



Exploring student community engagement in higher education: A bibliometric analysis on the path to sustainable development





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Abstract: Higher education institutions have seen significant growth in student community engagement initiatives, which act as engines for fostering social justice and fostering civic responsibility. By conducting a thorough bibliometric analysis of the literature on student community engagement programmes in higher education and focusing specifically on exploring the opportunities and challenges associated with sustainable practises, this study seeks to add to the body of knowledge already in existence. Data were taken from the Scopus database and analysed using a variety of bibliometric indicators and network visualisation tools. The analysis's findings provide insight into a number of facets of the field, including publication output, frequently used author keywords, prestigious journals, influential institutions, prolific authors, and national contributions. The study sheds important light on the scholarly work surrounding student community participation programmes in higher education by looking at these factors. The results of this study also highlight the opportunities and issues that must be resolved in order to implement sustainable practices in student community engagement programmes. To ensure such programmes' sustained success and impact, it is important to strengthen interdisciplinary research efforts, cultivate strong community connections, and create long-term sustainability strategies. This study contributes to understanding student community engagement programmes in higher education by exploring the literature through a bibliometric lens, revealing knowledge gaps, highlighting areas for further investigation, and highlighting opportunities for advancement.

Introduction

In order to encourage social justice and civic duty, student community engagement programmes have grown in popularity in higher education institutions (Dean et al., 2021). These initiatives give students the chance to actively participate in their local communities while tackling important social, economic, and environmental issues. Student community engagement programmes give students a platform to use their knowledge, skills, and creativity to make a meaningful impact in light of the growing emphasis on sustainability, social responsibility,

and global citizenship (Paulsen and McCormick, 2020; Welch, 2018; Zhoc et al., 2019). Student community involvement programmes also advance the values of civic participation, social justice, and inclusive behaviour, enabling students to take an active role in bringing about positive change in the world. These programmes are essential for developing socially conscious leaders who are devoted to solving the complex problems of our time in a world that is changing quickly and becoming more interconnected (Dua, 2022). However, as more institutions struggle to keep long-term partnerships with



community organisations and make sure that their programmes have a lasting impact, there is growing concern about the sustainability of these programmes. With a focus on potential and limitations in sustainable practices, this study intends to conduct a bibliometric analysis of the literature on student community engagement programmes in higher education.

The understanding of student community involvement programmes in higher education derives from numerous earlier studies. They emphasise the necessity of purposeful engagement, the transformative potential of community involvement, the assessment of student engagement, and the role of engagement in accomplishing sustainability objectives and sustainable community development. Dean et al. (2021) in a research study cover the transformative potential of place-based community participation in higher education. It looks at how educational institutions might work with local groups to address societal problems and influence positive change. The study emphasises the value of community involvement in altering communities and universities while highlighting the benefits and long-term effects of such collaborations. The Higher Education Student Participation Scale (HESES), created by Zhoc et al. (2019b), measures student participation in higher education environments. The study offers psychometric proof in favour of the scale's validity and dependability. This tool contributes to our understanding of student engagement in higher education by assessing the various aspects of student engagement, including their participation in community engagement activities.

Studies like Mbah (2019) look at how universities might support sustainable community development through community engagement. It talks about how crucial it is to involve locals in the design process and to carry out sustainable activities. The paper makes the case that through encouraging collaborations, knowledge sharing, and participatory approaches to sustainable development, colleges can serve as catalysts for positive change.

In order to give students a platform and programmes to actively engage them in accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), numerous earlier scholars created the notion of community engagement in higher education (Brundiens et al., 2021; Cottafava et al., 2019; Pineda and Winkler, 2021). These studies investigate a learning process that fosters a profound awareness of sustainability and emphasizes the significance of student interaction in developing sustainability knowledge and encouraging positive behaviour change. Ahn and Davis (2023) suggest relooking at Institutional policies for

student participation in social activities and emphasize that these policies should be more organized. Their findings also confirm a positive relationship between sense of belongingness and retention.

This study aims to evaluate the contribution that student community engagement (SCEB) programmes make to the advancement of sustainable development in higher education institutions (HEIs). A bibliometric analysis is used in the study to answer a number of research issues. These include the classification of sources and documents, the productivity of research, the most common languages in the documents, the subjects of higher education research, the journals that are actively publishing papers, the influential institutions that have made contributions to the field, the distribution of author keywords and co-occurrences, the geographical distribution of publications by country, author collaboration, the most active authors, the distribution of co-authorship, and citation analysis of documents.

Literature Review

The benefits of student community participation programmes have been highlighted in numerous studies (Bozkurt, 2022; Mazon et al., 2020; Son-Turan and Lambrechts, 2019). According to this research, these programmes help students better understand current problems while developing a feeling of social responsibility and global citizenship. While collaborating with neighbours and organisations, students gain relevant skills, interdisciplinary knowledge, and the capacity for thinking critically. Additionally, by addressing urgent issues and advancing social justice, student community engagement programmes support the sustainable growth of local communities (Choi and Murray, 2010).

