

Review

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Review

# Reviewing the Trends of Social Value in Construction Research in the Last Decade: A Bibliometric Review

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**Abstract:** This study explores the current landscape of social value (SV) research in the construction industry, analyzing global trends and identifying future research directions. Using bibliometric analysis, research published in Elsevier Scopus database from 2013 to 2023 was extracted using the keywords “social value” AND “construction industry.” Results indicate a focus on social value indicators, socioeconomic impacts, project management, innovative practices, and cross-sector collaborations. The study also reveals a lack of attention to SV in African countries’ construction sectors. By highlighting research areas and identifying gaps, this study contributes to academic literature, suggesting the need for guidelines, particularly in developing countries, and advocating for further research on SV in the built environment and strategies for global social value creation.

**Keywords:** Construction Industry; Social Value; Qualitative research; Social Procurement; Social Innovation; Project management; Social Benefits

## 1. Introduction

The construction industry is of paramount importance, as it creates buildings, structures, and environments that link communities, offer employment opportunities, and enhance the well-being of society. This sector is pivotal in global efforts to attain sustainable development by 2030, prioritizing projects that are environmentally conscious and socially accountable [1]. Despite this, the industry has a history of environmental harm and a confrontational stance towards clients and communities [2,3]. Research has also highlighted economic hurdles encountered in the execution of large-scale projects [4–6]. Consequently, there’s a growing demand for a new project and construction management approach, emphasizing a safeguarded environment, community-centered development, and economic advancement [1,7], giving rise to the integration of the social value concept within the industry.

Construction sites not only endanger the environment but also interfere with locals’ daily lives [8]. As a result, there is growing demand in the construction industry to show how it supports the community in addition to conducting business as usual. Firms have traditionally been thought to have obligations beyond maximizing profits [9]. Common social effects of construction projects include the eviction of locals, health problems brought on by poor waste management, and land acquisition [10,11]. However, by focusing on larger social goals, infrastructure projects can produce advantages that exceed these fundamental functions, adding more “social value.”

According to several literature reviews, three main thematic areas have been in the evolution of the concept of Social Value (SV) as stated in [12]; the first is morality and ethics, which delves into the theoretical foundation of duty-based ethics that broadly support the SV agenda [13]. Then, the importance of social efficacy and the sense of community is highlighted by [14]. Also, the theory of value, where authors like [15–17] discuss SV in terms of generating benefits to society by ensuring

“value for money” in service delivery. This concept of value primarily considers the worth placed on a product or service by the end-user [18]. These themes are interconnected and often overlap with various other related concepts. [14] highlight that social capital and the sense of community bear resemblances. Similarly, [19,20] find a positive correlation between corporate social responsibility and shared value. These concepts align with the triple bottom line of sustainability, encompassing social, environmental, and financial aspects. They all concur on the need to bolster the social dimension to drive community improvements.

Social value has gained significant attention across various sectors, including health, hospitality, corporate business, and the third sector (NGOs, civil societies), as well as the built environment [21–27]. This increased focus extends to the construction industry, where there’s a growing demand for the industry to give its quota to the community while carrying out day-to-day activities. Further, emphasizes measuring and communicating social value and integrating it into project procurement and implementation. While construction contractors have traditionally considered the social aspects of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) [2], the concept of SV is relatively new, and there are limited long-term success stories in its implementation [28–30]. Buildings generate both economic and social value, impacting owners and users in various ways. Owners experience the building’s financial impact, while users see it as a social and productive space. However, in the construction process, the focus tends to be on value creation rather than understanding what adds value for the end-user. The concept of value is multifaceted, subjective, and challenging to define or measure, hence the challenge of its definition and execution [20].

The term ‘social values’ has been used in various contexts, with a focus on its relationship with landscape values in participatory Geographic Information Systems (GIS) by [31,32]. Landscape values are non-monetary, location-specific values grouped into categories like spiritual, aesthetic, and subsistence values. [33] expanded the concept of ‘social values’ to include the benefits people derive from ecosystems, both tangible and intangible, while ‘ecological values’ were solely based on ecological characteristics. [16] defined SV as intangible, non-financial effects of organizations, work programs, and investments, encompassing community, individual, and environmental well-being. [34] proposed that social value represents positive outcomes resulting from specific organizational activities that are significant to stakeholders. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 defines SV as the enhancement of additional social results through the procurement of goods and services, reflecting varying perspectives. [30] described SV as additional outcomes from public sector-funded investment initiatives aimed at local communities, including engaging local suppliers, utilizing local labor, and creating lasting apprenticeship opportunities.

Therefore, it can be given that the concept of social value centers on recognizing and quantifying the positive impacts organizations and activities bring to society, communities, individuals, and the environment, extending beyond financial gains. These benefits encompass non-monetary outcomes like community development, environmental conservation, social well-being, and contributions to local economies, prioritizing the holistic welfare of stakeholders.

Despite numerous studies, the concept of social value (SV) remains in its early stages of development and has yet to establish a strong global presence. In the construction industry, SV research has primarily focused on non-digital environments. For instance, [19] examined the potential of Lean construction to generate SV in construction project delivery. [20] investigated diverse approaches to assessing SV among various stakeholders in the construction sector. Meanwhile, [25] delved into the optimization of social procurement policies through cross-sector collaborations to enhance SV in construction. [12] explored how the digitized construction industry could contribute to SV, expanding the discussions beyond the non-digitalized sector among several other studies on the subject area.

