

## Exploring Research Trends in Fantasy: A Bibliometric Study Utilizing the Scopus Database

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### Abstract

The present paper investigates the literature indexed on the Scopus database about fantasy on various bibliometric parameters. PRISMA was used to identify and select the articles from the Scopus database. The Scopus database was searched for the term “fantasy” resulting in 7177 research documents. After refining the results based on inclusion-exclusion criteria and manual screening 502 samples were exported in CSV format for analysis. R packages ‘Biblioshiny’ and ‘VOSviewer’ software were used for bibliometric analysis and visualization of data. The most influential authors, articles, journals, country, keywords, and the trend of the publications by years were determined. The significant findings of this study were that the most cited (88) document was “Brexit populism and fantasies of fulfilment” by Browning, C. S. (2023) and the most influential source was personality and social psychology (76). The number of publications has increased exponentially, although there have been some ups and downs over the years. Research on fantasy as a faculty shows a positive research trend which will turn it into an emerging research field.

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### Keywords:

Fantasy;  
research trends;  
Scopus;  
Bibliometric analysis,  
VOSviewer;  
Biblioshiny.

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### Introduction

Fantasy is a powerful faculty or activity of imagining impossible or improbable things (Oxford English Dictionary; 2016). It is one of the most important human qualities that make man imaginative, creative, innovative, and divergent thinkers that empowers people to think beyond the existing things, facts, and theories (Smith & Mathur, 2009, p. 52). No creative work has ever emerged without the ability to fantasize (Jung, 1921, p. 82). It is a result of human creativity and denotes the capacity for imagination (Vygotsky, 2004). The activity of imagining impossible or improbable things that stretch our imagination, explore possibilities,

generate new ideas, and allow us to imagine ourselves overcoming challenges, or living out our dreams in a way that might not be possible in reality (Shiota & Nomura, 2022, p. 65). It is a dominant genre of literature that allows limitless imagination, creativity, and explore themes such as power, destiny, and morality. It stimulates students' curiosity to think beyond reality by depicting magical or fantastical elements that defy the laws of nature (Richert & Schlesinger, 2022, pp. 02–04). Furthermore, fantasy literature has a significant impact on children's intellectual development (Eliphase, 2019, pp. 32–37). To improve students' performance in remembering declarative knowledge and enhancing learning effectiveness in the classroom fantasy elements serve as a powerful tool (Zuo et al., 2023, p. 100563). Incorporating fantasy literature into the curriculum shifts the traditional monotonous teaching-learning process into active joyful learning (Parker & Lepper, 1992, p. 625). Fostering imagination and creativity is crucial for preparing children for success in the future in a world that is becoming more complex (Lack & Kumar, 2003). Additionally, fantasy sparks the power of imagination, allowing us to explore worlds beyond the constraints of reality, providing emotional nourishment, and extending intellectual growth. During the last couple of decades, studies on fantasy explored how fantasy can be used as a pedagogical tools to encourage students' engagement in the learning process to foster creativity, and divergent thinking among learners (Parker & Lepper, 1992, p. 625). In these kinds of exercises, students feel free to imagine things that don't exist and not worry about competitive evaluation (Parker & Lepper, 1992, p. 625). In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements, hectic social systems, and existential anxieties, fantasy provides a sanctuary where we can immerse ourselves in alternate realities, mythical realms, and epic adventures (Bacon & Charlesford, 2018, pp. 157–165). Fantasy literature remains a dominant genre in various forms of entertainment, including literature, film, television, video games, and virtual reality. The importance of fantasy in our lives lies in its multifaceted impact on our mental, emotional, and social well-being. Studies on fantasy have been carried out across the globe highlighted the multifaceted role of fantasy as a pedagogical tool, cognitive, creative, and cultural faculty that influences various aspects of human experiences (Zuo et al., 2023; Shiota & Nomura, 2022; Bunce & Woolley, 2021; Richert & Schlesinger, 2022; Parker & Lepper, 1992, p. 625; Seja & Russ, 1999). The importance of fantasy as a cognitive function that is critical to emotional regulation is being investigated (Seja & Russ, 1999, pp. 269–277; Bacon & Charlesford, 2018, pp. 157–165; Shiota & Nomura, 2022, p. 912165). The novelty of the present study is that it unveils the research trends of fantasy as a pedagogical tool or psychological construct and recommends future research directions. Through bibliometric analysis and data visualisation, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date review of the published scientific literature on fantasy, particularly fantasy literature, and fantasy as a construct, that is indexed in the Scopus database.

