Navigating Sustainable Practices in Public Sector Organizations: Current Themes and Emerging Trends

Abstract

This study provides a systematic review of the current state of research on sustainability practices in the public sector exploring the growth trajectory, emerging themes, and future directions. Sixty publications (2009-2023) were selected and diligently examined to reach insightful results using the Biblioshiny tool and content analysis. Thematic mapping found the emerging sustainability practices in the public sector, including green HRM, green and e-procurement, circular business model, sustainable reporting and disclosures, and triple-bottom-line framework. Furthermore, trending topics, word frequency, and document citations indicate that a growing body of literature on sustainability practices is more focused on environmental concerns rather than the long-term orientation. Further research is required to examine the integration of sustainability concerns in the organizational strategy, technology-driven sustainable practices, and assessment of the impact of regulatory frameworks and incentives on encouraging public sector organizations to adopt and prioritize sustainability initiatives.

Keywords: sustainability practices, green HRM, CSR, triple bottom line, sustainable development

1. Introduction

Driven by mounting pressures from stakeholders, regulatory bodies, and the broader societal expectation for corporate responsibility, organizations are now striving to balance environmental stewardship, social equity, and profitability (Marouli, 2021; Vedula et al., 2022). This shift reflects a broader understanding that long-term business success is intrinsically linked

to sustainable practices, making sustainability not just a moral obligation but a strategic necessity (Hawken, 2007; Power & Hansen, 2010; Saxena et al., 2020). Although there are a variety of definitions available for corporate sustainability (also known as social, environmental, and governance or corporate social responsibility), it is largely defined as a "company's ability to accomplish its goals and increase long-term shareholder value by incorporating environmental, economic, and societal opportunities into its business strategies" (Symposium on Sustainability, 2001: 1). In the paradigm of global business citizenship, Mirchandani and Ikerd (2008) propose that sustainable organizations collaborate to maximize ecological, social, and economic authenticity. As a result, they are seeking solutions for achieving success on a more balanced spectrum of outcomes as outlined by the triple bottom line which refers to people, planet, and profits (Elkington, 1997; Savitz & Weber, 2006). Notably, whereas the concept of corporate sustainability is applied in the corporate and business world, the application of sustainability practices is wider and includes various contexts such as the non-profit sector, public sector, governments, economies, etc. (Maroun & Lodhia, 2017; Tommasetti et al., 2020; Wirtz, Kubin, & Weyerer, 2023). Demonstrating the holistic and multifaceted aspect of sustainability, rapid literature describes an extensive variety of specific sustainability strategies being applied by organizations. According to Baregheh et al. (2009), to achieve the target of sustainable development organizations need to adapt to the changing workplace, technological abilities, and consumer preferences. Organizations are adopting practices like corporate social responsibility (CSR), green practices (Masri & Jaaron, 2017; Järlström et al, 2018; Ren et al., 2022), socially responsible HR (Shen & Benson, 2016), and sustainability practices for the common good (Aust, Matthews, & Muller-Camen 2020; Campos et al., 2023). There is also increased adoption of sustainable reporting, e-procurement, and circular business models (Tan & Egan, 2018; Guea et al., 2019; Zhanbayev et al., 2023).

Although extensive literature has been developed on sustainability practices, research on its adoption in the public sector remains limited, highlighting a need for further exploration.

The public sector holds a significant role in meeting the sustainability challenges. The public sector is a meaningful employer and consumer of large and strategic resources which imposes importance on the public sector in achieving the goals and objectives associated with sustainable development (GRI, 2020). While public organizations are indeed embracing the movement toward sustainable work practices, the pace of adoption remains slow (Zhanbayev et al., 2023), especially when compared to the private sector where organizations are aggressively transforming their practices to achieve sustainable goals (Chams & Blandón, 2019; Greenland et al., 2022; Tvaronavičienė, 2014).

One reason for the slow pace of adoption in public sector organizations is that many sustainable works practice methodologies have been developed in the private sector (Guthrie, Ball, & Farneti, 2010) with less focus on public sector contexts. Additionally, public organizations face less pressure than their private counterparts (Jacobsen, 2020). However, public sector organizations are increasingly evaluated on economic, social, and environmental sustainability dimensions (Zhanbayev et al., 2023). Growing concerns have led to new methods for assessing sustainability in public organizations (Mwandu, 2023). Sustainability transitions emphasize the need for public entities to adapt policies and practices to technological innovation and institutional redesign (Haley, 2017). Changes in society and the economy are pushing the public sector to manage human resources more efficiently and adapt to digital transformations (Sharabi et al., 2019). This evolution is driving public sector organizations to incorporate sustainability into their operations (Ramos et al., 2021).In this regard, a literature review is required to capture the current developments and trends of sustainability practices in the public

sector and the emerging themes that need the researcher's attention. The application of bibliometric reviews in the public sector has been expanding for years (Jan et al., 2023; Palumbo et al.,2024). A few bibliometric studies provided reviews in the domain of the public sector on artificial intelligence (Djen et al., 2022) whereas other studies examined research on knowledge management (Agrifoglio et al., 2021), data intelligence (Di Vaio et al., 2022), accrual accounting (Salato et al., 2023), e-government (D Agostino et al., 2011; Roziqin et al., 2022), and work smart (Palumbo et al.,2022). The discussion on sustainability in the public sector is robust but not well organized. Previous bibliometric analyses have predominantly focused on specific topics like knowledge management or artificial intelligence with limited attention to sustainability in the public sector. This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a novel bibliometric analysis of sustainable work practices in the public sector. This review utilizes techniques such as document co-citation analysis, trend analysis, and thematic mapping to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of research in this area addressing the following research questions:

- *What is the volume, distribution, and production of scholarly work in the field of sustainable work practices in public sector?*

- *What are the current emerging themes in the scholarship of sustainable work practices in the public sector?*

- *What does the current literature reveal about the adoption of sustainable practices in the public sector?*

- *What are the future directions for sustainable work practices in the public sector?*

2. Methods

This study conducted a systematic review and bibliometric analysis to assess literature on sustainable practices in the public sector. Using PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009), the search focused on sustainability practices, development goals, work practices, and public sector within the Scopus directory, chosen for its broader coverage of management-related publications compared to Web of Science (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016).

