

## Exploring Research Trends in Fantasy as a Psychological Construct: A Bibliometric Study Using the Scopus Database

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### ABSTRACT

The present study explores research trends in fantasy by conducting a bibliometric analysis of literature indexed in the Scopus database. The PRISMA framework was employed to identify and select articles from the Scopus database. A search of the Scopus database using the term "fantasy" resulted in 7,177 documents from which 502 articles were shortlisted based on inclusion–exclusion criteria and manual screening. The selected metadata were exported in CSV format and analyzed using the R package Biblioshiny and VOSviewer software for bibliometric analysis and visualization. The study identifies the most influential authors, articles, journals, countries, keywords, and trends in publication over the years. The most cited document was “*Brexit Populism and Fantasies of Fulfilment*” by Browning, C.S. (2023) with 88 citations, while *Personality and Social Psychology* emerged as the most influential source with 76 citations. Results show that although the number of publications fluctuated slightly, there has been an exponential overall growth. Research on fantasy as a faculty shows a positive research trend, which will turn it into an emerging research field.

**Keywords:** *Fantasy, Scopus, Bibliometric Analysis, VOSviewer, Biblioshiny*

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). “No creative work has ever emerged without the ability to fantasize” (Jung, 1921/2016, p. 88). It is the 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). Additionally, fantasy sparks the power of imagination, allowing us to explore worlds beyond the constraints of reality, providing emotional nourishment, and extending intellectual growth.

Fantasy literature remains a dominant genre in various forms of entertainment, including literature, film, television, video games, and virtual reality. It allows limitless imagination, creativity and explores themes such as power, destiny, and morality. It stimulates students'

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curiosity to think beyond reality by depicting magical or fantastical elements that defy the laws of nature (Richert & Schlesinger, 2022). Furthermore, fantasy literature has a significant impact on children's intellectual development (Eliphase, 2019). 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). Incorporating fantasy literature into the curriculum shifts the traditional monotonous teaching-learning process into active, joyful learning (Parker & Lepper, 1992). So, 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).

During the last couple of decades, studies on fantasy have explored how it can be used as a pedagogical tool to encourage students' engagement in the learning process, to foster creativity and divergent thinking among learners. Parker and Lepper (1992) demonstrated that fantasy-oriented environments and activities significantly boost children's motivation and learning. 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).

The importance of fantasy in our lives lies in its profound impact on mental, emotional, and social well-being. Research conducted across the globe highlights the multifaceted role of fantasy as a pedagogical tool and as a cognitive, creative, and cultural faculty that shapes various aspects of human experience (Zuo et al., 2023; Shiota & Nomura, 2022; Bunce & Woolley, 2021; Richert & Schlesinger, 2022; Parker & Lepper, 1992; Seja & Russ, 1999). The importance of fantasy as a cognitive function essential to emotional regulation has been explored in various studies (Seja & Russ, 1999; Bacon & Charlesford, 2018; Shiota & Nomura, 2022).

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 visualization, this 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, 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.

- To identify the most influential authors in the research field of fantasy.
- To identify the most-cited journals publishing research on fantasy in Scopus.
- To identify the most frequently cited studies on fantasy.
- To identify the keywords that often appear with fantasy-related research articles published in the Scopus database.
- To identify the most influential country in terms of the number of publications.

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## *Research questions*

The present bibliometric analysis focused on the following research questions:

- RQ1: What is the most influential author's 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 analyze 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*

