





30 Years (1991 – 2021) Publication Trends on Disability and Higher Education Learning: A Bibliometric Review

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ABSTRACT

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Research focusing on disability in higher education is gradually receiving the attention from scholars around the world; however, the endeavor still scarce. This study was designed to identify issues which students with disabilities in higher education faced using the bibliometric review. Using Scopus database, 1865 publications on disability in higher education were disseminated between 1991 and 2021, from the perspective of publication trends, research areas, prolific source, most cited documents, co-authorship concerning authors, institutions and countries, and keywords co-occurrence. The review found an escalation of publications from 122 in 2015 to 160 publications in 2020. It can be construed that the disability in higher education draws a variety of research areas. United States scholars contributed 43.89% of the overall publications, leading another 89 countries. Authors' keywords of "students with disabilities", "higher education", "learning institutions", and "special students" have substantially impacted the online search for information. This bibliometric study offers a comprehensive and in-depth glance on the subject under study, which could assist academia and industry players.

Contribution/Originality: This study is one of very few studies which have explored publication trends on disability and higher education learning. The extensive database search provides a concise overview of the future of disability in higher education learning research to obtain better understanding that benefits research effort.

1. Introduction

The [United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(PWDs\) \(2006\)](#) has outlined clauses that promotes development, protection and monitoring of the following rights for PWDs such as (i) access to buildings, schools and public transportation, (ii) the right to live independently and be included in community activities, (iii) the right to personal mobility, information access and political participation, and (iv) the right to participate in the recreation, leisure and cultural life of the society.

Despite international commitment by the UN convention to advocate the inclusion of PWDs in the community, the participation of the PWDs in various sectors such as economic development, social and cultural activities are limited and far behind compared with the non-disabled community around the world ([Berger, 2013](#); [Kafer, 2013](#); [Oliver & Barnes, 2012](#); [Shakespeare, 2014](#); [Wilson, 2017](#); [Worth, 2013](#)). Equally important, the low participation, and opportunities of the PWDs can also been traced in other settings such as workplace, politics, religious activities and institutions, and arts movement ([Baldridge et al., 2016](#); [Collins & Ault, 2010](#); [Green & Bingham, 2017](#); [Mattila & Papageorgiou, 2017](#)). In most situation, PWDs are living in poverty and education has become less priority in their life. They are battling to finance themselves for meal, medical, and living.

The participation of the PWDs in the higher education setting remain unpromising and underrepresented in higher education ([Hubble & Bolton, 2021](#); [Taylor et. al, 2010](#)). Moreover, [Hubble and Bolton \(2021\)](#) further pointed, student with disabilities in higher education faced with paltry experience compared with non-disabled students. Students with disabilities are prone to drop-out of courses. As a consequence, they completed their degree a bit late and lower degree results compared with student without disability. The issue of accessibility of the PWDs to the education buildings also remain one of the major problems that hinder their full participation in learning environment. Narrow space that inhibits wheelchair bound people to move, no tactile paving for vision impaired, and limited disabled-friendly facilities in campus like hostel, washroom, and in-campus transportation to name a few, were among examples that hinder PWDs in education institutions.

However, although the disabled encountered with accessibilities issues in learning institutions, the number of students with disability entered universities are increasing ([Taylor et al., 2008](#)). Recent study conducted by [Hubble and Bolton \(2021\)](#) also found that, the number of student with disabilities in college and universities accelerated steadily. The growing enrolment of students with disabilities in the higher learning institutions require the university management team to make comprehensive range of adjustment. The modification may range from structural modifications such as faculty buildings ([Taylor et al., 2008](#); [Newman, 2008](#)), student residential, university transportation equipped with ramp for wheelchair-bound students, assistive device for students with visual or hearing impairments, and support group to ensure student with disabilities have pleasant emotional care in campus. Keeping with the trends of the growing number of students with disabilities in higher learning institutions, the purpose of this paper is therefore to explore publication trends on disability and higher education learning via bibliometric review.

