

Exploring green organizational identity: A bibliometric review using keyword co-occurrence and performance analysis



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Abstract The first comprehensive bibliometric mapping of Green Organizational Identity (GOI). While GOI has emerged as a crucial concept linking sustainability, employee behavior, and organizational performance, existing research remains fragmented. The paper seeks to synthesize the field by identifying its main themes, influential contributors, and research gaps. The study employs a bibliometric review using the Scopus database, covering publications between 1989 to 2025. A total of 204 documents were analysed. VOSviewer was used to generate keyword co-occurrence networks and performance analyses of authors, institutions, and countries. Indicators such as publication trends, thematic clusters, and document types were examined to map the intellectual structure of GOI. The results reveal a sharp increase in GOI publications after 2019, reflecting global ESG pressures. Four thematic clusters were identified: human resource management and employee behavior; green innovation and leadership; CSR and identity; and contextual drivers. In addition, the analysis shows that GOI research is highly concentrated within specific geographic regions, particularly Asia-Pacific, suggesting uneven global development and signaling opportunities for broader international collaboration. The findings further indicate that journal articles dominate the field, demonstrating growing academic legitimacy and conceptual maturation. By mapping these patterns, the study clarifies how GOI has evolved into a multidimensional construct shaped by organizational practices, employee dynamics, and sustainability-oriented strategies. Future research should expand datasets, employ longitudinal designs, and explore leadership and digital platforms as drivers of GOI. Organizations can strengthen GOI by investing in green HRM and leadership development, fostering authentic identities that support innovation and sustainable performance. This paper provides the first bibliometric overview of GOI, offering a structured knowledge map that guides scholars, practitioners, and policymakers in advancing sustainable organizational identities.

Keywords: sustainability identity, bibliometric analysis, ESG, sustainability, innovation

1. Introduction

In the age of sustainability and ESG, green organizational identity (GOI) is crucial. It is well known that environmental and social contributions are increasingly expected to characterize organizations as well as financial achievements. In recent years, there has been considerable interest in how firms internalize sustainability. The GOI reflects how organizations portray themselves as eco-friendly. GOI is increasingly becoming a vital factor in organizational behavior and strategy orientation, as sustainability concerns accelerate internationally (Chang et al., 2019; Kiani et al., 2024). The growth of the GOI as a study topic has become a central issue in management studies and shows a shift toward ecological responsibility in organizational theory.

The influence of the GOI on employee behavior and organizational success is crucial. As noted by (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Gioia et al., 2000), identity impacts communal understanding and employee behavior. When companies have a green image, employees are more likely to be environmentally friendly, innovative, and sustainable (Chaudhary, 2020). In particular, strong GOIs encourage employees to reduce resource usage, promote eco-friendly behaviors, and participate in sustainability programs. These microbehaviors represent a viable route to increase environmental performance and competitiveness (Akbaba et al., 2025). Thus, the GOI provides additional support for linking ESG commitments to daily practices and long-term goals, tying organizational principles to tangible results.

The GOI overlaps with CSR and ESG studies, expanding debates on organizational responsibility and authenticity. Much of the literature on CSR emphasizes external legitimacy, reputation, and stakeholder participation (Abbas & Dogan, 2022; Nugroho et al., 2024). In contrast, the GOI highlights the internalization of sustainability as part of an organization's self-definition. GOI studies have helped explain how internal identity construction affects exterior sustainability performance. In line with (Yu et al., 2020), sustainability-focused organizations exhibit greater alignment between their external communication and internal practices, reducing the likelihood of greenwashing. The GOI thus adds psychological and cultural perspectives to the existing body of ESG studies.



However, GOI research is fragmented despite its growing importance. Few researchers have addressed this issue in a systematic way (Amrutha & Geetha, 2020; Zhu et al., 2021). Studies have focused on human resource management, innovation, organizational behavior, and environmental management (Gazi et al., 2025; Zafar et al., 2023). These studies provide useful insights; however, most have tended to focus only on the GOI as a secondary construct or in limited circumstances. To date, there have been few attempts to synthesize or map the distributed information or intellectual structure of the field. As a result, scholars struggle to identify dominating themes, influential authors, and rising research fronts due to fragmentation. In light of the increasing growth of sustainability-related publications, there is now considerable concern about the need for comprehensive mapping to capture GOI research dynamics (Tang et al., 2023). Without such synthesis, there is a risk of duplication and loss of theoretical progress.

To address this gap, bibliometric analysis represents a reliable and innovative approach. Bibliometrics quantifies publications, keywords, authors, institutions, and nations over time, unlike literature reviews do (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015). VOSviewer is widely used to display co-occurrence networks, discover theme clusters, and follow research trends. Such analyses provide a comprehensive overview that narrative assessments often fail to capture. For example, green human resource management, green leadership, and organizational innovation associated with GOIs can be identified via keyword co-occurrence. Author and institution analysis is in line with previous work that identifies knowledge hotspots, whereas country-level data demonstrate productivity distributions. Thus, bibliometric approaches are suitable for informing research agendas descriptively and strategically.

This study therefore aims to analyse the intellectual landscape of GOI research via bibliometrics. Scopus data from 1989–2025 yielded 204 documents. The analysis investigates the temporal growth of publications; keyword co-occurrence thematic clusters; author, institution, and country performance; and document type distribution. This multifaceted method provides an innovative and comprehensive picture of the intellectual evolution of GOIs. The study clarifies a rapidly increasing topic with little comprehension by methodically mapping this knowledge base.