While previous studies on SV in construction have made significant contributions, they often had a narrow focus and relied on subjective findings. In contrast, this paper takes a more comprehensive and innovative approach to review existing SV research in the construction industry. It employs bibliometrics to analyze articles on social value in construction published in the last decade (between 2013 and 2023). This method allows for the identification of research trends, key

areas of focus, prominent publications, leading authors in the field, and levels of collaboration. Additionally, the paper explores the latest trends in this research area and offers practical recommendations in the ongoing discourse. The paper is structured as; Section 2 comprises a detailed research methodology, Section 3 presents the results of the bibliometric analysis and discusses the research trends and focus areas on SV and displays bibliometric visualization maps. In Section 4, a summary of key findings is discussed, and the closing remarks with future research areas suggested.

## 2. Research Methods

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the primary focal points within published literature related to social value research in the construction field. This was accomplished through the utilization of a bibliometric methodology, which facilitated the identification and visualization of key knowledge areas and co-occurring keywords, thus revealing research trends and patterns. As highlighted by previous studies by [4,35], the bibliometric approach offers a quantitative and comprehensive means to analyze existing literature, a task that is challenging to achieve through manual review processes. This study employs a four-step bibliometric analysis process, following the methodology outlined by [36,37]. These steps encompass data collection, data processing using bibliometric techniques, data analysis and visualization, and a subsequent discussion of the bibliometric findings. The data collection phase relied on existing literature accessible through the Scopus database. In recent times, Scopus has gained widespread acceptance due to its comprehensive coverage of various scientific fields, making it a prominent choice for literature retrieval, as noted by [4]. Scopus is widely acknowledged for its extensive coverage and inclusion of high-quality web sources. It serves as one of the largest databases, encompassing peer-reviewed books, book chapters, journals, and conference proceedings. Notably, Scopus is recognized for its expeditious index processing compared to other prominent scholarly databases like Web of Science (ISI) and Google Scholar, rendering it a primary choice for scientific research (Meho and Rogers, 2008; Tseng et al., 2020). Furthermore, the Scopus database offers comprehensive coverage of abstracts and citations from peer-reviewed literature spanning multiple disciplines. It is equipped with intelligent tools for tracking, analyzing, and visualizing research. In searching, meticulous attention was dedicated to formulating the search statement to ensure that crucial documents of significance were not overlooked, as shallow searches might omit important materials. Using the Scopus database, the following retrieval schema was entered into the Scopus catalog: (TITLE-ABS-KEY) ("social value") AND ("construction industry"). The "TITLE-ABS-KEY" indicates either a journal or conference article title, abstract, and keywords. For this study, the date range considered was between 2013 and 2023. The literature search was conducted in September 2023 with an initial search producing 68 documents with the above-named keywords. The extracted 68 documents were carefully refined based on three parameters – field (Construction Industry), publication language (English), and publication type (Journals, Articles, Conference proceedings, Books, and Reviews). Manual screening was employed based on these three parameters which yielded 44 articles, which were subsequently extracted as a CSV file and used for the analysis. The CSV file contained the metadata of the extracted articles based on information such as the title of articles, year of article publication, author of articles, affiliation of authors, abstract information, article keywords, volume and page numbers of articles, citation information, references list and Digital Object Identifier (DOI) of extracted articles. To investigate the concept of social value and its research emphasis within the construction industry, this research utilized the VOS Viewer text-mining tool for an in-depth analysis of bibliometric relationships, drawing insights from specific findings. These include: (1) analysis of the number of publications (2) analysis of the publications per country; (3) analysis of publications per document source; (4) analysis of most cited publications; (5) analysis of co-occurrence of keywords; and (6) Focus areas based on year of publication as shown in Figure 1. Table 1 presents a summary of the analysis conducted and tools used and the resulting purposes for adopting these tools.