2. Methodology

A bibliometric analysis was carried out to understand the nature of research in a particular domain based on collection in the literature. The bibliometric method is focused on the projection of the research trends, developments, and recent directions of a particular subject discussed by the authors (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015; Zupic & Čater, 2015). In this study, the scholarly analysis was conducted to explore. In this study, the scholarly analysis was conducted to explore research endeavour on students with disability in higher education learning emerged, expand, and evolved in the research mainstream.

The bibliometric analysis can be done using several databases such as Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, and Google Scholar. For this study, Scopus database were used to obtained bibliometric data based on several types of publications information such as languages, countries, the annual number of publications, reputable journals' and authors' prominence, as well as research areas. Moreover, we have also collected the most critical, significant and most cited researchers in the area.

The database includes a broad range of various academic, medical and social subjects with over 28,000 documents of journals, trade papers, conference proceedings. The bibliometric data was retrieved on November 20, 2021, to identify related keywords and appropriate information to address specific objectives that has been decided. The keyword of 'Disability' and 'Higher Education Learning' based on the TITLE-ABS-KEY and quotation marks was customized to produce accurate search results. The retrieved data yielded 1185 publications from 1991, where the article related to 'Disability' and 'Higher Education Learning' began to be recorded and captured in the Scopus database until 2021. The total 1185 publications were articles from various journal sources and written in English. Moreover, the data which is in Comma-separated Values (CSV) and Research Information System (RIS) such as years, authors, the field of study, article sources, countries, and languages were exported to several tools such as Microsoft Excel, Publish or Perish (PoP), and VOSviewer software for further analysis.

3. Result and Discussion

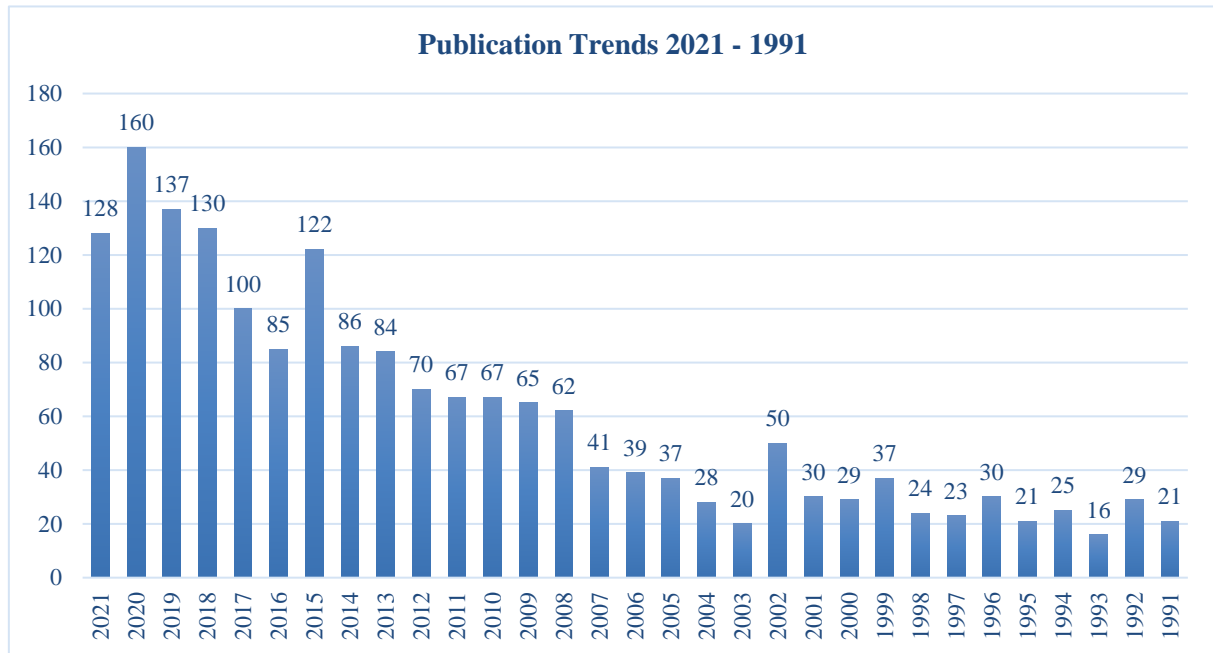
3.1. Publication Trends

Figure 1 shows that a total of 1865 articles have been written within 30 years. However, only 514 out of 1865 publications were open access. The 514 open access papers indicated that most of publications written on disability and higher education learning are not publicly available. Majority of the papers require the researcher to pay to access to the information. From the researcher perspective, publishing in open access journal permit the researcher to increase citations. Equally important, the visibility of this topic can be increased when researcher in this area publish their research work in open access journal. The endeavour will help to put this area of study in the limelight as the issue of equal and inclusive education for all the society are among the priority in Sustainable Goal Development (SDG) 2030.

