

02. Searching Through the Study of Disability in the Literary Field: A Bibliometric Analysis¹

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Abstract

Disability maintains its position as one of the most significant social issues, which fortunately resulted in the inauguration of a growing multidisciplinary field in the academic arena that would study the concept in all its multi-dimensional aspects. Among these disciplines, literature has been increasingly taking its part too, which has led to a continuously growing body of works. Although it can be observed that the studies on disability in the literary field have increased over time, reviewing the related literature on literary disability studies reveals that research investigating the quantity and development of disability studies in literature is almost non-existent. This lack demonstrates that to examine the progression and emerging trends of disability studies in literature is a necessity since interpreting them as a whole and putting forward a concrete dataset would form a basis for further studies and serve to the development of the field. Thereby, this study aims to contribute to the field by conducting a bibliometric analysis of 398 English-language articles indexed in the Web of Science database's category of literature published between 2000 and 2025 through the employment of both the performance analysis and scientific mapping techniques. The originality of the article lies not only in its mapping of the structure and development of the field with the purpose of offering reliable guidance for future scholars but also in its contribution to the visibility of disability within the literary domain.

Keywords: disability, literature, bibliometric analysis

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Edebiyat Alanında Engellilik Çalışmalarının Araştırılması: Bir Bibliyometrik Analiz Çalışması ⁴

Öz

Engelliliğin en önemli toplumsal sorunlardan biri olma konusundaki pozisyonunu istikrarlı bir şekilde korumakta olması, sevindirici bir şekilde akademik alanda bu kavramı çok boyutlu bir şekilde inceleyecek, giderek büyüyen disiplinler arası bir alanın doğmasına yol açmıştır. Bu disiplinlerin arasında edebiyat da giderek artan bir şekilde yerini almakta ve bu da edebiyat alanında sürekli gelişmekte olan bir engellilik çalışmaları literatürü oluşturmaktadır. Her ne kadar edebiyat alanında engellilik üzerine yapılan çalışmaların zamanla arttığını gözlemlemek mümkün olsa da , ilgili literatürün incelenmesi bu çalışmalarının niceliğini araştıran ve gelişim şemasını ortaya koyan çalışmaların neredeyse hiç var olmadığını göstermektedir. Literatürdeki bu boşluk, edebiyatta engellilik çalışmalarının gelişimini ve ortaya çıkan eğilimleri incelemenin bir gereklilik teşkil ettiğini göstermektedir; zira bu çalışmaları bir bütün olarak yorumlamak ve somut bir veri seti ortaya koymak, ileriki çalışmalar için bir temel oluşturacak ve bu alanın gelişimine katkıda bulunacaktır. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, Web of Science veri tabanının edebiyat kategorisinde yer alan ve 2000 ile 2025 yılları arasında yayınlanmış 398 İngilizce makale üzerinde hem performans analizi hem de bilimsel haritalama tekniklerini kullanma yoluyla bibliyometrik bir analiz gerçekleştirerek alana katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu makalenin özgünlüğü, yalnızca gelecekteki araştırmacılara güvenilir bir rehberlik sunmak amacıyla alanın yapılanış şeklini ve gelişimini haritalandırmasında değil, aynı zamanda edebiyat alanında engellilik konusunun görünürlüğüne yaptığı katkıda da yatmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: engellilik, edebiyat, bibliyometrik analiz

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1. Introduction

In the twenty-first century, in which disability maintains its position as one of the most significant social problems with all its multi-dimensional aspects, disability studies have fortunately begun to constitute a growing multidisciplinary field including areas such as medicine and healthcare, social sciences and humanities, cultural studies, and philosophy, thus, finding its place through the literary field too. As perceptions of disabled individuals and scholarly approaches to disability have changed over time, literary representations of disability have changed accordingly, and literary critics started to place a greater emphasis on the subject. Therefore, representations of disability began to be examined more frequently in the literary field. Nevertheless, it can be stated that the intellectual development of the field has not been systematically analysed clearly in terms of the disability studies. Hence, a broad review on the related literature reveals that research investigating the quantity and development of the disability studies in the field of literature are almost non-existent. The bibliometric analysis method, which is used to map critical studies, influential authors, and research gaps with the purpose of understanding the field's scholarly landscape, serves to this purpose (Kumar, 2025, p. 45). Hence, the aim of this study is to conduct a bibliometric analysis of disability studies in the literary field published between 2000 and 2025 using both the performance analysis and the scientific mapping techniques with the purpose of identifying the thematic structure, significant contributors, the most productive authors, the journal impact, the most influential countries, and underexplored areas so as to put forward a reliable dataset which would both demonstrate the contemporary tendencies and signal the gaps identified in the literature review so as to form a basis for further studies.

Bibliometric analysis is “a quantitative research method” which is used to analyse citation networks, authorship collaborations, research trends, and potential gaps within a field and which was originated by Paul Otlet in the early 1900s as well as being conceptualized by Alan Pritchard in 1969 (Kumar, 2025, p. 46). Pritchard introduced the concept of bibliometrics as “the application of mathematics and statistical methods to books and other media of communication” (1969, p. 349). The bibliometric analysis method enables the scrutiny of relationships among researchers, authors, institutions, and citation networks, thus, helping researchers situate their scholarly “impact” in their fields of interest (Donthu et al., 2021, p. 285; Kumar, 2025, pp. 45-46). While “databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar” made bibliographic data more available in the twenty first century, software tools such as VOSviewer and CiteSpace also allowed researchers to create scientific maps that can visualise “relationships” between the authors, countries, affiliations, and key concepts through density, temporal, and network link maps (Kumar, 2025, p. 46). Also, performance analysis enabled researchers to identify the “contributions” of various research actors such as “authors, institutions, countries, and journals in the field” (Donthu et al., 2021, p. 287). Hence, Donthu et al. divide bibliometric analysis techniques into two main categories, which are the “performance analysis” and “science mapping” techniques (2021, p. 287). This research study employs both techniques to attain a detailed and comprehensive data set regarding the study of the concept of disability in the literary field. In this way, it is aimed to provide a systematic map of the evolution of the field, the most current studies and trends, and insufficiently studied topics within the field in the 21st century, which would result in the realization of further studies, develop the trends in the field or fill the existing research gaps in the literature.

Through the analysis of academic maps, researchers can track the expansion of a field and identify the emerging research topics, as well as following the relationships and collaboration patterns among research entities. In this way, they can produce new studies by detecting potential research areas. Also, these maps demonstrate how a field changes over time, highlighting the central and peripheral

disciplines. In addition, scholars can explore the impact and output of authors, journals, and influence of academic studies through performance analysis (Çelik, 2023, p. 470). Thus, researchers can construct more effective, transparent, and innovative studies in their further projects. Despite all these advantages it grants, reviewing the related literature on disability reveals that bibliometric analyses conducted on the study of the concept of disability in the literary field remain very limited and almost non-existent, although it can clearly be observed that literary studies focusing on disability have increased over time. Because of this lack in assessing the quantity of these studies in this increasingly popular field, this study primarily aims to contribute to the related literature by conducting a bibliometric analysis on disability studies in literature through a detailed scrutiny of literary articles dealing with the theme of disability so as to provide a reliable guidance for researchers aiming to conduct studies in the field.

