PERFORMANCE AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN SMEs

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ABSTRACT

To date, most business management research has focused on large companies and has not taken into account the factor related to the size of companies. Much research in recent decades has studied the causal relationships with implications and antecedents of CSR application, debated definitions, and considered their scope and content. This study wants to analyze, in the contexts of SMEs, the theoretical frame of reference, the consequences as well as the antecedents of CSR in order to provide future empirical studies, a starting point. The results highlight aspects related to the possible impact in the context of SMEs of CSR, barriers, language, terminology, background and the recommended theoretical framework. The analysis of the scientific output that is indexed in the international Scopus database on the topic of "corporate social performance and corporate social responsibility" in SMEs is the main objective of this study. Social responsibility actions represent, within large corporations, a natural practice, which is obvious, observed in the literature. Given this aspect, there is a totally different reality in the case of small and medium enterprises, primarily due to their high heterogeneity. Starting from this objective, we identified a number of 324 articles on this topic, following a bibliometric analysis. The majority of studies being qualitative studies, there is a certain concentration of scientific production in the last 18 years (2002-2020).

KEYWORDS: bibliometric analysis, Corporate Social Responsibility, performance, SMEs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is one of the most debated topics in the professional and academic business literature, being analyzed in a multitude of perspectives, from financial impact, managerial strategies, managerial practice or marketing to philosophy (Zburcea & Pînzaru, 2017). In today's corporate world, sustainability as well as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) show strong trends. The idea of social responsibility stipulates that the corporation has not only legal and economic obligations, but also has certain responsibilities towards society, responsibilities that are extended beyond the limits of this obligation (Dura, & Drigă, 2017). In the social sphere but also in the economic one, companies are more and more obliged to take into account the repercussions generated regarding the environment by their actions and strategies, not being possible to obtain benefits and implicitly profit at any cost, due to a change of social consciousness. An investigation is needed in this regard to move forward. Worldwide, the focus is on corporate social responsibility (CSR), influenced by a wide range of factors, such as the interaction of economic performance with social and environmental components, increased competition, tax problems but also the employment crisis and the economic one (Vuță, et al., 2019). Within a sustainable society, the integration in the activity of the entities of the actions from the sphere of social responsibility becomes more and more evident (Neacșu, et al., 2020). During their business activities, companies

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face a new challenge regarding the adoption of a responsible behavior towards the environment and the community (Țigu, Popescu & Hornoiu, 2016).

A topic with a particularly extensive debate today in modern society is represented by the contribution made by CSR to the overall development of society. Empirical evidence in this area, despite the proliferation of CSR in the organizational and academic spheres, especially in the context of emerging countries, remains limited (Mitra, Stanca & Dabija, 2020). CSR-specific activities are very diverse and include: environmental protection activities (waste emissions, water consumption, energy and the amount of waste generated), transparency in the reporting of CSR activities, company policies to fight corruption and protection human rights, training courses for employees, occupational safety and health activities, marketing campaigns with elements of CSR, philanthropy and community investments (Hategan, Sirghi, Pitorac & Hategan, 2018). As social responsibility has become a real source of creation and development of competitive advantage for organizations, it is a preferred strategic option, which is increasingly concerned with the business environment (Androniceanu, 2019). Only a small minority of research publications fail to cover the subject, according to a literature review. In the decision-making process, most institutional investors consider in addition to financial criteria, aspects specific to cultural diversity, relations with civil society, environmental risks, business ethics and corporate governance (Baicu, Oehles-Sincai, State & Popescu, 2019).

Proposing a correlation between competitiveness, human resources, productivity, business opportunities in terms of market and CSR, the contributions of P. Drucker (1984) are noted. At this moment the so-called phase of relative maturity is realized. A central place as well as a wide acceptance is enjoyed by business ethics, stakeholder theory but also notions of performance (CSP). Although it gradually yields to alternative theoretical frameworks, CSR business management continues to be a priority construct in the 1990s. In recent decades, the integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in business reporting has been universally accepted, as users of financial information (stakeholders) have focused their attention on them (Tăbîrcă, Ivan, Radu, & Djaouahdou, 2019).

