



SUSTAINABILITY AND INTEGRATED REPORTING IN TÜRKİYE: ACADEMIC TRENDS AND REGULATORY LINKAGES

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Abstract

Sustainability reporting has become a strategic issue not only for enhancing corporate transparency but also for regulatory authorities and policy makers. This study systematically reviews 153 academic articles published in Türkiye between 2010 and 2024, examining their methodological diversity, thematic orientations, and regulatory linkages. The findings indicate a remarkable increase in publications after 2016, yet the majority of studies remain limited to financial data and firm-level analysis. Environmental and social aspects have been addressed only marginally, and references to national regulations or international standards are relatively scarce. The study concludes that methodological innovation, broader thematic coverage, and stronger connections between academic research and policy processes are required.

Keywords

Sustainability Reporting, Integrated Reporting, Corporate Governance, Content Analysis

Jel Classification Codes: M14, M41, Q56, G34

1. Introduction

The mounting effects of environmental degradation, resource depletion, and deepening social inequality have intensified global attention on sustainability as a guiding principle for both public governance and corporate practice. What was once considered a voluntary or ethical dimension of business has become an essential element of regulatory frameworks and strategic planning. The adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 marked a significant shift toward formalizing sustainability as a multidimensional responsibility encompassing environmental protection, social inclusion, and economic equity (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987; Sachs, 2015; Jacob, 2025). In this context, integrated reporting is included as a foundational element that preceded the emergence of sustainability reporting in Türkiye.

This shift has been accompanied by the proliferation of reporting frameworks designed to standardize and communicate sustainability performance. Among the most prominent are the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards, which have been widely adopted by companies seeking to demonstrate accountability and stakeholder engagement, and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), enacted by the European Union to mandate detailed environmental, social, and governance (ESG) disclosures. These frameworks represent a broader movement toward integrated thinking, in which financial

and non-financial information are considered together to evaluate long-term value creation, risk exposure, and societal impact.

In this evolving landscape, sustainability reporting and integrated reporting have gained increasing relevance. Sustainability reporting provides a means for organizations to disclose their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) activities and performance (GRI, 2021), while integrated reporting brings financial and sustainability information together into a unified narrative that explains how value is created over time (IIRC [International Integrated Reporting Council], 2013). Unlike traditional financial reporting, integrated reporting emphasizes strategy, stakeholder relationships, and the responsible use of multiple forms of capital (Eccles & Krzus, 2010).

Although the primary focus of this study is on sustainability reporting, integrated reporting has also been included due to its conceptual and practical overlap with sustainability-related disclosures. Integrated reporting frameworks incorporate ESG considerations as essential components of long-term value creation, thereby extending the scope of traditional financial reporting to include sustainability performance. Given that many organizations and scholars treat integrated reporting as a complementary or even advanced stage of sustainability disclosure, excluding such studies would result in an incomplete picture of the reporting landscape. Moreover, integrated reporting is increasingly referenced in both national policy documents and international standards—such as the GRI and CSRD—as part of a broader push toward harmonized, holistic reporting practices. For these reasons, academic work addressing integrated reporting was deemed relevant to the scope of this analysis.

Within the Turkish context, significant steps have been taken to introduce sustainability considerations into financial markets and corporate disclosure. The Capital Markets Board of Türkiye (SPK) published the Sustainability Principles Compliance Framework in 2020, mandating listed firms to adopt ESG reporting principles on a "comply or explain" basis. In parallel, the Green Deal Action Plan, published by the Ministry of Trade in 2021, outlined the country's roadmap for aligning with the European Green Deal. These developments indicate an institutional willingness to engage with global sustainability standards. However, both corporate practice and academic research in Türkiye still face challenges in internalizing and operationalizing these principles.

Despite the increasing volume of academic publications on sustainability in recent years, the literature remains heavily concentrated on financial aspects and quantitative methods, often neglecting the broader implications of sustainability in organizational, environmental, and social context (Yeniçeri & Böcek, 2022; Coşkun, 2023; Fidan, 2023; Yüksel, 2023). Moreover, limited engagement with international frameworks—such as GRI or CSRD—and the relative absence of policy-oriented or interdisciplinary approaches suggest a gap between global discourse and national academic studies. This gap is particularly important in the context of emerging regulatory expectations, which require a more nuanced understanding of how sustainability reporting functions within complex institutional and market environments.