In 1991, there are 21 articles published and the number of publications in this area of study fluctuates from year 1992 until 2014. The number of publications increased exponentially by 122 in 2015. In the same vein, there are 160 articles published in 2020. This could be explained through several factors. Firstly, the number of disability student

enrolment in the higher learning institutions such as university, community college, and vocational college has increased significantly. This is due to the growing online course offered, as well as significant modifications has been made at the institutions facilities to accommodate the disabled student. On a positive note, the online course offered, and the modifications make a meaningful difference for the disabled students in accessing to tertiary education. With the respect to exponential growth in the topic in 2015-2021, it can be concluded that this academic field is justifiable and relevant.

Figure 1: Publications trends in disability and higher education learning



3.2. Analysis of Research Areas

The area of study on disability and higher education learning received attention from the scholars around the world with various research groups working on this topic. Social Science with 1099 publications is the leading field for the scholars in discussing and publishing their research work. This finding is possible as the review focuses on the disability concept, issues in disability such as injustice, inequality, and participation in the community as well as intervention to address the issues. The second highest research area that garnered researcher attention to publish their work with 489 publications is Psychology. The discussion was focused on psychological aspect among disability people as such acceptance, emotional stability, and their well-being in the society. Apart from Psychology, Medicine area had 652 publications, followed with Health Profession, 392 publications, and Arts and Humanities with 117 publications. With various research areas discussed issues on the disabled, it is hoped that the effort will help to improve the disabled quality of life and provide opportunity for them to fully participate in the society. Table 1 depicts the top five research area in disability and higher education learning.

Table 1: Top Five Research area in Disability and Higher Education Learning

Rank	Research Area	Publications
1	Social Sciences	1099
2	Psychology	489

3	Medicine	652
4	Health Profession	392
5	Arts and Humanities	117

3.3. Prolific Sources

To identify the most influential source titles in disability and higher education learning, [Table 2](#) presents a list of the prolific source titles with at least three publications. Considering the number of publications, the Journal of Learning Disabilities appears to be the most influential source title in this field, with 118 publications. The second most influential source is European Journal of Special Needs Education and followed with Exceptional Children in the third rank. From the findings, it is suggested that the publications have been contributing useful knowledge that will allow prospective practitioners and researchers to refer to beneficial for their future research.

Table 2: The Prolific Source Titles with at least Three Publications

Rank	Sources	Publications
1	Journal of Learning Disabilities	118
2	European Journal of Special Needs Education	42
3	Exceptional Children	35
3	Learning Disability Quarterly	30
4	Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation	27
5	Remedial and Special Education	26

3.4. Most Cited Documents

The next step is to recognise the most active and successful authors in the field of disability in higher education learning. A list of the ten most-cited documents is provided in [Table 3](#). The number of citations is generally seen as a fair representation of the reputation and influence of work among the scientific community ([Merigó & Yang, 2017](#)).

As indicated in [Table 3](#), written by [Duncan et al. \(1994\)](#) was listed as the most-cited work, with 1343 citations and 49.74 cites per year for the article entitled 'Economic deprivation and early childhood development'. The second most cited with 1035 citations and 103.5 cites per year was written by [Boyle et al. \(2011\)](#) entitled 'Trends in the prevalence of developmental disabilities in US children, 1997-2008' published by the journal name Paediatrics. Next was scholarly work by [Biederman et al. \(2004\)](#) with 498 citations and 29.29 cites per year for an article entitled 'Impact of executive function deficits and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) on academic outcomes in children' published by Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology. Besides that, article written by [Shattuck et al. \(2012\)](#) entitled 'Postsecondary education and employment among youth with an autism spectrum disorder' able to obtain 464 citations with 51.56 cites per year. This article was published in Paediatrics.