### **Objectives of the study**

The primary aim of the present study was to conduct a bibliometric analysis of articles indexed in the Scopus database on fantasy to understand the present state of research on fantasy. In accordance with the objectives of the study, a systematic search was carried out in the Scopus database, which indexed high-quality scientific literature in more than 250 disciplines, including social sciences, and humanities.

1. To identify the most influential authors in the research field of fantasy.
2. To identify the most-cited journals publishing research on fantasy in Scopus.
3. To identify the most frequently cited studies on fantasy.

4. To identify the keywords that often appear with fantasy-related research articles published in the Scopus database.
5. To identify the most influential country in terms of the number of publications.

### **Research questions**

The present bibliometric analysis focused on the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the most influential authors' index in Scopus on fantasy-related research?

RQ2: What are the most-cited journals indexed in Scopus?

RQ3: What are the most cited articles indexed in Scopus about fantasy-related research?

RQ4: What are the keywords that often appear in fantasy-related research articles?

RQ5: Which countries are the most influential in terms of the number of publications?

### **Methods**

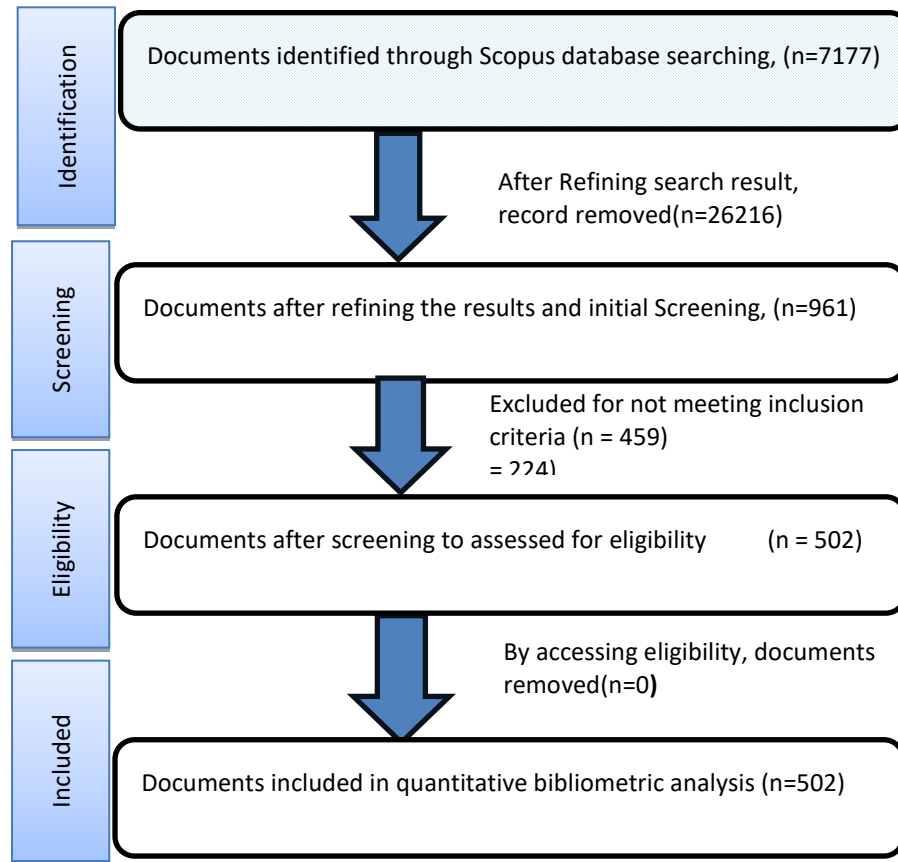
This study used the bibliometric analysis method to provide a comprehensive overview and to discover the current trends in fantasy-related research indexed in the Scopus database. Bibliometrics employs quantitative methods to analyse and evaluate the research landscape and its effects. There are two methods employed in this research, the PRISMA guidelines for data collection (Page et al., 2020) and bibliometrics for data analysis. VOSviewer version 1.6.20 and R packages Biblioshiny software were employed for bibliometric analysis and visualization of data. In accordance with the objectives of this study, a systematic advance search was carried out in the Scopus database. This database was chosen because it is the largest academic database indexed high-quality scientific literature about more than 250 disciplines, including social sciences, and humanities (Cretu & Morandau, 2020).