The research is guided by four specific questions.

RQ1: How has research on the GOI developed in terms of publication volume and temporal trends?

RQ2: What are the prominent themes and clusters in GOI research?

RQ3: Who are the most influential authors, institutions, and countries in GOI research?

RQ4: What types of documents dominate the field, and what does this indicate about its maturity?

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it provides a structured synthesis of available knowledge and represents the first thorough GOI bibliometric review. Second, it highlights research theme clusters and their connections to ESG, CSR, and organizational behavior, thus clarifying the GOI's conceptual boundaries and situating them in sustainability discourse. Third, future work should identify gaps in cross-national contexts, longitudinal identity development studies, and empirical assessments of the impact of the GOI on organizational performance. These contributions represent a significant step toward advancing both theory and practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Green organizational identity (GOI)

Green organizational identity (GOI) is how companies market themselves as environmentally responsible. In broad terms, it extends corporate identity, which captures what members value most, long-term, and unique about their company (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The GOI embeds environmental ideals into its character, making sustainability a defining trait. It is generally accepted that when firms go green, they show internally and externally that ecological responsibility is part of their mission and strategy (Song & Yu, 2018). Employee sense-making and stakeholder projection are key features of this definition.

Research shows that the GOI is more than a symbol. In fact, it has been widely investigated as a driver of workplace culture, employee behavior, and long-term competitiveness (Wang, 2019). For example, employees who believe that their company is environmentally responsible are more inclined to follow sustainability goals. This suggests that the GOI acts as a cognitive and cultural anchor that guides organizational behavior. Unlike environmental activities, identity is ingrained in organizational behaviors. The importance of the GOI cannot be overstated, as it is increasingly becoming a key factor in sustainable outcomes due to its longevity. The theoretical foundations of the GOI in identity studies and its distinctive contribution to sustainability must therefore be considered.

2.2. GOI and CSR/ESG/organizational identity

A considerable portion of CSR research emphasizes that companies strengthen stakeholder trust and legitimacy when they adopt practices that demonstrate environmental and social responsibility (Awa et al., 2024; del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2022). ESG frameworks provide quantitative sustainability performance standards for organizations. Whereas CSR and ESG focus primarily on external responsibility and reporting, GOI emphasizes how environmental principles are incorporated into organizational self-definition.

The GOI is well founded in organizational identity theory. According to (Albert & Whetten, 1985), identity is important, permanent, and distinctive. Organizations become “green” when environmental ideals become core to their identity, shaping strategy and conduct. As (Kaplan & Garner, 2017) suggest, identity changes with external forces and internal desires. This adaptability allows organizations to change their identity to meet sustainability goals. For example, a manufacturing firm under regulatory and stakeholder pressure may rebrand as an ecological innovator, thereby generating a GOI that supports strategy renewal.

GOI, CSR, and ESG make distinct contributions. However, when divorced from internal culture, CSR and ESG initiatives risk appearing symbolic or opportunistic (Shahzadi et al., 2024). This highlights a major limitation of such approaches, which the GOI helps overcome by emphasizing sincerity and internalization. External initiatives are more credible and consistent when sustainability is integrated into business identity. This distinction underlines why the GOI is more than just CSR or ESG; it mediates internal values and outwards performance. Further research is therefore needed to examine how the GOI moderates the sustainability effects of CSR and ESG initiatives.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data source

Scopus, one of the largest and most trustworthy peer-reviewed literature abstracts and citation databases, provides data for the study. This database was chosen because it is one of the most practical and comprehensive sources available for management, sustainability, and organizational studies (Amrutha & Geetha, 2020). Scopus includes more business and management publications than other databases do, which is crucial for capturing the interdisciplinary nature of green organizational identity. The benefits in terms of broad coverage and interoperability with the VOS viewer far outweigh the disadvantages of relying on a single database, as previous sustainability bibliometric reviews have shown (AlRyalat et al., 2019). Focusing on a single database is a widely used approach in bibliometric studies, as it strikes a balance between depth and consistency. Multiple databases, such as Web of Science and Scopus, may cause duplication and dataset cleaning issues. Thus, relying on one reliable source ensures consistent citation metadata and keyword indexing. Scopus ensures dependability and reproducibility, which are essential for bibliometric analysis.

3.2. Search strategy

The search strategy was designed to be broad but focused. The search terms included “green organizational identity” in titles, abstracts, and keywords. This term was selected because it directly reflects the main concept of interest and avoids ambiguity, in line with best practices for bibliometric research. The search was limited to papers published between 1989 and 2025 for precision. Since ESG and CSR became popular in the early 2000s, organizational research has developed sustainability discourses. Since the majority of management and environmental studies are published in English, the search was accordingly restricted. Only peer-reviewed, academically rigorous articles, conference papers, and book chapters were included. To ensure dataset quality and consistency, editorials, notes, and trade publications were excluded.

3.3. Selection process

To ensure transparency and reproducibility, a thorough review approach was adopted. After searching Scopus, the raw dataset contained documents matching “green organizational identity.” All titles, abstracts, keywords, authors, affiliations, and references were exported in accordance with standard bibliometric procedures. The resulting dataset of 204 documents was clean and focused on for analysis. In line with systematic review guidelines, a PRISMA flow diagram was used to document the number of records identified, filtered, excluded, and retained. PRISMA is recommended for systematic reviews because it promotes transparency and helps readers comprehend filtering decisions (Page et al., 2021).

See Figure 1 for the PRISMA flow diagram.