Table 3: Top Ten Most Cited Documents on Disability in Higher Education Learning

Cites	Cites Per Year	Authors/ Year	Title	Source Publisher
1343	49.74	Duncan et al. (1994)	Economic Deprivation and Early Childhood	Child Development

Cites	Cites Per Year	Authors/ Year	Title	Source Publisher
			Development	
1035	103.5	Boyle et al. (2011)	Trends in the prevalence of developmental disabilities in US children, 1997-2008	Paediatrics
498	29.29	Biederman et al. (2004)	Impact of executive function deficits and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) on academic outcomes in children	Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology
464	51.56	Shattuck et al. (2012)	Postsecondary education and employment among youth with an autism spectrum disorder	Paediatrics
328	32.8	Mazzocco et al. (2011)	Impaired acuity of the approximate number system underlies mathematical learning disability (dyscalculia)	Child Development
254	14.11	Mitby, et al. (2003)	Utilization of special education services and educational attainment among long-term survivors of childhood cancer: A report from the childhood cancer survivor study	Cancer
228	19	Johnson et al. (2009)	Academic attainment and special educational needs in extremely preterm children at 11 years of age: The EPICure study	Archives of Disease in Childhood: Fetal and Neonatal Edition
227	14.19	Barrera et al. (2005)	Educational and social late effects of childhood cancer and related clinical, personal and familial characteristics	Cancer

Cites	Cites Per Year	Authors/ Year	Title	Source Publisher
226	11.89	Stuebing et al. (2002)	Validity of IQ-discrepancy classifications of reading disabilities: A meta-analysis	American Educational Research Journal
219	10.43	Vaughn et al. (2000)	The underlying message in LD intervention research: Findings from research syntheses	Exceptional Children

The determination of the most influential authors in the field is another crucial aspect of the bibliometric analysis. [Table 4](#) shows 10 different authors with at least five articles related to disability and higher education learning. [Vaughn et al. \(2000\)](#) were at the top of the list with 13 publications, followed with [Molina et al. \(2016\)](#) with 11 publications. Authors such as [Ballard and Dymond \(2016\)](#), [Heiman et al. \(2015\)](#), and [Levi et al. \(2013\)](#) have published eight articles respectively.

In particular, authors from United States of America associated with University of Texas have been the most active authors to publish in the topic of disability and higher learning institution research over the last 30 years. Among possible explanation for this is United States has improved and well managed disabled facilities and services since the implementation of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Moreover, they also have The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) that responsible in managing and handling the enrolment of student with disabilities in higher learning institution. Among AHEAD portfolio is to provide substantial modification, accommodation, or auxiliary aid or service requested / needed by the disabled students that in return, minimize the impact of difficulty faced by disabled student at the higher learning institutions.