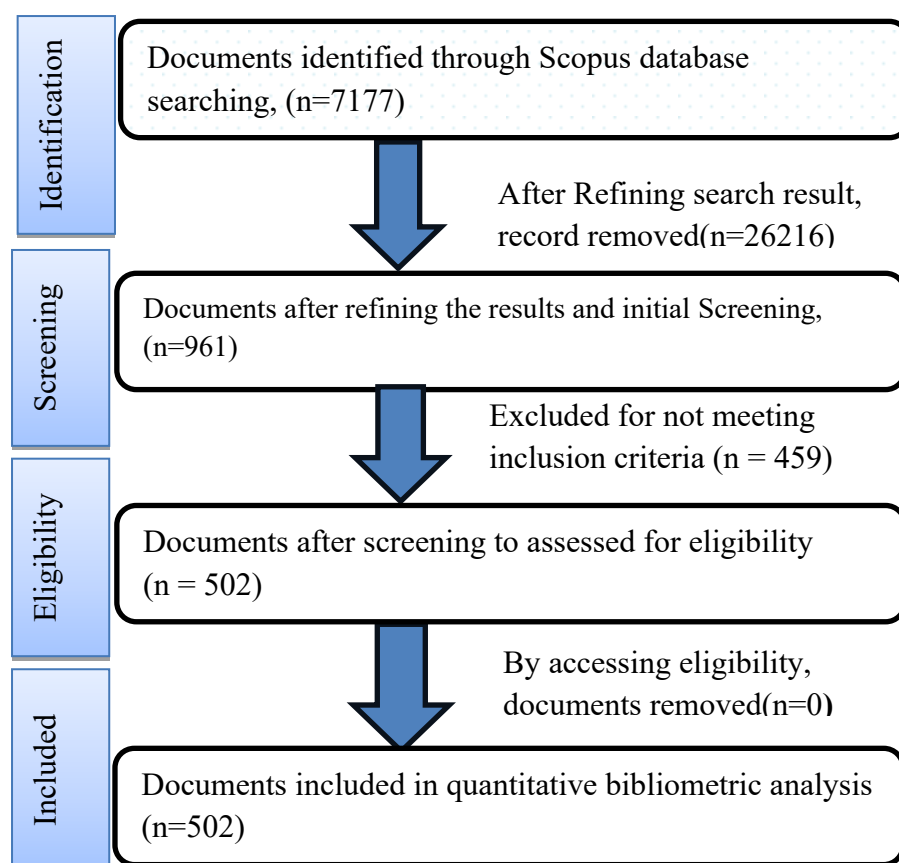
Studies were included in the bibliometric analysis if they met the following inclusion criteria. Four inclusion criteria were defined to generate a collection of published articles that specifically addressed our research questions. (i) Articles were only included if they addressed fantasy literature 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 chapters or review articles; Secondary and tertiary studies.

## *Information sources*

The researchers selected the Scopus database, a reputable scientific source, to identify relevant studies for systematic bibliometric analysis. The first advanced searches on 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 exported a total of 502 articles from the database.

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**Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram**

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

### Search Strategy

A systematic search strategy was employed in the Scopus database to identify the most relevant documents aligned with the study's objectives. The researchers chose to search the Scopus database because it is a well-established and widely recognized source of scientific literature. The first advanced search was conducted in May 2024. In addition, keywords were combined using Boolean operators ("AND," "OR," "NOT") in the advanced search interface of Scopus. 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 an advanced search in the Scopus database by using appropriate keywords and identified a total of 7177 documents. After that, the researchers refined and limited the search results by some keywords, subject area, language, source type, publication stage, and publication year range, and exported a total of 502 bibliometric metadata in CSV format. We export all of its references—author, year, title, DOI, abstract, etc., for further

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analysis. Then, the researchers check the eligibility of each one of the documents by manual screening for final selection.