In Türkiye, sustainability reporting practices are guided by recent regulatory initiatives such as the Capital Markets Board of Türkiye's Sustainability Principles Compliance Framework (SPK, 2020) and the Ministry of Trade's Green Deal Action Plan (Ministry of Trade, 2021). However, a preliminary review suggests that engagement with these national frameworks in the academic literature remains limited, as the majority of studies appear to focus more broadly on international standards or methodological aspects. To our knowledge, this is the first comprehensive systematic review of the sustainability reporting literature in Türkiye, explicitly assessing alignment with global standards and national policy frameworks.

This study aims to address this gap by systematically examining the academic literature on sustainability and integrated reporting in Türkiye. Drawing on a sample of 153 peer-reviewed articles published from 2010 to 2024, the research employs a content analysis approach to identify prevailing themes, methodological tendencies, and sectoral focuses within the national literature. In addition to mapping quantitative trends, the study explores whether and how Turkish academic output aligns with global standards and national policy initiatives. Ultimately, this paper seeks to inform future research and practice by highlighting opportunities for methodological innovation, interdisciplinary integration, and enhanced policy relevance in sustainability accounting.

2. Literature Review

The origins of sustainability reporting can be traced back to the 1990s, when the need to monitor environmental impacts through public disclosure gave rise to environmental reporting practices (Gray, 2000). Over time, elements of social responsibility and governance were incorporated into these reports,

broadening their scope (Adams & Frost, 2008). Established in 1997, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) has since become the most widely recognized standard-setting body for sustainability reporting (GRI, 2021).

According to GRI's 2021 data, more than 10,000 companies worldwide report in accordance with GRI standards. Furthermore, as of 2023, the European Union has made such practices mandatory by enacting the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). While OECD countries have made significant institutional progress in this area, the reporting framework in Türkiye is still in a developmental phase (Eski, 2023).

International studies show that sustainability reporting enhances corporate transparency, strengthens stakeholder relations, and positively influences long-term investment decisions (Ioannou & Serafeim, 2015). In developed economies, the impact of sustainability reporting on financial performance and firm value has been extensively investigated (Clark et al., 2014; Khan et al., 2015). These studies reveal that companies with high-quality ESG disclosures tend to exhibit more stable market valuations and demonstrate stronger resilience during crises.

In developing countries, reporting practices are primarily shaped by regulatory pressures and the expectations of international investors (Rezaee & Tuo, 2019). Empirical studies in Asia and Africa highlight varying degrees of compliance with legal requirements and emphasize the role of cultural factors in influencing the scope of sustainability disclosures (Hahn & Kühnen, 2013).

In this regard, Türkiye's position aligns with the general characteristics of developing economies. However, academic studies in Türkiye tend to focus primarily on financial sustainability and Borsa Istanbul-listed companies, whereas literature from developed countries addresses broader themes such as environmental risk management, value chain analysis, sustainable innovation, and institutional transformation (Lozano & Huisingsh, 2011). For instance, in Germany, the Netherlands, and Scandinavian countries, sustainability reporting not only reflects company performance but also addresses social policies such as human rights and gender equality (Stubbs & Higgins, 2014).

Moreover, in developed economies, public policy agendas and sustainability goals are more closely integrated with academic research. International examples illustrate the use of open data systems supported by public-private partnerships and university-led sustainability data centres, whereas Türkiye still faces major challenges regarding data accessibility and institutional transparency (Perego et al., 2016). Furthermore, conceptual studies emphasize the importance of clearly defining corporate value creation processes and understanding how sustainability disclosures can inform managerial decisions and stakeholder expectations.

Integrated reporting, defined by the IIRC in 2013, refers to the practice of combining non-financial and financial information into a single report that articulates the organization's value creation process (IIRC, 2013). These reports go beyond performance metrics to explain the business model, strategic goals, and stakeholder relationships (Eccles & Krzus, 2010). While initially adopted by corporations, integrated reporting practices have increasingly been explored within public-sector organizations and NGOs, revealing challenges and opportunities unique to these sectors (Dumay et al., 2010).