The bibliometric analysis aimed to establish scientific activity indicators by quantitatively analyzing publications (Zyoud et al., 2015). Using Biblioshiny, the study combined performance analysis for investigating participant contributions (Donthu et al., 2021) and science mapping which visualized relationships between scientific actors through coupling maps, theme mapping, and keyword co-occurrence analysis (Gaviria-Marin et al., 2019). Additionally, the study explored the emerging themes in the data through content analysis.

2.1. Data extraction and refinement

The data was extracted from Scopus using keywords like sustainability, sustainability practices, green practices, circular business and public sector. The title, article, and keywords were all used in the search. To narrow the search to the most relevant results, keywords were combined in a search using Boolean operators like AND in addition to OR. The search was conducted using the following query:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (("sustainable work practices" OR "sustainable workplace practices" OR "sustainability practices" OR "environmentally-friendly practices" OR "green practices" OR "eco-friendly practices" OR "triple bottom line" OR "circular business") AND ("public sector"

OR "government sector" OR "public services" OR "public agencies" OR "civil services" OR "public sector organizations")).

Insert Figure 1 here

From the initial search, 77 records were retrieved. After applying an English language filter, the count reduced to 76. Studies published between 2009 and 2023 were included. The search was further refined by excluding duplicates, irrelevant articles, or those containing errors. The most common exclusion reasons were lack of subject relevance, insufficient emphasis on sustainability practices, and a focus on sectors other than the public sector. Ultimately, 60 articles were used in the study. These 60 documents, published between 2009 and 2023, contained a total of 3,891 references, highlighting the authors' reliance on previous research. The authors' keywords numbered 305 while keywords plus added 288 more. Fourteen documents had a single author with an average of 2.65 co-authors per document. The dataset comprised 38 articles, 15 book chapters, five conference papers, one editorial, and one review.

2.2.   Data analysis

Data analysis included bibliometric review, content analysis, and thematic analysis of the selected articles. The bibliometric review provided a descriptive analysis of the volume, distribution, and production of scholarly work in the literature of sustainable practices in the public sector. It included performance analysis (such as the annual scientific production, trending topics, and most cited countries) and scientific mapping (such as a network of co-occurrence of keywords, and thematic mapping). A more detailed review of the literature was conducted through the content and thematic analysis to identify the emerging themes, conceptual framework of adoption of sustainable practices, and future directions.

3.   Findings

3.1.   *Performance analysis and scientific mapping of the literature*

3.1.1. Scientific production and citations per year

A periodic analysis of document distribution, along with the number of documents included for each year over the given time frame, is shown in Figure 2. Each year from 2009 to 2012, two documents were published. A small rise in output was seen in 2013 and this then fell in 2014 and 2015. In 2016, productivity significantly increased again following a downward trend until 2020. The years 2021 and 2022 saw a significant uptick in scientific output.

Insert Figure 2 here

3.1.2. Most cited country in sustainable work practice

As shown in Table 1, Australia currently retains the top position in the field of sustainable work practices in the public sector with 184 citations thus indicating that research from this country received the most citations overall. Italy has contributed 104 citations and the average number of citations per article is 52. This suggests that Italian research in sustainability practices in the public sector has a relatively high citation impact. With 90 citations, India emerges in third place exhibiting its significant impact on the subject. Brazil and the United Kingdom are ranked fourth and fifth with 84 and 61 citations respectively. With 57 citations, Saudi Arabia is ranked sixth demonstrating its expanding importance and research production in the field of sustainable work practices.

The literature is produced in the context of various countries including developed and developing countries. The prominent countries include Australia, Italy, Brazil, the United

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Kingdom, Indonesia, India, and Saudi Arabia which indicates that the literature on sustainable work practices in the public sector is produced globally and not confined to specific regions (Ray, 2013; Fathul, 2013; Mishra, Sarkar, & Kiranmai, 2014; Mishra, 2017; Yadav, 2017; Sharma et al., 2019; Roziqin, 2022).

Insert Table 1 here

3.1.3. Network of co-occurrence

Figure 4 effectively highlights the key trends and topics in sustainable work practices adopted within the public sector as determined through keyword analysis in academic publications. The emphasis on sustainability, Triple Bottom Line (TBL), and related concepts like CSR, green HRM, and green practices underscores the broad and growing interest in integrating sustainability into public sector operations. Additionally, the mention of specific countries like Indonesia and India reflects the global relevance of these trends both in developed and developing countries. This aligns with the increasing scholarly focus on integrating sustainable practices, sustainability in governance, illustrating the sector's commitment to addressing social, environmental, and ethical challenges in public sector organizations.

Insert Figure 4 here

Within the context of sustainable work practices and public sector clustering aids in the identification of groupings of related concepts. The explanation for the arrangement of the pieces in the various clusters is shown in Figure 5.

Cluster 1: This cluster comprises terms associated with sustainability and effective management practices. This cluster is depicted as a red color cluster. This cluster revolves around research methodologies, conceptual frameworks, and foundational concepts associated with sustainability and public administration. The terms included suggest a focus on understanding, assessing, and defining sustainable development and practices. It contains phrases like sustainable development, public administration, surveys, triple bottom line and sustainability practices, all of which have connections with the moral and social facets of organizational behavior and the wise allocation of resources.