### *Data analysis processes*

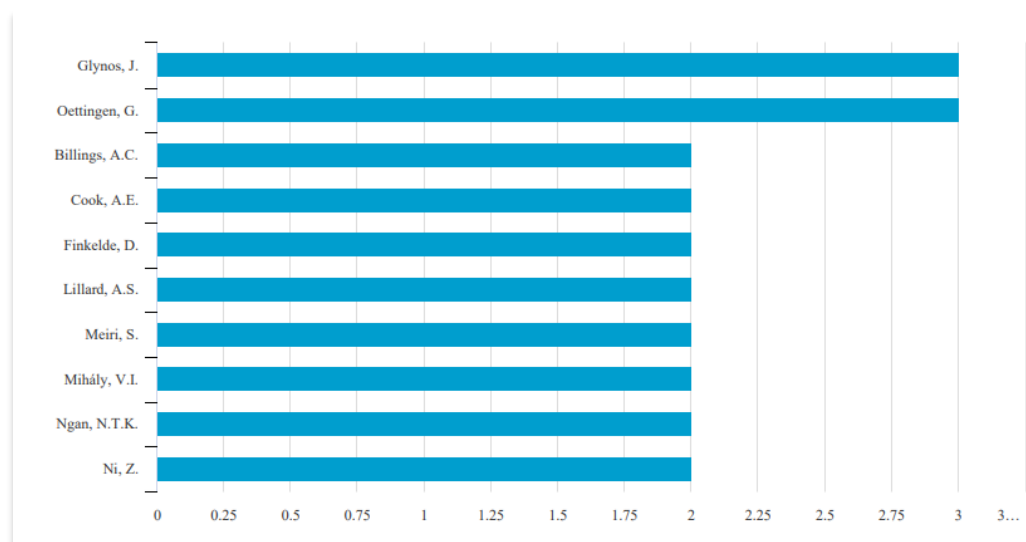
To address the defined research questions, researchers analyzed and visualized the retrieved bibliographic metadata by employing “VOSviewer” and “R packages Biblioshiny” software. Scopus data analysis was also incorporated into the study. The researchers visualize and analyze the overview of the included 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. Co-citation-cited source analysis, network visualization of keywords, and bibliographic coupling of countries were performed using VOSviewer. The processes of document searching, screening, data collection, and analysis were carried out by the two researchers

## 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 the 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.



***Figure2. Most influential authors***

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

Table 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)

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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).

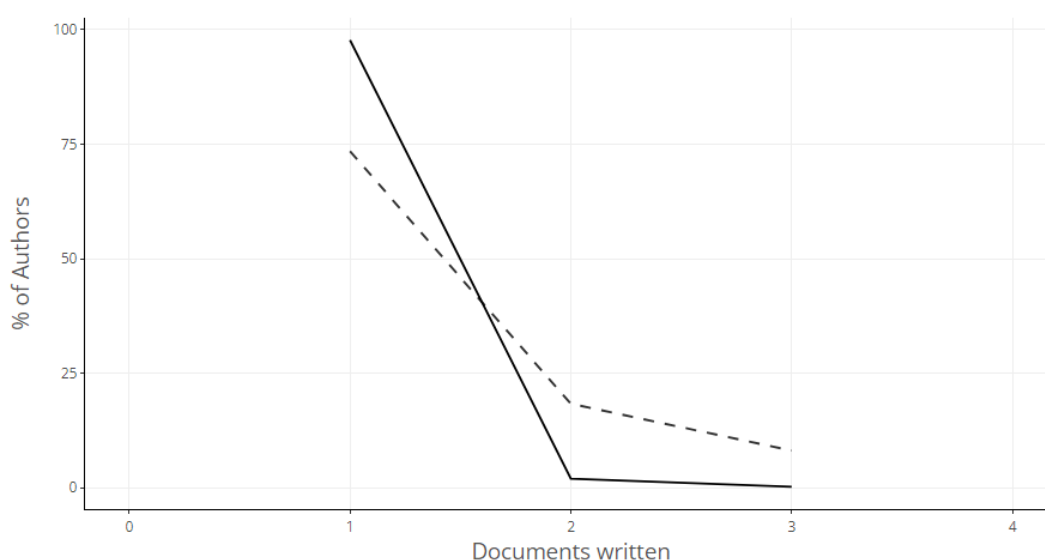
**Table 1 Authors' Local Impact**

Author	h-index	g-index	m-index	TC	NP	PY-start
Oettingen, G.	3	3	0.429	15	3	2018
Billings, A. C.	2	2	0.400	17	2	2020
Black, J.	2	2	0.333	14	2	2019
Cook, A. E.	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, E. J.	2	2	0.286	27	2	2018
Ruihley, B. J.	2	2	0.500	12	2	2021
Aboitiz, N. C.	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. Analysis of Authors productivity through Lotka's Law**