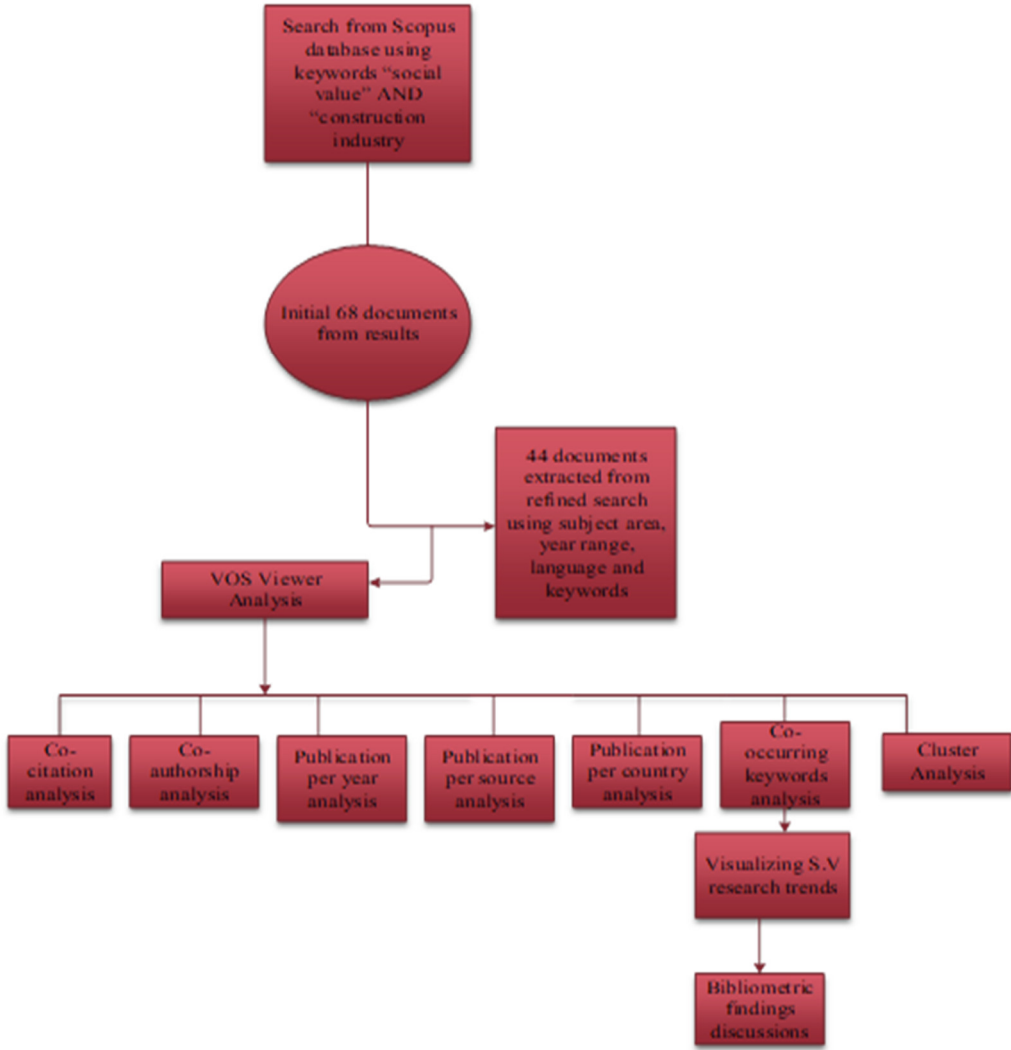


Figure 1. Research Methodology.

Table 1. Summary of Bibliometric Analysis conducted.

Analysis	Bibliometric Tool	Purpose
Analysis of the number of publications	VOS Viewer	To check the rate of publication of SV studies in Construction
Analysis of publication per country	VOS Viewer	To reveal regions where SV in Construction research has been predominant
Analysis of publications per document source	VOS Viewer	To reveal the leading sources of SV in Construction research
Analysis of most cited publications	VOS Viewer	To identify SV in Construction publications with the greatest impact
Analysis of the publications per author	VOS Viewer	To identify the leading authors and collaborators in published SV in Construction research.
Analysis of co-authorship	VOS Viewer	To reveal the authors and collaborators in published SV in the Construction research domain and their affiliated countries

Analysis of co-occurrence of keywords	VOS Viewer	To identify the main research themes within SV in Construction
Research focus based on year of publication	VOS Viewer	To identify the thematic trends of SV in Construction research

3. Results, Discussions

In this section, a comprehensive bibliometric analysis and discussions on findings are presented. As stated earlier, an analysis is made on the number of publications per year, publications by country, publications per document type, most cited documents during the time frame, publications per authors, co-authorship network analysis, co-occurrence of keywords cluster analysis, and trend analysis based of publication years.

3.1. Publication by Year

From the 44 extracted articles on social value in construction research, 28 (64%) were journal articles, 14 (32%) were conference papers, 1 (2%), and 1 (2%) was a review paper as depicted in Figure 2. Figure 3 shows the number of publications on SV in construction between 2013 and 2023. Figure 3 shows that there has been a fluctuating but growing interest in the subject area over the past ten years. Beginning in 2014, there were sporadic increases in the number of publications on social value in construction from 1 article being published to 4 articles the next year until 2020, when there was a major uptick, accounting for 23% of all publications for the decade and a 100% increase from the year before. This indicates an increase in interest in the subject, which may have been impacted by the increased focus on SV in construction since 2012 [27,38–40]. Social value research is still an embryonic area in the construction sector. Nevertheless, considering how vast and intricate the concept is, there is currently only a little research on it in the building sector, and quite complex to gain a specific definition [30]. Overall, the results emphasize the need for greater study in this sector because it is still in its early stages and has much untapped potential.

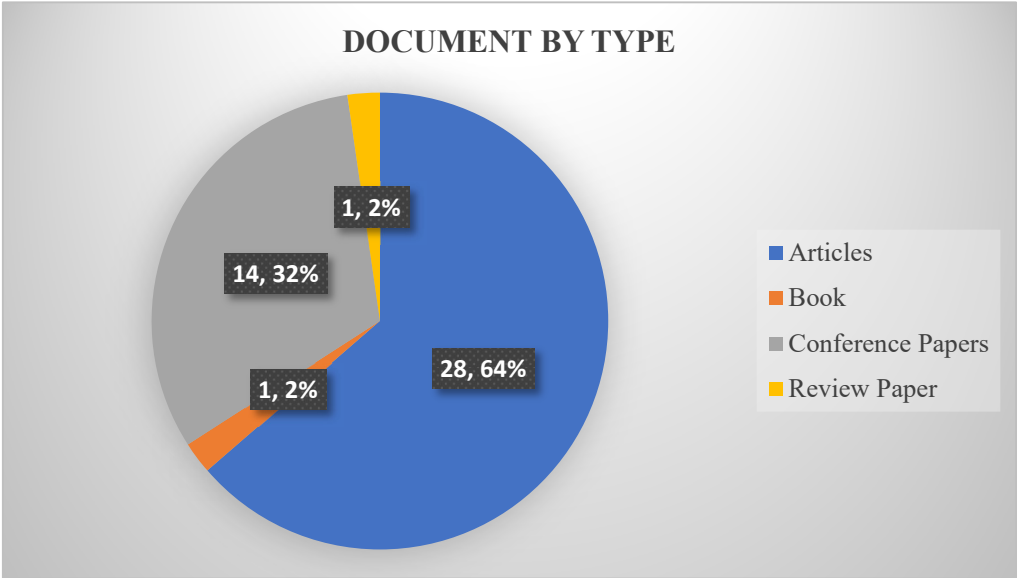


Figure 2. Document by Type.



