



CORPORATE TAXPAYER IN THE FACE OF ECONOMIC SHIFT: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF EMERGING ISSUES AND THEORETICAL GAPS

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ABSTRACT

Corporate tax compliance has become increasingly crucial amid global economic shifts, particularly in light of growing scrutiny over tax avoidance, evolving policy reforms, and digital transformation. Despite its significance, the existing literature on corporate tax remains fragmented and undersynthesized. This study conducts a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 1,241 Scopus-indexed publications to map the intellectual structure, emerging themes, and theoretical development in the field. A three-stage search strategy was employed, including phase-based filtering (pre-2020 and post-2020) and targeted retrieval of theory-oriented articles. Tools such as VOSviewer and OpenRefine were utilized for network visualization and data cleaning, while manual content classification provided support for thematic and theoretical mapping. The findings reveal a surge in research after 2020, driven by regulatory reforms such as BEPS 2.0 and the increased importance of ESG and governance factors. Tax avoidance, corporate governance, and digital finance emerged as dominant themes, whereas compliance as a standalone concept remains comparatively underrepresented. Theoretical analysis reveals a heavy reliance on agency theory, with limited integration of behavioral, institutional, and stakeholder perspectives. This study contributes to the field by identifying gaps and offering direction for future research in a globally disrupted tax environment.

JEL classification: H32

Keywords: *bibliometric analysis; corporate tax; economic shift*

Received: May 25, 2025

Revised: June 22, 2025

Accepted: August 22, 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

The corporate taxpayer faces significant challenges in the wake of economic shifts, driven by factors such as tax reforms, globalization, and climate change. The recent economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic intensified fiscal pressures on governments, prompting emergency tax responses, stimulus packages, and shifts

in enforcement priorities (Douglas & Raudla, 2020; Ivonchyk, 2024). These conditions have compelled corporations to reassess their tax strategies and compliance behaviors amid growing uncertainty and evolving regulatory expectations (Kobbi-Fakhfakh & Bougacha, 2023; Sanoran, 2025; Saragih, 2024). The rapid acceleration of digital transformation has also significantly altered tax administration processes and compliance strategies, particularly in emerging markets (Muhmad et al., 2024). Additionally, significant global policy developments have emerged from the OECD's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) 2.0 initiative, particularly Pillar Two, which introduced a global minimum tax designed to reshape corporate tax planning for multinational enterprises (OECD, 2024). These fiscal and regulatory shifts have significantly impacted corporate risk tolerance, prompting changes in investment behavior and financial planning (Liu & Wu, 2023; Zhang, Ausaf & Jahangir, 2022). While emergency measures, such as tax deferrals, provided temporary relief, the rapid expansion of the digital economy has introduced enduring challenges related to tax regulation, enforcement, and equitable cross-border taxation (Aren, 2024; Li, Li & Guo, 2022).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Corporate taxation is a critical component of fiscal policy, influencing not only government revenue but also corporate behavior and economic development. The significance of corporate taxation extends beyond mere revenue generation; it encompasses a range of economic, political, and social dimensions that impact entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and the broader society (Mihokova, Andrejovska & Martinkova, 2016). The complexity and impact of corporate tax systems have made them a focal point of research and debate, particularly in the context of globalization and the increasing mobility of capital.

Corporate taxation research reflects a dynamic and increasingly multidisciplinary field. Earlier studies have primarily focused on the impact of corporate taxes on firm-level decisions, including investment choices, capital structure, and organizational form (Desai & Dharmapala, 2009; Dyreng, Hanlon & Maydew, 2008; Pardo & de la Cuesta-González, 2020; Plesko, 2019). Over time, however, the scope of inquiry has broadened to encompass firms' behavioral responses to tax policy shifts, with a particular emphasis on planning strategies and avoidance behavior (Aliani & Bouguila, 2023; Bruce, Deskins & Fox, 2007; Panjaitan, Maksum & Abubakar, 2021; Wilde & Wilson, 2018). Heightened public scrutiny, driven by political and economic developments, has also sparked scholarly interest in the ethical and social dimensions of corporate tax conduct (Scarpa & Signori, 2023; Snyckers, 2017). As a result, a growing body of literature has emerged that frames tax behavior within the broader context of corporate social responsibility (CSR), with several studies illustrating a conceptual shift from purely financial considerations to reputational and normative factors (Araújo et al., 2024; Castelo Branco, 2021).