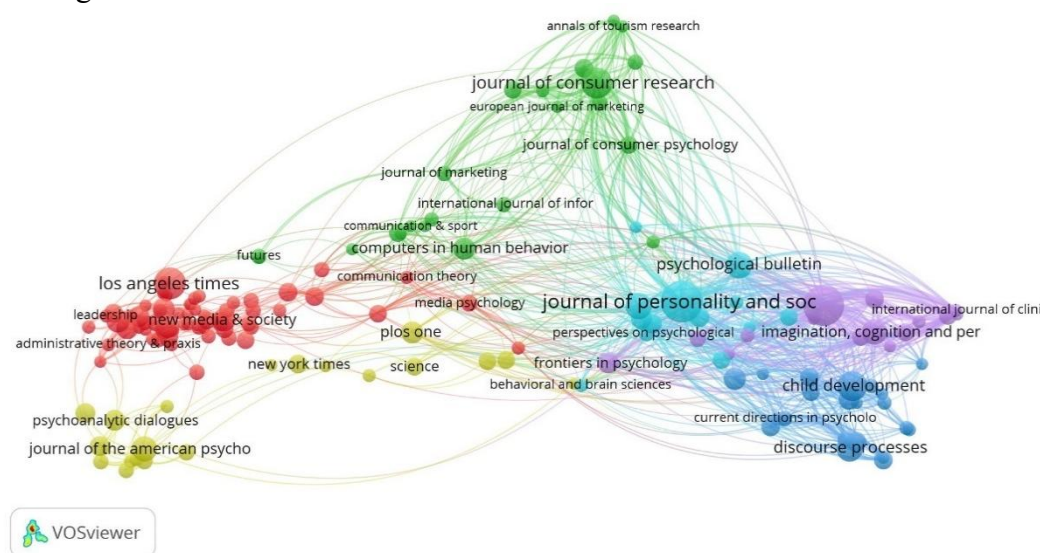
**Note.** X-axis represents the number of documents written by each author and Y-axis shows the percentage of authors contributing to different document output levels.

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

**The most cited journals**

To address the second research question, network visualization of co-citation cited-source analysis was employed by the 'VOSviewer' software. The network visualization 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 visualization of co-citation cited-source has a total of 157 items, 6 clusters, 2111 links, and a total link strength of 19213.

Figure 4 shows that 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' has 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, as shown in Figure 4.

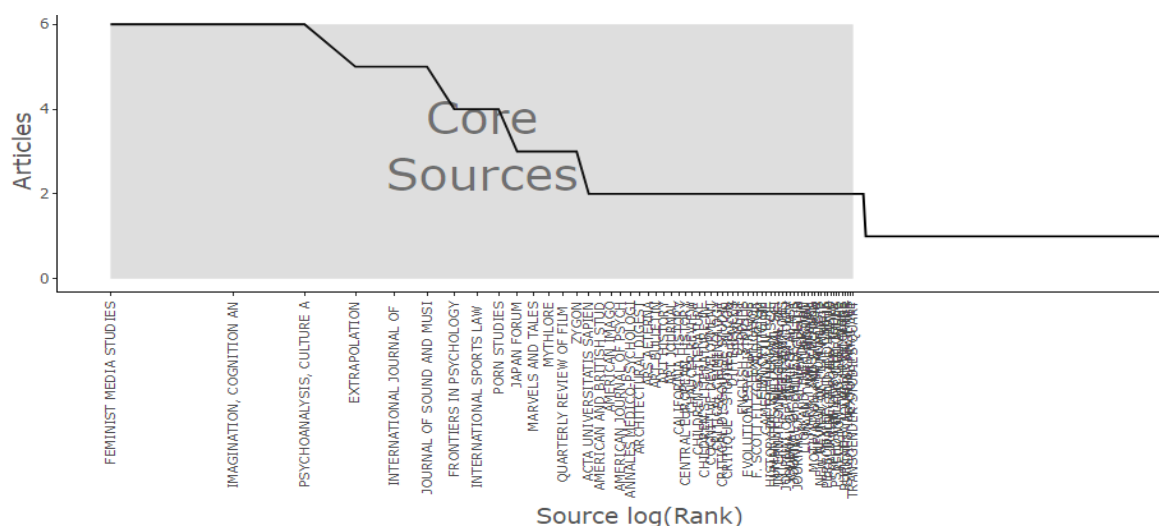


***Figure 4. The most cited journals (co-citation- cited source analysis)***

In addition to presenting the core sources in the domain, R. packages bibliometrix software, was used for analysis. Here, core resource analysis was presented by Bradford's Law, a bibliometrics principle that describes 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 presents the core resources such as 'feminist media studies'; 'imagination, cognition and personality'; 'psychoanalysis, culture and society' published 6 articles each.