**Figure 3.** Number of Publications Per Year.

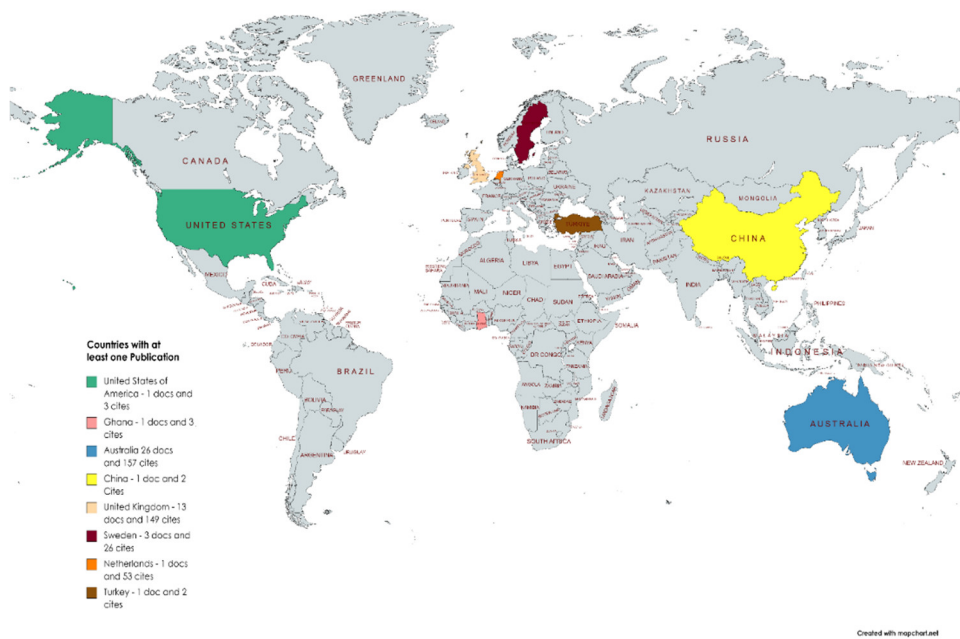
The findings align with the studies of [25,12] who noted that research on social value in the built environment especially the construction industry has been scarce, yet there has been an increase in SV publications within the same period under review.

*The Network of Publications per Country*

Adopting a selection criterion that required each country of origin to have at least one publication and at least two citations, was used because the VOS Viewer provided only three countries when the threshold was set beyond at least one publication and at least two citations per country. Therefore, the research adopted at least one publication per one-country threshold. This can be attributed to how nascent the concept of SV is in the construction research domain globally. These criteria were applied to identify eight countries that met the established threshold, as illustrated in Table 2. The five leading countries in social value studies in construction with at least a document are Australia (26 articles, 157 citations), UK (13 articles, 149 citations), Netherlands (1 article, 56 citations), Sweden (3 articles, 26 citations) and Ghana (1 article, 3 citations). Table 2 shows that Australia has published the most articles with the most citations, which implies that researchers from Australia currently lead the research community in social value in construction discussions. Findings in the literature [25,26,29]; and from publications per author and their country of affiliation (Table 5) from VOS Viewer analysis; are followed by the United Kingdom with a total of 13 articles. Despite having only one article on the subject area, the Netherlands has received over 56 citations, demonstrating the publication’s substantial influence. Findings also suggest that, except Ghana, no other African nation met the criterion, demonstrating a significant knowledge gap in the social value of construction research.

**Table 2.** Number of Publications per Country.

Country of Publication	Number of Articles	Number of Citations
Australia	26	157
United Kingdom	13	149
Netherlands	1	56
Sweden	3	26
Ghana	1	3
United States	1	3
Turkey	1	2
China	1	2



**Figure 4.** Number of publications per country.

3.3. The Publications per Document Source

Next, an analysis was conducted to determine the total number of papers extracted based on the source title. This analysis aimed to provide researchers with insights into the most prominent journal articles related to social value in the construction industry [36]. Out of the 44 extracted articles, 21 met the established threshold. These documents were published across 9 different journal articles and conference proceedings, with 2 of them having only one publication within the specified timeframe. Among these sources, the “Construction Management and Economics” journal stood out with the highest number of publications, featuring 10 documents and amassing 108 citations showing the significant contribution it is making in the research domain. This journal is known for publishing high-quality original research focused on the management and economics of activities within the construction industry. It emphasizes expanding the concept of construction beyond on-site production to encompass a broad spectrum of value-adding activities involving diverse stakeholders, including clients and users, which evolve. Table 3 provides a breakdown of only those sources with at least two published papers. The journal with the highest impact factor was Building Research and Information with a score of 4.967, this highlights its significance in the scientific community. Sustainability journal has the highest H-index indicating it has a high citation impact in the research domain.

**Table 3.** Number of Publications per Sources.

Journal Title	Articles/Book/Conference/Review	Number Documents (2014-2023)	Number of Citations	Journal Impact factor	H-Index
Arcom 2020 - Association of researchers in construction management, 36th annual conference 2020 – proceedings		2	1	-	2
Association of Researchers in Construction Management, Arcom - 33rd annual conference 2017, proceeding		2	8	0.13	5
Association of Researchers in Construction Management, Arcom 2019 - proceedings of the 35th annual conference		3	20	0.11	2
Building Research and Information		3	47	4.967	92



<i>Buildings</i>	2	3	3.8	45
<i>Construction Management and Economics</i>	10	108	0.947	105
<i>Engineering, Construction, and Architectural Management</i>	5	25	3.85	68
<i>Proceedings of the 32nd annual Arcom conference, Arcom 2016</i>	2	11	0.24	9
<i>Sustainability (Switzerland)</i>	3	13	3.9	136

3.4. The Most Cited Publications

The analysis also delved into identifying the most cited documents, aiming to shed light on the social value in construction publications with the greatest impact within the specified timeframe. This analysis focused on publications cited at least 10 times, as they are considered to have garnered significant visibility. Out of the 44 extracted documents, 14 publications met this criterion. From the findings presented in Table 4, it is evident that a majority of the highly cited social value publications center around topics such as social value measurement in construction projects, cross-collaborations, the impact of social procurement, and the application of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework in the built environment, among others. This demonstrates the growing importance and recognition of SV, particularly in leading countries like Australia and the United Kingdom, where there has been a surge in research efforts within the social value domain in construction. However, it also shows the knowledge gap in research taking into consideration the global context, especially the African context.