In the context of Türkiye, the literature on sustainability reporting largely centers around the Borsa Istanbul (BIST) Sustainability Index, corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, and the relationship between sustainability and financial performance (Yücel et al., 2022; Beyazyol & Ataman, 2023; Ceyhan & Kara, 2023; Kefe, 2023). However, many of these studies rely heavily on secondary data and seldom employ field research, qualitative methods, or case-based analyses (İşseveroğlu, 2021; Kayacan & Ataman, 2024). In addition, research in areas such as environmental sustainability, green economy, energy efficiency, and carbon footprint remains limited. Yet, these domains hold significant weight in the international literature, where advanced analytical techniques—such as multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM), machine learning, and natural language processing (NLP)—are actively employed (Kumar et al., 2021).

More recent contributions have emphasized the necessity of aligning sustainability research with pressing policy needs and institutional structures (Bebbington & Unerman, 2018). These studies suggest that the future of sustainability accounting depends not only on methodological rigor but also on its capacity to inform regulatory change and organizational behavior.

3. Purpose and Motivation

The primary purpose of this study is to systematically examine the academic literature produced in Türkiye on sustainability reporting, while also including integrated reporting studies due to their conceptual overlap and increasing significance in both national and global contexts. By performing a comprehensive content

analysis of 153 peer-reviewed articles published from 2010 to 2024, this research aims to identify major trends, methodological patterns, thematic diversity, and policy alignment within Türkiye's academic sustainability reporting literature.

Given the recent developments in Türkiye's regulatory framework—including the Capital Markets Board's Sustainability Principles Compliance Framework (SPK, 2020) and the Ministry of Trade's Green Deal Action Plan (Ministry of Trade, 2021) the study also explores how effectively academic research aligns with these emerging national policies as well as international reporting standards such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

In this broader context, the specific objectives of this research are as follows:

- To examine the chronological development and publication trends of sustainability and integrated reporting literature in Türkiye;
- To analyze the distribution of research methods used, identifying dominant methodological approaches and highlighting areas lacking methodological innovation;
- To evaluate thematic diversity, especially regarding underrepresented topics such as environmental sustainability, social dimensions, and stakeholder engagement;
- To assess the extent to which Turkish academic research aligns with international sustainability reporting standards (GRI, CSRD) and national regulatory frameworks;
- To provide actionable insights and recommendations for future academic research, policymaking, and methodological advancement within the field of sustainability reporting in Türkiye.

4. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative content analysis method. The study sample consists of 153 academic articles retrieved from the Turkish Academic Citation Index (TR Dizin), selected based on their relevance to sustainability and integrated reporting.

The data were evaluated using a three-dimensional analytical framework:

- Quantitative Findings: Articles were examined by the year of publication, number of authors, language, and journal distribution.
- Topic and Purpose Analysis: Articles were thematically categorized based on their focus areas, such as financial sustainability, environmental sustainability, and corporate governance.
- Methodological Analysis: Research methods (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed), techniques used (panel data, content analysis, multi-criteria decision-making, etc.), and the empirical or conceptual nature of each study were systematically classified.

The findings are interpreted to assess the current state of sustainability reporting literature in Türkiye and its alignment with international approaches. Additionally, areas for improvement are identified based on observed gaps and repetitive patterns.

5. Findings

The findings of the study are examined in three main sections. The first section presents quantitative information, including the number of articles, the language of publication, the number of authors per article, and the number of articles published per year across journals. The second section evaluates the studies in terms of their subjects and objectives. The third section focuses on methodological aspects, which are divided into three sub-categories: the dimension of the research method, the specific method used in the studies, and the techniques applied during the analysis.

5.1. Quantitative Findings

The total number of academic articles related to sustainability is 153. Of these, 16 articles were published in 2015 or earlier, while 137 were published after 2015. A notable increase in the number of publications is observed in the following years after 2015, indicating a growing academic interest in sustainability over time. The year 2023 stands out with 20 publications, making it one of the years with the highest number of

articles. In 2024, the number of publications decreased slightly to 14, which can be considered as a normal fluctuation. Starting from 2016, studies on sustainability showed a marked increase, with a significant jump observed particularly in 2018 and 2019. The upward trend continued in 2020 and 2021, possibly due to an increased focus on sustainability and financial systems during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of the total 153 articles, 20 were published in English and 133 in Turkish. This means that approximately 87% of the publications were written in Turkish. The distribution of the number of authors per article is detailed in the table below. It is observed that the highest proportion, 45%, corresponds to co-authored studies with two authors. Only one study was found to have more than three authors.

Table: 1 Publications by Number of Authors

Single Author	Two Authors	Three Authors	More than Three Authors	Total
60 (%39)	69 (%45)	23 (%15)	1(%0,6)	153 (%100)

The sustainability studies published over the years are presented in the table below according to journals.