### **Inclusion and Exclusion criteria**

Studies were included in the bibliometric analysis if they met the following inclusion criteria. Four inclusion criteria were defined to generate a collection of published articles that specifically addressed our research questions. (i) Articles were only included if they addressed fantasy literature or the psychological aspect of fantasy. (ii) Article published in an academic journal (not a book chapter or review article). (iii) Articles must be in English or available in English version. (iv) included articles published between 2018-2024.

To identify relevant papers for the study, the researcher defined the following exclusion criteria. We excluded papers from the bibliometric analysis that met at least one of the following criteria: Papers published other than English language; Papers shorter than 6 pages; Papers that were not peer-reviewed; book chapter or review articles; Secondary and tertiary studies.

Figure 1 PRISMA 2020 flow diagram



**Note.** Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) used as the process of study selection from the Scopus database

### Information sources

The researchers decided to search in an authentic scientific database, Scopus to identify suitable studies for systematic bibliometric analysis. The first advance searches on the Scopus were conducted on May 1st, 2024, and identified 7177 documents. After refining the search results and eligibility check based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, we added a total of 502 articles from the database.

### Search Strategy

A systematic search strategy was employed in the Scopus database to find best fitted relevant documents for the study for achieving the objectives. The researcher decided to search in the Scopus database because it is a well-established and recognized scientific database. The first search to identify documents took place in May 2024. In addition, these keywords were combined with Boolean operators (“AND,” “OR”, “NOT”). The term “fantasy” was searched in the Scopus database using the following advance query string of Scopus: TITLE (“fantasy”) AND PUBYEAR > 2017 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "ARTS" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "SOCI" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "PSYC" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SRCTYPE , "j" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( PUBSTAGE , "final" ) ).

### Data collection process

The researchers conducted the advanced search in the Scopus database by using appropriate keywords and identified a total of 7177 documents. After that, the researcher refined and imitated the search result by some keywords, subject area, language, source type, publication stage, and publication year range and exported a total of 502 bibliometric meta data in CSV format. We export all of its references—author, year, title, DOI, abstract, etc. for further analysis. Then, the researchers check the eligibility of each one of the documents by manual screening for final selection.

### Data analysis processes

To address the defined research questions, researchers analyzed and visualized the retrieved bibliographic metadata by employing “VOSviewer” and “R packages Biblioshiny” software. Scopus data analysis was also incorporated into the study. The researchers visualize and analyze the overview of the included studies through main information, annual scientific production, average citation per year, most relevant source, Bradford’s Law, most relevant author, author’s local impact, Lotka’s Law, corresponding authors country, countries scientific production and most global cited documents. On the other hand, co-citation-cited source analysis, network visualization of keywords, bibliographic coupling of countries done by VOSviewer. The data collection, screening and analysis procedure was conducted by three researchers.