In order to identify the topics of interest in the context of SMEs, the research methodology and the theoretical framework is absolutely necessary to analyze the state of the art to enter into a pragmatic and necessary study of the CSR relationship with aspects related to business actions. and strategy or CSR dimensions. The systematic review of the literature is exactly what this study aims to do.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Corporate social responsibility vs. philanthropy and ethics

Offering a more accurate portrait, on a given subject, regarding the existing research is an objective of the systematic review of the literature. By using precise filtering techniques in order to examine the search and evaluate each related study in a justified and critical way, the balance of the literature so far is achieved through systematic reviews. Providing the applicable but also valid evidence for their use in future research is a basic criterion. An activity with a logic rooted in various premises, underlying but also with a fundamental scientific character defines the systematic review of literature. In order to facilitate the understanding but also of the management, it is necessary to divide into larger units the large amounts of information and this aspect is especially necessary in order to use efficiently the existing scientific evidence.

The identification of potential lines of research that are of interest to the scientific community but also of key studies is done by reviewing the literature. From a perspective, which can be maintained over time and long-term, the philanthropy developed by companies remains focused on actions that want to develop, within the stakeholders, a change. In different parts of the world, philanthropy may or may not be considered an action of CSR.

2.2. Business size and CSR

In agreement with Jamali et al. (2009); Perrini et al. (2007), SMEs generate, worldwide, about 65% of employment and represent 90% of the world's companies, according to statistics. Not only in terms of qualitative aspects of a functional, social and structural nature but also in terms of access to resources, their profile, compared to larger firms, differs significantly (Davies and Crane 2010; Russo and Perrini 2010; Perrini et al. 2007; Jenkins 2006). According to Preuss and Perschke (2010); Russo and Tencati (2009); Tilley (2000), when we talk about SMEs, they are by no means "small versions of big companies". Despite this, SMEs can make a significant contribution to society but in a collective way (Von Weltzien and Shankar 2011; Morsing and Perrini 2009; Jenkins 2006).

According to Preuss and Perschke (2010); Russo and Tencati (2009), very often a relatively small distinction is observed between management and owners when analyzing the management scheme as well as analyzing the organizational structure for SMEs. According to Russo and Tencati (2009); Murillo and Lozano (2006), the perceived human factor often contains a more authoritative and paternalistic profile that is much more defining than in the case of larger companies. Increasing employee satisfaction as well as encouraging their loyalty is due to the integration of CSR in SME strategy planning (Davies and Crane 2010; Russo and Perrini, 2010).

In large corporate environments the contributions brought by CSR are defined and described as measurable, quantifiable, calculated, planned but also systematic (Jamali et al., 2009) but in the context of SMEs the contributions related to CSR have been defined as, within the overall strategy of the organization, informal, unstructured and unsystematic (Russo and Tencati, 2009), whatever the case.

2.3. "Social capital theory" versus "Stakeholder theory": a conceptual framework

In accordance with the concept of CSR defined by the European Union, organizations integrate in their interactions but also in their operations with stakeholders, voluntarily, environmental issues as well as social issues. Maybe companies should assume a certain degree of environmental and social responsibility, in other words the success of a company is measured by indicators that reflect the relationships they maintain and establish with stakeholders given that the primary function and objective The real benefits of companies are not just maximizing profits (Russo and Perrini, 2010). Beyond the intrinsic interaction of the company as well as the legal prescriptions, the voluntary nature of the CSR paradigm must be highlighted.

Consequently, the assessment of the weight as well as the identification of stakeholders is the next question (Russo and Perrini, 2010). Business practice but also specialized literature (for example, Jamali et al., 2009), take into account society in general, the environment, public institutions, suppliers, customers, employees, owners. According to Perrini (2006), the relationship with stakeholders, in the context of SMEs, is often built on an individual basis, highly personalized, unique, close. SMEs, compared to large corporations with a more external focus, tend to give much more attention to the satisfaction of internal stakeholders, especially employees (Darnall et al., 2010); Jamali et al., 2009). With an emphasis on certain characteristics that involve relational factors, reciprocity but also trust, social capital is a concept analyzed from different angles, a multidimensional concept (Putman, 1993, 2000; Ostrom, 1991). Goodwill and transparency are highlighted, as aspects of business ethics.

2.4. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in SMEs

In 1950, the concept of CSR appeared, when the first definition proposed by Bowden appeared (Bowen, 1953). The concept of CSR has evolved towards the specific identification of social responsibility practices as well as stakeholders starting from a purely idealistic concept. Today, in SMEs as well as in large companies, day by day and with an increasing force, CSR is permanently incorporated in business management. The need to research CSR in SMEs, through various studies, since the 1990s, has not been difficult to address and is defined as a field of study (Sweeney, 2007). Empirical studies on CSR have been initiated in the new millennium (Carroll, 1999). Studies are lacking on the one hand due to the fact that there is a heterogeneous behavior on the part of SMEs, in addition to a small formal management (Bolton, 1971), and the presence of personalized structures that are closely related to positions but and with personal attitudes on the part of manager-owners (Hopkins, 2003), who show a close relationship in terms of resource use as well as in decision-making.