Table: 2 Number of Articles by Journal

Journal Name	2015 and Before	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
The World of Accounting Science	0	3	2	5	3	1	1	1	6	0	22
Journal of Business Research-Turk	3	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	9
Journal of Accounting and Finance	1	0	1	0	1	2	3	0	1	0	9
Journal of Accounting and Taxation Studies	0	0	0	4	0	0	3	0	0	0	7
Financial Analysis	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	6
Third Sector Social Economic Review	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	5
Pamukkale University Journal of Social Sciences Institute	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	5
Eskişehir Osmangazi University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	4
Süleyman Demirel University Visionary Journal	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	4
Dumlupınar University Journal of Social Sciences	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	4
Journal of Business and Management Studies: An International Journal	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	3

Journal of Accounting and Auditing Studies	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
Öneri Journal	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Journal of Management and Economics Research	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
International Journal of Economic and Administrative Studies	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Mustafa Kemal University Journal of Social Sciences Institute	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Selçuk University Journal of Social Sciences Vocational School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Finance, Political and Economic Comments	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Journal of Economic and Social Research	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Erciyes University Journal of Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Kafkas University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences Faculty	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Hitit University Journal of Social Sciences Institute	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Hitit Journal of Social Sciences (Online)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Abant İzzet Baysal University Journal of Social Sciences Institute	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Others	6	2	1	4	5	2	5	5	4	9	43
Total	16	10	6	20	15	17	21	14	20	14	153

It is observed that the journal with the highest number of publications on sustainability is The World of Accounting Science, with a total of 20 articles. However, no studies related to this topic were published in that journal in 2024. One possible reason for its leading position in publication count is that the journal had a special issue dedicated to sustainability in 2023. Journal of Business Research–Turk and Journal of Accounting and Finance also demonstrated consistent publication activity, each contributing 9 articles. Similar to The World of Accounting Science, these journals also show a decline in the number of studies published in 2024.

The “Others” category includes 45 studies, representing a significant portion of the total. However, since these studies were mostly published in journals that featured only a single or a limited number of articles, they did not individually stand out. Despite a few journals having a higher concentration of publications, the fact that many journals included only a small number of articles on sustainability indicates a broad and diversified academic interest in the topic.

Table: 3 Topic Distribution by Years

Year	Finance and Accounting	Corporate Sustainability	Technology and Innovation	Environmental Sustainability	Others
2015 and Before	4	6	0	1	5
2016	0	5	0	0	5
2017	1	2	0	0	3
2018	1	13	0	1	5
2019	6	6	0	0	3
2020	4	8	0	0	5
2021	2	10	0	1	8
2022	6	6	0	1	1
2023	6	8	1	1	4
2024	2	5	0	1	6
Total	32	69	1	6	45

When sustainability studies are examined by topic, it is observed that they predominantly focus on four main areas: Finance and Accounting, Corporate Sustainability, Technology and Innovation, and Environmental Sustainability. The most frequently studied topic is Corporate Sustainability. However, Finance and Accounting also appear as subjects with a high number of studies, particularly gaining momentum in 2019, 2020, 2022 and 2023.

Studies categorized under Finance and Accounting primarily explore how sustainable finance is integrated into accounting and auditing processes. Additionally, there are bibliometric analyses focusing on publications within the fields of accounting and finance. Although studies related to Environmental Sustainability are fewer in number, they remain significant. These studies generally investigate the impact of environmental factors on sustainability performance.

Sustainability studies by their research objectives are presented in the table below. Since there are no significant differences across years, the data are presented without reference to publication years.

Table: 4 Distribution of Articles by Objectives

By Article Objectives	Number of Studies
Presenting Research Findings	132 (%86)
Explanation	17 (%11)
Providing Practical Recommendations	1 (%1)
Offering Comparative Analysis	3 (%2)
Total	153 (%100)

An analysis of sustainability studies based on their objectives reveals that 86% of the studies aim to present research findings. Regardless of whether a quantitative or qualitative method was employed, the dominant goal across the studies was to report empirical results. The proportion of studies with an explanatory objective is 11%. Upon closer examination, these studies are generally intended to clarify sustainability standards and recent developments. Despite the relatively high number of explanatory studies, there is a noticeable lack of research offering practical recommendations regarding the implementation of such standards.