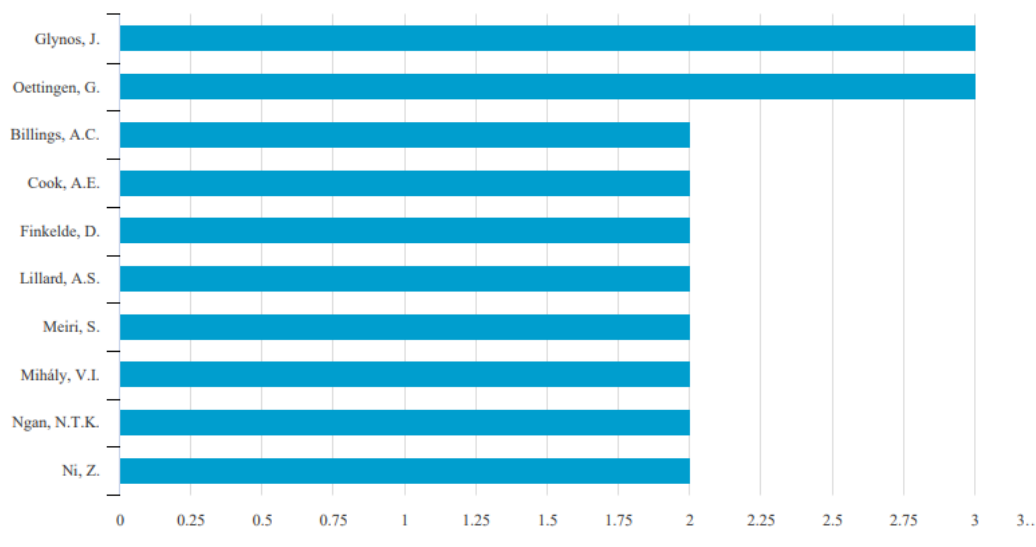
## 3.0.0 Results and Discussion

RQ1: What are the most influential authors in the research area of fantasy based on Scopus index articles?

### Most influential authors

To address the first research question, Scopus analysis was used to find out leading authors. Among 743 authors, Jason Glynos, a lecturer in political theory in the Department of Government at the University of Essex, UK, was the most influential author. Figure 1 Shows that Glynos, J., & Oettingen, G., have the highest number of publications (3), and Billings, A.C., Black, J., Cook, A.E., Finkelde, D., JR, Lee, H., Lillard, A.S., & Meiri, S. have two publications each.

Figure 2 *Most influential authors*



**Note.** The horizontal bar graph represents the leading authors in terms of publication in fantasy-related research.

Table No 1 shows that Glynos, J., has the highest citation count (29) from (NP-3) three publications while Cook, A.E., & O'Brien, E.J., have the second-highest citation count (27) from (NP-2) two publications each. Among the leading authors Oettingen, G. has the highest h-index (3), g-index (3), and m-index (429).

Table 1 Authors' Local Impact

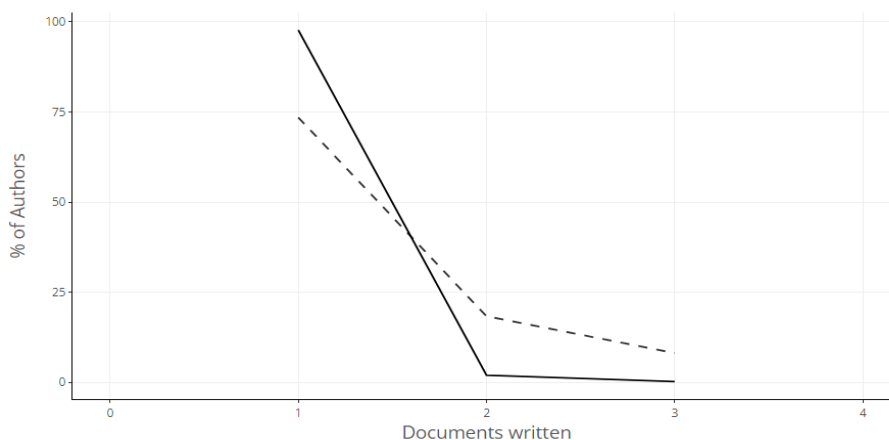
Author	h-index	g-index	m-index	TC	NP	PY-start
OETTINGEN G	3	3	0.429	15	3	2018
BILLINGS AC	2	2	0.400	17	2	2020
BLACK J	2	2	0.333	14	2	2019
COOK AE	2	2	0.286	27	2	2018
GLYNOS J	2	3	0.500	29	3	2021
NI Z	2	2	0.400	16	2	2020
O'BRIEN EJ	2	2	0.286	27	2	2018
RUIHLEY BJ	2	2	0.500	12	2	2021
ABOITIZ NC	1	1	0.167	3	1	2019
ACHMAD D	1	1	0.200	1	1	2020

*Note.* TC= Total Citations, NP= Number of Publications, PY= Per year

*Authors productivity*

Lotka's law of scientific productivity is a bibliometric example of empirical observations where the number of authors against the number of contributions made is plotted on a logarithmic scale (Kawamura et al., 2000; MacRoberts & MacRoberts, 1982).The logarithmic scale of Lotka's Law shows that a very small number of authors have written multiple documents, while a majority (726) of authors contribute only a single (n=1) document as the number of documents increases, the percentage of authors decreases sharply. Among them, 726 authors have one (n=1) document each, 15 authors have two (n=2) documents each, and 2 authors have three (n=3) documents each. Figure 2. also shows that the solid line closely follows the dotted line, indicating that the observed author productivity conforms well to the expected theoretical distribution according to Lotka's Law.