Table 4: The Status of Authors with at least Five Publications

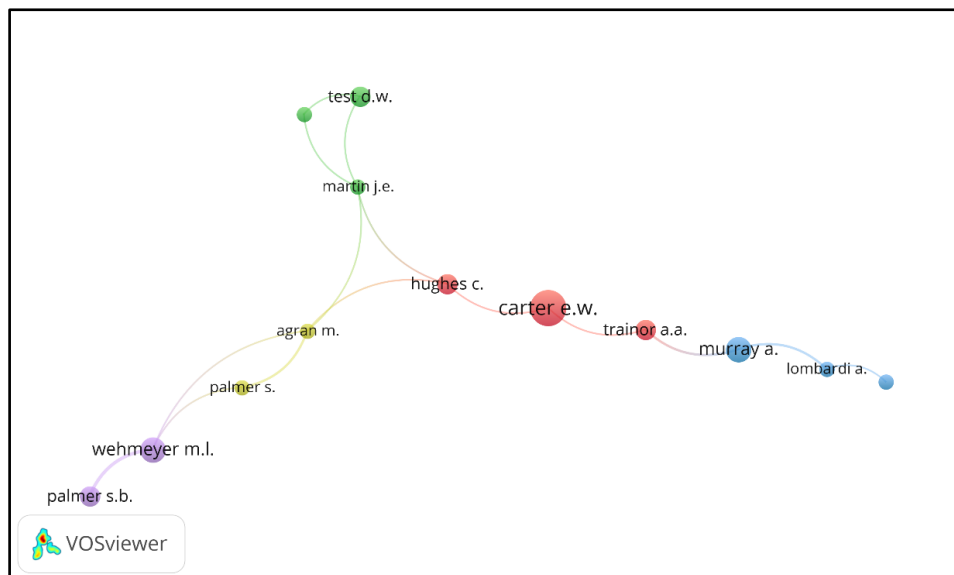
Authors / Years	Publications	H-index	Affiliation	Country
Vaughn et al. (2000)	13	60	University of Texas	United States
Molina et al. (2016)	11	13	Universidad de Sevilla	Spain
Ballard and Dymond, (2016)	8	12	University of Illinois Urbana – Champaign	United States
Heiman et al. (2015)	8	18	Open University of Israel	Israel
Levi et al. (2013)	8	23	Peres Academic Centre	Israel
Trainor et al. (2011)	7	40	Vanderbilt University	United States
Thompson et al. (2010)	6	14	University of Washington	United States
Bouck and Flanagan	5	22	Michigan State University	United States

Authors / Years	Publications	H-index	Affiliation	Country
(2009)				
Connor and Cavendish (2020)	5	10	University of Miami	United States
Bertills et al. (2018)	5	29	Högkolan i Jönköping	Sweden

3.5. Authors Co-authorship analysis

Collaborative publications have the most significant recognition and scientific impact, together with inter-institutional collaborative articles, single-country articles and single-author articles (Wambu & Ho, 2016). The most popular form of collaborative network is known as co-authorship. The network visualisation of co-authors in halal tourism is shown in Figure 2. Each circle refers to the author, and the number of publications is the size of the circle. The link between the two circles (nodes) stands for the cooperative relationship between the two authors, and the breadth of the link (lines) reflects the strength of the partnership. Authors with a minimum of a publication are visualised in Figure 2 using a network visualisation. Out of the 745 authors who have conducted the research, 26 authors reached the thresholds and were related. The circles denoting authors in the same cluster suggested they work in a related area and collaborate closely. As shown in Figure 2, there are five clusters. The first cluster is denoted in red colour represented four authors. The second cluster, which is blue, consists of four authors, the third cluster, which is green colour yielded two authors, fourth and five cluster which is in yellow and purple colour, comprises of two authors.

Figure 2: Network Authors Co-authors

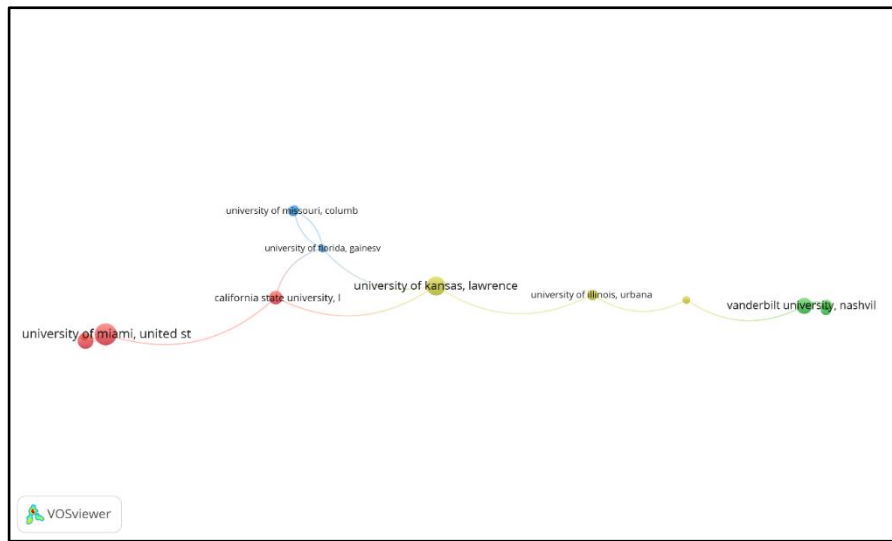


3.6. Institutions Co-authorship analysis

Co-authorship institutions’ study represents the degree of contact between institutions and prominent research institutions (Reyes Gonzalez, Gonzalez Brambila & Veloso 2016). The institutions’ contribution was estimated by the affiliation institute of at least two authors of the written articles, and 430 institutions have been selected. Figure 3

illustrates the network of institutions performing a co-authorship analysis of 7 institutions in four clusters.