Participation in community-based activities improves students' academic learning opportunities. Students develop a deeper comprehension of complicated concepts and theories by applying information in real-world situations (Hallinger and Chatpinyakoo, 2019). They learn to solve problems, conduct research, and engage in reflective practises. Moreover, engagement in community projects improves students' communication, leadership, and teamwork skills, preparing them for future careers and civic engagement.

Student community engagement programs foster meaningful partnerships between higher education institutions and communities (Fissi et al., 2021; Fitzgerald et al., 2016). Collaboration with local organizations, non-profits, and government agencies promotes mutual learning, knowledge exchange, and shared resources. These partnerships enable the co-

creation of sustainable solutions, empowering communities to address their specific needs and challenges. By working closely with community stakeholders, students contribute to long-term positive impacts on social, economic, and environmental aspects (Symaco and Tee, 2019).

Table 1. Main information about data

Description	Results
Timespan	2010:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	943
Documents	1660
Annual Growth Rate %	-1.07
Document Average Age	5.5
Average citations per doc	7.711
References	60565
Document contents	
Keywords Plus (ID)	3662
Author's Keywords (DE)	3930
AUTHORS	
Authors	4740
Authors of single-authored docs	362
Authors collaboration	
Single-authored docs	377
Co-Authors per Doc	3.07
International co-authorships %	12.65
Document types	
Article	1002
Book	63
Book chapter	262
Conference paper	289
Review	44

While student community engagement programs offer numerous benefits, they also face certain challenges. These may include logistical issues, time constraints, limited resources, and ensuring meaningful and sustainable community partnerships. Best practices emerged to address these issues. Comprehensive programme planning and assessment, staff and faculty assistance, curricular integration, community needs assessments, ongoing reflection and evaluation, and cultivating long-term connections with community partners are a few of these (Mishra, 2022). The effectiveness and sustainability of student community engagement programmes are improved by using these best practises.

There is a need to investigate the linkages and relationships between various publications and writers given the abundance of information on student community programmes and their consequences. This study will offer a thorough grasp of the body of existing

knowledge and allow participants to make educated judgements regarding the scope and direction of their own research by incorporating bibliometric analysis into the study of literature.

Furthermore, bibliometric analysis makes it possible to visualise bibliographic data using maps and networks, giving scholars a visual way to study the links and interconnections between various publications and authors. The aim of this research is to examine notable authors, conceptual frameworks, and trends in scientific ecosystems through a quantitative examination of publishing and citation data. In order to create and display maps based on keyword, co-citation, and co-occurrence data, we used VOS viewer. The three forms of visualisation employed in this study were network visualisation, overlay visualisation and density visualisation.

Method

The Scopus database, a comprehensive collection of peer-reviewed literature, provided the data for this investigation. The effectiveness of student community participation programmes in higher education for sustainable development was specifically targeted in the search. Search parameters for this investigation included "student community engagement", "service learning", "civic engagement", "sustainability", and "higher education". The search was restricted to items released between 2010 and 2023 and concentrated on publications in the English language. On July 8, 2023, we conducted a search in the Scopus database using the search term "Effectiveness of student community engagement programmes on sustainable development in Higher Education" in the 'article title' field. The search yielded a total of 1,660 documents, which were further analyzed for the purpose of this study (Table 1).

The bibliometric analysis employed various indicators and visualization tools, including co-authorship analysis, citation analysis, and keyword analysis. The retrieved data from Scopus were exported in CSV format for further analysis in R environment using library package "bibliometrix" (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017; Linnenluecke et al., 2020). Additionally, Microsoft Excel was used to calculate publication frequency and generate graphical representations.

Results

The research findings encompass various aspects, including document and source types, research productivity, language usage in documents, subject areas, most active journals, analysis of author keywords and co-

Table 2. Annual and country wise scientific publications

YEAR	Number	Relative frequency (%)	Country	Number	Relative frequency (%)
2023	80	4.8%	United States	701	42.2%
2022	196	11.8%	United Kingdom	129	7.8%
2021	183	11.0%	Australia	117	7.0%
2020	186	11.2%	Spain	88	5.3%
2019	149	9.0%	South Africa	71	4.3%
2018	122	7.3%	Canada	67	4.0%
2017	134	8.1%	Malaysia	42	2.5%
2016	121	7.3%	India	40	2.4%
2015	89	5.4%	Germany	33	2.0%
2014	77	4.6%	Brazil	31	1.9%
2013	67	4.0%	Mexico	30	1.8%
2012	79	4.8%	Portugal	29	1.7%
2011	85	5.1%	China	27	1.6%
2010	92	5.5%	Others	255	15.4%
Total	1660	100.0%	Total	1660	15.4%