Figure 3 *Authors productivity through Lotka's Law*



*Note.* X-axis represents the number of documents written by each author and Y-axis shows the percentage of authors contributing to different document output levels.

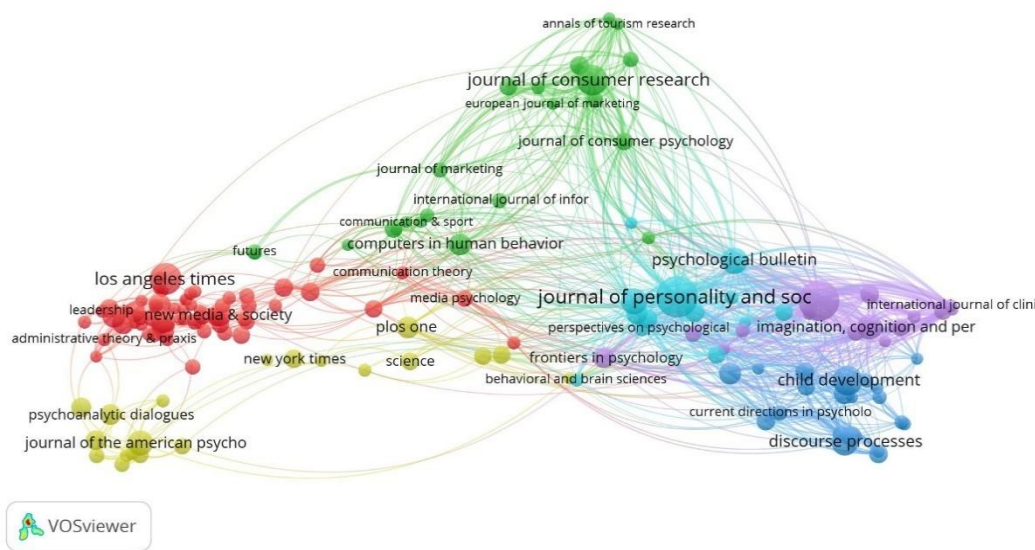


RQ2: What are the most-cited Scopus index journals published fantasy-related documents?

*The most cited journals*

To address the second research question network visualisation of co-citation cited-source analysis was employed by 'VOSviewer' software. The network visualisation comprised with a minimum number of citations of a source 7 of the 10523 sources, which meets 160 thresholds. The overall strength of the co-citation linkages with other sources was computed for each of the 160 sources. 160 sources were chosen from those having the strongest overall relationship. The network visualisation of co-citation cited-source have total 157 items, 6 clusters, 2111 links and total link strength 19213.

According to Figure 4, the "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology," which had the most citations (76), links (85), and a total link strength of 1885 in cluster 6, was the most cited journal in the fantasy category that was indexed in Scopus. "Personality and Individual Differences" had 72 citations, 31 links, and a total link strength of 2626, making it the second most referenced journal. The 'Journal of Consumer Research' have 41 citations, 31 links, 1456 total link strength; 'Child Development' has 37 citations, 597 total link strength; 'Personality and social psychology bulletin' has 31 citations, 863 total link strength.



**Figure 4.** The most cited journals (co-citation- cited source analysis)

In addition, to present the core sources in the domain, R. packages bibliometrix software were used. Here, core resource analysis was presented by Bradford's Law, a bibliometrics principle that describe the scattering of articles on a specific subject within scientific journals. This law provides insights into the most productive sources and resource allocation. Figure 5. presented the core resources such as 'feminist media studies'; 'imagination, cognition and personality'; 'psychoanalysis, culture and society' published 6 articles each.