3.4. Tools & analysis

The bibliometric network construction and visualization software VOS viewer was used to analyse the dataset (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). This software was chosen because it is widely recognized as one of the most effective tools for managing large datasets and generating intuitive maps of bibliometric networks. The VOS viewer uses complex algorithms to cluster related objects on the basis of citation linkages or keyword cooccurrences, creating field-specific intellectual and thematic maps. Fractional counting was employed, as recommended by previous bibliometric studies, to ensure fair distribution of contributions across authors, institutions, and countries. This strategy prevents overrepresentation of highly collaborative papers and ensures balanced analysis.

Keyword co-occurrence analysis requires seven occurrences. This threshold was adopted because it eliminates noise from rarely used or idiosyncratic keywords, thereby improving the clarity of thematic clustering. Terms such as “article” and “study” were eliminated. The resulting maps clearly show keyword clusters, where proximity and color indicate co-occurrence

and thematic grouping. GOI literature maps reveal prevalent topics, rising trends, and conceptual linkages. By merging network maps and descriptive information, the analysis provides a complete picture of the intellectual structure of the field.

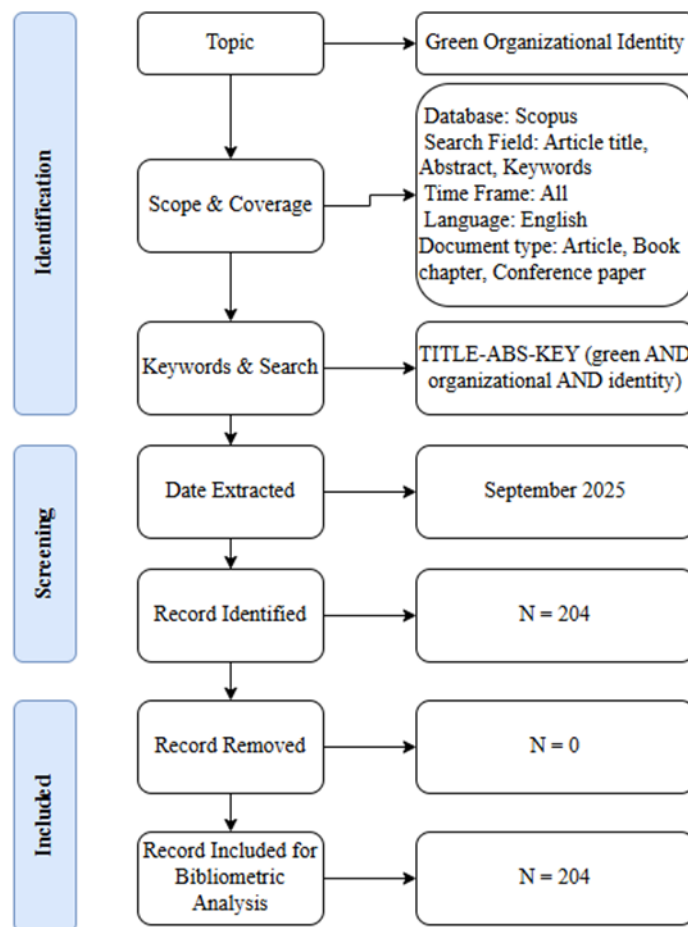


Figure 1 Flow chart.

3.5. Indicators

Several bibliometric indicators were used to address the research questions. First, the publication volume by year demonstrates the growth of GOI research. This indicator helps determine whether the field is new, emerging, or mature. An increasing number of publications may imply scholarly recognition, whereas spikes may signal responses to global events, such as international climate agreements.

Second, keyword co-occurrence shows literature theme groups. In particular, mapping author keywords highlights dominant research themes such as green human resource management, employee behavior, innovation, leadership, and organizational culture. These clusters address field intellectual structure and identify underexplored regions.

The third set of indicators covers authors, affiliations, and nations. Author productivity highlights notable researchers contributing to the area, whereas institutional contributions reveal research clusters. Country-level analysis shows how regions prioritize the GOI. As noted in earlier sustainability bibliometric studies, contributions tend to be concentrated in China, the U.S., and Europe (Olawumi & Chan, 2018). GOI research is expected to follow similar trends due to regulatory and academic interests.

The fourth is document type distribution, which distinguishes journal articles, conference proceedings, and book chapters. A high proportion of conference papers generally indicates a growing discipline, whereas a predominance of journal publications reflects maturity and academic respectability. The prevalence of peer-reviewed articles in the GOI indicates that the area is solidifying within sustainability and management research.

These indicators provide a comprehensive methodology for evaluating GOI scholars. They answer the research questions by correlating temporal growth, theme clusters, intellectual contributions, and publishing genres. These findings therefore offer a clear snapshot of the field and suggest promising directions for future research.

4. Results

4.1. Publication trends



Sustainability and management studies have shaped the study of green organizational identity (GOI). As shown in Figure 2, the distribution of publications between 1989 and 2025 illustrates this trajectory. Documents were scarce in the early years, especially from 1989--2005, averaging zero to one each year. This suggests that the GOI has not yet been recognized as a designated study domain. In contrast, CSR and environmental management views dominated sustainability discussions at the time (Sánchez-Teba et al., 2021). This limited emphasis highlights that debates related to identity and sustainability had not yet merged.