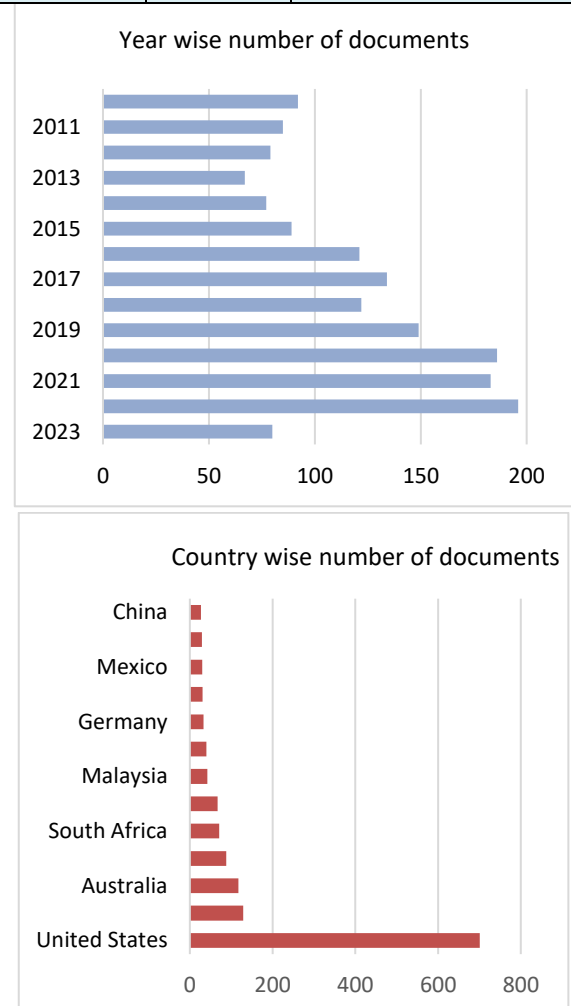
occurrences, geographical distribution of publications, number of authors per document, most active authors, co-authorship patterns, influential institutions, and citation analysis. To enhance the analysis, visualization maps were utilized for keyword analysis, understanding the geographical distribution of publications, examining the number of authors per document, identifying influential institutions, and exploring highly cited articles. These findings provide valuable insights into different dimensions of the research landscape concerning the effectiveness of student community engagement programs in higher education for sustainable development.

Annual Scientific Production

The Scopus database was categorized into different groups based on country, subject area, country-wise distribution, and time (years). The number of documents in each group was determined. Table 2 presents the number of documents and their relative percentages in the last ten years, as well as the top countries accounting for at least 25% of the publications.

The results indicate that the highest number of publications occurred in the year 2022, representing 11.8% of the total publications under study. The period from 2020 to 2022 witnessed the publication of 33% of the total publications, possibly influenced by the increased online and collaborative opportunities in the post-COVID period. As of now, in 2023, there have been 80 (4.8%) Scopus-indexed publications in the areas of student community, higher education, and sustainability.

Among the countries, the United States ranks first, contributing approximately 40% of the total publications.

**Figure 1. Annual and Country wise Publications**

India has published 40 articles in Scopus, accounting for around 2.4% of the total publications, while China has published only 27 articles.

Table 3. Document and Source type publications

Document type	Number	Relative frequency (%)	Source type	Number	Relative frequency (%)
Article	1002	60.4%	Journal	1040	62.7%
Conference Paper	289	17.4%	Conference	257	15.5%
Book Chapter	262	15.8%	Book	254	15.3%
Book	63	3.8%	Book Series	109	6.6%
Review	44	2.7%			
Total	1660	100.0%	Total	1660	100.0%

Document and Source type publications

Table 3 shows how publications in the Scopus database are distributed according to document type, such as articles, conference papers, book chapters, books, and reviews, as well as source type, such as journals, conferences, books, and book series. The findings show that the majority of the documents (about 60% of them) are original research articles that have been published in journals. Reviews make up 2.7% of all publications, whereas books make up about 3.8% of them. Additionally, authors frequently choose to publish conference papers and book chapters, which account for 17.4% and 15.8% of the publications, respectively.

Average Citations

According to Table 4, there has been a steady rise in publications about student involvement in the community in higher education over the past ten years. Throughout this time, publication performance has consistently held up well. It's noteworthy that 2022 and 2020 were the years with the biggest number of publications. Additionally, it was found that 2021 and 2019 had the greatest annual average total citations. These findings show that there is ongoing interest in and growth in this area of study. This shows that there is untapped potential for this field of study's further extension and exploration.

Table 4. Average Citations per year

Year	MeanTCperArt*	Number of publications	MeanTCperYear**	Citable Years
2010	14.8	92.00	1.06	14
2011	8.07	85.00	0.62	13
2012	14.29	79.00	1.19	12
2013	13.45	67.00	1.22	11
2014	12.58	77.00	1.26	10
2015	11.43	89.00	1.27	9
2016	8.17	121.00	1.02	8
2017	8.06	134.00	1.15	7
2018	7.3	122.00	1.22	6
2019	9.6	149.00	1.92	5
2020	5.18	186.00	1.29	4
2021	6.43	183.00	2.14	3
2022	0.97	196.00	0.48	2
2023	0.2	80.00	0.20	1

MeanTCperArt* = average total citations per article, *MeanTCperYear* = average total citations per year

Most relevant and Cited Sources

The number of publications in the top journals, conferences, books, and book series are summarised in Table 5. The findings show that the Swiss journal "Sustainability" has published the most articles, followed by the ASEE conference. It is interesting that authors in this discipline tend to favour the "Sustainability" journal in particular. Furthermore, Bringle's paper has earned the most citations, followed by Eyler and Dewey, whose works have gotten 161 and 159 citations, respectively. These results demonstrate the importance and influence of these articles within the scientific community.