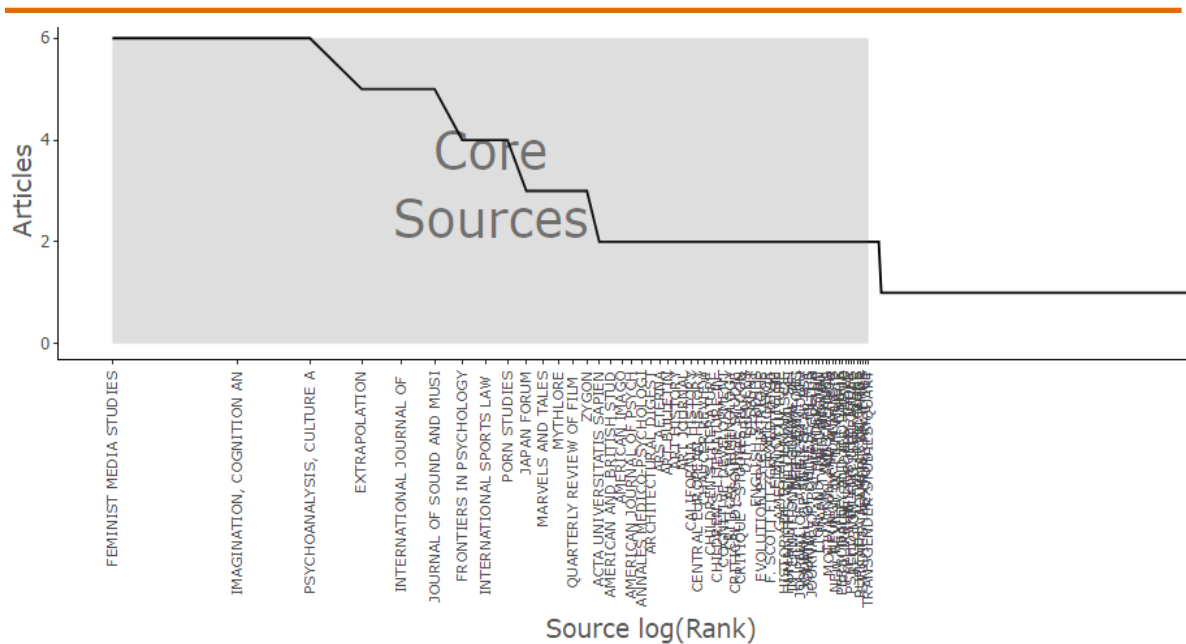


Figure 5. Bradford’s Law for Core Sources

Q3: What are the most cited (most influential articles) studies on fantasy?

Most Influential Documents

According to Scopus index articles about fantasy, Table No. 2 displays the most globally cited papers. The most cited study was ‘Brexit populism and fantasies of fulfillment’ by Browning, C. S. (2023) in ‘Ontological Insecurities and the Politics of Contemporary Populism’ (pp. 9-31) published by Taylor & Francis which had a total of 88 citations, total citation per year counts 14.67 and normalize total citation 20.77. The second highest cited document was ‘Followers in Leadership Theory: Fiction, fantasy, and Illusion’ by Ford, J., & Harding, N. (2018); has a total citation of 60; total citations per year of 14.67; normalized total citations of 20.77.

Table 2 Most global cited documents

Paper	DOI	Total citations	TC per year	N. TC
BROWNING CS, 2019, CMB REV INT AFF	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2019.1567461">10.1080/09557571.2019.1567461</a>	88	14.67	20.77
FORD J, 2018, LEADERSHIP	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715015621372">10.1177/1742715015621372</a>	60	8.57	8.78
COSKUN A, 2018, INT J DES		59	8.43	8.63
IOANA-DANIELA S, 2018, ASIA PAC J TOUR RES	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2018.1433699">10.1080/10941665.2018.1433699</a>	39	5.57	5.71
MACKENZIE M, 2020, SOC SCI MED	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113047">10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113047</a>	34	6.80	10.66
LEE H, 2018, MEDIA CULT SOC	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717718926">10.1177/0163443717718926</a>	33	4.71	4.83
HUNLETH J, 2019, CULT ANTHROPOL	<a href="https://doi.org/10.14506/ca34.2.01">10.14506/ca34.2.01</a>	30	5.00	7.08
CARTER M, 2023, NEW MEDIA AND SOCIETY	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211012794">10.1177/14614448211012794</a>	28	14.00	31.23
NICHOLLS L, 2018, URBAN POLICY RES	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/08111146.2017.1308859">10.1080/08111146.2017.1308859</a>	27	3.86	3.95
GLYNOS J, 2021, JLANGPOL	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.20052.gly">10.1075/jlp.20052.gly</a>	25	6.25	8.78

Note. TC= Total citations, NTC= Normalized total citations



RQ4: What are the keywords that often appear in fantasy-related research articles published in the Scopus database?