Table 4. Most Cited Publications.

Source	Source Title	Citation s	Research Method	Research Focus
<i>Loosemore et al., (2020)</i>	Optimizing social procurement policy outcomes through cross-sector collaboration in the Australian construction industry	15	Case Study	Cross-Sector Collaboration
<i>Watts et al., (2019)</i>	Paradox and legitimacy in construction: How CSR reports restrict CSR practice	12	Qualitative content analysis	CSR Communication and Legitimacy
<i>Watts et al., (2019)</i>	Measuring social value in construction	16	Mixed Methods (Qualitative and Quantitative)	Measuring Subjective Social Value
<i>Loosemore et al., (2020)</i>	The risks of and barriers to social procurement in construction: a supply chain perspective	32	Quantitative Approach (survey)	Subcontractor Perspectives on Social Procurement Policies
<i>Kurdve M.; De Goey H. (2017)</i>	Can Social Sustainability Values be Incorporated into a Product Service System for Temporary Public Building Modules?	11	Case Study	Integrating Social Sustainability in Product Service Systems (PSS)
<i>Bridgeman et al., (2015)</i>	Putting a value on young people's journey into construction: Introducing SROI at construction youth trust	10	Desk study	Measuring Social Value
<i>Solaimani S.; Sedighi M. (2020)</i>	Toward a holistic view on lean sustainable construction: A literature review	56	Systematic Literature Review (SLR)	Lean Philosophy, Sustainability

<b>Troje D.; Gluch P. (2020)</b>	Beyond policies and social washing: How social procurement unfolds in practice	12	Qualitative approach	Social procurement Impact
<b>Loosemore et al., (2020)</b>	Preventing youth homelessness through social procurement in construction: A capability empowerment approach	11	Exploratory Case Study	Cross-Sector Collaborations
<b>Barraket J.; Loosemore M. (2018)</b>	Co-creating social value through cross-sector collaboration between social enterprises and the construction industry	41	Case Study	Cross-Sector Collaboration
<b>Loosemore M.; Reid S. (2019)</b>	The social procurement practices of tier-one construction contractors in Australia	16	Qualitative approach	Social Procurement Strategies and Barriers
<b>Watson K. J.; Whitley T. (2017)</b>	Applying Social Return on Investment (SROI) to the built environment	36	Mixed Methods (Qualitative and Quantitative)	Social Return on Investment (SROI)
<b>Wright T. (2015)</b>	New development: Can 'social value' requirements on public authorities be used in procurement to increase women's participation in the UK construction industry?	18	Qualitative approach	Social Value Act 2012 in Addressing Gender Inequality
<b>Bridgeman et al., (2016)</b>	Demonstrating the social value of a school engagement programme: Introducing young people to the construction professions	10	Qualitative approach	Social Return on Investment (SROI)

### 3.5. Analysis of Co-Authorship and Publication per Author

The co-author analysis aims to find out the evolution of the collaborative relationship between academic communities or individuals who have made great contributions to SV research in the construction sector. The co-authorship analysis identified 14 authors, including lead authors and collaborators, who contributed to the 44 extracted articles. The threshold for inclusion was set at a minimum of one document per author, resulting in 14 authors meeting this criterion, as displayed in Table 5. The top 5 authors who have made significant contributions to the field and received substantial citations are [41] with 56 citations, [26] with 41 citations, [42] with 36 citations, [27] with 18 citations, and [20] with 16 citations. Notably, most of the articles authored by these individuals have garnered substantial attention in terms of citations. The co-authorship network visualization was ignored since there was a link between just two countries under analysis which is Australia and the United Kingdom, unlike other studies that showed the network [4]. Loosemore and co-authors can be seen to be leading research in SV literature in the construction sector [25,26,28,29,43–46]. It is also noteworthy that many of these leading authors of SV in the construction industry are affiliated with universities in Australia. This confirms the results of Table 2 revealing Australia as the leading country with the most publications. and the United Kingdom. Additionally, some collaborations between authors from Australia and the United Kingdom highlight the pivotal roles played by both countries in advancing SV research during the specified period.

**Table 5.** Number of Publications per author.

Author	Country/ University Affiliated	Document	Citations
Loosemore et al., (2020)	University of Technology, University of New South Wales, Sydney, University of Technology, La Trobe University, Southern Cross University-Australia; Lincoln University- <b>United Kingdom</b>	1	15
Watts et al., (2019)	Loughborough University- <b>United Kingdom</b>	1	12
Watts et al., (2019)	University of Salford, Loughborough University- <b>United Kingdom</b>	1	16
Loosemore et al., (2020)	University of Technology, Asia Pacific International College, University of New South Wales- <b>Australia</b>	1	32
Kurdve M.; De Goey H. (2017)	Mälardalen University- <b>Sweden</b>	1	11
Bridgeman et al., (2015)	Cardiff University, London South Bank University- <b>United Kingdom</b>	1	10
Solaimani S.; Sedighi M. (2020)	Nyenrode Business University; Delft University of Technology- <b>Netherlands</b>	1	56
Troje D.; Gluch P. (2020)	Chalmers University of Technology- <b>Sweden</b>	1	12
Loosemore et al., (2020)	University of Technology Sydney; Southern Cross University-Australia; Cardiff University- <b>United Kingdom</b>	1	11
Barraket J.; Loosemore M. (2018)	Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn; University of New South Wales, Sydney- <b>Australia</b>	1	41
Loosemore M.; Reid S. (2019)	University of New South Wales, Sydney- <b>Australia</b>	1	16
Watson K. J.; Whitley T. (2017)	University of Manchester- <b>United Kingdom</b>	1	36
Wright T. (2015)	Queen Mary University of London- <b>United Kingdom</b>	1	18
Bridgeman et al., (2016)	Cardiff University, London South Bank University- <b>United Kingdom</b>	1	10