2. The concept of disability and the development of disability studies

Although the concept of disability may have a broad variety of definitions, the word basically refers to physical, mental, or social impairments that restrict one's daily life, capacity, and functioning (Vijayan, 2021, p. 15). According to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), the concept covers "impairments" and "limitations" in "activity" and "participation" (World Health Organization, 2002, p.2). These impairments can include prolonged physiological, cognitive, "intellectual", and "sensory" difficulties which restrict a person's ability to participate in the societal structure in "equal" conditions with the others (Kashikar, 2021, p. 139). Therefore, disability cannot be evaluated only as a bodily condition, it also has a broad impact on social, cultural, and historical dynamics (Vijayan, 2021, p. 15). Whether the connotations about disability are positive or negative may depend on a society's structure, collective behaviours, historical and cultural background, and individual experiences may differ accordingly. If we look at history, it can be observed that literature has been reflecting these diverse experiences of disabled people. Therefore, the potential of literature in drawing attention to the issue of disability and the problems that disabled individuals face should not be undervalued and the fact that literature can replace negative perceptions of disability with positive ones should be kept in mind. Accordingly, it is of vital significance to develop the literature on disability studies in the literary field, and this study serves to the realization of this purpose.

It can be observed that in ancient times, disability was interpreted to be a consequence of divine disfavour and was considered as a notion beyond human control. For example, in ancient Greece and Rome, newborns with disabilities were usually abandoned, and they were believed to be "returned to the gods" (Johnson, 2011, p. 2; Penrose, 2015, pp. 503–510). Accordingly, in ancient texts, disability carried different symbolic meanings. For instance, Hephaistos, a physically disabled "Greek god of fire and metallurgy" (Dolmage, 2006, p. 120), demonstrates that disability and ability coexist through his intellectual skills and "craftsmanship" (Dolmage, 2006, p. 122). However, he is marginalized despite being a divine figure. In mythological narratives, his disability is often associated with his parents and divine intervention, reflecting the role of fate (Garland, 1995, p. 29). Similarly, "Philoctetes" is abandoned on an island by his friends because of his wound, symbolizing social isolation based on bodily difference (Garland, 1995, p. 29). Additionally, in *Oedipus Rex*, the blind oracle "Teiresias" is accused of lying; however, he is the only character who perceives the truth, representing wisdom despite his physical blindness (Garland, 1995, p. 29). This negative reflection of disability and the belief that it was solely a consequence of divine intervention maintained its presence in literary texts until the appearance of monotheistic religions.

With the spread of monotheistic belief systems "the religious model of disability", as defined by Edward

Wheatley, became dominant in explaining perceptions of disability (2010, p. 9). This model linked disability not only to divine intervention but also associated it with the individual. In this religious model, disability was interpreted as a divine punishment which came along as the result of a sin in Jewish tradition, while it was perceived as “an opportunity for charity” in Christianity (Johnson, 2011, pp. 2-3; Sati, 2024, p. 2). In medieval times, based on theological notions, disability was equated with monstrosity (Scarborough, 2015, p. 37) and was often considered to be the result of one’s moral failing (Metzler, 2006, p. 8). The body was believed to reflect God; thus, “deformity” in the body was regarded as a distortion of the divine order. (Scarborough, 2015, p. 37). All these interpretations demonstrated that disability was perceived as a flaw within a divinely constructed framework. It was a phenomenon shaped by religious, sociological, and cultural factors, which resulted in the discrimination and marginalization of individuals with disabilities over time.

The moral and religious models in ancient and medieval times changed into “the medical model” with the turn of the eighteenth century (Johnson, 2011, p. 3). Darwin’s notion of “evolution” led to a medical approach towards disability (Reddy, 2011, p. 287). Introduced by the “psychiatrist Dr. Szasz”, the medical model was used to criticize psychiatric approaches that “pathologized human behaviours” as illnesses (Zaks, 2024, p. 3235). According to this approach, people with disabilities were regarded as responsible for their incapacity and they negatively influenced every aspect of society. In this model, “medical care, therapy, and treatments almost exclusively aimed at normalizing the bodies and brains of disabled people” (Zaks, 2024, p. 3241). Until the 1960s, academic studies tended to medicalize disabled people by considering disability as an “abnormality” that necessitated fixation (Sati, 2024, p. 2; Dubourg et al., 2025, p. 152). The model considered that an individual’s disability led to limitations in his/her social participation (Linker, 2013, p. 519).

The social model of disability appeared after the medical model (Oliver & Sapey, 1999, pp. 1024-1025) which argued that disability was a consequence of social “barriers” that restricted and discriminated disabled people. Arising from the intellectual and political discourse of “the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS)” (Shakespeare, 2004, p. 9), it was suggested that disability was a “social” issue that should be resolved through the collective efforts of society (Sati, 2024, p. 3; Oliver & Sapey, 1999, p. xii). According to this model, disability was seen as a notion produced by social “injustice”, and these injustices could be reduced through systemic transformation (Lawson & Beckett, 2021, p. 349). Even though this approach enabled “public buildings”, “media” representations, and transportations to become “more accessible” for disabled individuals by developing social “consciousness” (Oliver, 2013, pp. 1024-1025), it was criticised for ignoring “cultural” aspects and “individual” experiences (Ellis, 2016, p. 3) and there have been claims for the re-evaluation of “the social model” since then (Waldschmidt, 2017, p. 21), which led to the emergence of “the cultural model” (Shakespeare, 1994, p. 284).

Developed by “Mitchell and Snyder”, “the cultural model” was initially influenced by the “feminist” studies and was based on the analysis of “media representation[s]” of women (Shakespeare, 1994, p. 284). It argued that disability should be evaluated through both social and biological perspectives (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006, p. 7), transcending the limitations of the social and medical models. This model has been regarded as being more comprehensive than “the social model” since its emergence, because it emphasized the representation and the agency of disabled individuals (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006, p. 10). The cultural model placed disability at the centre of culture and society and interpreted it as a notion shaped by the “power” relations and “hegemonic discourses” (Waldschmidt, 2017, pp. 24–25). In this regard, disability was not regarded as a problem now but rather as a field of production and

“cultural” interpretation (Ellis, 2016, p. 5). All these models which appeared regarding disability had right and wrong aspects and therefore they needed to be analysed from diverse perspectives, which required an interdisciplinary approach. Hence, in contemporary disability studies, policies including the “UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” have made disability a central and global topic (Goodley et al., 2017, p. 81). With the emergence of critical disability studies, previous models and approaches have been criticized for analysing disability in ways that “individualize[d], pathologize[d], medicalize[d], psychologize[d], essentialize[d] and depoliticize[d] the phenomenon” (Goodley et al., 2019, pp. 973–974). Therefore, all the previous approaches were considered to be insufficient in explaining the framework of disability on their own. Disability was a notion which needed to be studied across diverse fields such as psychology, feminism, queer studies and postcolonial studies, leading to an intersectional approach (Goodley et al., 2017, pp. 81–82). Through the intersectional framework, disability has recently been evaluated as a fluid and multidimensional concept, not limited to social or biological dimensions. Fortunately, disability is now generally understood as a holistic concept that considers disabled individuals in every aspect and that does not reduce them to a single identity or category. Therefore, in contemporary critical disability studies, interdisciplinary studies step ahead and disability is handled in a broad perspective ranging from medical sciences to engineering or from humanities to social sciences including literature.