The network visualisation of the sources' bibliographic connection is shown in Figure 3. This network visualization provides a visual representation of the relationships and connections between different sources, allowing for a better understanding of the interconnectivity and scholarly influence within the field of student community engagement in higher education.

Concurrence Network of author key words

The frequency of author keywords used in the publications is summarised in Table 6, and a concurrence network of the authors' most used terms is shown in Figure 3. According to the research, "students" has been used more frequently than other keywords, which include

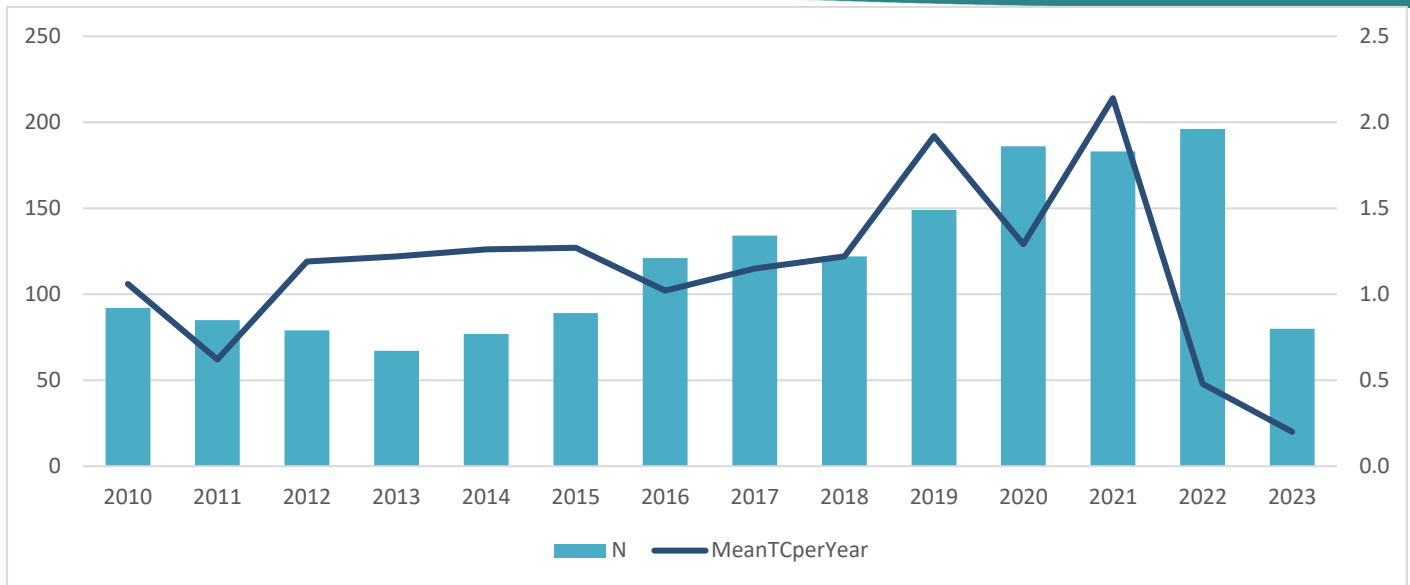


Figure 2. Average Citations per year

Table 5. Most relevant and cited sources

Most relevant sources	Number
SUSTAINABILITY (SWITZERLAND)	74
ASEE ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXPOSITION, CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS	61
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION	58
WORLD SUSTAINABILITY SERIES	35
HANDBOOK OF ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP	21
JOURNAL OF CLEANER PRODUCTION	19
JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT	14
ACM INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PROCEEDING SERIES	13
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND PUBLIC HEALTH	13
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH ON SERVICE-LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	12
Most cited sources	Number
BRINGLE R G	252
EYLER J	161
DEWEY J	159
LOZANO R	144
FURCO A	118
ASTIN A W	113
JACOBY B	110
FREIRE P	105
LEAL FILHO W	93
BOYER E L	88