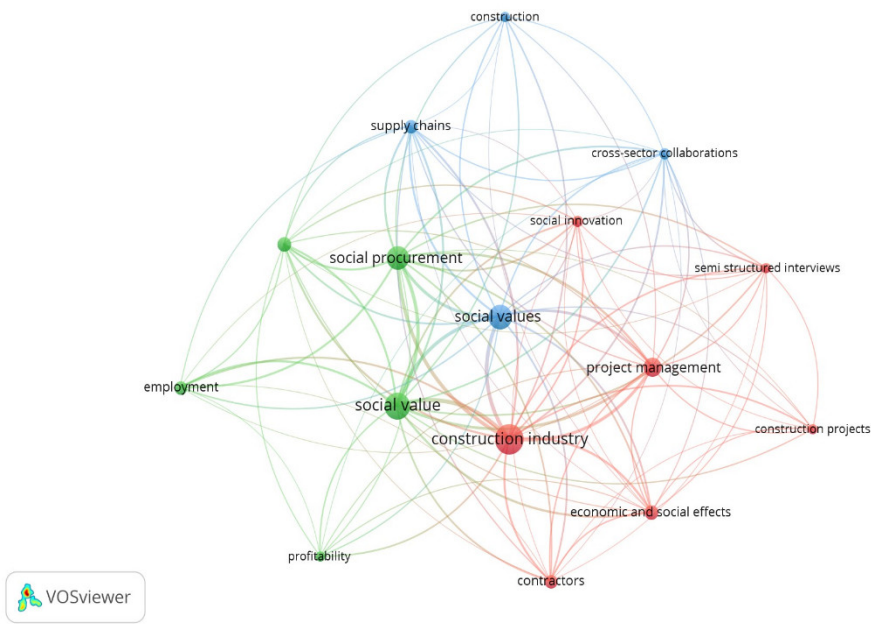
### 3.6. Analysis of Co-Occurrence of Keywords (Research focus Based on Co-Occurring Keywords)

The study employed a bibliographic approach to analyze the most occurring keywords, shedding light on the focal points and trends in the concept of SV. The VOS Viewer software made it possible to create the network visualization of most occurred keywords over the specified timeframe; it is a software that aids literature review providing basic functions for bibliometric studies [4]. A co-occurrence map was constructed based on the collected bibliographic data. This method entailed collecting keywords from the indexed sources that appeared at least five times—the software’s preset minimum or default. As a result, for a keyword to be displayed on the map, it must be referenced in at least five articles [47]. 44 retrieved articles produced a total of 369 keywords, of which 16 satisfied the criteria and provided the best visual representation. These keywords were categorized into three clusters based on their co-occurrence relationships, with node size indicating occurrence frequency and line thickness representing the strength of relationships as indicated in Figure 5 (co-occurrence map). Figure 5 further reveals that “construction industry” and “social value” was central keyword upon which other keywords were connected: occurring 40 and 33 times respectively. This is unsurprising given that this was the main keyword search. Table 6 shows the number of occurrences

of a keyword and the total link strength as derived from the data-mining software. The total link strength shown depicts the significance of the keyword in SV in construction research.

**Table 6.** List of Clusters and Co-occurring Keywords.

Cluster Label	Keywords	Number of Occurrence	Total Link Strength
Cluster 1 (red)	construction Industry	40	170
	construction projects	5	21
	contractors	8	42
	Economic and social effects	10	52
	project management	17	83
	social innovation	6	33
	semi-structured interviews	5	33
Cluster 2 (green)	social value	33	155
	employment	8	36
	corporate social responsibility	9	50
	profitability	5	22
	social procurement	25	131
Cluster 3 (blue)	social values	27	129
	cross-sector collaborations	6	40
	supply chains	8	51
	construction	5	24



**Figure 5.** Network visualization map for co-occurring Keywords.

*Cluster 1 - Socioeconomic Impact and Innovative Construction Practices:* The theme “Socioeconomic Impact and Innovative construction practices”, represents the red cluster on the map which covers various dimensions with 7 keywords. The keywords include construction industry, construction projects, contractors, economic and social effects, project management, semi-structured interviews, and social innovation. The cluster can be seen to be related to the broad theme, revealing that several studies depict the multifaceted effects of construction projects on both the economy and

society. Thus, research focuses on how construction activities influence communities, stakeholders, and innovation within the industry. Additionally, it reveals that research is being done on the broader repercussions on communities and individuals, addressing factors like well-being, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability [25,29]. It also highlights that research has revealed the significance of project management in optimising impacts and fostering positive outcomes [25]. “Innovative Construction Practices” revolves around studies made into the adoption of novel and advanced methods, technologies, and strategies within the construction industry. A study by [48], noted that usually studies in construction are focused on technological and economic innovation with the social innovation aspects heavily ignored. This area of research encompasses studies made into several innovative approaches, including but not limited to, digitalization, sustainable construction techniques, cutting-edge project management, and social innovation [12,49]. Therefore, more researchers must beam their searchlights into this vital area as embracing creativity and forward-thinking in construction enhances efficiency, sustainability, and overall project outcomes. Overall, this cluster offers a comprehensive view of research focused on how construction projects extend beyond physical structures, impacting the social and economic fabric of society.