Methodology

The method which was used in this article is the bibliometric analysis method. As mentioned before, bibliometric analysis is divided into two main categories by Donthu et al. which are the “performance analysis” and “science mapping” techniques (2021, pp. 287). Performance analysis investigates the “impact” and “productivity” of research elements (Donthu et al., 2021, pp. 287-288). Through performance analysis, researchers can identify the influence of “authors”, publications, “countries”, and affiliations by examining quantitative metrics of academic contributions and visibility (Donthu et al., 2021, p. 288). The second technique, science mapping, explores the “relationships” among research components through various mapping techniques like “citation analysis, co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling, co-word analysis, and co-authorship analysis” (Donthu et al., 2021, p. 288). The first research component which would be explored by means of scientific mapping technique is the “citation analysis”, which examines the relationship among publications when one references another, showing intellectual connections (Smith, 1981, p. 84). This technique reveals the most prominent authors and the key studies that shape literary disability studies, illustrating how knowledge is distributed across the discipline. The second research component is the “co-citation analysis”, which looks for occasions in which two publications are cited together in a third publication, suggesting that these two publications are thematically related (Small, 1973, p. 265; Donthu et al., 2021, p. 288). This method allows the identification of the most prominent authors and studies, analysing their thematic similarities within disability studies in the field of literature. Similarly, the third research component, “bibliographic coupling” is based on the idea that studies “sharing common references” are similar in content (Donthu et al., 2021, p. 288). In this research, this technique was used to reveal which authors and studies had similar approaches in disability. The fourth research component “co-word analysis” investigates the terms used in a study’s “content”, focusing generally on “author keywords” (Donthu et al., 2021, p.289). Through co-word analysis, key topics and research gaps on disability in the literary field are identified, analysing the development of the field. Finally, the last research component of the scientific mapping technique, “co-authorship analysis” analyses academic “collaborations” among authors, organizations, and countries (Donthu et al., 2021, p. 290). In disability studies in the literary field, co-authorship analysis reveals how academic collaborations are formed, what shared

methodologies are applied, and which organizations, authors and countries contribute collaborative studies. Scientific mapping technique provides a visualisation of academic links while carrying out a bibliometric analysis. In this study, by means of the simultaneous use of the performance analysis and scientific mapping techniques, it was aimed to realise what Kara et al. emphasised about the bibliometric analysis method, which was its ability to enable the interpretation of “large datasets” and to provide comprehensive knowledge in a scientific subject (2024, p. 115).

3.1 Data collection

In this study, several research questions were aimed to be answered with the purpose of analysing articles written in English language on disability in the field of literature between 2000 and 2025, through the bibliographic analysis method. These research questions include:

1. How does citation analysis contribute to the understanding of the intellectual connections in the field?
2. How does co-citation analysis reveal the thematic relationship of disability studies in the field of literature?
3. How are the studies conducted in the field connected through shared references in bibliographic coupling analysis?
4. What are the key terms are identified through co-word analysis in literary disability studies?
5. What collaborative patterns exist among authors, organizations, and countries in co-authorship analysis?

In this context, the productivity and impact of key research actors were evaluated through performance analysis and scientific mapping techniques, such as “citation analysis, co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling, co-word analysis, and co-authorship analysis” (Donthu et al., 2021, p. 288) were applied. Thus, recent studies, unexplored areas, prominent authors and institutions, and their influences on disability research in literature were analysed. Through a quantitative analysis, a systematic mapping of the research domain was achieved.

In terms of the research database, the Web of Science was preferred to be used, as it provides access to over “34,000” journals, more than “278 million” detailed metadata records, over “3.3 billion” citation links, and a research archive dating back to “1864” (Web of Science, 2026). It connects research across “254” subject categories and is trusted by “10,000” organizations worldwide (Web of Science, 2026). Data collection for this research was executed on 01.03. 2026 from the Web of Science database. In the Web of Science database, the word “disability” was searched as a keyword in the “title”, “abstract”, and “author keywords”, producing 307,494 records. Then, the category of “literature” was selected in the Web of Science categories, and the number of records decreased to 704. The time span was defined as the twenty-first century to observe the contemporary developments in the field, so publication years were limited to 2000–2025, reducing the dataset to 688 records. The document type was filtered as “article,” leaving 514 records. Finally, the language was restricted to English, resulting in 492 records. After eliminating the articles that were not related to the field of literature although they appeared in the literature category research, the dataset was reduced to 398 articles. The data were uploaded into the VOSviewer (version 1. 6. 20.) program to visualize the scientific development of publications. The interpretation of the results was based on these visualizations including co-authorship, citation, co-

citation, bibliographic coupling, and co-occurrence of keywords analyses. Full counting was used as counting method across all articles. The minimum number of documents was limited to 1 document, and maximum number was chosen to be 25. This limitation was applied to authors, organizations, documents, or countries. Items in networks which were not connected to each other were also selected. In all visualisations, association strength normalization was preferred, to assure methodological standardization.

3.2 The Scope of the Study and Elimination Stage

The study's scope was decided to be limited to data retrieved from the Web of Science database. The data was determined to include only the "articles" written on disability which were written in English language in the category of literature and published between 2000 and 2025. Publications outside articles, and articles in other languages were eliminated from the analysis to assure scientific quality and relevance. In addition, since the time span was decided to be limited to the twenty-first century, articles published before 2000 or after 2025 were also eliminated. In this study, the criteria for including and eliminating studies were pre-defined with the purpose of assuring the reliability, stability, and accuracy of the research. First and most importantly, only the "Web of Science" database was decided to be used to prevent a probable irregularity in the dataset. Next, the keyword "disability," which constitutes the focal point of this research, was determined to be searched in the category of literature within the "title", "abstract", and "author keywords", since these categories referred to the fact that articles handled the search word "disability" by giving it a central importance. The category "all fields" was preferred not to be chosen, since "disability" is a multidisciplinary research area, and other categories would bring up results in as sociology, psychology, education, health, and other categories, thus, extending the boundaries of this research.

Publication years were decided to be limited to studies published between 2000 and 2025, as a broader time frame would be too broad to deal with in a single article and a contemporary research was aimed at, which would assess the quantity of the disability studies in the literary field in the 21st century and demonstrate contemporary tendencies. The year 2026 was excluded from the analysis, as ongoing publications could have affected the accuracy of the data. As mentioned, only the articles were included in the research, and studies such as books, theses, and conference texts were removed from the database, as articles were believed to be more countable in scientific terms since they were subjected to a review process by experts in the field before publication and since including the other sources would be too broad to deal with in a single bibliometric analysis article. Moreover, these articles were selected to be written in the English language which contributed to the standardization of the study in the primary international academic language.