Cluster 2: This cluster is depicted in green. The terms in this cluster focus on concepts related to e-procurement, e-government, green, developing countries, decision making and infrastructure. This cluster is centered around sustainable development practices in the context of developing countries, particularly emphasizing infrastructure-related initiatives. The terms included point towards efforts to integrate green practices, e-government, and e-procurement in the development process.

Cluster 3: This cluster is blue and shows the connection between sustainability, green practices, and the public sector. This cluster centers around the intersection of sustainability concepts and considerations, such as green computing, sustainability, public sector, life cycle, and cost, within the public sector. The terms suggest a focus on the environmental impact of public activities with an emphasis on costs and green computing practices.

Insert Figure 4 here

Thematic mapping

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Figure 6 provides thematic mapping revealing the study's themes, important terms, and the connections with other themes. It includes a network analysis based on keyword presence to highlight major topics and patterns within the scientific literature (Akter et al., 2021) and summarizing the literature into four distinct themes (Jain et al., 2021).

The upper right quadrant (Q1) identifies the motor themes that have high centrality and density. These include sustainability, developing countries, e-government, infrastructure, green, project success, PPPs, e-procurement environment, accountability, training, moderated mediation, public enterprise, green innovation, green training, green recruitment, green culture and green HRM. This quadrant reveals that these themes are well established and focused more on concepts related to green and sustainable practices in the public sector. Furthermore, this quadrant suggests a comprehensive approach to sustainable practices, especially in developing countries (Fulgence, 2016).

The themes located in the upper left quadrant (Q2) are frequently known as niche themes, having high centrality and low density. Niche themes are required to connect with sustainable work practices. In other words, it means that themes such as information and communications technology, sustainability development, organizational culture and knowledge management should be studied with sustainable work practices.

Low density, as well as low centrality, in the lower left quadrant (Q3) are categorized as declining or emerging themes. This quadrant includes themes such as CSR, public procurement, sustainable development, institutional theory, stakeholder theory, theory of business ethics, corporate social performance, grounded theory, and united nations. These themes are underdeveloped and therefore need to be researched due to a lack in their clarity. These themes have grown internally but have only made a little contribution to the advancement of the

discipline of sustainable work practices in the public sector. Notably, the themes in this quadrant appeared to be centered around the idea of sustainable development.

The themes found in the lower right corner (Q4) represent basic themes due to their low density and high centrality. These include public sector, triple bottom line, sustainable energy, best practices, green computing, eco balance, green organization, adopting green, environmental performance, social performance, industry, green practices, and sustainable development which represent a primary area of research in the sustainability field. The high centrality of these themes indicate that these are addressed as the central idea in the articles whereas low density indicates that they are not very developed. For example, triple bottom line is mostly used as the central theory to explain the phenomenon but it is a less developed theme in this literature.

Insert Figure 5 here

3.2.   Emerging themes in the domain of sustainable practices in public sector

The emerging themes are identified through content and thematic analysis of the articles as well as considering the thematic mapping, keywords, and clusters in reviewed articles. Notably, the most prominent key words (sustainability, sustainable practices, TBL, environmentally friendly practices, circular business, eco-friendly, public sector) highlight some emerging trends in the sustainable work practices research and suggests some novel and practical avenues for future research. The emerging themes collectively showcase the multifaceted nature of sustainable work practices in the public sector encompassing environmental, social, economic, and technological dimensions. The emerging themes in the scholarship of sustainable practices in the public sector are discussed below.

3.2.1. Triple-bottom-line framework

The TBL framework, emphasizing economic, social, and environmental dimensions, is a key focus in the literature (Getz, 2009; Adebayo, 2015; Kuchta, 2020). This suggests a growing recognition of the need for public sector organizations to consider not only financial profits but also social and environmental impacts.

3.2.2. Sustainable development

It is another prominent theme that appeared in the literature (Getz, 2009; Fathul, 2013; Yajima, 2015; Yadav & Bandyopadhayay; 2017; Figueira et al., 2018; Chams & García-Blandón, 2019; AlNuaimi & Khan; 2019; Kumari & Saharan, 2020; Hossain et al., 2023) highlighting its significance in the discourse. This indicates a focus on the long-term viability and balance between economic, social, and environmental aspects. It also highlights the concern of the public sector for the sustainable development of the economy and society.

3.2.3. Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

CSR has also received considerable attention in literature (Ray, 2013; Yajima, 2015; Fulgence, 2016; Sharma et al., 2019; Mishra et al., 2017; Kuchta, 2020; Correa-Quezada et al., 2021; Romano et al., 2023; Mwandu, 2023), indicating a voluntary commitment by organizations to address social, environmental, and ethical concerns. This reflects a growing interest in responsible and ethical practices within the public sector.

3.2.4. E-government and e-procurement

Themes related to green public procurement, ICT, efficient use of resources, technology, e-government and e-procurement (Fathul, 2013; Fulgence, 2016; Liu et al., 2021; Roziqin et al.,

2022) suggest a recognition of the role of technology in promoting sustainability and efficiency in public sector operations.

3.2.5. Green HRM

Literature is also growing in green HRM with various directions such as green training and development, gamification, technology-enhanced training effectiveness model (TETEM), and a green appraisal system framework (Mishra et al., 2014; Nijaki, 2015; Fulgence, 2016; Jabbour & de Sousa Jabbour, 2016; Bhardwaj, 2016; Sangwan & Choudhary, 2018; Huss-Lederman & Deering, 2019; AlNuaimi & Khan, 2019; Liu et al., 2021).