### *The most used keywords*

To find out the frequency of keywords, VOSviewer co-occurrence of keyword analysis was employed. For each of the 70 keywords, the overall strength of the co-occurrence links with other keywords has been calculated and the minimum number of occurrences of a keyword was determined at (3) three in the keyword co-occurrence visualization investigation. Figure 6. shows the differences in node's colours, size, and distance indicating the groups, the frequency of keyword repetition, and the relationship between the keywords (Waltman et al., 2020). The results of data visualization of the co-occurrence of keyword analysis revealed that the keywords with the highest number of occurrences are fantasy (f =89), link 57, total link strength 189, occurrence 189; human (f = 21), link 30, total link strength 73, occurrence 21; psychoanalysis (f = 15); gender (f = 12) and female (10). These results show that the studies are mostly focused on fantasy as a human faculty and power of imagination.

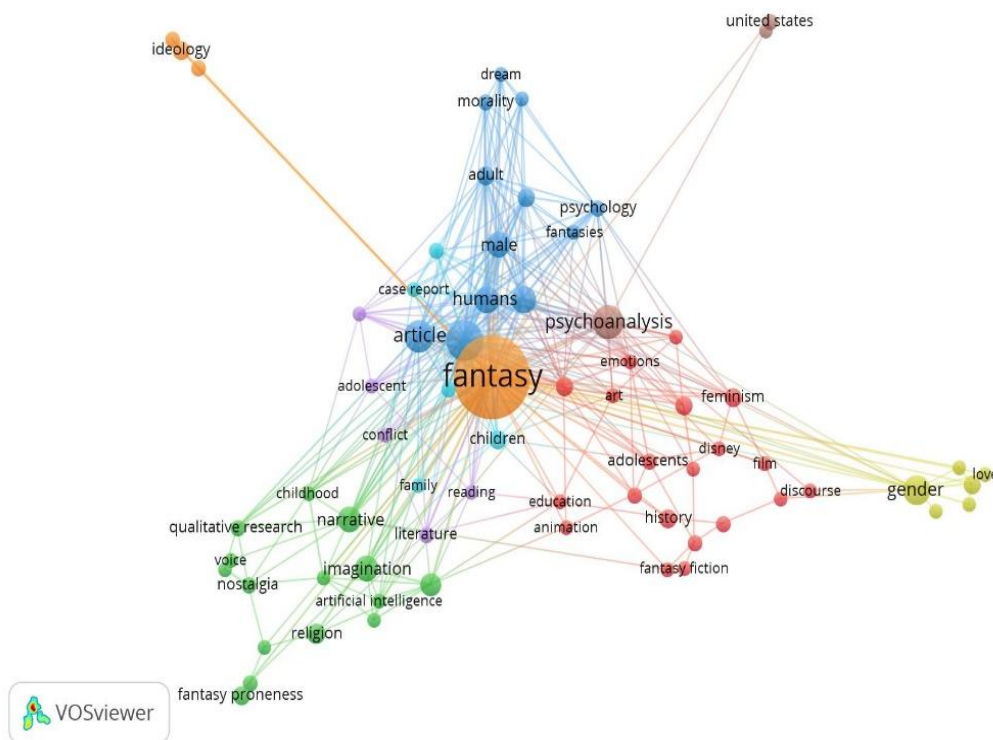


Figure 6 Co-occurrence of keyword Network visualization

RQ5: Which are the most contributing countries in terms of the number of publications?

### *Leading countries and the networks of collaboration*

In order to find out the leading countries, the researcher created a bibliographic coupling of countries network visualization with minimum number of documents of a country was selected 2 of the 62 countries that meet 42 thresholds. The most notable nations in the corpus are the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Germany, Netherlands, France, and Israel, as shown by the bibliographic coupling of countries in Figure 7. The analysis of bibliographic coupling of countries visualized that United States has the highest number of documents (170) with total links (238); and total link strength (1619). The United Kingdom has the second-

highest number of documents (65) and total link strength (1059) and Canada and Australia published 20 documents each. In terms of citation count, USA comes in first position (485), UK comes second (430), and Australia comes third (122). Although Australia has a relatively lower number of publications 20 but cited 122 times by different authors.