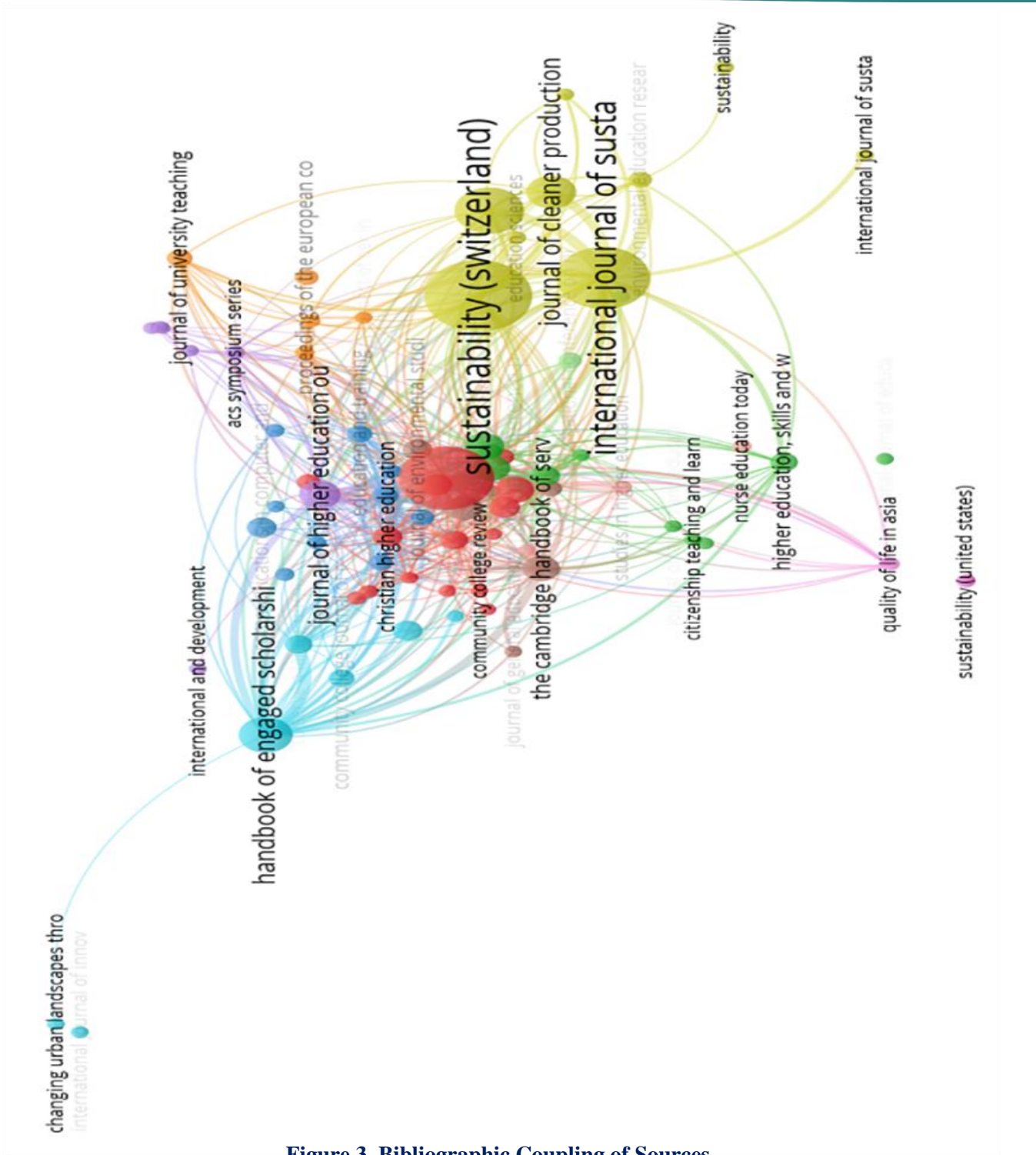


Figure 3. Bibliographic Coupling of Sources

Table 6. Author keywords analysis

Author keywords	Frequency
students	271
higher education	204
education	197
human	165
sustainable development	163
learning	154
teaching	152
student	144

"higher education," "education," "human," and "sustainable development." These keywords have shown signs of being used frequently and being popular within the articles.

An assessment of research trends by made comparing the most often occurring words with their incidence throughout time. Trend topics (TTs) were examined for this purpose and are shown in Figure 5. The horizontal line showed the time period of frequency of occurrence, while the size of the dots showed the frequency of the words. Keywords can be analyzed using figure 6 also. The word students is used more frequently ever since from 2010 till 2023 followed by the words education, sustainability, higher education, human respectively. Another way to visualize the frequency of use of words is through Treemap (figure 7). The keywords students, higher education, education, human, sustainable development are the 5 most frequently used words.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study conducted a thorough bibliometric analysis on the issue of student community participation in higher education, concentrating on the value of such engagement for sustainable growth. The investigation used a variety of bibliometric indicators and visualisation tools to analyse data from the Scopus database. The research results provide insight into a number of significant aspects of the research environment, including document and source types, research productivity, linguistic preferences, subject areas, well-known journals, author keywords, co-authorship patterns, geographical distribution, and citation analysis.

According to the findings, there has been a notable rise in publications on student community engagement over the previous ten years, with 2022 marking the high. The average number of citations per year showed a persistent interest in and influence of this field's research. Notably, the United States took the lead in contributions, with the United Kingdom and Australia following closely behind. The "Sustainability" journal and the ASEE conference came out as the most pertinent sources according to publications and citations in the analysis. Additionally, several authors, such Bringle, Eyler, and Dewey, had high citation counts, highlighting the importance of their writing. Additionally, the author's keyword research showed that words like "students," "higher education," and "sustainable development" were frequently used.

The implications of this study are twofold: practical implications for higher education institutions and

academic implications for researchers in the field of student community engagement.

Practical Implications

The results of this study can help higher education institutions design policies and programmes. Institutions can be guided in creating and implementing effective programmes by identifying effective student community engagement practises and the difficulties associated with sustainable development. This may encourage among students a sense of social justice and civic responsibility.