5.2. Methodological Findings

Evaluating sustainability studies in terms of methodological dimension, it is found that 91% are empirical in nature. This demonstrates a strong prevalence of empirical research in the field of sustainability-related accounting literature. Conceptual studies represent only 9% of the total, and among them, very few exhibit a well-established theoretical foundation.

Table: 5 Distribution by Methodological Dimension

Methodological Dimension			
	Conceptual	Empirical	Total
Number of Studies	14 (%9)	139 (%91)	153 (%100)

An examination of the studies by research method reveals that 56% are quantitative, 42% are qualitative, and 2% are mixed-method studies. The proportion of qualitative and quantitative methods appears relatively balanced. However, considering the previous analysis regarding the methodological dimension, the dominance of empirical studies indicates that researchers tend to favor empirical approaches regardless of the specific method employed.

Table: 6 Distribution by Research Method

Research Method	Number of Studies
Quantitative	86 (56%)
Qualitative	64 (42%)
Mixed Methods	3 (2%)
Total	153 (100%)

An assessment of the techniques employed in the studies reveals that content analysis is the most frequently used method, accounting for 28% of the total. Panel data analysis follows as the second most

preferred technique. The findings show that, when statistical-based analysis techniques are considered collectively, they constitute over 50% of the methods applied. This indicates a predominant reliance on quantitative analytical approaches in the literature. Among qualitative techniques, case study stands out as the most commonly used method after content analysis.

Table: 7 Distribution of Studies by Techniques Used

Technique Used in Research	Number of Studies
Content / Document Analysis	43 (28%)
Panel Data Analysis	34 (23%)
Description / Definition	15 (10%)
Survey	3 (2%)
Case Study	7 (5%)
ANOVA	2 (1%)
Multi-Criteria Decision Making	9 (6%)
Ratio Analysis	9 (6%)
Grey Relational Analysis	3 (2%)
TOPSIS	5 (3%)
Other Statistical Methods	21 (14%)
Total	153 (100%)

A closer examination of the analytical techniques reveals that Multi-Criteria Decision-Making (MCDM) methods are among the most commonly applied approaches. In the table, the TOPSIS method is listed separately, although it is indeed considered a part of the MCDM family. Techniques such as AHP (Analytic Hierarchy Process) and TOPSIS are particularly prominent in studies related to sustainability-oriented decision-making processes.

Regression and panel data analysis are also widely used due to the strong empirical foundation they offer. In particular, regression analysis and panel data techniques, commonly utilized in econometric research, appear frequently in studies focusing on corporate performance and sustainable finance.

However, there is a noticeable repetition of similar methodologies across many studies. Most articles employed comparable statistical procedures applied to overlapping datasets, often derived from Borsa Istanbul-listed companies. This convergence limits the scope for methodological innovation and reduces the diversity of insights.

6. Discussion

This section provides a comprehensive interpretation of the study's findings, structured along two dimensions. The first part discusses key patterns and limitations observed in the academic literature, focusing on methodological preferences, thematic coverage, and the scope of data sources. The second part evaluates the degree of alignment between Türkiye's sustainability-related academic output and international policy frameworks, such as the GRI Standards, CSRD, and national regulatory initiatives. By addressing both the academic and policy dimensions, this discussion aims to offer an integrated assessment of the current state and future potential of sustainability research in Türkiye.

6.1. Interpretation of Key Findings

The findings of this study point to a rapid quantitative growth in sustainability-related academic publications in Türkiye, especially after 2016. However, this expansion has not been accompanied by corresponding methodological and thematic diversification. The widespread use of econometric models and MCDM techniques, while valuable, indicates a preference for conventional tools applied to similar datasets—often publicly available financial disclosures of Borsa Istanbul-listed companies. This homogeneity may inhibit the emergence of fresh perspectives or in-depth explorations of underrepresented dimensions of sustainability.

For instance, studies (Yücel et al., 2022; Beyazyol & Ataman, 2023; Ceyhan & Kara, 2023; Kefe, 2023) heavily rely on financial data from Borsa Istanbul-listed firms and utilize traditional econometric models to examine the impact of ESG disclosures on firm performance. In contrast, only a few studies—such as İşseveroğlu (2021) and Kayacan & Ataman (2024)—attempt to incorporate qualitative analysis or explore non-listed firms. These examples illustrate the methodological homogeneity and sectoral concentration identified in the literature.