Despite this thematic expansion, important theoretical gaps persist that limit a more integrated understanding of corporate tax behavior. While empirical studies have rigorously explored topics such as tax avoidance, statutory tax burdens, and cross-jurisdictional policy outcomes, relatively few have investigated the alignment between tax systems and long-term corporate strategic planning (Clausing, 2013; Stępień, 2024; Stewart & Webb, 2006). Much of the literature relies on institutional theory to interpret how tax structures interface with national development goals and

fiscal capacities (Alon & Hageman, 2017; Jesus et al., 2024). Although institutional theory has provided a foundational understanding of how formal rules and regulatory environments shape tax compliance and policy outcomes, it often lacks the granularity needed to capture firm-level strategy and decision-making dynamics.

To advance the field, future research should consider a more integrative theoretical framework that bridges macro-level institutional contexts with micro-level corporate decision-making (Chen et al., 2025; Niu et al., 2024). While institutional theory has offered valuable insights into the structural determinants of tax compliance, incorporating perspectives from strategic management, behavioral economics, and political economy could yield a more nuanced understanding of how corporations interpret and respond to complex tax environments (Aliani & Bouguila, 2023; Snape, 2011). In particular, the underutilization of interpretative and critical theories limits the ability to assess how power dynamics, regulatory capture, or international lobbying influence both corporate tax policy and compliance behavior. The growing intersection of tax policy with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations further highlights the need for cross-disciplinary approaches that capture the reputational, ethical, and sustainability dimensions of taxation (Pipatnarapong, Beelitz & Jaafar, 2025; Scarpa & Signori, 2023). By addressing these theoretical and conceptual limitations, future studies can offer more comprehensive frameworks to guide policy development and enhance understanding of corporate tax behavior in the context of ongoing global economic shifts.

3. RESEARCH QUESTION

This study examines the evolution and direction of corporate tax literature in response to global disruptions, dividing the analysis into two periods: pre-2020 and post-2020. This segmentation is based on significant global economic upheavals that have transformed corporate tax policy and compliance. The year 2020 marks a structural turning point, beginning with the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted unprecedented fiscal responses, increased financial stress on firms, and triggered new compliance behaviors among taxpayers. Simultaneously, the acceleration of digital transformation has altered tax administration processes and compliance strategies, especially in emerging markets. Another key development during this period was the advancement of the OECD's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) 2.0 initiative, particularly Pillar Two, which proposed a global minimum tax rate for multinational enterprises, thereby further shifting corporate tax planning norms. These events provided a meaningful basis to divide the literature temporally, enabling a more precise comparison of evolving research themes and theoretical orientations across structurally distinct economic contexts.

Considering these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the publication trends in corporate tax research across the pre-2020 and post-2020 periods?

RQ2. How have the most prolific countries contributing to corporate tax compliance research changed between the pre-2020 and post-2020 periods?

RQ3. What are the most frequently occurring keywords in each period, and how do these reflect shifts in thematic focus before and after major global economic disruptions?

RQ4. What thematic categories emerge from the top 50 most cited articles in each period, and what do this reveal about emerging issues and research focus?

RQ5. What theoretical frameworks have been employed in the top 20 theory-based articles, and what are the theoretical gaps in explaining corporate tax compliance?

4. METHODOLOGY

Bibliometric analysis involves the systematic collection, classification, and evaluation of bibliographic records derived from scholarly literature (Alves, Borges & De Nadae, 2021; Assyakur & Rosa, 2022; Verbeek et al., 2002). In addition to basic descriptive metrics, such as tracking publication outlets, author productivity, and annual trends, this method also encompasses more complex analytical techniques, including co-citation mapping and thematic clustering (Wu & Wu, 2017). A rigorous bibliometric review involves a well-structured and iterative approach to refining keyword selection, executing database queries, and analyzing content comprehensively. This process ensures the compilation of a robust reference dataset, enhancing the credibility of the research outcomes (Fahimnia, Sarkis & Davarzani, 2015).

In line with these practices, this study concentrated on highly cited and influential publications, as these works often serve as foundational pillars for theoretical development in the field. Scopus was employed as the core data source due to its reputation for indexing high-quality academic output and ensuring data consistency (Al-Khoury et al., 2022; Khiste & Paithankar, 2017; di Stefano, Peteraf & Veronay, 2010). To uphold relevance and scholarly rigor, the selection was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, with monographs and teaching materials deliberately excluded (Gu et al., 2019). The bibliometric dataset comprises works published between 2020 and December 2023, all retrieved from Elsevier’s Scopus database.

5. DATA SEARCH STRATEGY

To ensure the relevance, quality, and consistency of the dataset, a structured data search was conducted using the Scopus database, a widely recognized resource for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed scientific publications. The search strategy employed a three-stage refinement process.