3.2.6. Sustainable reporting and disclosure practices

Literature is also produced in the direction of the role of legislation, TBL accounting system, sustainable asset accounting system (SAAS) (brown et al., 2010; Tan & Egan, 2018; Yarramet al., 2023; Zhanbayev et al., 2023), Global Reporting Initiative adherence, and disclosure standards of sustainability reports in the public sector. It indicates the growing accountability concerns in the public sector.

3.2.7. Circular Business Model

Cleaner production has received a lot of attention in the public sector which includes themes like environmental concerns, life cycle infrastructure, efficient use of resources, enterprise zone, project management, and PPP sustainable construction projects (Lewandowski, 2018; Guea et al., 2019; Aggarwal & Agarwala, 2023; Zhanbayev et al., 2023).

3.3. *Conceptual framework of adoption of sustainable practices in the public sector*

Sustainability pressures require the public agencies to integrate social, economic, and environmental factors into their operational and decision-making processes. With these

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procedures, the public sector can ensure social justice, economic sustainability, and environmental care. Sustainable practices are those particular activities or approaches that make it easier for sustainability to be successfully implemented within an organization (Lăzăroiu et al., 2020; Mwandu, 2023). Several key sustainability practices are shown in Figure 2, including sustainable procurement which involves buying products and services while considering the social and environmental impact. Eco-efficiency is the process of using fewer resources to provide more value while lessening its effect on the environment (Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2020; Majid et al., 2023). In the public sector, eco-efficiency, and sustainable procurement are important aspects of sustainability that minimize waste and resource use (Fathul, 2013; Adebayo, 2015; AlNuaimi & Khan, 2019; Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). The term integration or alignment describes the process of incorporating sustainability into an organization's main goals and plans (Figueira et al., 2018). Ethics and employee-centered practices entail aligning sustainability initiatives with moral principles and worker welfare (Jena et al., 2018). A transparent reporting and disclosure policy enables the organization to report on sustainability activities. Public sector organizations also focus on transparency through sustainable reporting and disclosure, ensuring that their actions are accountable and aligned with sustainability goals (Adebayo, 2015; Tan & Egan, 2018). Additionally, the adoption of e-government and e-procurement systems facilitates more efficient and sustainable processes (D' Agostino et al., 20211; Fathul, 2013; Liu et al., 2021; Roziqin et al., 2022). Therefore, sustainable practices can be improved by leveraging e-government and e-procurement. By embedding CSR into their operations public sector entities not only fulfill their duties but also contribute positively to society (Barkemeyer, 2011; Fulgence, 2016; Sharma et al., 2019; Kuchta, 2020; Correa-Quezada et al., 2021; Mwandu, 2023). These efforts are often driven by regulatory pressure, public concerns, and the commitment of leadership within the organization. Sustainability practices in the public sector help to build trust with stakeholders, reduce environmental impact,

and promote a more equitable and resilient society. As part of their commitment to sustainability, public sector organizations also place a strong emphasis on openness through sustainable reporting and disclosure. Furthermore, more sustainable and effective procedures are made possible by the implementation of e-procurement and e-government systems (Fulgence, 2016; Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). Public sector Organizations that incorporate CSR into their daily operations contribute more than just their mandates to society. The commitment of the organization's leadership, public concerns, and regulatory pressure are frequently the driving forces behind these initiatives. In the end, public sector sustainability initiatives foster greater social justice and resilience, lessen their negative effects on the environment, and increase stakeholder trust (Majid et al., 2023).

3.3.1. Antecedents of Sustainability Practices in the Public Sector

In the public sector, the fundamental forces that lead an organization to embrace and execute sustainable practices are organizational culture, leadership commitment (Jang, 2016), regulatory pressure, resource availability etc. Organizational culture is one of the main antecedents which is based on shared values and ideas that promote sustainability practices within the organization (Linnenluecke et al., 2009; Adebamboet al., 2014). Another crucial factor that is a critical factor for sustainability projects to succeed is leadership commitment. Organizations are frequently forced to implement sustainable practices by legal and policy pressure (Adebamboet al., 2014; Baah et al., 2020). Effective execution of these practices requires the availability of both human and economic resources(Lăzăroiu et al., 2020; Klein et al., 2022). The perspective of corporate sustainability indicates how sustainability is perceived within the company and has the potential to facilitate or impede its implementation (Barkemeyer, 2011; Figueira et al., 2018). The organization's commitment level to these

practices is also influenced by management's views towards sustainability and public concerns about it (Adebamboet al., 2014; Jang, 2016).

3.3.2. Mediators Between Sustainability Practices and Public Sector Outcomes

In the public sector, mediators such as sustainability awareness, environmental management systems, and environmental regulation help to bridge the gap between sustainable practices and outcomes (Adebamboet al., 2014). Sustainability awareness refers to the level of understanding and application of sustainability by staff members and other stakeholders. The efficacy of sustainable actions can be considerably increased by this insight. Another important mediator that shows how interested and dedicated staff members are to sustainability activities is employee engagement (Jang, 2016). Engaged staff can achieve better results and are more likely to endorse and contribute towards sustainability goals.

3.3.3. Moderating effect

In the relationship between sustainable practices and antecedents moderators such as perceived benefits, organizational size, and technological advancement play a key role as shown in Figure 2. The benefits that an organization experiences from implementing sustainable practices may influence its willingness to do so. Organizational size is another consideration; larger companies may have greater resources which means they can confront more difficult sustainability implementation issues (Drempetic et al., 2020). Technical development within an organization determines whether technological growth helps or hinders sustainability initiatives (Abid et al., 2022). These practices' success can also be influenced by perceived organizational support or the degree to which staff members believe the organization supports them in their efforts to be sustainable (Adebamboet al., 2014).