Moreover, the dominance of financial themes such as CSR scores, board characteristics, or stock performance underscores a narrow conception of sustainability. Key areas emphasized in the international literature—such as climate risk, biodiversity, resource efficiency, or human rights—remain marginal. The limited presence of qualitative methods and fieldwork further reinforces a gap in contextualized, stakeholder-driven research. These patterns collectively suggest that while academic attention to sustainability is growing, the field remains largely conventional and disconnected from the complexity and interdisciplinarity that define global sustainability challenges.

6.2. Alignment with International Sustainability Standards and Policy Frameworks

The global evolution of sustainability reporting has been shaped by an increasing demand for transparency, accountability, and long-term value creation. Central to this development is the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), which obliges companies to disclose not only financial performance, but also a wide range of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) metrics in a standardized and verifiable format. Complementing the CSRD are the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards, which offer a voluntary but widely adopted framework for ESG disclosure. In parallel, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become a guiding set of principles for both corporate and academic engagement with sustainability.

While these frameworks have significantly influenced corporate reporting practices in many developed economies, the academic literature in Türkiye appears to lag behind in both recognition and integration of such standards. As shown in the findings of this study, few of the 153 reviewed articles make direct reference to international reporting guidelines or attempt to evaluate Turkish practices in relation to them. Moreover, the literature remains focused on financial sustainability and publicly listed firms, with minimal attention paid to environmental impact, supply chain transparency, or social inclusion—key pillars emphasized by both CSRD and GRI.

This gap suggests not only a thematic disconnect, but also a missed opportunity for alignment between academic inquiry and the direction of public policy and regulation. For instance, the Green Deal Action Plan published by the Turkish Ministry of Trade in 2021, which outlines strategic goals for harmonizing with the EU Green Deal, is scarcely referenced in the existing literature. Similarly, the Sustainability Principles Compliance Framework introduced by the Capital Markets Board of Türkiye (SPK) in 2020 has not been widely examined through empirical studies or policy analysis. The academic community thus risks remaining peripheral to national and international sustainability transitions.

To address these shortcomings, future research in Türkiye should place greater emphasis on assessing the degree of institutional alignment between local corporate practices and global reporting obligations. This includes, for example, comparative studies that evaluate the ESG disclosures of Turkish firms in relation to EU counterparts, or impact assessments of SPK's sustainability regulations on market behavior. Additionally, qualitative fieldwork involving corporate sustainability officers, regulatory bodies, and industry associations can provide deeper insights into how sustainability standards are interpreted and implemented on the ground.

Furthermore, universities and research institutions should consider establishing more formal mechanisms of collaboration with policymakers. Joint sustainability data platforms, policy monitoring tools, and co-authored white papers can help bridge the divide between academic knowledge and decision-making. These practices are increasingly common in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, where academic research plays an active role in informing national sustainability strategies and regulatory frameworks.

Despite these international developments, Türkiye's national regulatory initiatives—such as the Capital Markets Board's Sustainability Principles Compliance Framework and the Ministry of Trade's Green Deal Action Plan—have not yet been thoroughly examined in the academic literature reviewed. Future studies could specifically assess how effectively Turkish companies adapt to these frameworks, providing valuable insights for both academia and policy-makers.

Although the Capital Market Board's Sustainability Principles Compliance Framework (SPK, 2020) mandates ESG disclosures for listed companies, there is little academic exploration of its enforcement mechanisms, market compliance levels, or challenges faced by firms. Similarly, the Ministry of Trade's Green Deal Action Plan (Ministry of Trade, 2021), which aims to align national regulations with the EU Green Deal, is rarely examined in terms of its measurable influence on reporting practices. This lack of empirical analysis represents a gap in understanding how regulatory tools are shaping sustainability behavior in the Turkish context.

It is important to acknowledge that Türkiye's regulatory framework for sustainability reporting, such as the Capital Markets Board's Sustainability Principles Compliance Framework and the Ministry of Trade's Green Deal Action Plan, has only recently been introduced (post-2020). Thus, the limited engagement observed in the existing academic literature might partly reflect the novelty of these developments. Nevertheless, the rapid institutionalization of sustainability reporting internationally underlines the importance and urgency for Turkish academia to quickly align research practices with these emerging regulatory frameworks.