Figure 3: Network Institutions Co-authorship



3.7. Countries Co-authorship analysis

A network analysis was carried out to classify the countries of authors who have contributed to disability in higher education learning. As shown in Figure 4, the co-authorship network consists of 89 countries and is divided into six clusters. The nodes represent the countries, where the more extensive the nodes indicate a more significant number of publications. In this scenario, United States had more significant nodes. It has been revealed that United States has a considerable volume of publications (901 publications). The second rank goes to United Kingdom with 257 publications, and Australia was in the third rank with 82 publications. Co-authorship analyses have shown that United States has become a focal point and has cooperated closely with several countries such as Saudi Arabia, Spain, United Kingdom, Australia, Belgium, and Spain. The most productive ten countries of the network are shown in Table 5.

Figure 4: Network Countries Co-authorship

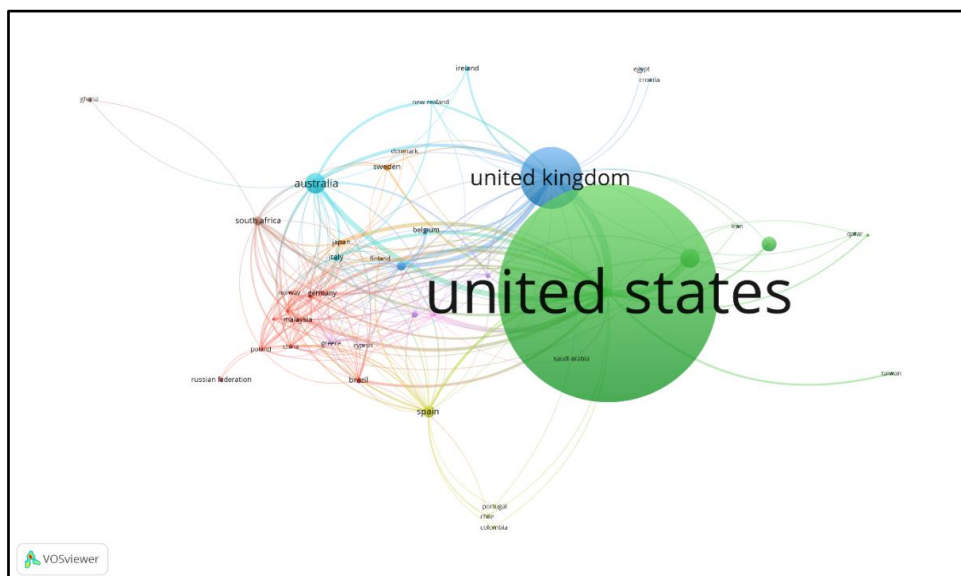


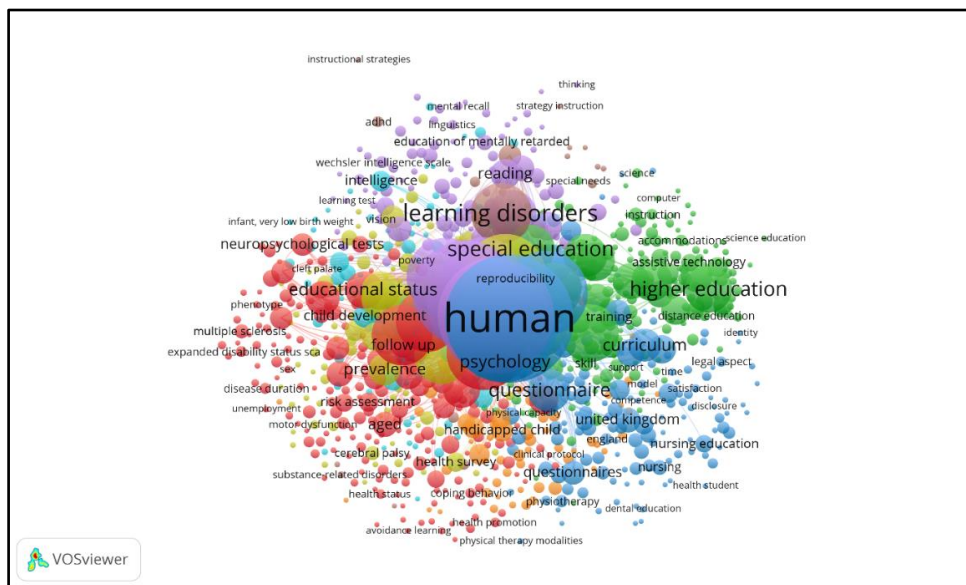
Table 5: The Status of Countries with at least Three Publications