In the elimination process, some of the results were omitted from the research. The reasons for elimination included not being published before 2000 and in 2025, being written in non-English languages, and being written in other fields than literature. During the elimination process, the results in Web of Science were ordered from the newest to the oldest. Then, the results were analysed manually by Author 2, researching for authors, examining titles, keywords, and abstracts of sources, and the irrelevant publications were eliminated from the analysis, to access more transparent, relevant, and reliable data. After reading abstracts, keywords, and titles of the studies obtained from Web of Science, duplicated studies, the studies irrelevant to the disability studies, and the articles outside the literary field were eliminated.

4. Findings

In this study, the dataset was obtained from the Web of Science database by searching the keyword “disability” in the title, abstract, and author keywords of articles. A total of 307,494 results were identified and when the research was limited to the category of literature, 704 studies were attained. The publication years were defined as 2000–2025, which reduced the number to 688 academic studies. Limiting the document type to articles decreased the results to 514. Finally, the language was restricted to English, and 492 results were examined during the elimination process. After manual screening, 398 English-language articles published between 2000 and 2025 on disability in literature were included in the bibliometric analysis. The final dataset was first analysed using performance analysis and then visualized in the VOSviewer program to create scientific maps and to conduct citation, co-citation, keyword co-occurrence, and bibliographic coupling analyses.

4.1 Publication and citation trends

According to the dataset retrieved from Web of Science, the annual distribution of 398 English articles published between 2000 and 2025 within the keyword “disability” in the literature field is shown in Figure 1. The results show that the highest number of publications in the field was reached in 2025 with 44 articles, while the fewest studies were published between 2000 and 2002 with no publications. Number of studies were found to be gradually evolving between 2000 and 2025. Also, in 2005, there was a rapid increase in the number of publications, rising from 7 to 18. The rapid increase in this year suggests that political developments such as the emergence of 2005 Disability Policies in France (Calvez 2010) may have influenced the growing academic interest in disability studies within literary research. Furthermore, the citation counts, as demonstrated in Fig. 1, revealed that the highest number of citations was in 2025 with 189 citations, while the lowest number was between 2000 and 2004 with 0 citations. The absence of citations between 2000 and 2004 suggests that disability had not yet become an established and visible academic field within literary studies during those years. The highest citation count in 2025 indicates that scholarly interest in disability studies may demonstrate an increase in the future too, suggesting the growing importance of this field within literary research. Through this analysis, citation and publication trends that were examined revealed an ongoing attention in the field of disability in literature. Analysing the periodic evolution of the field primarily targeted helping researchers to identify their research priorities in future studies. Also, it was hoped that depicting this rising interest in the concept of disability would lead institutions and governments in regulating their policies regarding the issue.

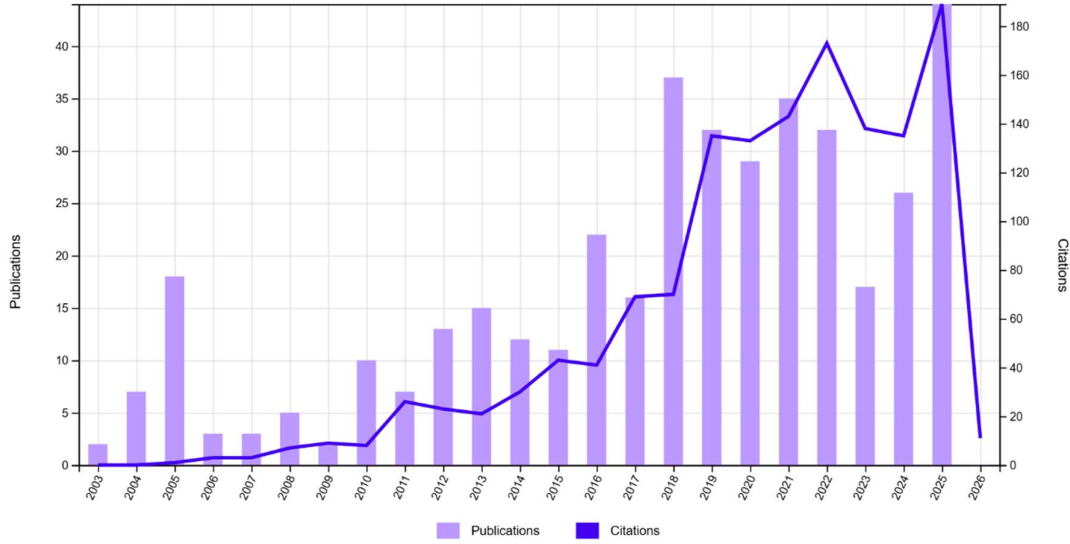


Fig 1. Citation and publication counts (Source: Web of Science citation report, March 2026)

4.2 Citation analysis through performance analysis

In Table 1, the most cited 10 authors and their works are given with the purpose of evaluating their academic contributions to the literature of disability studies in the field of literature. In the scope of the analysis, the most cited author was found to be Rosemarie Garland-Thomson whose study “Disability and Representation” (2005) had 64 citations, and her “Shape Structures Story: Fresh and Feisty Stories about Disability” (2007) had 53 citations, which made her the most cited author since she had 117 citations in total. Garland-Thomson appeared twice among the most cited publications, which showed the author’s importance and influence in literary disability studies Other most cited authors and their publications cited were found to be Mitchell Berube’s “Disability and Narrative” (2005) with 81 citations, Nikolajeva’s “Recent Trends in Children’s Literature Research: Return to the Body” (2016) with 50 citations, R. J. Savarese and Lisa Zunshine’s “The Critic as Neurocosmopolite; Or, What Cognitive Approaches to Literature Can Learn from Disability Studies: Lisa Zunshine in Conversation with Ralph James Savarese” (2014) with 32 citations, Johnson’s “The Skeleton on the Couch: The Eagleton Affair, Rhetorical Disability, and the Stigma of Mental Illness” (2010) with 31 citations, Couser’s “Disability, Life Narrative, and Representation” (2005) with 26 citations, Kafer and Kim’s “Disability and the Edges of Intersectionality” (2018) with 25 citations, Curwood’s “Redefining Normal: A Critical Analysis of (Dis)ability in Young Adult Literature” (2013) with 25 citations, and Weil’s “Killing Them Softly: Animal Death, Linguistic Disability, and the Struggle for Ethics” (2006) with 21 citations. Another important finding in this analysis was that most of the highly cited articles were published between 2005 and 2018, indicating the productivity of this period and the increasing interest in disability in the field of literature. The citation numbers of these publications per year were found to be as follows:

Article, Journal/Book, Publication Year	Author(s)	<2022	2022	2023	2024	2025	Average Per Year	Total
Disability and narrative, <i>PMLA-Publications of the modern language association of America</i> , 2005	Bérubé, M.	57	9	3	8	4	3,68	81
Disability and representation, <i>PMLA-Publications of the modern language association of America</i> , 2005	Garland-Thomson, R.	39	6	4	8	7	2,91	64
Shape structures story: Fresh and feisty stories about disability, <i>Narrative</i> , 2007	Garland-Thomson, R.	44	3	2	1	3	2,65	53
Recent trends in children's literature research: Return to the body, <i>International research in children's literature</i> , 2016	Nikolajeva, M.	23	10	7	3	7	4,55	50
The Critic as Neurocosmopolite; Or, What Cognitive Approaches to Literature Can Learn from Disability Studies: Lisa Zunshine in Conversation with Ralph James Savarese, <i>Narrative</i> , 2014	Savarese, R.J.; Zunshine, L.	17	6	4	3	2	2,46	32
The skeleton on the couch: The Eagleton affair, rhetorical disability, and the stigma of mental illness, <i>Rhetoric society quarterly</i> , 2010	Johnson, J.	22	1	2	3	3	1,82	31
Disability, life narrative, and representation, <i>PMLA-Publications of the modern language association of America</i> , 2005	Couser, G.T.	10	5	4	4	3	1,18	26
Disability and the edges of intersectionality, <i>Cambridge companion to literature and disability</i> , 2018	Kafer, A.; Kim, E.	8	4	5	3	5	2,78	25
Redefining normal: A critical analysis of (dis)ability in young adult literature, <i>Children's literature in education</i> , 2013	Curwood, J. S.	14	3	2	3	3	1,79	25
Killing them softly: Animal death, linguistic disability, and the struggle for ethics, <i>Configurations</i> , 2006	Weil, K.	17	0	2	1	0	1	21

Table 1 Annual Citation Counts of the Most Cited Publications (Source: Web of Science, March 2026)⁵

This citation analysis revealed the most influential works, shaping the field of disability in literature. According to the analysis, the most cited studies on disability was observed to be focusing on the topics

⁵ This table is adapted from Asiye Ayben Çelik's article "A Systematic Look at the Concept of Consumer Vulnerability" (Tüketici Kırılmalı Kavramına Sistemik Bir Bakış) (2023).

such as disability and narrative, disability representation, life narrative, intersectionality, and cognitive approaches to literature. In 2005, articles concentrated on narrative and representations while studies between 2013-2018 examined children's literature and intersectionality, indicating the evolution of disability studies into a more interdisciplinary and diverse state. Also, these findings demonstrated that the academic studies on disability in the literary field shifted from fundamental topics to more socially engaged and broader subjects.

Table 2 given below shows the most productive authors between 2000 and 2025 based on their publication numbers. The analysis results showed that Alice Hall, Christopher Krentz, and Abbye E. Meyer were found to be the most productive authors, each with five publications. Other important contributors to the field included David Houston Wood, Ria Cheyne, Julie Avril Minich, and Sami Schalk, all of whom had three publications. Moreover, authors, such as Shahd Alshammari, Miriam Fernandez Santiago, and Allison P. Hobgood, each with two publications, were found to be the other significant authors in the field. Analysing productivity of authors revealed the distribution of knowledge among scholars, examining the key figures in disability in literature. Although a small group of authors were depicted to be playing a leading role in the field, the results reflected the diversity of authors, showing that academic contributions were not limited to one dominant author and rather shaped by multiple authors.

Author Name	Total Number of Studies	Number of Citations	Citations per article	H-Index
Alice Hall	5	3	0,6	2
Christopher Krentz	5	12	12,4	3
Abbye E. Meyer	5	0	0	1
David Houston Wood	3	20	6,6	4
Ria Cheyne	3	9	3	3
Julie Avril Minich	3	15	5	5
Sami Schalk	3	15	5	7
Shahd Alshammari	2	9	4,5	3
Miriam Fernandez Santiago	2	1	0,5	3
Allison P. Hobgood	2	23	11,5	4
Rogers Kathleen Beres	2	6	3	6
Savarese Ralph James	2	32	16	5
Leni Van Goidsenhoven	2	17	8,5	6
Joanne Woiak	2	1	0,5	3
Rosalía Baena	2	6	3	4
Clare Barker	2	20	10	12
Fu-Jen Chen	2	2	1	4
G. Thomas Couser	2	13	6,5	8
Michael Davidson	2	12	6	9
Jay Dolmage	2	15	7,5	6
Alice Equestri	2	0	0	1
Iwona Filipczak	2	2	1	1

D. Christopher Gabbard	2	15	7,5	4
Anna Hinton	2	11	5,5	14
Petra Kuppers	2	5	2,5	7
Susannah B. Mintz	2	5	2,5	3
Stuart Murray	2	7	3,5	7
Maria Nikolajeva	2	50	25	14
Yoshiko Okuyama	2	0	0	4
Cynthia Richards	2	3	1,5	9
Shannon Walters	2	3	1,5	6

Table 2 Author Productivity (Source: Web of Science, March 2026)⁶

In Table 3, the most influential authors are listed according to their citation counts. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson was found to be the most cited author with 117 citations, who was followed by Michael Bérubé with 81 citations. In addition to the mentioned authors, several other authors were observed to be contributing to the field with high citation counts. Maria Nikolajeva had 50 citations, Ralph James Savarese 32 citations, Lisa Zunshine 32 citations, Jenell Johnson 31 citations, G.T. Couser 26 citations, Alison Kafer 25 citations, Eunjung Kim 25 citations, and Jen Scott Curwood 25 citations. Through the examination of citation counts, this analysis highlighted these authors' academic impacts within the field of literary disability studies. The distribution of citations demonstrated that a core group of authors led and shaped the intellectual structure of the field. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's dominance in the table shows the author's central role, thus, contributing to the development of the field.

Most Influential Authors	Total Publications	Total Citations	Average Citations	H-Index
Rosemarie Garland-Thomson	2	117	58,5	18
Michael Bérubé	1	81	81	7
Maria Nikolajeva	2	50	25	14
Ralph James Savarese	2	32	16	5
Lisa Zunshine	1	32	32	11
Jenell Johnson	1	31	31	5
G.T. Couser	1	26	26	8
Alison Kafer	1	25	25	6
Eunjung Kim	1	25	25	1
Jen Scott Curwood	1	25	25	15

Table 3 The most influential authors (Source: Web of Science, March 2026)⁷

In Table 4, journal impact was analysed according to journals' total publications, citations, and impact factor. First introduced in *Science* in 1955 by Eugene Garfield, "impact factor" is an indicator which is used to measure the impact of scientific journals. However, this indicator is not sufficient on its own to analyse a journal's impact, citation counts should also be analysed (Garfield, 2006, pp. 90-93). In this

⁶ This table is adapted from Asiye Ayben Çelik's article "A Systematic Look at the Concept of Consumer Vulnerability" (Tüketici Kırılganlığı Kavramına Sistematik Bir Bakış) (2023).

⁷ This table is adapted from Asiye Ayben Çelik's article "A Systematic Look at the Concept of Consumer Vulnerability" (Tüketici Kırılganlığı Kavramına Sistematik Bir Bakış) (2023).

regard, the journal *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America (PMLA)* appeared as the most influential journal in disability studies in the field of literature, based on 294 citations and 0,6 journal impact factor, followed by *Prose Studies-History Theory Criticism* with 84 citations and 0,1 journal impact factor. This analysis revealed that the most influential journals were literary and humanities journals. In addition, the dominance of a few journals reflected the centralization of publications that contributed to the establishment of the field.