In the first stage, a broad query was applied to the title field using the keywords "corporate tax" and "corporate taxpayer"*, which allowed for the inclusion of variations such as “corporate taxpayers” and “corporate taxpayer’s obligations.” The search was restricted to documents published in English to maintain language consistency. This initial query yielded a total of 1,241 documents, forming the foundational dataset for analysis as presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: First stage search string

Scopus	TITLE (("corporate tax" OR "corporate taxpayer*")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) (Total documents: 1,241)
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To support the comparative phase analysis in line with the study’s objectives, a second stage refinement divided the data into two distinct periods: First Phase- Publications from 1957 to 2019 (pre-2022), and Second Phase- Publications from 2020 to 2025 (post-2022)

This temporal split enables a focused investigation of evolving research themes and theoretical applications across economic contexts. Using the exact title-based

keywords, the two queries were independently applied for each phase, again limiting results to English-language journal articles. The first phase search yielded 633 documents, while the second phase returned 608 documents, bringing the total to 1,241 publications included in the bibliometric analysis. Search string for stage 2 is tabulated in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Second stage search string

Scopus (First Phase)	TITLE (("corporate tax" OR "corporate taxpayer*")) AND PUBYEAR > 1956 AND PUBYEAR < 2020 AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) (Total documents: 633)
Scopus (Second Phase)	TITLE (("corporate tax" OR "corporate taxpayer*")) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) (Total documents: 608)

To address RQ5, which investigates the theoretical underpinnings of corporate tax compliance research, a third stage of refinement was applied to the dataset. While the first two stages focused on identifying relevant documents and comparing thematic trends across periods, this third stage aimed to isolate theory-based articles that explicitly reference theoretical frameworks within their abstract content. Using the exact title-level keywords from previous stages, this refined search included an additional condition targeting theoretical terms within the abstract field. Keywords such as “theory,” “theoretical framework,” “conceptual framework,” and specific theories were used to retrieve documents that engaged in conceptual analysis or model development. This step yielded a smaller, focused set of 115 documents, which served as the core pool from which the top 20 most cited theory-based articles were manually selected and reviewed for deeper theoretical mapping. The search string for Stage 3 is summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Third stage search string – identification of theory-based articles

Scopus (Total documents: 115)	(TITLE (("corporate tax" OR "corporate taxpayer*")) AND ABS ((theory OR "theoretical framework" OR "conceptual framework" OR "grounded theory" OR "institutional theory" OR "attribution theory" OR "agency theory" OR "deterrence theory" OR "behavioral theory" OR "stakeholder theory" OR "legitimacy theory")))
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6. DATA ANALYSIS

VOSviewer is a user-friendly bibliometric software developed by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman at Leiden University, the Netherlands (van Eck & Waltman 2010a, 2017). Widely utilized for visualizing and analyzing scientific literature, the tool specializes in creating intuitive network visualizations, clustering related items, and generating density maps. Its versatility allows for the examination of co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence networks, providing researchers with a comprehensive understanding of research landscapes. The interactive interface, coupled with continuous updates, ensures efficient and dynamic exploration of large datasets. VOSviewer's ability to compute metrics, customize visualizations, and its compatibility with various bibliometric data sources make it a valuable resource for scholars seeking insights into complex research domains.

One of the standout features of VOSviewer is its capacity to transform intricate bibliometric datasets into visually interpretable maps and charts. With a focus on network visualization, the software excels in clustering related items, analyzing keyword co-occurrence patterns, and generating density maps. Researchers benefit from its user-friendly interface, enabling both novice and experienced users to explore research landscapes efficiently. VOSviewer's continuous development ensures it remains at the forefront of bibliometric analysis, offering valuable insights through metrics computation and customizable visualizations. Its adaptability to different types of bibliometric data, such as co-authorship and citation networks, positions VOSviewer as a versatile and indispensable tool for scholars seeking more profound understanding and meaningful insights within their research domains.

Datasets comprising information on publication year, title, author name, journal, citation, and keywords in Plain Text format were obtained from the Scopus database, spanning the period from 2004 to December 2024. These datasets were then analyzed using VOSviewer software version 1.6.19. Through the application of VOS clustering and mapping techniques, this software facilitated the examination and generation of maps. Offering an alternative to the Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) approach, VOSviewer focuses on situating items within low-dimensional spaces, ensuring that the proximity between any two items accurately reflects their relatedness and similarity. In this respect, VOSviewer shares similarities with the MDS approach. Diverging from MDS, which primarily engages in the computation of similarity metrics like cosine and Jaccard indices, VOS utilizes a more fitting method for normalizing co-occurrence frequencies, such as, the association strength (AS_{ij}), and it is calculated as:

$$AS_{ij} = \frac{C_{ij}}{w_i w_j}$$

which is “proportional to the ratio between on the one hand the observed number of co-occurrences of i and j and on the other hand the expected number of co-occurrences of i and j under the assumption that co-occurrences of i and j are statistically independent”.

7. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings derived from a bibliometric analysis conducted to explore the development, patterns, and theoretical gaps in corporate taxpayer compliance research. The analysis addresses five core research questions (RQs), each designed to uncover trends in publication output, geographical and thematic focus, keyword evolution, thematic development from highly cited literature, and the application of theoretical frameworks over time. The results are organized in alignment with these research questions to offer a comprehensive understanding of how corporate tax compliance literature has responded to global economic shifts and what emerging issues and scholarly gaps remain.

7.1 RQ1- What are the publication trends in corporate tax research across the pre-2020 and post-2020 periods?

The progression of corporate tax compliance research has demonstrated steady growth over the past several decades. As illustrated in Figure 1, the number of publications began to rise significantly in the early 2000s, following a long period of relatively modest output throughout the 20th century. This upward trend reflects increasing global interest in corporate taxation issues.

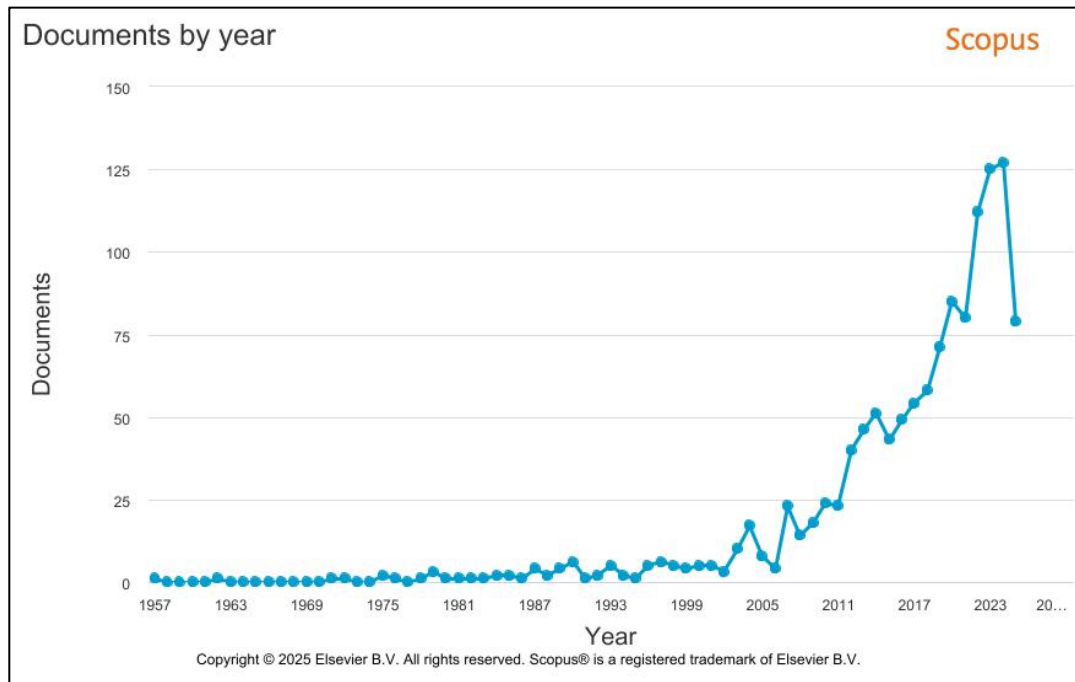


Figure 1: Trend of research in studies of corporate tax compliance published for the years 1957 -2025

A more detailed view of publications for the last ten years is presented in Table 4, which shows a consistent rise in annual outputs during this period. Notably, the number of articles increased from 43 in 2015 to 71 in 2019, marking a period of heightened research activity leading up to 2020. This trend continued post-2020, with annual publications peaking at 127 in 2024. As of May 2025, 79 articles have already been recorded, suggesting continued momentum.

Based on Table 4 above, the post-2020 period marks a significant intensification in research output. Starting with 85 publications in 2020, the numbers rose to a peak of 127 in 2024. The year 2023 also recorded high productivity with 125 publications. As of May 2025, the number has already reached 79, suggesting that the final count for the year is likely to surpass the previous average. The surge in publication during this period correlates with a global shift in economic priorities brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the increasing pressure on governments to recover tax revenues, and the implementation of the OECD's BEPS 2.0 framework. These shifts have elevated corporate tax compliance as a research priority across disciplines, including economics, accounting, law, and public policy.

Table 4: Number of articles in studies of corporate tax compliance published for the years 2015 -2025

Year	Total Publication	%
2025 (as at May)	79	6.37%
2024	127	10.23%
2023	125	10.07%
2022	112	9.02%
2021	80	6.45%
2020	85	6.85%
2019	71	5.72%
2018	58	4.67%
2017	54	4.35%
2016	49	3.95%

Overall, the comparative data reveal a near-even distribution of research efforts across both periods, with 633 publications before 2020 (51%) and 608 publications after 2020 (49%), as shown in Table 5 below. However, the annual growth rate in the post-2020 era is significantly steeper, indicating heightened academic engagement and possibly more diverse thematic exploration. This trend suggests that corporate tax compliance is increasingly viewed through the lens of global policy reform, economic resilience, and technological advancement. The figures below visually present the evolution of publication trends across the whole timeline, as well as the segmented pre- and post-2020 phases.