A modest rise occurred between 2006 and 2015. Although the number of annual publications seldom exceeded five, the consistent presence of studies during this decade confirms the early establishment of the GOI as a researched issue. Climate change has become increasingly important, and global sustainability frameworks such as the Kyoto Protocol and early ESG reporting initiatives have been institutionalized (Filonchuk et al., 2024). Researchers have begun to investigate how corporate identity affects environmental responsibility, particularly in environmentally sensitive industries. Identity theory has been widely used to describe how corporations portray themselves as sustainable actors in response to external demands. This modest but continuous growth indicates that GOI research is still in its nascent stage.

From 2016 onwards, a noticeable acceleration can be observed. The number of publications rose sharply from less than ten to more than thirty by 2022. This sudden growth can be attributed to several external factors. First, the 2015 Paris Agreement raised awareness of sustainability worldwide and encouraged firms to include environmental responsibility in their strategy. Second, ESG frameworks increase the need for thorough research on how organizations absorb sustainability concepts. Third, management and organizational researchers have increasingly used identity to explain employee behavior and organizational change (Lee et al., 2015). These trends created fertile ground for GOI research. As research has diversified, it has covered green human resource management, innovation, and leadership.

The substantial increase in publications after 2019 is particularly striking. The number of documents exceeded twelve in 2020 and then rose to over thirty in 2022 and over forty in 2025. There are several possible explanations for this surge. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced resilience, social responsibility, and sustainability as organizational values (Rai et al., 2021). While governments and investors stressed ESG performance, green identity became more important for organizational legitimacy. Consequently, scholars have focused on examining how GOI influences employee engagement, pro-environmental behavior, and sustainable competitive advantage. The increase in publications clearly demonstrates that the GOI is now a well-established discipline with various theoretical and empirical contributions.

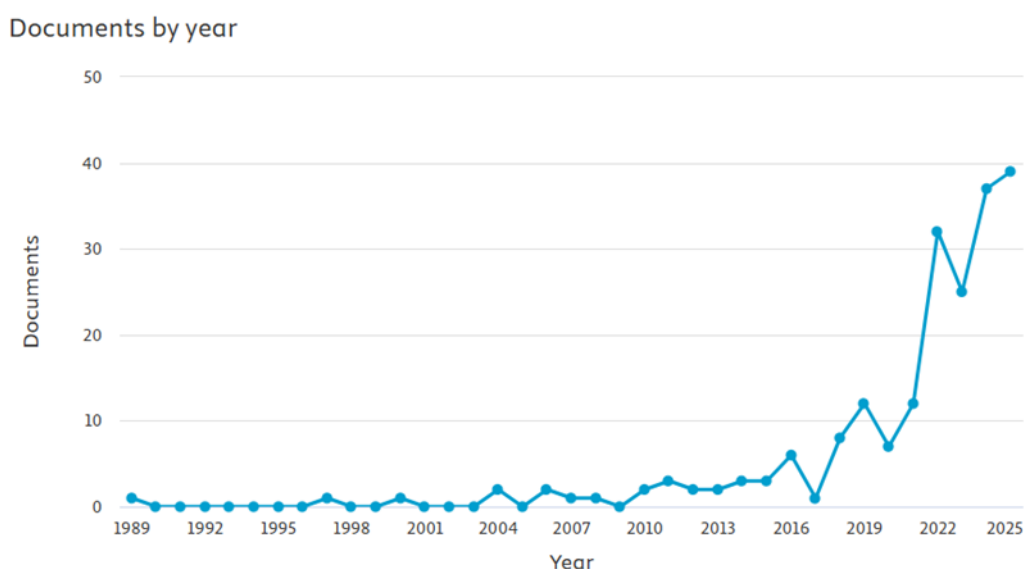


Figure 2 Documents by year. Source: Scopus database.

4.2. Keyword co-occurrence analysis

The conceptual structure of green organizational identity (GOI) research is revealed via keyword co-occurrence analysis. As illustrated in Figure 3, the co-occurrence network highlights thematic clusters, whereas Figure 4 shows term intensity. The maps show how themes cluster into four primary domains: HRM and employee behavior; green innovation and leadership; CSR and identity; and manufacturing and contextual drivers. Taken together, these clusters indicate that organizational practices and external conditions transform GOI into multiple dimensions.

The first cluster (Cluster A, red) covers green HRM and employee behavior. This cluster highlights the central role of green HRM, employee green behavior, and environmental performance. The co-occurrence shows that scholars stress HRM systems for GOI building. Ansari et al. (2021) reported that HRM strategies that support environmental goals increase employee environmental activity. Manika et al. (2015) discovered that employees are more inclined to implement eco-friendly actions



when they see their company as green. This finding confirms that HRM translates a company's identity into behavioral outcomes, turning employees into agents of sustainability. Nevertheless, further research is needed to examine how cultural or industry circumstances moderate the links among HRM, identity, and behavior.

Cluster B (blue) links green innovation, leadership, and creativity. The co-occurrence clearly demonstrates that green creativity, innovation, and leadership are interrelated. This cluster emphasizes the significance of the GOI in organizational innovation. Studies show that green companies are more likely to invest in clean technology and eco-innovations (Huong et al., 2021). Leadership is also important, as green transformational leaders promote creativity and sustainability visions (Begum et al., 2022). Importantly, the emphasis on innovation suggests that GOI is not only about conformity but also about promoting innovative techniques that enhance competitiveness. Thus, this cluster places GOI as an innovation and change catalyst, providing compelling evidence for cross-level studies on identity, leadership, and business performance.