Name of the Journal	Total Number of Publications	Citation Counts	Average citation per article	Journal Impact Factor ⁸
Prose Studies- History Theory Criticism	16	84	5,2	0,1
Textual Practise	16	62	3,8	0,4
PMLA- Publications of the Modern Language Association of America	15	294	19,6	0,6
Journal of Modern Literature	11	30	2,7	0,1
Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction	11	15	1,3	0,3
Literature and Medicine	10	34	3,4	0,1
Literature Compass	9	42	4,6	0,2
Life Writing	9	29	3,2	0,5
The Explicator	8	3	0,3	0,1
CLA Journal College Language Association	6	26	4,3	0,3

Table 4 Journal Impact (Source: Web of Science, March 2026)⁹

4. 3 Scientific mapping analyses

4. 3. 1. Citation of authors' network

According to the citation of authors network visualisation in Figure 2, Leni Van Goidsenhoven was found to be the central author who connected different authors. The cluster on the left, including scholars such as Ralph James Savarese, Lisa Zunshine, Valerie O'Brien, and Jeanne Verwee, exhibited the shared thematic and methodological patterns. Bridget M. Bartlett, Bradley Irish, and Mita Banerjee, linking in the cluster on the right, shared common approaches in literature. The citation of authors map demonstrated which scholars were connected in terms of their intellectual relationship and citation practices and which scholars had a central role in the field. This analysis revealed that disability research in the literary field had an established but fragmented structure, connected through key authors. This exhibited the fact that the field embodied diverse approaches, connecting different fields with an interdisciplinary structure.

⁸ "Impact factor", which demonstrates the influence of journals, was first developed by Eugene Garfield (Garfield, 2006, pp. 90-93).

⁹ This table is adapted from Asiye Ayben Çelik's article "A Systematic Look at the Concept of Consumer Vulnerability" (Tüketici Kırılganlığı Kavramına Sistemik Bir Bakış) (2023).



Fig. 2 Citation of authors network visualisation (The map was created in VOSviewer based on data retrieved from the Web of Science database in March 2026.)

4.3. 2 Co-citation analysis

Fig. 3 demonstrates the co-citation of cited authors among 7,899 authors. In the analysis, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson was depicted to be the most frequently co-cited author with 995 total link strength, exhibiting her prominence within the discipline. Other significant authors leading the field were Lennard J. Davis, Tobin Siebers, David Mitchell, Robert Chapman, Robert McRuer, G. Thomas Couser, Alison Kafer, and Michael Bérubé. This analysis revealed a strong interconnected structure among key scholars, indicating a shared intellectual development in the field.

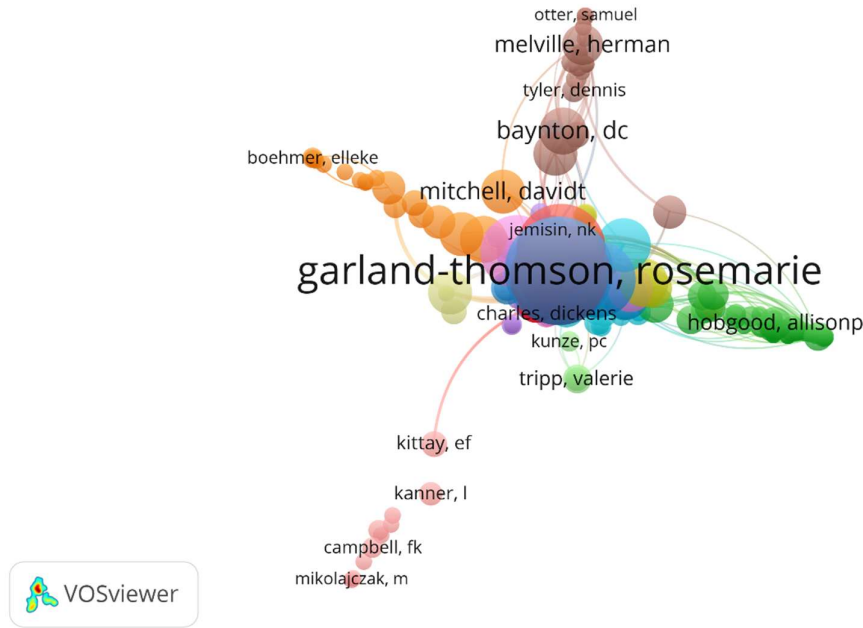


Fig. 3 Co-citation of cited authors network (The map was created in VOSviewer based on data retrieved from the Web of Science database in March 2026.)

4. 3. 3. Bibliographic coupling analysis

In this study, the bibliographic coupling of authors' temporal visualisation revealed the density of the shared references in disability studies. In the centre of the map, shown in Figure 4, Christopher Krentz was located, which demonstrated that the author shared many similar references with other authors. Authors such as Kirsti Bohata, Patrick J. Murphy, Petra Kuppers, and Rachel Adams, on the other hand, were observed to be remaining outside of the network, reflecting their use of different references. This suggests that these authors focused on specific and narrow topics in disability studies. Additionally, the map highlighted that literary studies on disability gained importance after 2010, showing the field's rising impact on contemporary studies. This analysis revealed which authors shared common references in their studies, demonstrating the proximity of their intellectual approaches.

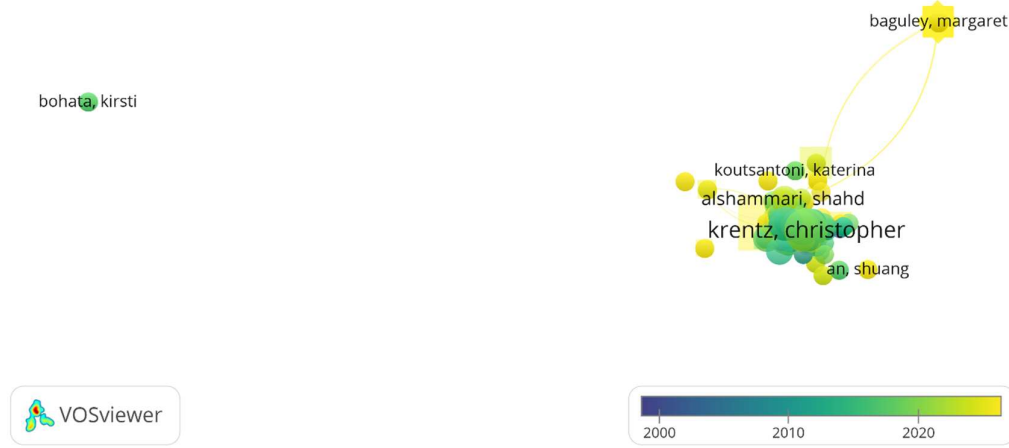


Fig. 4 Bibliographic coupling of authors temporal visualisation (The map was created in VOSviewer based on data retrieved from the Web of Science database in March 2026.)

Within the scope of this study, the article language for the dataset was limited to English; however, the bibliographic coupling of countries analysis revealed 40 different countries, presenting the international structure of disability studies. According to VOSviewer results in Table 5, the U.S.A. was found to be the most productive country with 212 documents and 1035 citations. The second influential country in the field was England with 36 documents and 145 citations. This indicates the dominant role of U.S.A. and England among Anglophone countries. The other notable countries were India, Spain, Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Taiwan, and Italy. The presence of multiple countries, including non-Anglophone countries, indicated the global spread of the field and the growing international interest in disability studies.

Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
U.S.A.	212	1035	2600
England	36	145	614
India	17	5	296
Spain	13	26	278
Australia	12	46	252
Canada	10	40	229
China	7	11	192
Germany	6	15	379
Taiwan	6	2	162
Italy	6	4	76

Table 5 Publication Number of Countries (Source: Web of Science, March 2026)¹⁰

¹⁰ This table is adapted from Asiye Ayben Çelik's article A Systematic Look at the Concept of Consumer Vulnerability (Tüketici Kırılabilirliği Kavramına Sistematik Bir Bakış) (2023).

The bibliographic coupling of countries visualisation in Fig. 5 demonstrated 12 clusters. Among these clusters, the United States, which was found to be central and strongly connected to other countries, was the most influential in the field, revealing its academic impact in English articles. This cluster also included Croatia, India, Norway, China, Poland, and South Korea, presenting the collaboration of these countries with the U.S.A. Also, the network among countries such as Germany, Belgium, Spain, Poland, and Italy, which revealed the network of European countries. Denmark, Brazil, Indonesia, and Kuwait were located in the periphery in the visualisation but were still connected to the central countries, suggesting the growing interest of these countries in the field. On the other hand, Palestine and Wales, which were positioned far from the main countries, demonstrated weaker participation and collaboration in disability studies. Within this framework, this analysis aimed to reveal the international distribution and imbalances in scholarly production among countries within disability studies literature in literature.

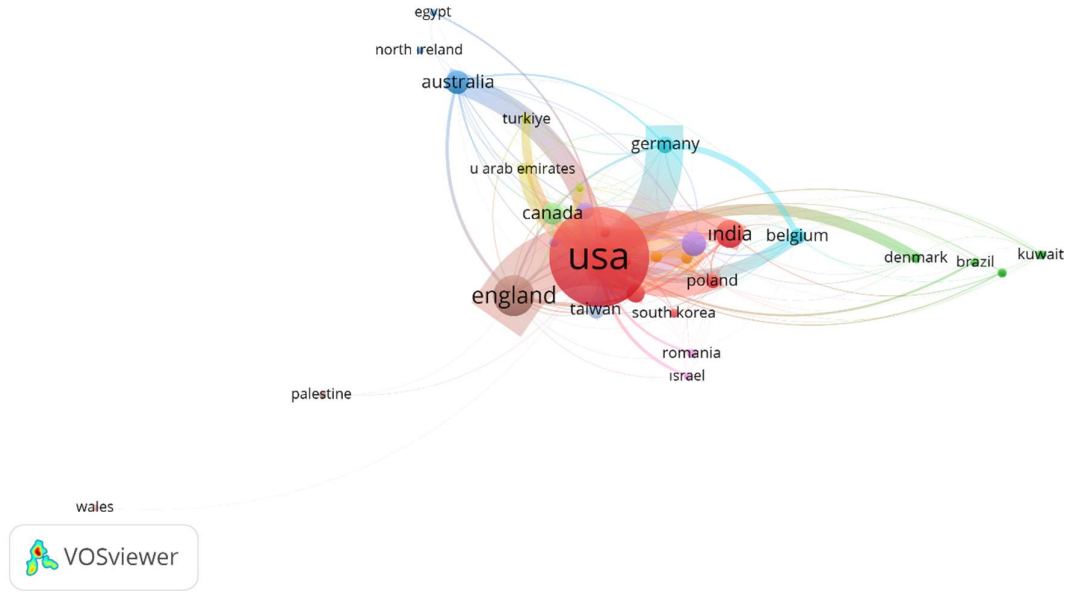
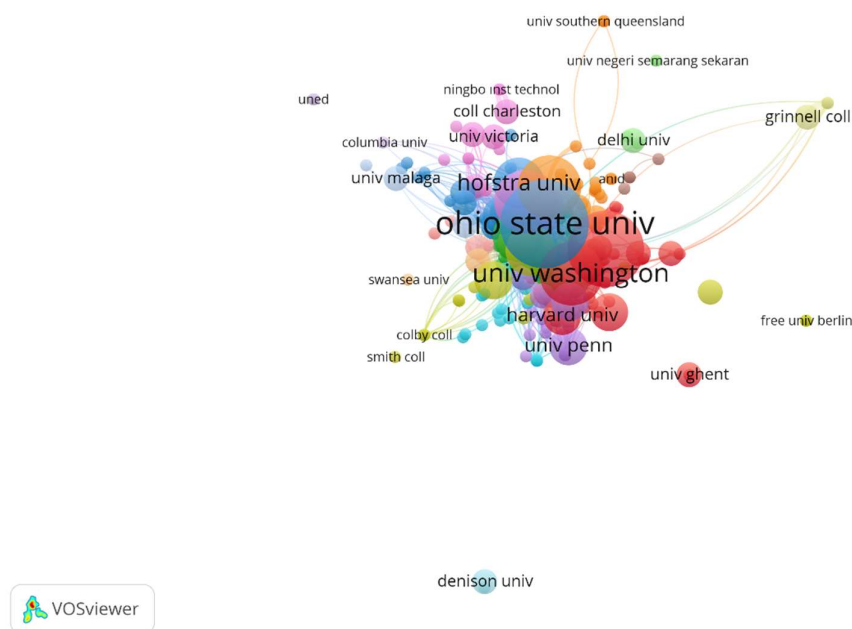


Fig. 5 Bibliographic coupling of countries visualisation (The map was created in VOSviewer based on data retrieved from the Web of Science database in March 2026.)

In bibliographic coupling of organizations list, the most productive organization within 299 institutions was discovered to be the Ohio State University with 7 documents. The second influential university was University of Michigan with 6 documents. The others were Pennsylvania State University, University of Cambridge, and University of Washington. In addition, Emory University was found to be the most cited institution with 118 citations. According to bibliographic coupling of organizations map in Fig. 6, the universities in the United States formed the majority of the map and had the strongest connection.