Higher education institutions may be inspired to develop alliances and partnerships with other universities by looking at influential institutions and collaborations. Sharing best practices, assets, and knowledge can improve student community involvement programmes' efficacy and advance sustainable development projects. Institutions can also use these insights to create plans to improve learning outcomes and student engagement. Furthermore, Institutions can use these findings to develop strategies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes

Academic Implications

The study gives a broad overview of the field of research on student community participation, highlighting important areas of interest and possible research gaps. These results can be used by researchers to direct their future research and add to the body of existing knowledge. Finding new trends and regions of little examination can inspire more scholarly investigation.

The research landscape of student community participation in higher education for sustainable development is usefully illuminated by this bibliometric analysis, which offers interesting insights. The findings highlight the need for interdisciplinary research, community partnerships, and long-term sustainability planning, which helps to improve understanding of the potential and problems in this field. The outcomes also show that scholars are actively investigating the efficiency of student community participation initiatives in higher education.

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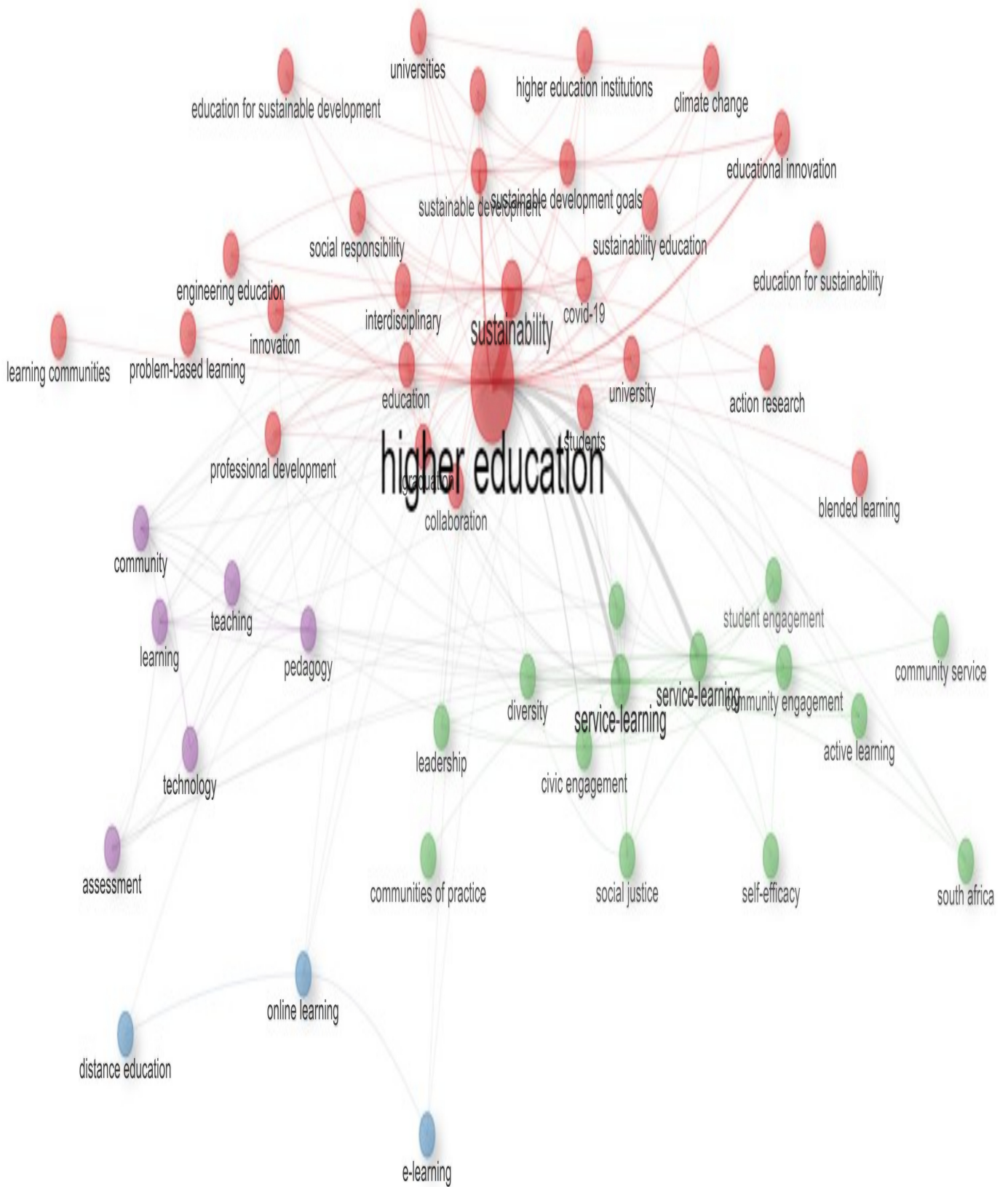