Cluster C (green) covers CSR and organizational culture. This cluster suggests that corporate social responsibility, organizational culture, and human factors are the primary factors influencing this domain. The close relationship between CSR and GOI suggests that identification is used to authenticate CSR commitments internally. While CSR stresses external legitimacy, GOI provides internal coherence, making sustainability activities seem genuine (Liao et al., 2024). In particular, organizational culture connects sustainability values with daily activities. According to (Beddewela & Fairbrass, 2016), sustainability as a cultural norm defines identity and boosts legitimacy. This cluster therefore emphasizes authenticity and integration while also warning against greenwashing when CSR is separated from identity.

Cluster D (yellow) covers green innovation and organizational identities. As illustrated in the co-occurrence network, green innovation is closely linked to identify terms, thereby demonstrating that organizational self-definitions underpin sustainability-oriented innovation. Organizational identity theory states that “who we are” influences strategic decisions and resource allocation (Gioia et al., 2000). Consistent with this theory, green companies are more likely to pursue clean R&D, eco-friendly product design, and process reconfiguration to reduce emissions (Cai et al., 2025).

As shown in Figure 4, the heatmap depicts the research attention intensity, supporting these findings. The literature emphasizes green organizational identity, CSR, and green innovation. However, peripheral buzzwords such as employee green behavior and green inventiveness indicate rising but underdeveloped fields. Although fundamental themes have now stabilized, additional issues are broadening the research area. These trends indicate the maturity of GOI research and its multidisciplinary expansion.

Keyword co-occurrence analysis confirmed that GOI research is multifaceted and can be divided into four main topic clusters. The clusters show how identity affects HRM, innovation, CSR, location, and industry. The heatmap also reveals dominant and emerging themes. These findings provide a clear answer to RQ2 and suggest that future studies should include comparisons across industries and regions, as well as a deeper examination of innovation and leadership in the GOI.

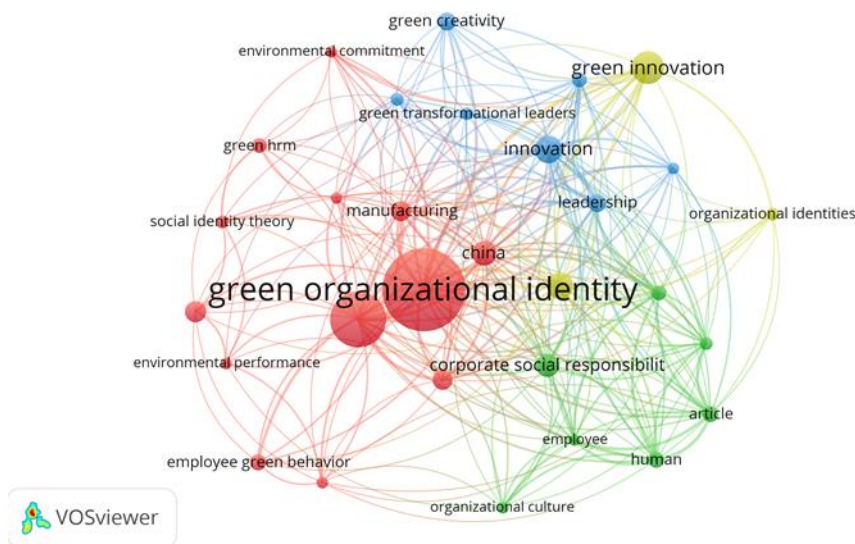


Figure 3 Co-occurrence network. Source: Scopus database.

4.3. Authors, affiliations, and countries

Author productivity research has identified several key Green Organizational Identity (GOI) contributions. As shown in Figure 5, Chang T.W. has five publications, followed by Shahriari M. and Zafar H. with four each. Al-Romeedy B.S., Azizan O., and Chen Y.S. each published three publications. This finding aligns with earlier bibliometric studies, which suggest that a small output per author is typical in developing scientific topics where knowledge is disseminated across multiple participants (Gu, 2004). Significantly, Chang T.W.'s productivity indicates that he cements GOI research, especially in Asia, whereas Chen Y.S. is



noteworthy for linking the GOI to innovation and competitive advantage. These contributions highlight how the GOI integrates organizational behavior, sustainability, and strategic management.



Figure 4 Cooccurrence heatmap. Source: Scopus database.

Institutional analysis highlights this field's academic hubs. As reported in Figure 6, Universiti Sains Malaysia has the most publications, with six, followed by Newcastle, Australia, and Taiwan's National Defense University, with five. Other universities, such as Isfahan and Swinburne, provide four publications. The evidence suggests that Malaysian and Taiwanese institutions are particularly prominent due to national sustainability policies and ESG inclusion in business education. Western universities such as King's College London appear less often, which points to uneven worldwide engagement. This imbalance raises important questions about the need for increased cross-institutional collaboration to broaden both theoretical and empirical perspectives.

Figure 7 clearly shows that China leads with 54 publications, followed by Australia and the UK with 20 each. Emerging economies such as Pakistan and India contribute to both Malaysia and the U.S. As (Kostka & Zhang, 2018) propose, Chinese leadership reflects government-led ecological transformation. The UK's and Australia's substantial representation is consistent with their longstanding CSR and sustainability research traditions. Pakistan's and India's contributions show increasing interest in economic development and environmental responsibility. In contrast, Africa and Latin America are underrepresented, which highlights a major gap in global coverage.

GOI research is shaped by a few recurring authors, some top Asian institutions, and considerable national contributions from China and other Asia-Pacific countries. These findings confirm that the field is global in scope but unevenly distributed. In our view, GOI scholars could therefore benefit from greater regional and disciplinary cooperation, which would aid in improving theoretical integration and enhancing diversity.