3.3.4. Consequences of Sustainability Practices

Sustainable practices have an impact on both organizational outcomes (macro) and employee outcomes (micro). Organizations may experience benefits in their sustainable innovation performance (Majid et al., 2023), Sustainable financial performance (Adebamboet al., 2014; Figueira et al., 2018; Wang & Jiang, 2019; Klein et al., 2022), operational (Figueira et al., 2018), brand (Wang & Jiang, 2019), and sustained earnings on a macro level. Aspects of sustainability, such as social, environmental (Pullman Adebambo et al., 2014), and economic sustainability, are also highlighted in Figure 2 along with innovation performance. By implementing sustainable practices organizations may also gain a competitive edge. Employees' alignment of their conduct with sustainability goals is reflected in their micro level of sustainability performance which encompasses in-role behavior (Ahmed et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023), extra-role behavior (Shen & Benson, 2016; Lăzăroiu et al., 2020), and organizational commitment (AlNuaimi & Khan, 2019; Demircioglu, 2023). Stakeholder satisfaction is another crucial consequence since it shows how successfully the company's sustainability initiatives meet stakeholder expectations.

Insert figure 6 here

4. Recommendations for future research

Building on the identified themes and current trends in sustainable work practices in the public sector some potential future directions for research are discussed below.

4.1. Integration of sustainability into organizational strategy

Researchers need to investigate how public sector organizations can integrate sustainability into their overall strategic planning and decision-making processes (Kuchta, 2020; AlNuaimi &

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Khan; 2019; Kumari & Saharan, 2020; Munjal & Sharma, 2023; Hossain et al., 2023). This may include examining the alignment of sustainability goals with organizational objectives and the development of frameworks for strategic implementation. Future articles might consider integrating emerging trends or issues into their framework. This could involve anticipating and addressing new challenges or opportunities that may impact the future directions of sustainability initiatives in the public sector.

4.2. Exploring theoretical frameworks

According to thematic mapping, TBL framework (basic theme) is used by many studies. However, further research still needs to be conducted on in-depth studies on the practical implementation and impact of the TBL framework in public sector organizations (Getz, 2009; Kuchta, 2020; Hecimovic & Martinov-Bennie, 2023; Munjal & Sharma, 2023). Moreover, future researchers should explore other relevant theories to explain how public agencies balance economic, social, and environmental considerations in their day-to-day operations and decision-making. Furthermore, institutional theories can provide critical explanations of the coercive, normative and memetic pressures on the public organizations to incorporate the sustainable practices in their operations. The institutional complexity can explain how multiple pressures from economic, social, and environmental concerns can be challenging for the public organizations to successfully incorporate in their operations.

4.3. Technology-driven sustainable practices

Analysis of the frequency of words, co-occurrence network, and trend analysis revealed that there is a need to explore the role of technology, especially e-government and e-procurement, in advancing sustainable practices within public sector operations (Fathul, 2013; Ma et al., 2022; Aishah et al., 2022; Nair & Mathew, 2023) Furthermore, future researchers should also

assess the effectiveness of technological solutions in promoting efficiency, transparency, and environmental responsibility.

4.4. Global comparative and interdisciplinary studies

The result of collaboration networks among different countries and authors show that collaboration is very low in the domain of sustainable work practices in the public sector because the construct is still in the exploratory phase and needs to be explored further (Rodrigues et al., 2020; Roziqin et al., 2022; Di Vaio et al., 2022; Hecimovic & Martinov-Bennie, 2023; Salato et al. 2023; Nair & Mathew, 2023). Therefore, there is an urgent need to conduct comparative studies across different countries including emerging economies like Indonesia, Australia, China, the United Kingdom and India to understand how cultural, economic, and institutional factors influence the adoption and success of sustainable work practices in the public sector.

Furthermore, interdisciplinary research that explores the intersections between sustainability in the public sector and fields such as information and communications technology, knowledge management, and other emerging areas should be encouraged. Synergies that can enhance the overall impact of sustainable work practices (Nijaki, 2015; Murtagh et al., 2019; Aishah et al., 2022; Nair & Mathew, 2023) also need to be identified.

4.5. Longitudinal studies on sustainable development

Analysis of the network of co-occurrence revealed that studies are mostly centered on cross sectional studies and therefore researchers also need to undertake longitudinal studies to track the progress of sustainable development initiatives within the public sector (Rodrigues et al., 2020; Babatunde et al., 2022; Munjal & Sharma, 2023; Nair & Mathew, 2023). For this purpose,

researchers should assess the long-term impacts of sustainability practices on organizational performance, employee wellbeing, and community development.

4.6. Green HRM strategies

Future research needs to delve deeper into the integration of green human resource management (HRM) practices within the public sector and explore how HRM strategies can be tailored to foster sustainability, employee engagement, and overall organizational wellbeing (Huss-Lederman & Deering, 2019; AlNuaimi & Khan, 2019; Aishah et al., 2022; Munjal & Sharma, 2023).

4.7. Regulatory requirements and government initiatives

The result of the network of co-occurrence revealed the significant association between accountability and sustainable practices in the public sector. There is, however, still an additional need to examine the role of government policies in promoting sustainable work practices and assess the impact of regulatory frameworks and incentives on encouraging public sector organizations to adopt and prioritize sustainability initiatives. Researchers also need to understand how the influence of sustainable practices enhance the sustainable asset accounting system and the accountability of the public sector (Brown et al., 2010; Zhanbayev et al., 2023; Yarram et al., 2023).

4.8. Community engagement and stakeholder collaboration

Further investigation should focus on the involvement of public sector organizations in community engagement and collaboration with stakeholders for sustainable development and explore how partnerships with local communities, NGOs, and private sectors can contribute to holistic and inclusive sustainability initiatives (Levitt, 2016; Rodrigues et al., 2020; Guea et al.,

2019; Zhanbayev et al., 2023). Furthermore, Babatunde et al. (2022) recommended conducting further research on the obstacles that prevent sustainability principles from being incorporated into PPP infrastructure projects.