Figure 4. Network visualization of author keywords

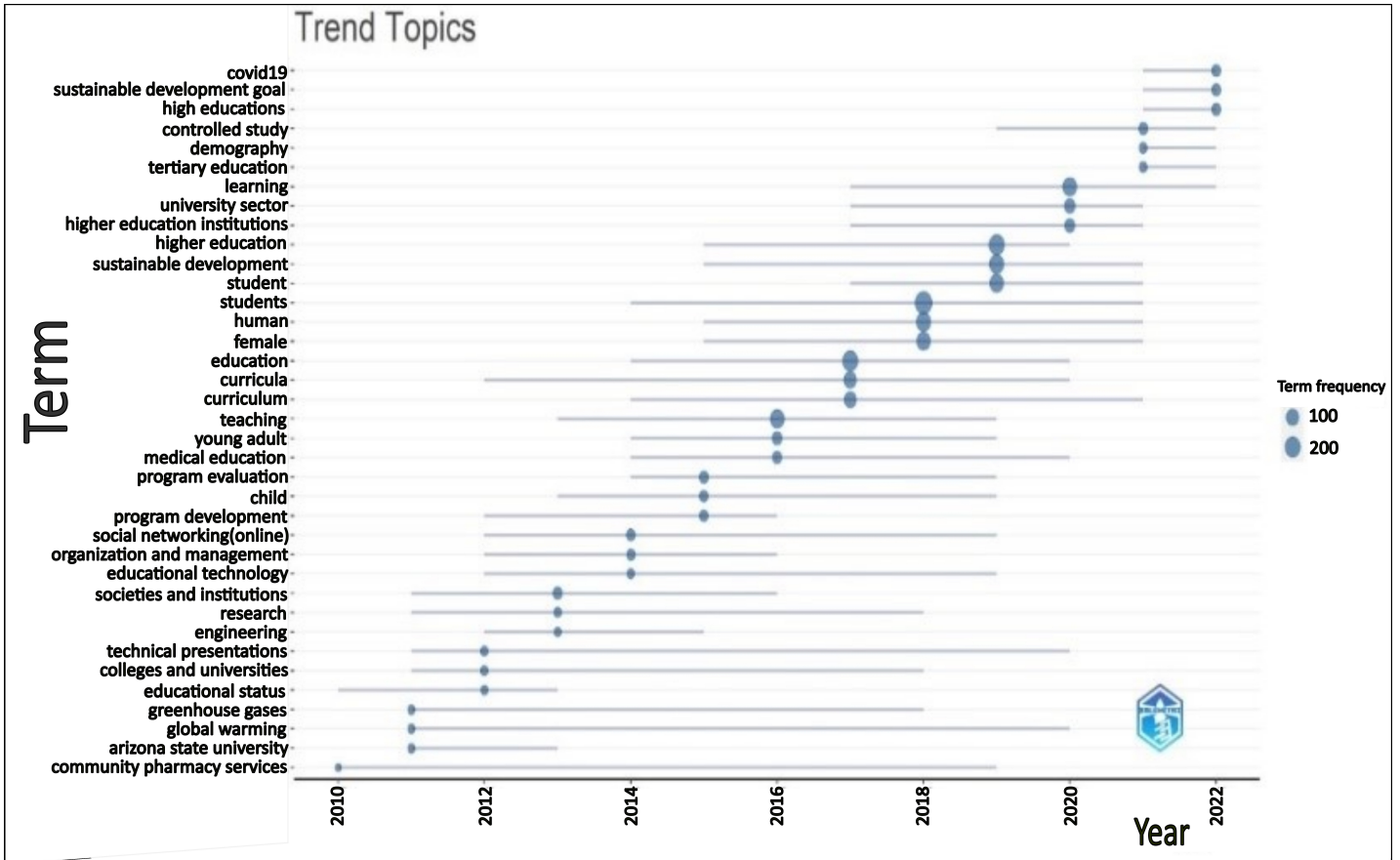


Figure 5. Trend Topics 2010-2022 (Source- Scopus)