Documents by author

Compare the document counts for up to 15 authors.

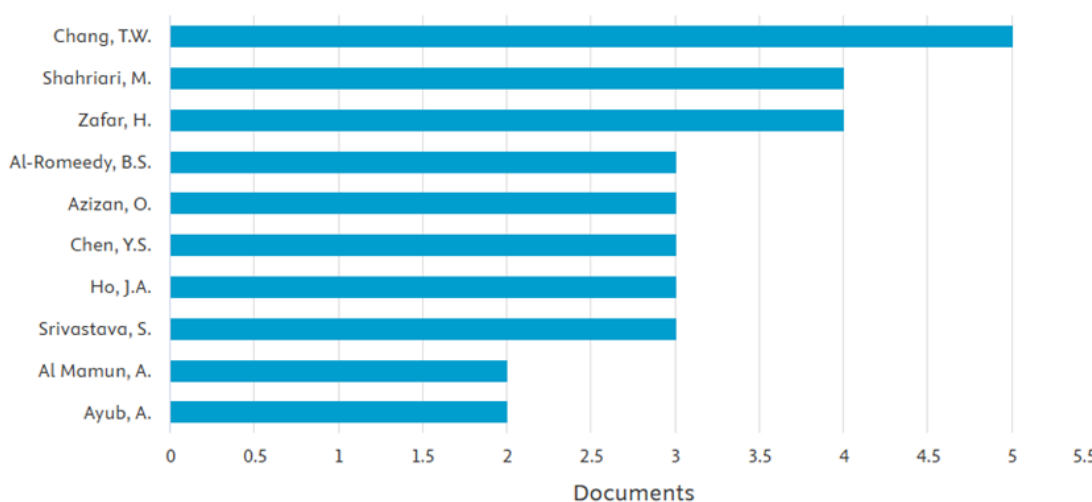


Figure 5 Documents by author. Source: Scopus database.



Documents by affiliation

Compare the document counts for up to 15 affiliations.

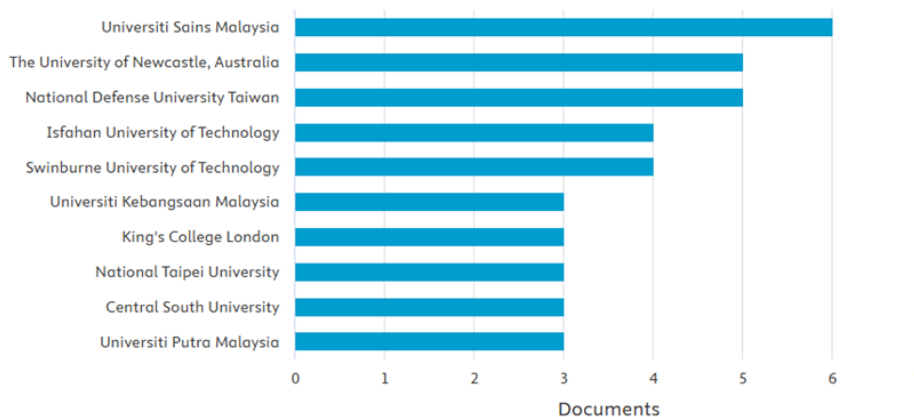


Figure 6 Documents by affiliation. Source: Scopus database.

Documents by country or territory

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

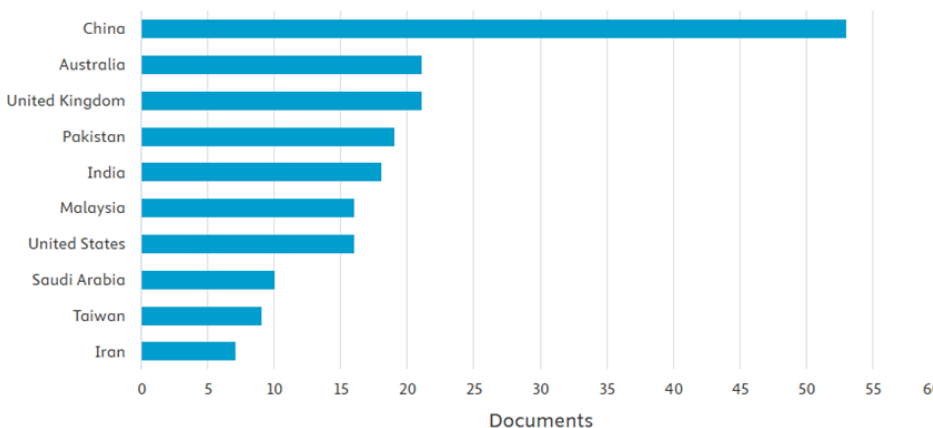


Figure 7 Documents by country. Source: Scopus database.

4.4. Document types

The distribution of document types illustrates the maturity of green organizational identity (GOI) research. As shown in Figure 8, journal articles account for 89.2% of publications, followed by book chapters (6.9%) and conference papers (3.9%). This dominance of journal articles suggests that GOI has progressed beyond its early exploratory phase and is now a recognized field of academic inquiry. In bibliometric terms, a high share of peer-reviewed articles indicates legitimacy and scholarly acceptance (Ninkov et al., 2021).

The concentration in journals also reflects methodological and theoretical rigor. Articles undergo more stringent peer review than conference papers do, ensuring greater reliability and academic visibility. This pattern suggests that scholars are increasingly confident in presenting GOIs as a well-developed research construct. In contrast, the limited share of conference papers implies that preliminary discussions on GOIs are less prominent, reinforcing the notion that the field is moving toward consolidation.