Table 5: Summary of corporate tax compliance publications by phase (Pre-2020 vs Post-2020 as of May 2025)

Year	Pre-2020	%	Post-2020 (as May 2025)	%
Number of publication	633	51%	608	49%
Total Publication	1241			

7.2 RQ2- How have the most prolific countries contributing to corporate tax research changed between the pre-2020 and post-2020 periods?

Over the years, scholarly engagement in corporate tax has expanded globally, with significant contributions originating from both developed and emerging economies. According to Scopus data, the United States is the dominant contributor, with 367 publications, followed by China (208) and the United Kingdom (116). European countries such as Germany (81) and France (27), alongside Asia-Pacific nations like Australia (79), Indonesia (38), and Malaysia (36), also feature prominently in the landscape. Figure 2 visually summarizes the contributions, illustrating the top 10 countries contributing to corporate tax research based on total Scopus-indexed outputs over the year.

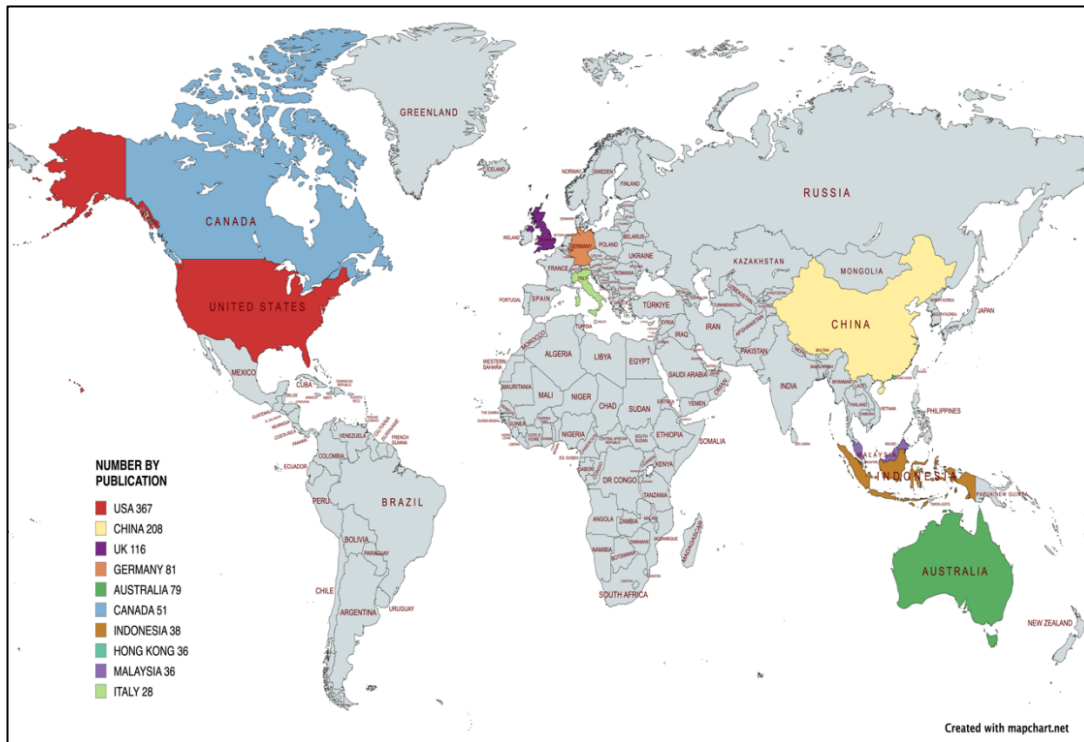


Figure 2: Top 10 countries contributing to corporate tax research

When comparing the pre- and post-2020 periods, apparent shifts in country rankings become evident. As shown in Table 6 below, there are noticeable shifts in research leadership within the field of corporate tax. While the United States remained a dominant contributor across both phases, its total output decreased from 229 publications before 2020 to 138 in the post-2020 period, resulting in a shift to second place. In contrast, China, which was not among the five contributors before 2020, rose sharply to the top with 180 publications, reflecting a significant increase in scholarly engagement post-2020. The United Kingdom maintained a consistent presence in both periods, though with a modest decrease from 69 to 47 publications. Australia also sustained its position, increasing slightly from 35 to 44 publications, indicating stable research output. Notably, Indonesia emerged as a new entrant into the top five post-2020, contributing 31 publications, thereby replacing Canada, which recorded 28 publications in the earlier period but did not appear in the post-2020 top five. These shifts highlight a changing dynamic in the geographical distribution of research productivity over time.