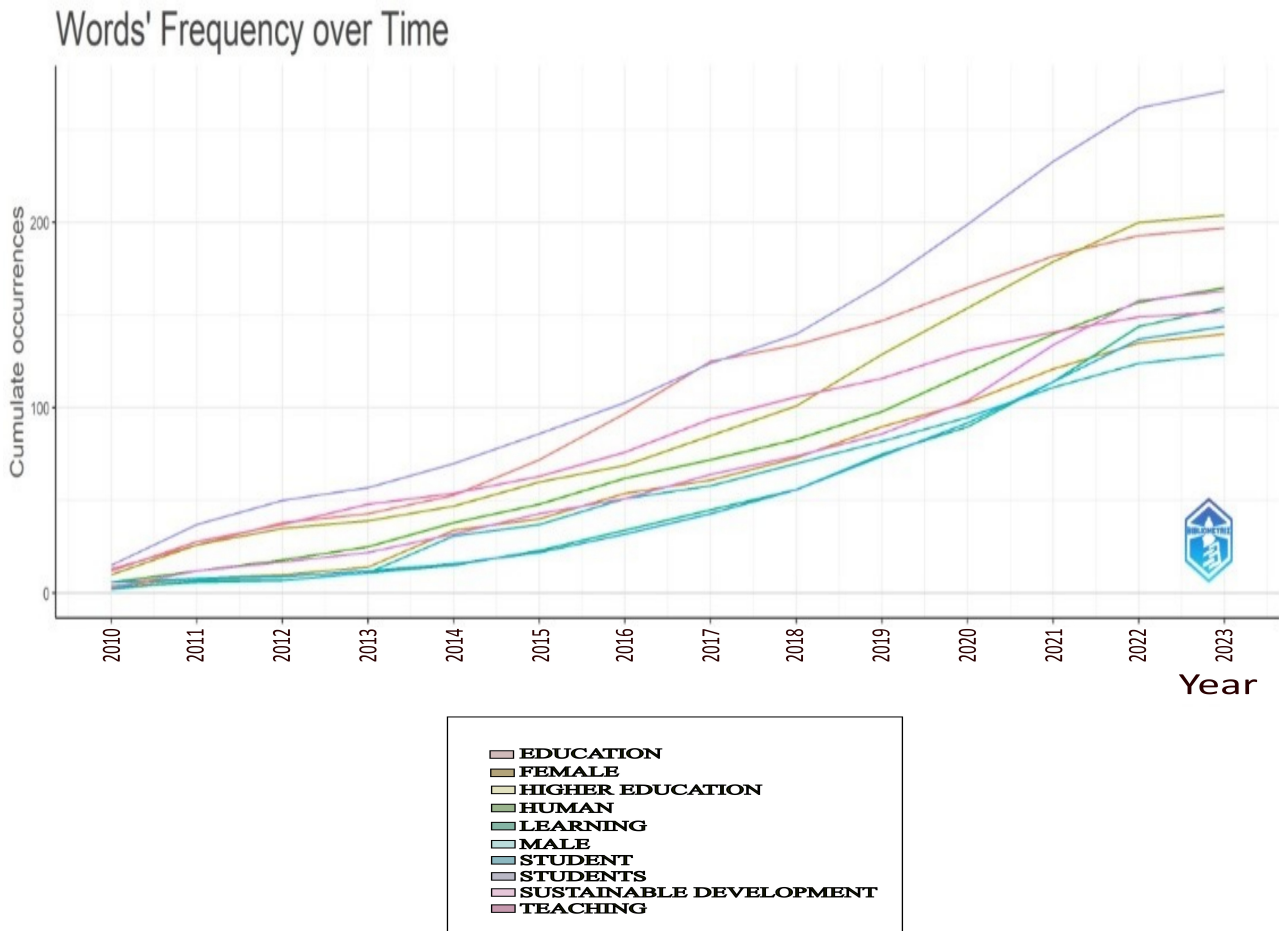


Figure 6. Word Frequency over Time (Source- Scopus).

sustainability campaigns in higher education institutions. We sincerely acknowledge the support of ICSSR in making this research project possible.

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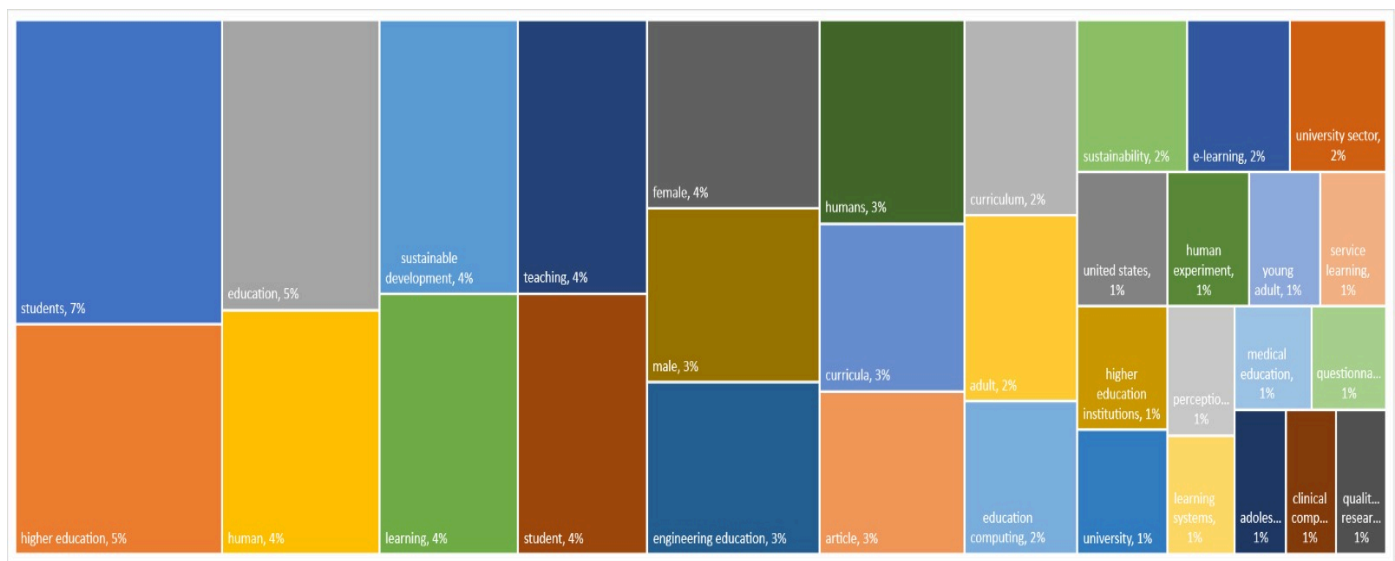


Figure 7. Treemap (Source- Scopus).

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