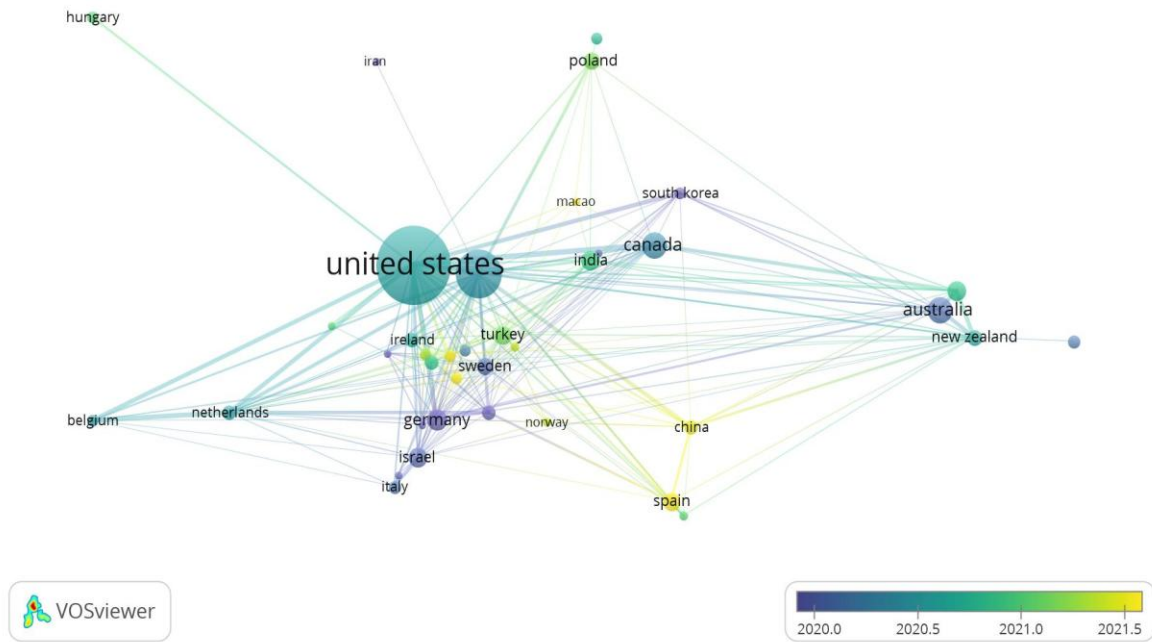


Figure 7 Bibliographic coupling of countries

### Conclusions

This research sought to identify the research trends of fantasy as a faculty or fantasy literature. Despite some fluctuations, the bibliometric analysis based on the Scopus database revealed that the number of articles has been rising year. The most influential researcher in this area is Jason Glynos, a lecturer in political theory in the Department of Government at the University of Essex, UK. The most cited documents were ‘Brexit populism and fantasies of fulfilment’ by Browning, C. S. (2023); with 88 citations. The keyword with the highest number of occurrences (89) is fantasy. United States has the highest number of documents (170). The most cited journals in the field of fantasy indexed in Scopus is ‘Personality and Social Psychology’ which has 76 citations. According to the primary data analysis, the average number of citations per document was 3.095 and the annual growth rate of fantasy article publication was 5.68 percent. In sum, the paper demonstrated that the researcher retrieved 502 documents from 400 sources, with a total author count of 743 and single-authored documents of 347, and international co-authorships were found at 6362%. The paper established that the research on fantasy as a faculty or fantasy literature has a positive trend that will make the topic an emerging research field.

### Limitations and Recommendations for future study

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of fantasy, future research could expand by incorporating multiple databases like Web of Science, Google Scholar, PubMed, and ERIC could provide additional insights about the

research area. The present study has some limitations that should be acknowledged, the first one is the study depends exclusively on the articles available in the Scopus database. Although the Scopus is one of the largest databases, it may not cover all related literature. Secondly, our bibliometric analysis only takes into account on the bibliometric metadata, without reviewing the full text.

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