4.3.4. Co-authorship analysis

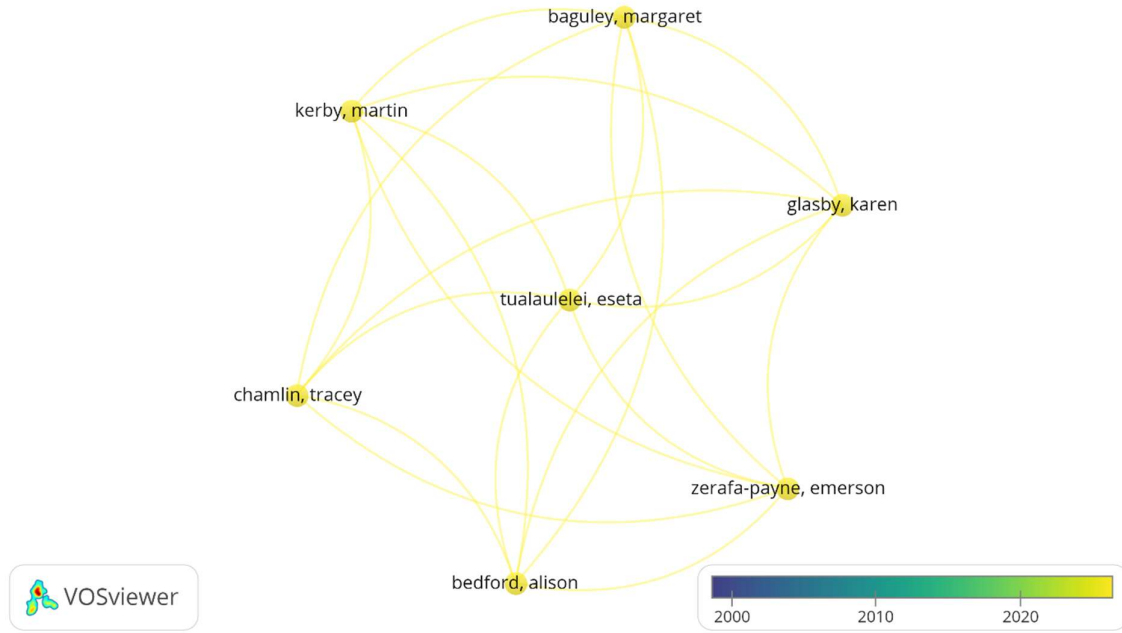


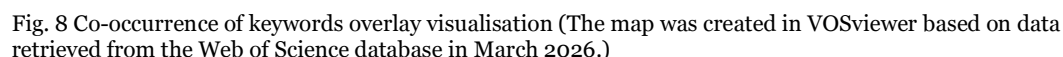
Fig. 7 Co-authorship of authors temporal visualisation (The map was created in VOSviewer based on data retrieved from the Web of Science database in March 2026.)

4. 3. 5. Co-occurrence of keywords

In the co-occurrence analysis of keywords, a total of 711 keywords were identified. The second most frequently studied keyword which followed the keyword “disability” (with 92 occurrences) was found to be “disability studies” with 34 occurrences. Other most frequently studied keywords were “memoir” (11 occurrences), “body” (8 occurrences), “gender” (7 occurrences), “sexuality” (7 occurrences), and “narrative” (6 occurrences). Keywords with 5 occurrences were found to be “race,” “autobiography,” “embodiment,” “prosthesis,” “masculinity,” “autism,” and “life writing.”

Fig. 8 suggested that literary studies on disability focused on autobiographical narratives of disabled individuals. Also, the occurrence of keywords such as “race,” “sexuality,” “masculinity,” and “gender” demonstrated that disability studies were conducted through various interdisciplinary perspectives, including cultural, gender, medical, and postcolonial studies, highlighting the intersectional nature of the field in the 21st century.

The fewest occurring keywords were found to be the “intellectual disability,” “identity,” “trauma narrative,” “postcolonial,” “bioethics,” “age studies,” “post dramatic theatre,” “motherhood,” “mental disability,” and “immigration.” These findings suggested that certain areas, such as ethical approaches, psychological disabilities, multiple identities, and the intersection of disability with topics like immigration and motherhood remained underrepresented, highlighting an important research gap in these areas. The identification of these keywords, therefore, constituted one of the original and strong aspects of this study, since it demonstrated that future studies on disability which would focus on these keywords would be of authentic quality.



In this research, the study of the concept of disability within the field of literature was investigated through the bibliometric analysis method by focusing on the articles written in English language and published between 2000 and 2025. For this research, both the performance analysis and the scientific mapping techniques were applied. The bibliographic maps used in the scope of the research were created in the VOSviewer software through the processing of the dataset which was collected from the Web of Science database. The search for the keyword “disability” brought 307,494 results, and these results were finally limited to 398 articles after the elimination process. To obtain more accurate and stable information, the study was pre-determined to be limited to include only certain criteria. Therefore, the selection of the database, publication year, document type, language, and keyword constituted the first step of the study. When the selected filters were applied to the selected database, the research was realised, and the articles were uploaded to VOSviewer. The attained results demonstrated that most of the publications were published in 2025, while no study was published between 2000 and 2002. Research results showed that the most cited authors and the most cited works were found to be Mitchell Berube’s “Disability and Narrative” (2005) with 81 citations, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s “Disability and Representation” (2005) with 64 citations, and the same author’s “Shape Structures Story: Fresh and Feisty Stories about Disability” (2007) with 53 citations. Alice Hall, Christopher Krentz, and Abbye E. Meyer were found to be the most important contributors to the field since each of them had five publications. According to the “co-authorship of authors” analysis results, “Challenging the Status Quo: Disability in Australian Children’s Picture Books” (Glasby et al., 2025) was visualized on its own, revealing the mostly single-authored structure of the field. According to the citation of authors network, Leni Van Goidsenhoven was found to be the central scholar in citations. In the bibliographic coupling of authors, Christopher Krentz shared the most similar references with various authors. Rosemarie

Garland-Thomson, Lennard J. Davis, Tobin Siebers, David Mitchell, Robert Chapman, Robert McRuer, G. Thomas Couser, Alison Kafer, and Michael Bérubé stepped ahead as the most co-cited authors in cited references, showing their influence in academic publications.

The keyword co-occurrence analysis revealed both the important themes and the research gaps in disability studies in literature. After “disability,” the most frequently occurring keywords were found to be “disability studies,” “memoir,” and “narrative,” reflecting the autobiographical nature and narrative focus of the study of disability. The other most frequently used keywords such as “race,” “sexuality,” “masculinity,” and “gender” demonstrated that disability was examined through interdisciplinary perspectives, highlighting the intersectionality of disability studies in the 21st century. Themes such as “intellectual disability,” “trauma narrative,” “bioethics,” “age studies,” “post dramatic theatre,” “motherhood,” and “immigration” were the least studied keywords, thus, generating a research gap for future studies in disability. Regarding the countries, the bibliometric results demonstrated that the publications from the United States had the most impact with a number of 212 documents and 1035 citations. England, India, Spain, Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Taiwan, and Italy were determined to be the other important contributors that were leading the field. Croatia, India, Norway, China, Poland, South Korea, and the U.S.A. had the strongest collaborative patterns. Moreover, a scholarly cooperation among Germany, Belgium, Spain, Poland, and Italy was revealed, which indicated a network among the European countries.

When all the results were synthesized as a whole, it was concluded that the disability studies in the literary field have gained a palpable momentum in the last decade, and especially in 2025, it has reached the peak, with a publication number of 44 and 189 citation. When the most cited and most influential authors were evaluated together, it was observed that most of the leading ones were either American or British or that they were either scholars of American or English language/literature or working at American or British universities, although there were significant names from other countries or nationalities in the bibliometric results too. Similarly, both the bibliographic coupling of countries and the publication number of countries analyses demonstrated that the United States of America and England were the leading countries in the field. The most influential journal was depicted to be also an American one, which turned out to be the journal titled *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America (PMLA)*. Moreover, in the scope of the research the most significant organizations were found to be American or British too such as Ohio State University and University of Cambridge. All these results clearly indicated that disability studies in American and English literature constituted a broader literature on literary disability studies when compared to the related literatures of other countries’ literatures. Last but not the least, the identification of the least frequently studied keywords constituted one of the most original and strong aspects of this study, since it demonstrated that future studies on disability which would focus on these keywords would be of authentic quality and contribute to the development of disability studies in literature.

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