Country	Publications	Percentage (%)
United States	901	48.31
United Kingdom	257	13.78
Australia	85	7.17
Canada	82	4.56
Israel	63	3.38
Spain	50	2.68
Netherlands	37	1.98
South Africa	37	1.98
Italy	28	1.50
Sweden	28	1.50

3.8. Keywords Co-occurrence analysis

This section provides a visual description to deepen the conclusions of the authors' cooccurrence keywords. VOS viewer also enables the most common keywords in a particular series of publications to analyse the author's keywords. Figure 5 provides a network diagram of the author's keywords in which various colours, node sizes, font sizes, and the thickness of the connecting lines illustrate the relationship with other keywords (Sweileh et al., 2016).

Figure 5: Network visualization map of authors' keywords



Keywords that appeared more than five times, with 346 keywords, were included in the map. VOSviewer divided the keywords into four main clusters that represent 13 authors' keywords. The most famous keywords are the critical term 'human' in blue nodes. In addition, some common keywords are 'special education', 'higher education', 'learning disorder', 'educational status', 'child development' and 'education of mentally retarded' in terms of their coincidences. The results confirm that disability in higher education learning research has a cross-disciplinary perspective and links various fields, including psychology and social sciences.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this bibliometric analysis promotes examining and integrating established directions toward halal tourism and emerging trends. Based on a bibliometric analysis of 30 years of publication trends, the study found that the information below will be able to provide practitioners and researchers with the related facts:

- a) The number of publications in the area of disability in higher education learning increased exponentially in 2020, with 160 articles published in 2020.
- b) The research areas 'Social Sciences' became the most research hotspots with 1099 publications.
- c) The Journal of Learning Disabilities appears to be the most influential source title on disability and higher education learning, with 118 publications.
- d) The paper written by [Duncan et al. \(1994\)](#) was the most cited publication, with 1343 citations and 49.74 cites per year for the article entitled 'Economic deprivation and early childhood development' published by the Child Development. This article will good kick-start for new researcher in the field to understand the foundation and concepts of the issue understudy.
- e) Co-authorship analyses have shown that United States has been a focal point and has collaborated closely with other countries. It is designated that those growing foreign collaborations have facilitated academic collaboration and play an essential role in enhancing intellectual engagement in the research area.
- f) Research on disability in higher education learning has an interdisciplinary perspective concerning the authors' keywords such as 'special education', 'higher education' and 'education of mentally retarded', as it links with a wide range of fields, including psychology as well as social sciences.

The bibliometric analysis contributes to the art of a particular field or topic to be explored and understood. Equally important, the process involved during the analysis such as document categorisations were carried out cautiously. In this specific instance, the nature of a bibliometric analysis per se is therefore limited. Only publications published in area disability in higher education learning were included during the process. Moreover, it is also essential to note other database such as Google Scholar and Microsoft academic are also beneficial for conducting bibliometric analysis. The information provided in this study is envisioned to provide a concise overview of the future of disability in higher education learning research to obtain understanding that benefits research endeavour. In order to comprehend in-depth on the topic, it is suggested the future analysis should included elements of 'family support', 'university facilities', 'campus inclusion', 'assistive devices' as these terms were closely connected and attract interest based from the previous bibliometric work.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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