Table 6. Comparison of top 5 contributing countries to corporate tax research: pre-2020 vs post-2020

Country/ Territory	Pre-2020	Country/ Territory	Post-2020
United States	229	China	180
United Kingdom	69	United States	138
Germany	55	United Kingdom	47
Australia	35	Australia	44
Canada	28	Indonesia	31

Table 7: Most popular keywords in studies of corporate tax

Notably, “tax avoidance” emerged as the most frequently occurring keyword in Figure 3 and Table 7, with 266 mentions and a total link strength of 265, indicating its deep integration across related topics. Other prominent keywords include “corporate tax” (79 occurrences), “corporate governance” (36), and “effective tax rate” (32), suggesting sustained scholarly interest in institutional factors and fiscal

outcomes. Additionally, themes such as CSR, multinational enterprises, and profit shifting show interconnectedness with broader issues of ethical conduct and cross-border tax strategy. These patterns are further detailed in Table 7, which lists the top 10 keywords and affirms the field's focus on corporate tax.

A comparison of the pre-2020 and post-2020 periods, as shown in Table 8, reveals substantial shifts in thematic emphasis within corporate tax research. In the pre-2020 period, the most frequent keywords centered around broader policy and international tax issues, "corporate taxation" (70 occurrences), "tax competition" (21), "foreign direct investment" (12), "corporate income tax" (19), "developing countries" (8), and "transfer pricing" (10). These reflect a macro-level focus on tax structures and the global mobility of capital. In contrast, the post-2020 period displays a clear pivot toward micro-level corporate behavior and governance themes. Keywords such as "corporate governance" (36), "corporate social responsibility" (25), "firm value" (12), and "tax planning" (20) emerge, indicating increased interest in internal corporate practices and ethical conduct. Furthermore, while "tax avoidance" remained a dominant theme across both periods, its occurrence rose significantly from 62 to 266, suggesting intensified scholarly scrutiny following global economic disruptions. The inclusion of "China" in the post-2020 top keywords also reflects shifting regional relevance in the literature. Overall, this evolution highlights a movement away from structural tax policy discourse toward more behaviourally and governance-oriented perspectives in the post-pandemic research landscape.

Table 8: Comparison of most popular keywords in studies of corporate tax: pre-2020 and post-2020

Pre-2020			Post-2020		
Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength	Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength
corporate taxation	70	62	tax avoidance	266	265
tax avoidance	62	54	corporate tax	79	68
tax competition	21	28	corporate governance	36	67
multinational corporations	17	23	effective tax rate	32	44
foreign direct investment	12	21	corporate social responsibility	25	42
corporate income tax	19	19	china	19	40
effective tax rate	18	19	multinational enterprises	17	33
transfer pricing	10	19	firm value	12	27
developing countries	8	18	profit shifting	11	24
tax aggressiveness	18	17	tax planning	20	23

7.4 RQ4- What thematic categories emerge from the top 50 most cited articles in each period, and what does this reveal about emerging issues and research focus?

To answer RQ4, a manual thematic analysis was conducted on the titles of the 50 most cited articles for both the pre-2020 and post-2020 phases. Each title was reviewed and grouped based on dominant topics, conceptual angles, and sectoral relevance. This classification enabled the identification of shifting priorities and methodological approaches in the corporate tax literature. The articles were then mapped into thematic categories, including executive behavior, international tax strategy, governance, CSR, ESG, digitalization, and political-economic contexts. This manual method supplements bibliometric keyword co-occurrence analysis by offering a deeper, content-driven lens on emerging issues and theoretical gaps. For reference, the top 10 articles from the list reviewed are provided in Table 9.

Table 9: List of 10 most cited corporate tax articles: pre-2020 and post-2020

Pre -2020			
Authors	Title	Year	Cited by
Kim J.-B.; Li Y.; Zhang L.	Corporate Tax Avoidance And Stock Price Crash Risk: Firm-Level Analysis	2011	1272
Desai M.A.; Dharmapala D.	Corporate Tax Avoidance And High-Powered Incentives	2006	1139
Dyreng S.D.; Hanlon M.; Maydew E.L.	Long-Run Corporate Tax Avoidance	2008	1018
Dyreng S.D.; Hanlon M.; Maydew E.L.	The Effects Of Executives On Corporate Tax Avoidance	2010	841
Wilson R.J.	An Examination Of Corporate Tax Shelter Participants	2009	639
Desai M.A.; Dharmapala D.	Corporate Tax Avoidance And Firm Value	2009	600
Rego S.O.; Wilson R.	Equity Risk Incentives And Corporate Tax Aggressiveness	2012	576
Cai H.; Liu Q.	Competition And Corporate Tax Avoidance: Evidence From Chinese Industrial Firms	2009	534
Djankov S.; Ganser T.; McLiesh C.; Ramalho R.; Shleifer A.	The Effect Of Corporate Taxes On Investment And Entrepreneurship	2010	413
Devereux M.P.; Lockwood B.; Redoano M.	Do Countries Compete Over Corporate Tax Rates?	2008	398
Post -2020			
Authors	Title	Year	Cited by
Wen W.; Cui H.; Ke Y.	Directors With Foreign Experience And Corporate Tax Avoidance	2020	157
Yu H.; Liao L.; Qu S.; Fang D.; Luo L.; Xiong G.	Environmental Regulation And Corporate Tax Avoidance : A Quasi-Natural Experiments Study Based On China's New Environmental Protection Law	2021	120