2.5. Corporate Social Performance (CSP)

The need to establish or obtain CSR results, ie to be able to measure and quantify them, arises once the company's performance is introduced in the CSR equation. In the opinion of Sethi (Sethi, 1975), the forerunner of the CSP states that it is one thing to formulate actions, but it is quite another that the results generated by those actions can be measured. Moreover, the approach to sustainability is also integrated with the emergence of CSP, where it is necessary to reduce or mitigate the negative environment but and the social impact generated by business activities, while increasing the company's performance (Baumgartner, Rauter, 2017).
It is important to specify that CSP is currently being studied in terms of two approaches. An aspect of CSR (Carroll, Buchholtz, 2006), where, for the satisfaction of various corporate actors (Bendheim, Waddock, Graves, 1998), the principles of social responsibility are formed (Wood, 1991) is an approach, on the one hand. The results obtained improve the relationship of society with the organization (Wood, 1991) and are measurable. On the other hand, the other approach, in which CSR is integrated, is like an umbrella theory (Carroll, 1999). It represents a new approach, one in which CSR results in definite benefits for the company, allowing the generation, from the problems it identifies, of economic opportunities, according to Drucker's statement (Drucker, 1986).
Companies can give priority in identifying areas that need to be improved, by evaluating the company's activities in terms of time quality and costs due to the introduction of the need to measure performance. As in previous concepts, the current literature is focused on case studies from large companies. The results of relatively few studies in SMEs are inconclusive (Gilley, Worrell, Davidson, El – Jelly, 2000), due, in large part, to the generation of specific studies that fail to establish the existence of a very clear relationship between the implementation of CSR practices and its effect on profitability, company performance in general as well as financial performance (Surroca, Tribó, Waddock, 2010; Torugsa, O'Donohue, Hecker, 2012).

3. WORKING METHODOLOGY

In order to identify the scientific output in terms of "corporate social performance and corporate social responsibility" developed in the field of SMEs, a bibliometric analysis is performed. Useful information provides researchers with this analysis regarding the citation of journals and articles on this topic in which research publications are concentrated, the types of institutions focused on research on this topic, the countries with the highest production, the most prolific authors and the evolution of publications. investigating this issue.
Bibliometric indicators of impact, dispersion, collaboration and production from mathematical models with reference to two variables, based on "bibliometric laws" of great relevance such as Bradford's law and Lotka's law, are used to perform this analysis. The characteristics of the Scopus database used are the following: rigorous quality standards, such as SJR Scimago Journal Rank (Harzing, Alakangas, 2016), allow a significant download of metadata in order to obtain bibliographic information, author details , keywords, abstract, etc., presents an excellent coverage in time, is a database with an international scope.
The following search equation was used: "small and medium business" or "small and medium enterprises" or "ethics and SMEs" or "CSP" or "corporate social performance" or "CSR" or "social

responsibility" or " corporate responsibility "and" corporate social responsibility ", for tracking, in the Scopus database, the documents. The documentary unit was limited to scientific articles "DOCTYPE (ar)". When considering the speed of access to the relevant scientific literature allowed by the article this limitation has been integrated into the equation (Frank, 2006), a valuable contribution of the scientific community is established as this feature (Goldschmidt, 1986). After performing a review process to remove duplicate documents but also to remove documents that, due to the improper use of keywords during their indexing, have nothing to do with the topic, creating an ad-hoc database consisting of a total of 377 articles represents the final result.

4. THE RESULTS OBTAINED FROM THE RESEARCH

4.1. Productivity for one year

All 281 articles indexed in Scopus related to CSR in SMEs are grouped over a period of 18 years. The only article published in 2000 and the first article identified was the article "Ethics and the use of information technology: a survey of US SMEs" by Dhillon and Phukan. With 42 articles published, the highest productivity was found in 2016. The 15 articles from 2018, in order to comply with the trend line, are not included (starting with June 2018).

In any field of knowledge can be identified, in line with the evolution of the study, three distinct phases of behavior: precursors, exponential growth and linear growth. Two of these distinct phases can be observed in the CSR analysis in SMEs. A limited production, focused mainly on the development of the initial steps in the subject characterizes the precursor phase. It has been contacted since 2002 and continues until 2008, with a productivity index of 3.64 items in one year. The second phase, also called exponential growth, begins in 2010 and continues until 2020, finding a considerable increase in the interest shown by the scientific community for this topic. During this phase, the index of 26.23 articles / year is observed, which validates the compliance with the Price law. According to this law, after a period of 10–15 years from the emergence of a certain subject, the existing information at the global level will double (Price, 1956).

