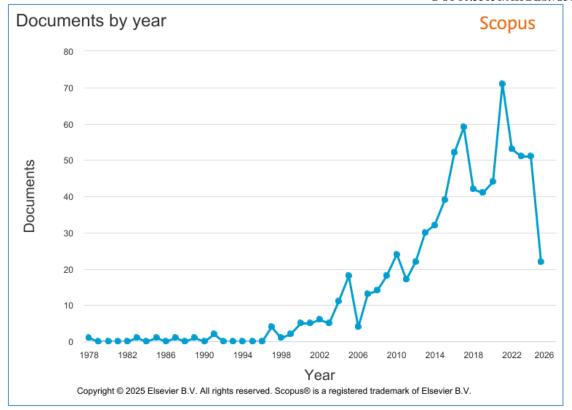


Figure 2: The Most Cited Articles

TABLE 3: The Most Cited Articles

Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Cited by
Brammer S.; Millington A.	Corporate reputation and philanthropy: An empirical analysis (Brammer & Millington, 2005)	2005	Journal of Business Ethics	701
Sen S.; Bhattacharya C.B.; Korschun D.	The role of corporate social responsibility in strengthening multiple stakeholder relationships: A field experiment (Sen et al., 2006)	2006	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	1104
Mohr L.A.; Webb D.J.	The effects of corporate social responsibility and price on consumer responses (Mohr & Webb, 2005)	2005	Journal of Consumer Affairs	824

			DOI 10.35631/AI	JBES.7250
Seifert B.; Morris S.A.; Bartkus B.R.	Having, Giving, and Getting: Slack Resources, Corporate Philanthropy, and Firm Financial Performance (Seifert et al., 2004)	2004	Business & Society	385
Lev B.; Petrovits C.; Radhakrishnan S.	Is doing good good for you? How corporate charitable contributions enhance revenue growth (Lev et al., 2010)	2010	Strategic Management Journal	675
Lii YS.; Lee M.	Doing Right Leads to Doing Well: When the Type of CSR and Reputation Interact to Affect Consumer Evaluations of the Firm (Lii & Lee, 2012)	2012	Journal of Business Ethics	468
Windsor D.	Corporate social responsibility: Three key approaches (Windsor, 2006)	2006	Journal of Management Studies	448
Crane A.; Palazzo G.; Spence L.J.; Matten D.	Contesting the value of "creating shared value" (Crane et al., 2014)	2014	California Management Review	590
Benabou R.; Tirole J.	Individual and corporate social responsibility (Benabou & Tirole, 2010)	2010	Economica	1351
Peloza J.; Shang J.	How can corporate social responsibility activities create value for stakeholders? A systematic review (Peloza & Shang, 2011)	2011	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	736

The dataset provides insight into highly cited academic works related to CSR, philanthropy, and corporate reputation. Notably, the most cited article is by Benabou and Tirole (2010), titled *Individual and Corporate Social Responsibility*, with 1,351 citations, published in *Economica*. This indicates the article's foundational role in framing the theoretical underpinnings of CSR from both individual and organizational perspectives. The second most cited is by Sen, Bhattacharya, and Korschun (2006), which garnered 1,104 citations. Their work, emphasizing CSR's role in stakeholder relationship management, highlights the growing interest in CSR's strategic importance beyond mere compliance or philanthropy.

Several other articles also demonstrate strong academic influence, such as Mohr and Webb (2005), whose study on the intersection of CSR and pricing decisions received 824 citations, and Brammer and Millington (2005), whose empirical analysis of corporate reputation and philanthropy achieved 701 citations. These figures suggest a substantial interest in how CSR affects consumer behavior and public perception. Similarly, the work of Lev et al. (2010), exploring the tangible financial benefits of corporate charitable actions, also reached 675 citations, underscoring how CSR initiatives are increasingly tied to business performance metrics and strategic outcomes.

Later contributions, like Crane et al.'s (2014) critique of "creating shared value" (590 citations), reflect a more critical and evolving discourse around CSR concepts. Peloza and Shang's (2011) systematic review (736 citations) adds to this by evaluating how CSR can generate value for various stakeholders, pointing to a shift from descriptive to integrative and value-driven CSR research. Overall, the distribution of citations shows that research published across different reputable journals has shaped diverse dimensions of CSR—from theoretical models and stakeholder engagement to performance outcomes and critical perspectives—solidifying CSR's relevance across academic and business domains.

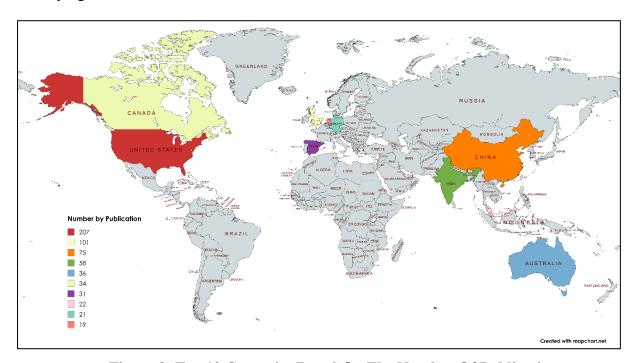


Figure 3: Top 10 Countries Based On The Number Of Publications.