Book chapters, while fewer in number, play a complementary role. They often situate GOI within broader discourses of sustainability, CSR, and organizational behavior, reaching interdisciplinary audiences. These contributions extend the relevance of the GOI beyond specialized journals and into practitioner and policy debates. Their presence underscores that the GOI is not only academically recognized but also practically meaningful.

In summary, the overwhelming dominance of journal articles signals the academic maturity of the GOI, whereas book chapters and conference papers provide additional channels for integration and dissemination. The balance across these document types answers RQ4 by showing that the GOI has achieved credibility in scholarly publishing but still offers opportunities for broader engagement across disciplines and audiences.



Documents by type

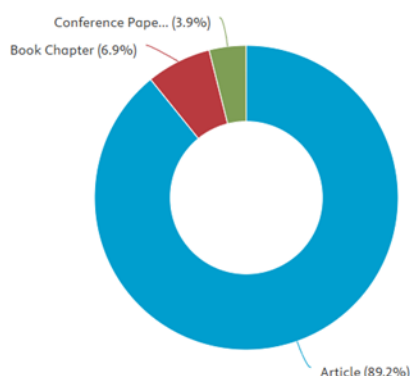


Figure 8 Documents by type. *Source:* Scopus database.

5. Discussion

5.1. Recent growth in the GOI and ESG pressures (RQ1)

The rapid growth of publications on green organizational identity (GOI) in recent years demonstrates that the field is gaining traction in response to global ESG pressures. The bibliometric results show a sharp increase in publications after 2019, aligning with the intensification of global sustainability debates following the Paris Agreement and the rapid institutionalization of ESG frameworks. This growth is consistent with studies that document how environmental imperatives have reshaped organizational research agendas (Raman et al., 2024). This surge suggests that GOI is becoming a central lens for examining how organizations respond to external demands for sustainability.

This trend also indicates that the GOI is moving from the margins of management research into the mainstream (Al-Swidi et al., 2021). The increased volume of publications reflects not only the urgency of sustainability issues but also a growing recognition that organizational identity plays a critical role in embedding ecological responsibility into practice (De Oliveira et al., 2023; Maier et al., 2020). As ESG reporting becomes a global norm, organizations must demonstrate authenticity in their sustainability efforts. The GOI provides a framework for bridging external accountability with internal values (Chang & Hung, 2021; Zihan et al., 2024). The growth in publications therefore reflects both academic curiosity and practical necessity, positioning the GOI as a vital construct for understanding the future of sustainable organizations.

5.2. Four clusters and interdisciplinary connections (RQ2)

The keyword co-occurrence analysis identified four main clusters: human resource management and employee behavior, innovation and leadership, CSR and organizational identity, and contextual factors such as China and manufacturing. Each cluster represents a different dimension of how the GOI has been conceptualized and studied. The presence of these clusters suggests that the GOI is not confined to a single discipline but is instead an inherently interdisciplinary construct.

The HRM and employee behavior cluster highlights the significance of individuals in shaping and embodying organizational identity. This finding aligns with research on Green HRM, which suggests that employees' identity has a significant influence on their adoption of pro-environmental behaviors (Liu et al., 2023). The innovation and leadership cluster highlights the role of GOI in fostering creativity and organizational change, which is consistent with studies that link identity to dynamic capabilities (Ahmad et al., 2022). The CSR and identity cluster reflects the ongoing need to ensure authenticity in sustainability practices (He et al., 2021). Finally, the contextual cluster shows that national and industrial environments shape how the GOI is interpreted and operationalized, with China emerging as a central research context (S. Ren et al., 2021; Xing & Mohamed Zainal, 2024).

These clusters demonstrate that the GOI is a multifaceted construct bridging micro, meso, and macrolevel perspectives. This complexity is a strength, as it allows GOI research to integrate diverse theories and methodologies (S. Ren & Chowdhury, 2025). At the same time, it also signals a need for greater coherence and synthesis to avoid fragmentation.

5.3. Knowledge hubs and global opportunities (RQ3)

The analysis of authors, institutions, and countries indicates that GOI research is geographically uneven. China leads in publications, followed by Australia, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, and India. Institutions in Malaysia and Taiwan also play central roles, reflecting strong regional interest in the GOI. These findings are consistent with bibliometric studies showing that Asian universities have become increasingly active in sustainability scholarship due to both policy pressures and industrial contexts (Hallinger et al., 2024).

The dominance of China highlights the influence of national policies, particularly the concept of ecological civilization, which has spurred both academic and practical interest in green transformation (Lee & Nie, 2023; W. Ren et al., 2024). However, the relative scarcity of contributions from North America, Africa, and Latin America reveals gaps in global coverage. These gaps limit the generalizability of GOI findings and highlight the importance of fostering international collaboration. Partnerships between Asian and Western institutions could strengthen theoretical integration, whereas expanding research into underrepresented regions could provide valuable insights into how cultural and institutional contexts shape the GOI.

Thus, while current research hubs provide momentum, the uneven distribution underscores the need for more inclusive, global approaches. Broader participation would not only enrich the empirical base but also ensure that the GOI reflects diverse organizational realities.