4.2. Citations

Regarding the examination of citations, all 287 articles contain a total number of 3921 citations, obtaining the ratio of 13.66 citations / article, with the index h = 33, and out of all the documents that were collected, 33 articles present 33 quotes or even more. The year 2009, in total, represents the year with the most citations, namely 537, corresponding to the percentage of 6%, compared to the total number of citations. Specifically, a percentage of 55.7% of the total number of articles has between 1 and 25 citations and 16.1% of articles have a number of citations between 25 and over 100. Of the total articles, compared to the entire period under analysis, only 28.7 % of articles have no citation. It should be noted that articles that have been published in the last 10 years do not have a large number of citations, because they have failed to reach the necessary dissemination or consolidation, so that their opportunity to be cited is limited (Merigó, Mas-Tur, Roig-Tierno, Ribeiro-Soriano, 2015).

4.3. Authors

Regarding authors, 561 authors were identified, corresponding to a productivity of 1.22 articles / author. The classification of authors, according to Crane (1977), is made in relation to productivity: large producers (those with more than 10 articles), medium producers (authors with between 5 and 9 articles), aspirants (those with between 2 and 4 articles), and transitional authors (authors who have only one article). Compared to Lotka's (1926) classification, this classification is more detailed. According to this classification, of the authors 84.7% have only one article (they are transitory authors), 14.5% represent aspiring authors, 0.8% represent medium producers and large producers do not exist. The transition index, defined as the percentage of authors who published a single article, has the value of 84.5% (productivity index, PI = 0). This index characterizes the number of authors who are occasional and who appear in the subject only once and do not continue to contribute to the subject. Regarding the existing collaboration between authors, it facilitates the real understanding of the relationships that are included in the subject. According to Berelson, on the one hand, a greater collaboration for the elaboration of documents allows to increase the performance of the discipline and on the other hand, validates the presence of a positive correlation between the number of authors and the number of times when a certain article is quoted. it is recognized that when the number of participating institutions as well as the number of authors is higher, the citation of a certain document increases. In this research, 21.5% of all articles (61) are written by a single author, and articles written by several authors represent a percentage of 78.5%. The most frequent are the collaborations made between two authors, with 34.9% (95) and those made between three authors, in a percentage of 31% (85) of the articles. The co-author index is 2.45 authors for a publication.

4.4. Productivity established by country and by type of institutions

According to Spinak (1996), this analysis allows the evaluation of the behavior of the investigation regarding countries or organizations. In this sense, according to the affiliation by countries, with 69 authors, 81 authorships and 47 centers, the leader is Great Britain, the next being Spain, which has 58 authors, 91 authorships and 23 centers. In terms of productivity broken down by institution, 317 institutions were recognized. Universities are noted, as having the largest number of affiliates, 87.5% (271) of the centers, which are then followed by research institutes (6.8%, 22 centers) and finally by private companies (5.7%, 21 center). The top institutions that are the most productive is led by the University of Murcia (Spain) with 12 authors, followed by Universiti Sains Malaysia (Malaysia), which has 8 authors. In order to understand the networks specialized in geographical and institutional collaboration, 223 (79.5%) articles written by several authors are finally examined; 75.6% (164) of the articles are written by authors from the same country, and 26.9% of the articles are written through an international collaboration. Regarding national collaborations, 65% (105) represent articles that are signed by authors belonging to the same institution while 35% (57) represent articles that are signed by authors belonging to different institutions, but belonging to the same country. Also, regarding the international collaboration, 100% of the articles were signed by authors belonging to several institutions from different countries.

4.5. Journals

Compared to the resources that were used for the scientific dissemination of the articles, 164 journals were identified, 77% publishing only one article on this topic. The dispersion index is 1.74 articles per journal. According to the Bradford law (1934), when examining scientific production belonging to any field, a unique phenomenon can be found, according to which a large percentage of articles that are related to a particular topic belong to a small number of journals. The value for the minimum Bradford zone (MBZ) is 62. The magazines have the ordered ranking keeping the descending order on their productivity, thus obtaining the Bradford core, composed of magazines with the sum of articles equal to 63. MBZ is made up of the following four magazines : Journal of Business Ethics, which has 30 articles, Social Responsibility Journal, which has 14 articles, Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management has 10 articles and Journal of Cleaner Production has 8 articles. Regarding the geographical origin of the journals in which the articles were published, a number of 72 articles are grouped by the United Kingdom, and in second place is the United States with a number of 27 articles.