The top 10 countries by number of publications reflect a geographically diverse and academically active group in the field of study, likely related to CSR or a similar domain, based on the context. The United States leads significantly with 207 publications, highlighting its dominant role in global academic output and possibly indicating strong institutional support and funding for research in this area. The United Kingdom follows with 101 publications, demonstrating its substantial contribution and influence, possibly fueled by its strong research universities and academic tradition in business and social sciences.

China and India take the third and fourth spots with 75 and 58 publications, respectively, showcasing the growing prominence of Asian countries in academic research. China's rapid ascent in scholarly output reflects its increasing investment in higher education and research infrastructure, while India's steady contribution may be attributed to its expanding academic community and growing interest in CSR as a development and governance tool. Australia and Canada, with 36 and 34 publications respectively, maintain strong academic outputs, likely driven by their developed research sectors and active international collaborations.

Rounding out the top ten are Spain (31), Malaysia (22), Germany (21), and the Netherlands (19). These countries, while smaller in volume compared to the top-tier, still represent key contributors in the global academic landscape. Spain and Germany have long-standing research institutions, while Malaysia's presence indicates a growing academic interest in CSR and related themes in the Southeast Asian context. The Netherlands, known for its high-quality education system, also continues to play a consistent role in advancing scholarly discourse in this field.

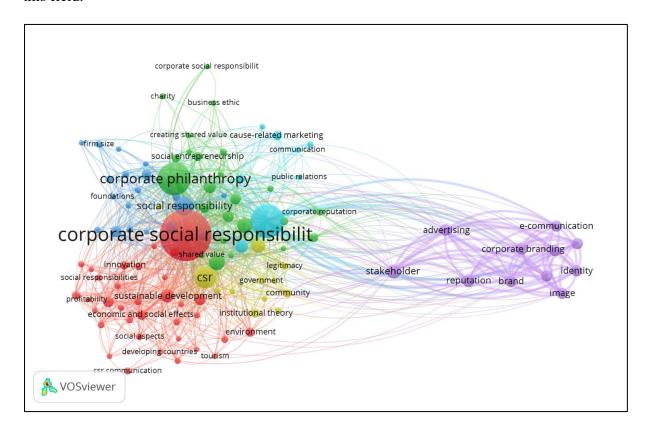


Figure 4: Network Visualization Map Of Keywords' Co-Occurrence

The table derived from VOSviewer illustrates the most prevalent keywords within a specific corpus of academic or bibliometric data, highlighting their occurrences and total link strengths. "Corporate social responsibility" dominates with the highest frequency (374) and link strength (760), signifying its central role and extensive connections with other terms in the dataset. This underscores CSR as a foundational concept in the research landscape, often intertwined with various other themes. "Philanthropy" and "corporate philanthropy" follow, both showing strong presences (160 and 153 occurrences, respectively). However, with different degrees of connectedness, philanthropy exhibited a significantly higher link strength (511 vs. 258). This

suggests that while both are important, general philanthropy interacts more broadly across the conceptual network.

The mid-tier keywords, such as "stakeholder," "advertising," and "reputation," exhibit relatively lower occurrences but substantial link strengths. For instance, "stakeholder" appears only 29 times but has a link strength of 245, indicating a high level of relevance or integration with other topics despite being mentioned less frequently. Similar patterns are seen with "advertising" (22 occurrences, 224 link strength) and "reputation" (23 occurrences, 222 link strength). These patterns suggest that these terms, while not dominant in sheer frequency, play pivotal roles in connecting various concepts within the research, serving as critical nodes or bridges in the knowledge structure.

At the lower end of the spectrum, keywords like "corporate branding," "brand," "communications," and "e-communication" show the fewest occurrences (between 18 and 21) yet still maintain considerable link strengths (ranging from 202 to 208). This implies that even less frequently mentioned topics contribute meaningfully to the thematic network, perhaps representing emerging or cross-cutting areas of study. Their relatively high connectivity despite low frequency may indicate specialized but integrative roles, suggesting potential areas for future exploration where these concepts intersect with broader themes such as CSR and philanthropy.