5.4. Document types and field maturity (RQ4)

The dominance of journal articles, representing 89.2% of the dataset, suggests that the GOI has achieved recognition as a mature research domain. In bibliometric terms, such a concentration in peer-reviewed journals is indicative of the field's transition beyond its exploratory phase. The presence of book chapters further reflects interdisciplinary integration, situating GOI within wider discussions of CSR and organizational studies. In contrast, the relatively small proportion of conference papers indicates that preliminary explorations have diminished as scholars focus more on journal outlets.

This maturity is encouraging but also poses challenges. While the field has established legitimacy, it now requires deeper methodological diversity to advance. Most publications rely on conceptual frameworks or cross-sectional surveys, which, although useful, limit causal inference and theoretical innovation (Maier et al., 2023; Rutkowski et al., 2024). Future studies should therefore move beyond descriptive work to include longitudinal designs, mixed-methods approaches, and experimental studies. Such diversification would enhance the robustness of GOI research and strengthen its contributions to both theory and practice.

5.5. Research gaps and future agenda

Despite its growth, GOI research faces several gaps. First, longitudinal studies that can capture how organizational identities evolve over time are lacking. Identity is inherently dynamic, yet most studies rely on cross-sectional data, limiting insights into temporal processes. Longitudinal designs could reveal how external shocks, such as regulatory changes or global crises, reshape the GOI.

Second, the links among GOI, innovation, and performance remain underexplored. While existing studies suggest that the GOI supports innovation, few have empirically tested its impact on environmental and financial outcomes. Establishing this link is essential for demonstrating the strategic value of the GOI.

Third, there is limited cross-national and cross-industry research. Current studies are concentrated in specific regions and sectors, such as manufacturing in China. Comparative studies could reveal how institutional environments, cultural values, and industry pressures shape GOI differently. Such work would enhance the external validity of the concept.

Fourth, the role of leadership and digital platforms in shaping GOIs requires greater attention. Green leadership has been identified as important, but its mechanisms and interactions with identity remain unclear. Similarly, digital platforms, including social media, increasingly influence how organizations construct and communicate their green identities. Exploring these factors could expand the theoretical understanding and provide actionable insights for practitioners.

By addressing these gaps, future research can move GOI beyond description toward deeper theoretical and practical contributions (see Table 1).

Table 1 Summary of research gaps and future agenda.

Research Gap	Explanation	Future Agenda
Lack of longitudinal studies	Most research relies on cross-sectional designs, limiting understanding of identity dynamics.	Conduct longitudinal and panel studies to track GOI evolution over time and in response to external shocks.
Limited evidence on GOI–innovation–performance link	Few studies empirically connect GOI to environmental and financial outcomes.	Test causal relationships using structural models, experiments, or multilevel analyses.
Regional and industry concentration	Research is dominated by China, with little representation from Africa, Latin America, or nonmanufacturing sectors.	Expand research to diverse regions and industries through cross-national comparative studies.
Underexplored role of leadership	Leadership is acknowledged but not fully examined as a driver of GOI.	Investigate green and transformational leadership as antecedents or moderators of GOI.
Influence of digital platforms	GOI studies rarely examine digitalization and social media in identity formation.	Explore how digital platforms shape, communicate, and contest organizational green identities.
Methodological limitations	Heavy reliance on surveys and conceptual work reduces causal inference.	Employ mixed-methods, longitudinal, and experimental designs for stronger validity.



6. Conclusion

This was the first thorough bibliometric mapping of green organizational identity. In total, we analysed 204 Scopus papers to examine publishing trends, theme clusters, important authors, institutional affiliations, and country contributions. The findings reveal that GOI research has grown dramatically in the previous five years, which clearly reflects worldwide ESG and sustainability concerns. Four thematic clusters, HRM and employee behavior, innovation and leadership, CSR and organizational identity, and environmental impacts such as China and manufacturing, indicate that the GOI is both complex and interdisciplinary. Overall, these results outline the intellectual contours of the field and create a solid foundation on which future studies can build.

This study created the first GOI knowledge map, clarifying a fragmented field. By visualizing publishing trends and topic networks, this study helps researchers better comprehend research scopes, orientations, and linkages. Top authors, institutions, and countries show where academic competence is concentrated and where deficiencies exist. Since no previous bibliometric review of the GOI has been undertaken, this study fills an important gap in the literature.

The scholarly consequences are evident. On the one hand, keyword clustering highlights the field's main themes, whereas on the other hand, productivity analysis highlights the significant scientists and organizations that underpin research. China and the Asia–Pacific region produce a large amount of output, but it is important to note that theoretical generalization requires wider global participation. Taken together, this article maps the field and highlights the importance of international and multidisciplinary collaboration.

Practical implications follow. The analysis clearly indicates that HRM and leadership are among the key drivers of GOI. To establish their green brand, organizations should promote employee engagement, green HRM, and leadership development. In addition, the findings suggest that strategic communication and real cultural integration are needed to embed sustainability into identity. Companies that invest in these areas may achieve greater levels of innovation, employee engagement, and competitiveness.

This study has several limitations. One limitation is that it relies on a single keyword, “green organizational identity,” and one database (Scopus). Other terms or databases, such as Web of Science, may produce more data. A further shortcoming is that this investigation does not incorporate cocitation mapping, which might have provided deeper insights into the theoretical foundations.

Further research should extend datasets, diversify keywords, and use multiple bibliometric methods. Future work should also combine bibliometrics with systematic reviews or meta-analyses, since this may enhance comprehension of the field. By diversifying methodologies and applying them across different contexts, researchers can ensure that the GOI becomes both globally relevant and conceptually integrated.

Ethical Considerations

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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