5.   Conclusion

This research has provided a comprehensive analysis of the emerging themes in sustainability practices within the public sector, shedding light on various dimensions including economic, social, environmental, and technological aspects. Several key themes have emerged through bibliometric analysis signifying the evolving discourse surrounding sustainability in public sector organizations.

The identified themes underscore the multifaceted nature of sustainability practices ranging from the integration of the Triple-Bottom-Line (TBL) framework to the promotion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the adoption of technology-driven solutions such as e-government and e-procurement. Moreover, the global coverage of literature highlights the universal significance of sustainability concerns across diverse geographic contexts.

Looking forward, this research offers valuable insights for future studies in this domain. Recommendations include exploring the integration of sustainability into organizational strategy, conducting in-depth studies on the practical implementation and impacts of the TBL framework, enhancing CSR practices, and leveraging technology to drive sustainable initiatives. Additionally, there is a call for global comparative studies to understand cultural and institutional influences on sustainability practices as well as longitudinal studies to track the progress of initiatives over time.

Furthermore, there is a need to delve into emerging themes and niche areas such as green HRM strategies and policy implications while also encouraging interdisciplinary approaches to enhance the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives. Collaboration with stakeholders and community engagement are emphasized as crucial components for fostering inclusive and holistic sustainability efforts within the public sector.

Moreover, understanding the similarities and differences between the public and private sectors and assessing the effectiveness of training programs and capacity-building initiatives are identified as key areas for further exploration. By addressing these recommendations, future research can contribute to advancing the understanding and implementation of sustainability practices in the public sector thereby fostering organizational resilience and societal wellbeing.

6.   Limitations

It is important to keep in mind that Scopus frequently updates its data leading to changes in the number of citations and publications (Zyoud et al., 2015). One of Scopus's drawbacks is that when authors or journals submit they only upload articles. As a result, it is questionable if the data retrieved from the Scopus databases on a particular day was accurate. Second, performance analysis and scientific mapping are quantitative techniques that help in the analysis of a wide range of publications and give an all-encompassing view of the study field thus allowing for an in-depth analysis of the topics. The third limitation of this research is that a number of related cross-concepts and synonymous terms connected to sustainable practices were excluded throughout the process of analysis. This would have increased the data set but at the expense of distorting the analysis and reducing its ability to discriminate. Despite its shortcomings, this research can be utilized as a starting point for additional study and as a guide for practitioners interested in exploring the field of sustainable practices in the public sector.

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| | Topic | | **Sustainable work practices in public sector: Role of HR** |

Identification

Topic → **Sustainable work practices in public sector: Role of HR**

Keywords & Search String → TITLE-ABS-KEY (("sustainable work practices" OR "sustainable workplace practices" OR "sustainability practices" OR "environmentally friendly practices" OR "green practices" OR "eco-friendly practices" OR "triple bottom line" OR "circular business") AND ("public sector" OR "government sector" OR "public services" OR "public agencies" OR "civil services" OR "public sector organizations"))

Articles Identified through database: Scopus = 77 → **Articles remaining after filtering process:** Language: English (76)

Data Extracted → Date: 9 June 2023

Eligibility Screening

Record Screened by abstract → Data excluded due to lack of relevance (16)