4.6. Thematic areas

The priority sector of knowledge is represented by Accounting, Management and Business, with 139 (51%) articles and 87 (54%) journals, Social Sciences with 55 (21%) articles and 34 (21%)

journals. Moreover, the area of knowledge is defined by Arts and Humanities, which concentrates the largest number of quotes received. Regarding the categories of Accounting (miscellaneous), Management and Business, I remain the leader with 64 articles and 31 magazines and in second place is business management and international management.

4.7. Keywords

In order to index any research, the study of keywords has a special relevance, because these terms are used in order to more easily identify the documents. Their correct use increases the success and quality of searches performed in different databases. There are 25 articles that do not use keywords in their Scopus metadata or in their dissemination format. In conclusion, the keywords that were used to index each of the studies in 253 documents were examined. We identified 706 keywords used by 1364 times.

5. CONCLUSIONS

These types of studies allow, in addition to defining the lines of research followed by the authors, to identify the progress made by any subject within the scientific community, an element of great relevance to the scientific community being the development of these types of studies. The first work related to CSR in SMEs, indexed by Scopus, was published in 2000. More than 20 years of research have passed since the first study was published. There is an exponential increase in 2008 and the fact that there is an increase in interest in his study maintained to date gives rise to a higher concentration of studies. The year 2009 is the point that shows us the largest number of citations, although they have seen a considerable increase to date, compared to the citations obtained by the 377 articles. Due to a limited present in terms of confirmatory but also quantitative studies, a situation completely contrary to the more general CSR research in corporate contexts, this analysis allows us to observe that this subject does not reach maturity.

By Crane's classification, the predominance of transient authors over authors can be seen as behavior that is partly due to the fact that, on the one hand, it has a high participation in countries where scientific production is incipient or rare and on the other hand it is a new topic. The absence of large producers in this study is highlighted by the low percentage of average producers, of 0.9 %. With 9 articles, Spanish Larrán-Jorge represents the author with the highest productivity. The leader in terms of institutional and geographical connection is the United Kingdom, which out of the total number of co-authors and authors groups a percentage of 14 % but also 16 % in terms of the number of registered centers. Universities represent the center with the largest alliance of authors, of 86.9 %, at institutional level. With a percentage of 35.56 % of the articles signed by two authors, the tendency towards a double collaboration is noticed.

Four journals, representing 24.8% of the total articles, make up the Bradford core of the journals in which those articles are published. The largest number of articles was published in the journals: Journal of Cleaner Production, Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, Social Responsibility Journal and Journal of Business Ethics, with a total of 2348 citations. Mainly due to the direct relationship of the subject with the business world, Accounting, Management and Business, followed by Social Sciences, is a predominantly agreed field for the publication of these studies.

In order to identify the lines of research, the content analysis was performed. Due to the number of grouped articles, four of the ten lines identified are the most relevant. "CSR practices and institutionalization" is the line studied most by researchers, establishing during the process the level of institutionalization it presents, examining the practices achieved in relation to CSR. "Sustainable development, management and environmental awareness" is the second line that is followed by researchers, with 44 articles; promotes the inclusion in the CSR strategy of the environmental component, which will be used by SMEs. The third line, with 41 studies, is "Corporate Ethics"; over time it is considered and consolidated with a greater presence in SMEs one of the sub-fields of CSR, with an adaptable practice for them. With 35 articles, the fourth line is represented by the study of "performance, achievement and competitiveness in business". It groups different case studies that try to establish how CSR can result in an action that can enrich the company by obtaining economic profits based on proposals and models and at the same time, can increase market competitiveness.

In the realities of SMEs we need more research on CSR because they are quickly becoming aware of their social responsibility. As not many of the generic conclusions from the literature so far are applicable – and for this reason it needs to be adapted to the specifics of SMEs - the aim of the guidelines developed is to turn the practice into opportunities for responsible positioning in social and growth (Russo and Tencati 2009). For a better understanding of the relationship between CSR-SMEs, we should definitely focus primarily on the social impact. The initial objective, that of establishing the state of the problem, is achieved by this study within a systematic review of the literature. The suspicion that we have a very relevant line of research, which has a very special potential for future studies is confirmed by the detailed analysis of the content of relevant journals for the management of SMEs, business and CSR. Qualitative studies of an exploratory and conceptual nature predominate. Confirmatory, quantitative studies that suggest that this discipline is still far from reaching maturity are much less common compared to CSR studies in more general corporate contexts.

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