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**Figure 5. Bradford's Law for Core Sources**

**RQ3: What are the most cited (most influential articles) studies on fantasy?**

### Most Influential Documents

According to Scopus index articles about fantasy, Table 2 shows the most globally cited documents. 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); it 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, CAMB 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

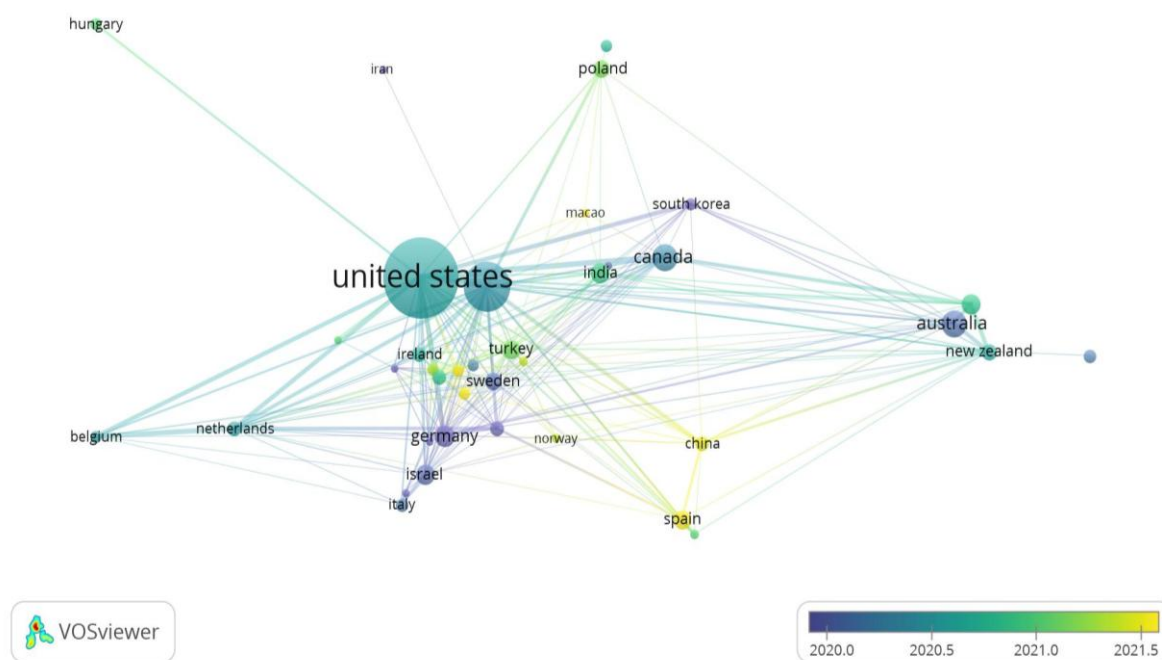
**Note.** TC= Total citations, NTC= Normalized total citations





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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 bibliometric analysis was conducted to explore research trends concerning fantasy, both as a cognitive faculty and as a domain of literary study. The findings of the bibliometric analysis based on the literature indexed in the Scopus database indicated that although periodic fluctuations were noted, there was a consistent increase in the number of articles published annually. 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. The United States has the highest number of documents (170). The most cited journal in the field of fantasy indexed in Scopus is 'Personality and Social Psychology', which has 76 citations. Further analysis showed an average of 3.095 citations per document and an annual publication growth rate of 5.68%. In total, 502 documents were retrieved from 400 sources, involving 743 authors, with 347 single-authored documents and an international co-authorship rate of 6.362%. The study established that the research on fantasy as a faculty or literature has a positive research trend that makes the topic as an emerging research field.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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