Beer S.; de Mooij R.; Liu L.	International Corporate Tax Avoidance: A Review Of The Channels, Magnitudes, And Blind Spots	2020	112
Wang F.; Xu S.; Sun J.; Cullinan C.P.	Corporate Tax Avoidance: A Literature Review And Research Agenda	2020	112
Hasan M.M.; Lobo G.J.; Qiu B.	Organizational Capital, Corporate Tax Avoidance, And Firm Value	2021	108
Chen H.; Tang S.; Wu D.; Yang D.	The Political Dynamics Of Corporate Tax Avoidance: The Chinese Experience	2021	99
Geng Y.; Liu W.; Li K.; Chen H.	Environmental Regulation And Corporate Tax Avoidance: A Quasi-Natural Experiment Based On The Eleventh Five-Year Plan In China	2021	69
Cooper M.; Nguyen Q.T.K.	Multinational Enterprises And Corporate Tax Planning: A Review Of Literature And Suggestions For A Future Research Agenda	2020	64
Baudot L.; Johnson J.A.; Roberts A.; Roberts R.W.	Is Corporate Tax Aggressiveness A Reputation Threat? Corporate Accountability, Corporate Social Responsibility, And Corporate Tax Behavior	2020	61
Shevlin T.; Urcan O.; Vasvari F.P.	Corporate Tax Avoidance And Debt Costs	2020	61

The pre-2020 phase was characterized by a strong focus on financial incentives, agency theory, and the use of quantitative models to understand how managerial traits, ownership structure, and corporate governance influenced tax avoidance behavior. Frequently studied topics included profit shifting, transfer pricing, institutional tax enforcement, and cross-border tax arbitrage. Macroeconomic analyses examined the impact of tax policy on foreign direct investment (FDI), wages, and entrepreneurship, with a focus on statutory tax rates and tax competition among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations. These studies were largely Western-centric, with limited exploration of behavioral, ethical, or socio-political influences. The dominant paradigm emphasized how internal corporate mechanisms affected compliance, setting a baseline for regulatory evaluations.

In contrast, the post-2020 literature reflects a notable shift in both scope and methodology, responding to global disruptions such as COVID-19, BEPS 2.0, and rapid digital transformation. Research expanded to incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives, examining how environmental regulation, CSR mandates, ESG performance, and political turnover influence tax compliance, particularly in emerging economies such as China, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Governance themes now include board diversity, CEO personality traits, and foreign institutional ownership. Moreover, newer studies examine how digital finance, tax reporting readability, and regulatory uncertainty shape corporate behavior. This evolution indicates that the field is shifting from internal control and deterrence theories toward stakeholder-based, institutionally embedded approaches, reflecting a more contextualized and inclusive understanding of tax compliance in a post-crisis world.

7.5 RQ5- What theoretical frameworks have been employed in the top 20 theory-based articles, and what are the theoretical gaps in explaining corporate tax?

To address RQ5, a manual thematic analysis was performed by reviewing the titles and abstracts of 20 selected high-impact articles focused on corporate tax. Each article was categorized based on the explicitly stated or inferred theoretical framework used to underpin the study. This method enabled the identification of dominant theories, including Agency Theory, Stakeholder Theory, Behavioral Theory, and Institutional Theory, as well as their contextual applications. The analysis also captured emerging perspectives such as Diffusion of Innovation Theory, Schumpeterian Growth Theory, and Dynamic Resource-Based Theory. This classification offers insight into both the breadth and limitations of current theoretical approaches, serving as the basis for evaluating theoretical coverage and identifying gaps in the corporate tax literature. Table 10 below lists the 10 most frequently cited articles in corporate tax research based on corporate tax theory.