*Cluster 2 - Socially Responsible Construction:* The green cluster comprises 5 keywords. Based on this set of keywords a theme was created, “Socially Responsible Construction”. The focus of this cluster encompasses various aspects of the construction industry that focus on social value, employment, social procurement, profitability, and corporate social responsibility. It suggests that research focuses on the construction sector increasingly recognizing its role in creating positive social impacts while maintaining profitability and adhering to ethical standards. As highlighted in the findings of a survey study from 61 construction workers in Australia [50], construction companies create social value when they provide employment that promotes ‘work benefits’ and ‘culture benefits’. Also, it depicts the continuous research focus on the importance of social procurement, which involves considering the social value and employment as integral components of tendering construction projects and leveraging it into government policies to ascertain social outcomes [43,45,51]. Present studies reflect a growing commitment within the construction industry to contribute positively to society, both economically and socially, while upholding corporate social responsibility principles [20,52]. Hence, there is a need for a balanced and responsible approach to construction practices and this must be considered in future research works.

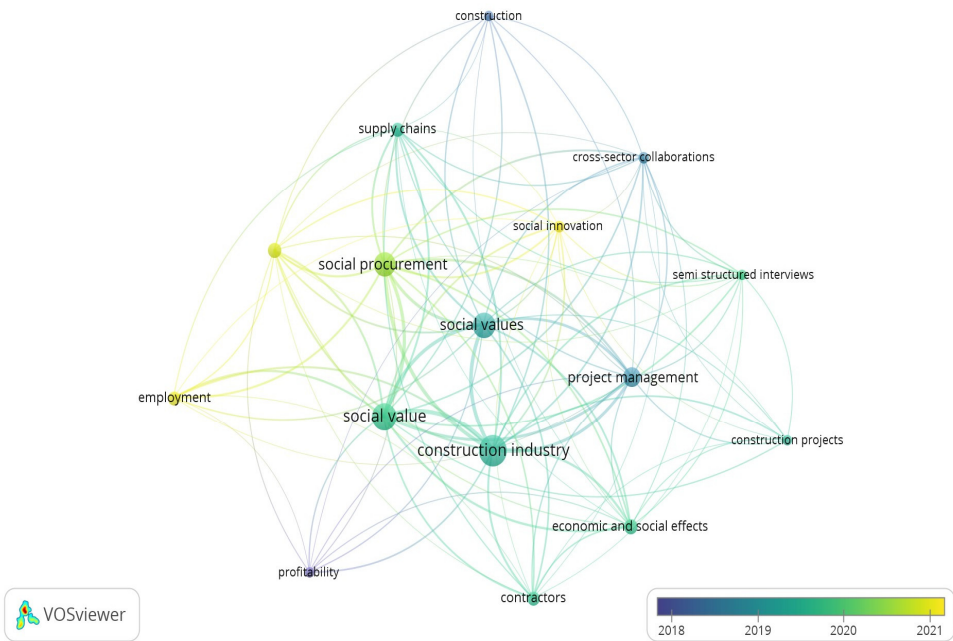
*Cluster 3 - Sustainable Construction Partnerships:* “Sustainable Construction Partnerships” represent the blue region on the map with 4 co-occurring keywords indicating collaborations and alliances within the construction industry are aimed at promoting sustainability. The keywords include construction, cross-sector collaborations, social values, and supply chains. This theme highlights the studies focused on the significance of working together across sectors offering insights on risks and opportunities, to achieve environmentally friendly and socially responsible construction practices [25,53,54]. [26] whose aim was to explore how collaborative practices between public, private, and social enterprises within supply chain relationships in the construction industry can contribute to the joint creation of social value. Thus, there is a call for more studies in the construction industry on how the sector can advance sustainable construction methods and principles aimed at creating positive impacts on society through partnerships between various other stakeholders such as construction companies, government agencies, contractors, and subcontractors, non-profit organizations, and communities.

### 3.7. Research Trends Based on Year of Publication

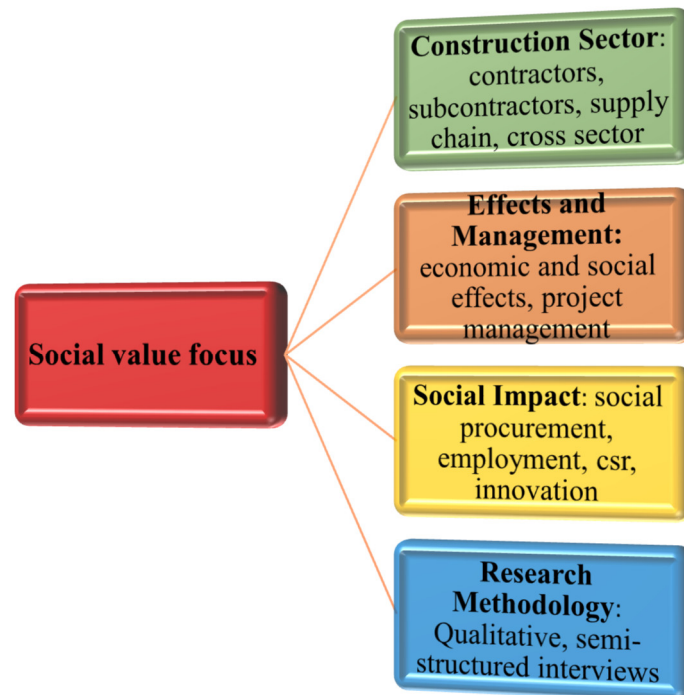
The overlay visualization network map for the co-occurring keywords was presented as shown in Figure 6. In this case, the different years of publication were taken into consideration. With at least five occurrences, research focusing on Socioeconomic Impact Innovative construction practices, and Sustainable Construction Partnerships for social value were predominant between 2018 and 2021 and are depicted in blue and purple clusters on the map. Some of the most prominent keywords during this period include project management, social innovation, cross-sector collaborations, economic and social effects, and social values. Also, between 2021 and 2022 research was more aligned toward social