Total Record Removed → n = 17

Included

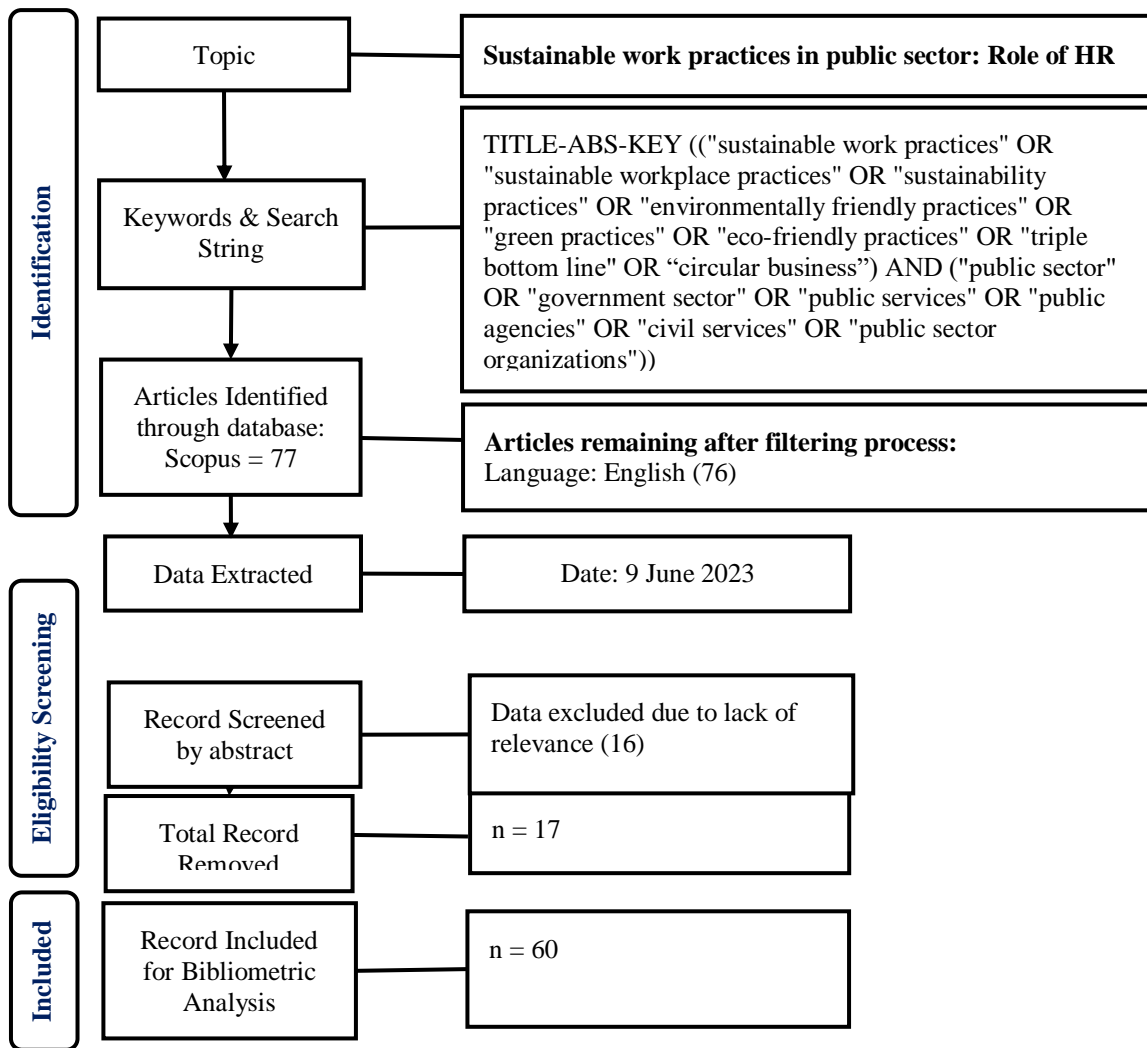Record Included for Bibliometric Analysis → n = 60
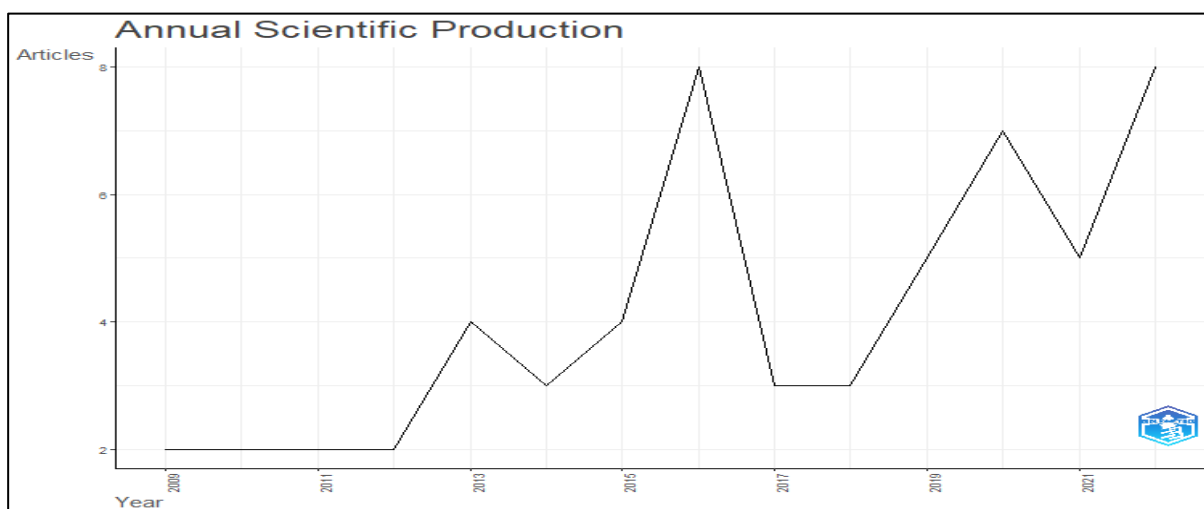
Figure 1: Prisma Flow Diagram
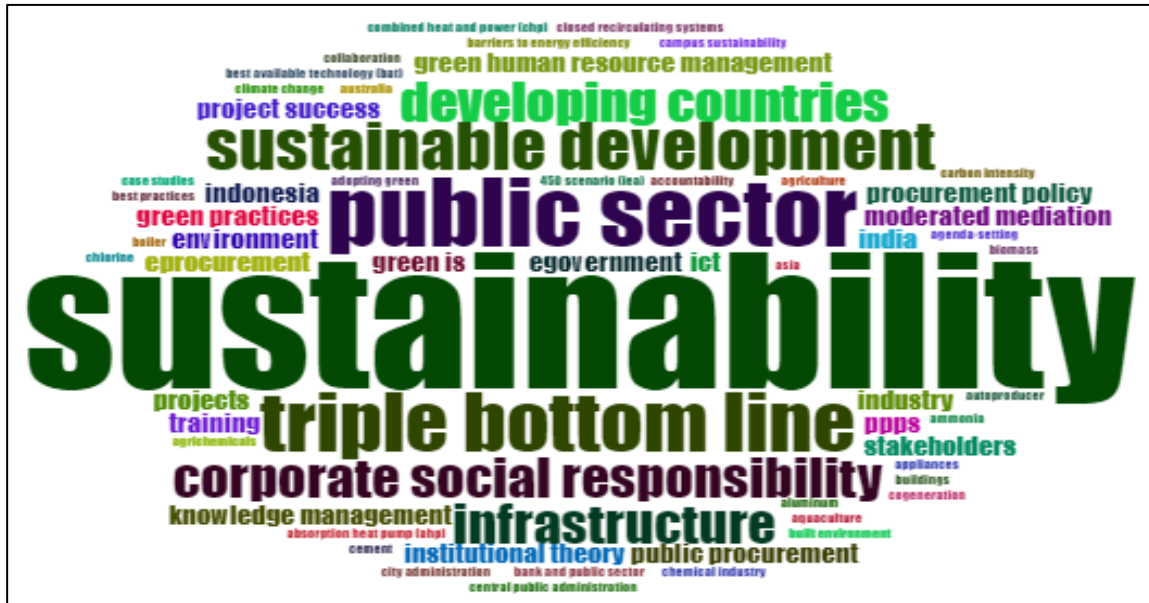
Figure 2: Annual Scientific Production

