



## Review

# Mapping of the literature on social responsibility in the mining industry: A systematic literature review

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## ABSTRACT

The discussion in recent years about the sustainability of the mining industry has emphasized its commitment to social responsibility as an emerging topic. In this context, this article aims to develop a mapping of the literature on social responsibility in the mining industry. In accordance, a systematic literature review approach was adopted and, grounded on a rigorous screening processes, 72 significant papers were selected for analysis from the ISI Web of Knowledge database. The paper provides a bibliometric analysis regarding this specific field and, based on a content analysis approach, highlights a growing interest by the academic community and identifies two key research streams: *i*) Relationships with local communities, and *ii*) CSR reporting. Cluster 1 shows that relationships with stakeholders are important to mining companies in obtaining relevant social performance, and in acquiring local legitimacy from surrounding communities; cluster 2 highlights the importance of the elaboration, dissemination and quality of social reports, particularly concerning credibility. The review also points to shortcomings identified in literature, which correspond to potential significant opportunities for future research, either quantitative, qualitative, action research or mixed in nature.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, faced with the phenomenon of globalization, a profound change has been seen in the business environment and

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in the traditional way to do business, and society's attitude in general has also undergone significant changes. In this connection, there has been wide discussion of whether firms, particularly multinationals, make their profits while neglecting environmental and social questions (Edwards et al., 2007). There is consensus in the literature that the responsibility and functions of firms/multinationals should be adjusted to this new climate.

Therefore, at the centre of this debate is the concept of sustainable development, which for Bansal (2005) is development that satisfies the needs of the present without jeopardizing future generations' capacity to satisfy their needs too. Here, three basic principles were defined (Bansal, 2005): environmental integrity (related to not harming the natural environment); social equality/fairness (equal access to resources and opportunities) and economic prosperity (the productive capacity of organizations to provide individuals with a reasonable quality of life). Further, these three principles are translated, in practical terms, to another fundamental concept, corporate social responsibility. Among the countless definitions of social responsibility, the definition of Porter and Kramer (2002) was adopted, for whom this is a positive relationship between the environment and business opportunities, as well as the geographical and social context in which that business takes place. The justification for adopting this definition has to do with it being associated with other dimensions, specifically respect for ethical principles, codes of conduct, well-being and quality of life (social questions) and relationships with all stakeholders in implementing and disseminating good practices of social responsibility. However, these practices differ from one country to another, where institutional and cultural issues can be factors influencing how those practices are implemented and spread, and how relationships with stakeholders are managed. The differentiation of these practices is reflected in the literature, where empirical studies focus on just one region.

Arthaud-Day (2005) concluded that multinationals' growing interest in social, and also environmental, questions is associated with their great public exposure, and so the social impact implied by their operations has led them to focus more and more on social responsibility. Here, the mining industry is one sector with major public exposure, due to the social and environmental impacts brought about by exploiting mineral resources. This industry is considered strategic worldwide, and no less importantly, crucial to support many families living in the surrounding communities/regions, playing a significant role in regional and global economic growth.

Mining is important for the economy and employment, and has social and environmental repercussions globally and locally. This activity has specific characteristics related to its transitory nature, due to exhausting mineral resources and reserves and the strong environmental and social impact. The effects of that exploitation are seen as a threat to the natural environment and society in general. Faced with these impacts, mining company directors come under pressure to include measures of social responsibility in their management strategies, and to adopt a high degree of social responsibility in the countries they operate in, particularly in relation to the surrounding communities. In this context, the main challenge for this industry is to demonstrate it contributes to the well-being of the present generation and future generations, without harming the quality of life of any of them (Vintró et al., 2014). We can therefore expect the regular issue of reports on social responsibility and the formation of dynamic relationships with surrounding communities, among other stakeholders.

Nevertheless, although social responsibility is crucial for the extraction industry, little research has been carried out in the mining sector, where most concerns are held by multinationals, and where, despite the importance of this variable, literature on the

subject is somewhat scarce (Turker, 2009); indeed, driven by leading authors such as Boiral (e.g. Boiral and Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2017; Boiral, 2016) and Kemp (e.g. Owen and Kemp, 2012; Kemp, 2010) approaching sensitive issues as stakeholders' involvement, reporting, sustainability performance, and company-community relations, among others, research in the field remains rather scattered with studies related to a specific geographical context, which justified the topicality of this article and its subject matter. It is therefore important to compile that literature systematically. In this context, this article aims to identify the most studied themes in the academic community regarding social responsibility in the mining industry, through a bibliometric review.

Following this brief introduction, the literature review, methodology, results and conclusions are presented.

## 2. Theoretical framework

The concept of CSR has been a much studied subject in recent years (Turker, 2009). Generically, this responsibility was defined as business's commitment to contribute to sustainable economic development, and also as the commitment to collaborators and their families, local communities and society in general, to provide a better quality of life (World Business Council for Sustainable Development Cross, 2004). Social responsibility includes: volunteerism, ethics, legality and economics, which are variables according to the type of business, and so society expects organizations to assume these responsibilities, demanding social commitment to all stakeholders (Carroll, 1979). The response capacity ranges from 'doing nothing' to 'doing much', i.e., depending on the strategy defined and how this is put into practice (Carroll, 1979). This author also indicated that the CSR concept has a brilliant future, as at its core lie citizens' fundamental concerns in terms of the relationship between business and society (Carroll, 1999). Certainly, organizations must continue to create economic value, but through creating social value. It is understood that value creation should be shared, although that sharing is more wide-reaching than CSR (Porter and Kramer, 2011). So the literature contains various definitions around the concept of CSR, but that of Porter and Kramer (2002) stands out as it shows this responsibility is a positive relationship between the environment and business opportunities, taking into consideration the place where activities are carried out.

For Prieto-Carrón et al. (2006) it is important to reconsider CSR, where initiatives in this connection should be heterogeneous, i.e., organizations have to adapt them to the specific characteristics of each country. This conclusion had already been reached by Blowfield and Frynas (2005), as the least developed countries require different solutions in terms of CSR, and so the authors criticize the homogenization of CSR practices.

The position of the above-mentioned authors fits the argument that globalization altered the business environment. Multinationals predominate, and therefore their strategies must take into consideration the social responsibility practices of the host country (Kolk and van Tulder, 2010). These authors also argued that they face difficult and complex decision-making processes, as they include economic, legal, social, environmental and ethical aspects. Mohan (2006) considered that global management of social responsibility depends on the strategies defined by multinationals, on definition of their internal processes, on the influence of regulations/norms/procedures and knowledge of the environment. Here, several studies deal with multinationals' strategy in various contexts, for example, the relationship between this and CSR and its impact (Guerras-Martín et al., 2014).

Finally, multinationals are seen as the driver of economic growth in developing and developed countries (Matten and Crane,

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