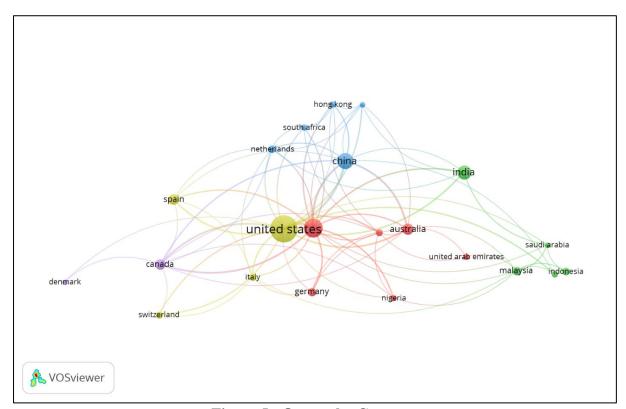


Figure 5: Output by Country

The data from VOSviewer highlights the global distribution and influence of research outputs by country, using metrics such as the number of documents, citation counts, and total link strength. The United States leads significantly with 207 documents and an impressive 13,883 citations, indicating both high productivity and impact. It also has the highest total link strength

(77), suggesting strong connectivity and collaboration with other research entities. The United Kingdom follows with half the output (100 documents), but a relatively strong citation count (4,359) and comparable link strength (72), indicating its centrality in the global research network. China, while producing a substantial 75 documents, has a lower link strength (38), indicating a more insular or less connected role in the international research landscape, despite a solid citation figure (2,769).

A cluster of mid-tier contributors includes Canada, France, Australia, and Germany. These countries maintain a balance of output and connectivity, with Canada standing out due to its high citation count (2,201) from just 34 documents, reflecting strong research influence. Australia and India, with 36 and 57 documents respectively, show moderate citation numbers but differ in link strength—Australia with 21 and India with 13—suggesting more impactful global collaboration from the former. Meanwhile, countries like Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Spain also reflect healthy engagement in research, with solid citations and moderate link strengths, indicating their role as contributors in international research dialogues.

The lower tier includes emerging and less-connected research nations, such as Nigeria, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. These countries contribute modest document counts and citation numbers. However, some still maintain noteworthy link strengths (e.g., Nigeria with a link strength of 8 from just 12 documents), hinting at growing international collaboration. Conversely, countries like the Russian Federation and Serbia show minimal link strength (0), suggesting isolation or limited integration within the broader research community. Overall, the data underscores both the dominance of traditionally strong research economies and the gradual rise of new contributors seeking greater visibility and influence through increased global collaboration.

Conclusions

This bibliometric analysis was conducted to systematically examine the development, structure, and emerging trends within the domains of philanthropy, CSR, and food banks. The primary objective was to explore the publication landscape, key contributors, influential journals, collaborative networks, and thematic evolution associated with this research area. By mapping these elements, the study aimed to offer a thorough overview of the intellectual and social framework supporting the scholarly discourse on philanthropy, CSR, and food banks.

The analysis revealed a steady increase in publications over the years, indicating growing academic interest and relevance of the topic. Certain countries and institutions emerged as dominant contributors, suggesting geographical concentrations of expertise and resource allocation. Core journals and frequently cited publications provided insights into the foundational knowledge base, while keyword co-occurrence patterns highlighted thematic clusters that define the research focus. Network visualizations further illustrate collaborations among authors and institutions, underscoring the significance of scholarly partnerships in advancing this domain.

The findings offer meaningful additions to the existing knowledge on philanthropy, CSR, and food banks. By identifying research frontiers and influential works, the study provides a structured lens through which future investigations can be contextualized. It also uncovers thematic gaps and underexplored areas, guiding researchers toward fruitful directions for

further inquiry. In addition, the study strengthens the understanding of the field's intellectual trajectory and its interdisciplinary linkages.

From a practical standpoint, the findings from this analysis can assist in strategic decision-making for funding agencies, academic institutions, and policymakers by identifying impactful contributors and emerging topics. This may help inform the allocation of resources, the establishment of collaborative research initiatives, and the design of curriculum and training programs.

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. Bibliometric indicators rely heavily on the coverage and indexing policies of specific databases, which may exclude relevant publications not indexed within the chosen source. Additionally, quantitative measures may not fully capture the contextual quality or theoretical depth of contributions. Future research could expand the analysis by incorporating multiple databases, applying text mining techniques for qualitative insights, or exploring longitudinal trends with greater granularity.

In summary, this study demonstrates the utility of bibliometric methods in capturing the structural and developmental characteristics of research on philanthropy, CSR, and food banks. It serves as a fundamental reference for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, highlighting the need for ongoing exploration and refinement within the field. The application of bibliometric analysis remains a vital tool for understanding scholarly dynamics and fostering informed academic progress.

Funding Statement

This research received no funding from any research grants.

Conflict Of Interest

The authors state that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose regarding the current research.

AI Disclosure Statement

The main author (Rosmanizah Derahman) employed ChatGPT to assist with writing style enhancement and language correction during the preparation of this study. The author(s) then carefully reviewed and revised the content, taking full responsibility for the final version of the manuscript.

Acknowledgement

The author(s) would like to acknowledge the support of **Global Academic Excellence (M) Sdn. Bhd.** for providing the platform and opportunity to share this work. Additionally, ChatGPT, an AI language model developed by OpenAI, was utilized to assist in enhancing the writing style and ensuring grammatical accuracy during manuscript preparation. All AI-assisted content was thoroughly reviewed and revised by the author(s), who take full responsibility for the final version of the publication.

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