Finally, greater methodological innovation is essential to support this policy-oriented agenda. Incorporating tools such as natural language processing (NLP) to analyze corporate disclosures, multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) to assess sustainability performance, or case-based comparative approaches can provide more nuanced and actionable findings. A closer reading of the articles reveals a recurring reliance on similar datasets and conventional methodological frameworks. Studies often examine the same types of companies—particularly those listed on Borsa Istanbul—using standard statistical approaches. This methodological homogeneity limits the originality of the findings and reduces the potential for alternative perspectives, such as qualitative inquiry, mixed-methods research, or innovative frameworks that integrate stakeholder engagement. By integrating methodological rigor with policy relevance, sustainability accounting research in Türkiye can enhance both its academic impact and its societal value.

7. Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that academic research on sustainability and integrated reporting in Türkiye has shown a significant quantitative increase in recent years. Especially after 2016, the number of published articles has risen notably, reflecting growing scholarly attention to the topic. However, in terms of content and methodology, a considerable number of studies continue to focus on similar themes and employ conventional approaches, while innovative perspectives and techniques remain relatively underutilized. Multi-criteria decision-making techniques and econometric analyses are among the most frequently applied methods, resulting in a repetitive use of established methodologies on familiar datasets. This may limit the originality and depth of academic contributions.

Moreover, advanced data-driven methods—such as machine learning, big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and natural language processing—are rarely encountered in the reviewed literature. This contrasts with the international sustainability literature, where such tools are increasingly common, particularly in accounting and finance research. The limited use of modern analytical techniques reflects a broader challenge in aligning national research practices with evolving global trends.

In terms of thematic coverage, most studies concentrate on financial sustainability and corporate governance, while critical issues such as environmental risk, social justice, the circular economy, and carbon management receive comparatively little attention. Considering Türkiye's industrial structure and energy dependency, expanding the academic focus toward these dimensions is increasingly important. Furthermore, most studies rely on secondary data sources, with only a few utilizing primary data or qualitative methods such as interviews, case studies, or fieldwork. Engagement with diverse institutional actors—including SMEs, cooperatives, municipalities, and public bodies—remains limited, which narrows the practical relevance of the research.

Another key limitation identified in this study concerns the weak integration of academic research with national and international policy frameworks. The analysis suggests that few studies reference policy documents such as the Green Deal Action Plan or the Sustainability Principles Compliance Framework, and even fewer assess the implications of regulatory changes, such as those introduced by the European Union's CSRD or global frameworks like GRI. As discussed earlier, the absence of structured dialogue between academia and policymaking institutions reduces the potential of research to shape sustainability governance and reporting practices.

Additionally, most publications rely heavily on Turkish-language sources and lack comparative or cross-national analyses. This restricts the visibility and global relevance of Turkish sustainability research. Establishing stronger links to international literature and policy developments could enhance both the academic and practical impact of future studies.

Several priorities emerge from this evaluation. Methodological innovation remains central, particularly the integration of new technologies and interdisciplinary thinking. For example, natural language processing (NLP) can be used to identify rhetorical patterns or greenwashing tendencies in

corporate sustainability reports, while MCDM techniques may help evaluate trade-offs between environmental, social, and governance indicators across firms or industries.

The expansion of research scope to include underrepresented sectors and organizational forms is equally critical. In addition, aligning research more closely with regulatory frameworks—both domestic and international—will increase the policy relevance of scholarly work. Given that these regulatory frameworks in Türkiye are relatively recent developments, the limited academic engagement observed to date can be considered understandable. However, this also represents an important opportunity for future studies to contribute substantively to the implementation and evaluation of these emerging policy initiatives. Comparative research across countries and sectors may further contribute to the development of context-sensitive best practices. Recent contributions in Sustainability underscore the evolving dynamics of sustainability disclosure and its governance underpinnings. For instance, Lehenchuk et al. (2023) found that although sustainability reporting in Turkish FBT and TCL sector firms often lacked a direct positive impact on financial performance, corporate governance performance (CGDQI) significantly influenced asset turnover—highlighting the importance of governance frameworks in ensuring disclosure effectiveness. More broadly, Du Toit's (2024) thirty-year literature review identified persistent gaps in standardized reporting frameworks and data comparability, calling for enhanced stakeholder engagement and robust measurement tools—a call that resonates with our study's recommendations. Together, these findings reinforce the need to integrate policy alignment, governance structures, and methodological innovation, thereby strengthening the credibility and practical relevance of sustainability reporting in Türkiye. Above all, academic work should strive to generate actionable insights that support sustainability transitions in both private and public domains.

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