procurement and employment for social value creation in the construction industry as shown in the yellow cluster revealing the current trend in research. Figure 7 shows a summary of research focus over the decade of SV in construction studies. The green rectangle reveals studies in the construction sector have mostly been centered on contractors and subcontractors as a unit of analysis among several sectors; this corroborates the findings in the light green cluster on the visualization map (Figure 6) between the years 2019 and 2020. The brown rectangle also exposes that research over the years has identified the economic and social effects of the construction sector globally and a call for managing both positive and negative effects through principles of project management as seen between the years 2018 and 2019; research trends were more focused on these because the construction sector began to realize the need for studies on the impacts of its activities on the society aside the economy hence the research on social value in the domain [1,20,55]. Next, researchers started to focus on the positive impact the sector could provide as it goes about its day-to-day activities in society especially for communities. The yellow rectangle shows the research on social responsibility, social procurement, employment, and innovative construction to ensure SV is currently trending in discussions [25,29,45,46,48,54] This aligns with the VOS Viewer results shown below in the visualization map indicated with the light green to yellow network region (Figure 6) depicting the current research focus (2020-present). Current research has been focusing on how the sector can give value more than profitability. A thorough assessment of several research done on SV in the construction sector reveals that the methodology adopted by various researcher are qualitative. This includes case studies, thematic analysis, content analysis, use of documentaries and semi-structure interviews, interviews, and surveys among other qualitative and mixed methods [20,25,30,56].



**Figure 6.** Overlay visualization for co-occurring Keywords.



**Figure 7.** Focus areas in social value studies based on co-occurring keywords.

#### 4. Summary of Key Findings and Conclusions

The comprehensive trend of SV in construction literature has been discussed based on the bibliometric analysis and review of the clustering results of SV literature. Although a handful of researchers have made efforts in the social value in construction literature there are still some knowledge gaps that can be explored both contextually and geographically. Presently, the initiative of incorporating SV principles into the construction sector is gradually recognized and valued in European countries.

This paper bibliographically reviewed the status quo, and trends and revealed the gap in SV research in the construction industry, and discussions of the findings were made. Of 68 articles retrieved from initial the Elsevier Scopus databases, a total of 44 articles from the refined search were used in this bibliometric study. Then, based on the VOS Viewer results, this paper made a bibliographic analysis of the publication per year profile, publication per document source, most cited publications, co-authorship per publication, derived one network of co-occurring keywords map and one visualized bibliographic timeline map, and research focus and trends from clustering. The main findings are as follows:

One key finding of the study is that Australia and the United Kingdom are at the forefront of SV research in the building sector, with the highest number of published articles and citations. This may indicate a rising interest in considering larger societal advantages in these nations' development initiatives. Except for Ghana, the study also finds a sizable research deficit among African nations, highlighting the need for additional study and awareness in this area. Investigating SV in the African environment could uncover challenges and opportunities. Collaboration between nations with existing research and those looking to advance their understanding could result in more environmentally and socially responsible building methods being used globally.

Another significant finding of the study is the identification of key authors who have made substantial contributions to SV research in the construction sector. Martin Loosemore stands out as the leading author in this field, with a strong presence in publications affiliated with Australia and collaborations with authors from the United Kingdom. Another notable pair of authors, Solaimani S. and Sedighi M., hailing from Sweden, have also made significant contributions and received substantial citations for their work. It's noteworthy that many of these leading authors are associated

with universities in Australia and the United Kingdom, underscoring the pivotal roles these countries play in advancing social value research in construction. This finding emphasizes the importance of international partnerships and collaborations in advancing the global field of SV research in construction.

The study employed the data mining tool VOS Viewer to categorize keywords into three clusters, resulting in three distinct themes. The first theme is “Socioeconomic Impact and Innovative Construction Practices”. It explores how construction activities influence communities, stakeholders, and industry innovation, emphasizing the role of effective project management. Future research should consider interdisciplinary approaches and delve into social innovation within the construction sector. The second is “Socially Responsible Construction” which highlights the increasing importance of ethics and social responsibility in construction. Researchers can further investigate innovative ways to measure and communicate these impacts. Then, the third, “Sustainable Construction Partnerships” centers on environmentally friendly and socially responsible construction practices. Future studies can examine different models and approaches for fostering collaborations across sectors and borders in construction projects. There is also a call for research on the effectiveness of existing policies and the development of new regulatory measures to promote such collaborations and assess their impact on community well-being.

The study identified trending research areas in SV in construction, including social procurement, community engagement, employment for social value creation, in-depth case studies of cross-sector collaborations, maintaining profitability while contributing to social well-being, and diverse research methods. These trends offer opportunities to shape industry practices, policy development, and socially conscious construction projects. African scholars are encouraged to contribute to this field.

This study's limitation was that it only looked at the Scopus database. Therefore, while extrapolating the results of this study, caution must be taken. Even though this study's findings have significantly added to the body of knowledge, future research can be done to compare them to data from other databases to get a more comprehensive picture of the SV in the construction debate. This strategy can assist in removing any gray regions that might be noticed when completing this investigation.

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