Table 10: List of 10 most cited corporate tax theory-based articles in corporate tax research

Author(s) and Year	Citations	Theory/ Framework	Main Theme or Focus
Desai and Dharmapala (2009)	600	Agency Theory	Firm value and tax avoidance
Khan, Srinivasan and Tan (2017)	242	Agency Theory	Institutional ownership impact
Christensen et al. (2015)	242	Behavioral Agency Theory	Political orientation and executive behavior
Robinson, Sikes and Weaver (2010)	232	Incentive Theory	Tax department performance evaluation
Kovermann and Velte (2019)	165	Stakeholder Theory	Governance mechanisms and stakeholder influence
Brown (2011)	126	Diffusion of Innovations	Network diffusion of tax sheltering
Ariel (2012)	106	Deterrence Theory	RCT on tax compliance strategies
Donohoe (2015)	83	Risk Management Theory	Use of financial derivatives in tax avoidance
Peretto (2007)	78	Schumpeterian Growth Theory	Tax policy and welfare
Hasan et al. (2017)	61	Resource-Based View	Life cycle and tax avoidance

Most of the articles employed Agency Theory as their foundational lens, especially in exploring how managerial behavior, executive compensation, and ownership structures influence tax avoidance (e.g., Desai & Dharmapala, 2009; Khan et al., 2017; Chi et al., 2017). Variants such as Behavioral Agency Theory and Stakeholder Agency Theory were used to explain more nuanced scenarios, including how CEO overconfidence or stakeholder pressure modulate tax behavior (Kubick & Lockhart, 2017; Zolotoy et al., 2021). Some studies expanded into broader theoretical domains. For example, Peretto (2007) applied Schumpeterian growth theory to model the welfare effects of tax reforms, while Mao (2019) and Kovermann and Velte (2019) integrated CSR frameworks and stakeholder-oriented views to evaluate the moral and reputational drivers of tax compliance. Other unique contributions came from studies that employed Diffusion Theory (Brown, 2011) and Dynamic Resource-Based Theory

(Hasan et al., 2017), which offered sector- or stage-specific insights. While these frameworks demonstrate theoretical diversity, their application is still uneven, with a heavy reliance on classical economic and agency-driven assumptions.

Despite these contributions, key theoretical gaps remain. Most studies frame tax avoidance as a rational, risk-based decision, lacking in psychological, relational, and institutional depth. Institutional theory is underutilized, especially in understanding how national policies, legal systems, or tax authority behavior shape compliance. Similarly, Attribution Theory, Legitimacy Theory, and Cognitive Framing Models are rarely employed, despite their relevance in analyzing perceptions, morality, and legitimacy-seeking behavior, which are key aspects increasingly important in post-pandemic tax debates. There is also limited theoretical application in developing economy contexts, with most models grounded in data from the US or OECD. The field would benefit from a more integrated, cross-disciplinary approach that brings together behavioral science, sociology, political economy, and governance theory to fully capture the complex drivers of modern corporate tax behavior in a globally disrupted environment.

8. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of corporate tax research in the context of global economic disruptions. By employing a bibliometric approach, this analysis sought to identify shifts in scholarly output, thematic focus, geographic contributions, and theoretical frameworks within the field. A multi-phase search strategy enabled the study to segment research trends into pre-2020 and post-2020 periods, allowing for a meaningful comparison of the field's development over time.

The findings reveal a notable surge in corporate tax publications following the year 2020, reflecting increased attention driven by tax policy reform, global financial uncertainty, and digital transformation. Thematic analysis revealed that while earlier studies emphasized agency-based models and international tax planning, more recent work has shifted toward governance, stakeholder influence, and the impact of regulatory frameworks. Countries such as China and Indonesia have become more prominent in the literature, indicating a regional diversification of research efforts. The analysis also revealed gaps in the application of comprehensive theoretical models, with an overreliance on agency theory and limited engagement with institutional, behavioral, and relational frameworks.

This study contributes to the field by mapping its intellectual evolution and highlighting underexplored areas that require scholarly attention. The results highlight the importance of integrating emerging themes, such as ESG, digital finance, and socio-political governance, into future research agendas. Additionally, the findings underscore the need for a deeper understanding of how both internal corporate dynamics and external institutional pressures shape compliance. While the study offers a robust bibliometric foundation, limitations include database dependency and the exclusion of non-indexed materials. Future research should consider broader data sources and adopt qualitative or mixed-method approaches to enrich understanding.

In sum, this analysis demonstrates the value of bibliometric methods in capturing the transformation of corporate tax research in response to economic change. By identifying key contributors, dominant themes, and theoretical gaps, the study provides a comprehensive overview that may inform both academic inquiry and

policy development. As fiscal landscapes continue to evolve, ongoing attention to this research domain is critical for supporting equitable and effective tax governance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the Iman Excellence Center for their valuable guidance throughout the development of this study. Appreciation is also extended to the research institution for access to databases and resources that made this bibliometric analysis possible.

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