Figure 3: Word cloud of Trending Topics by authors keywords

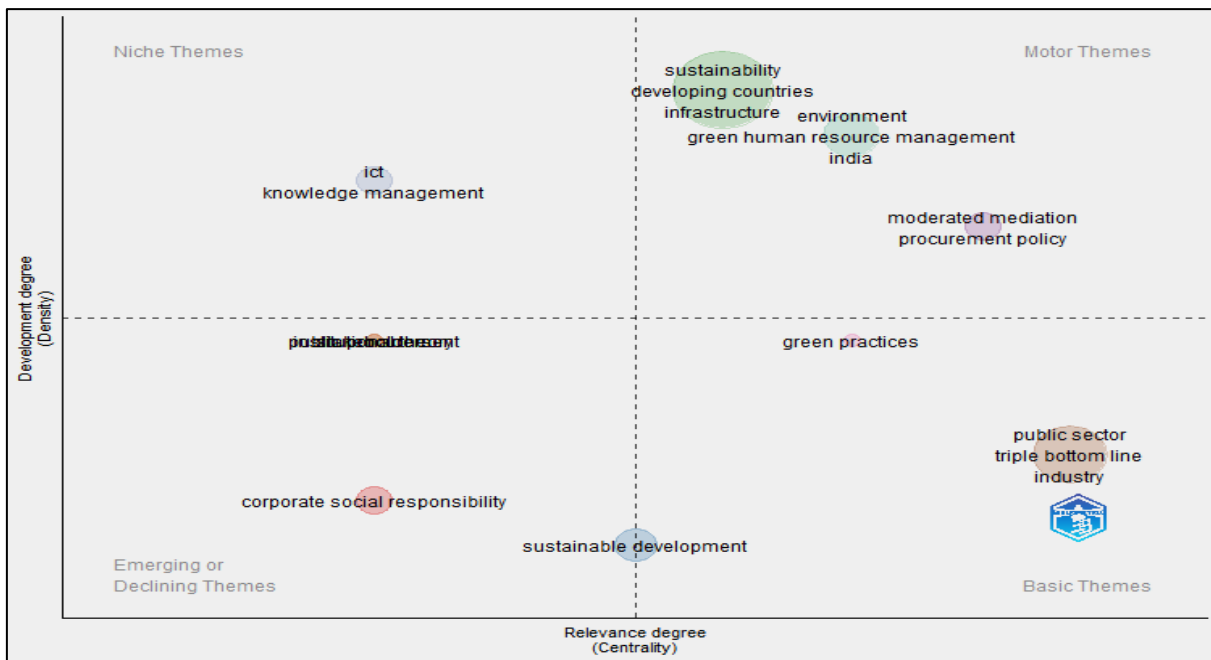Figure 4: Network of co-occurrence (Authors Keyword)
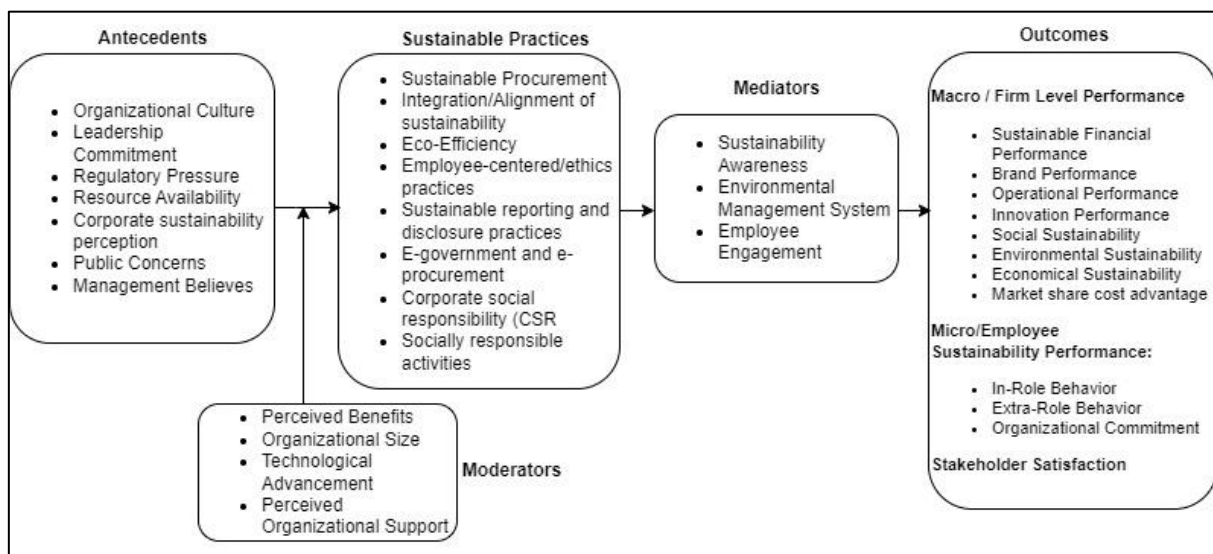
Figure 5: Thematic Mapping

Figure 6: Conceptual Framework

Table 1: Most Country Cited

N	Country	TC	AvgArtC
1	AUSTRALIA	184	36.8

2	ITALY	104	52
3	INDIA	90	12.85
4	BRAZIL	84	42
5	THE UNITED KINGDOM	61	12.2
6	SAUDI ARABIA	57	57
7	PORTUGAL	52	26
8	THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	31	31
9	CHINA	24	24
10	GERMANY	24	12