

A critical analysis of postgraduate theses in University of Kelaniya

Wimalasiri B.G.S. P and De Silva A.P.U

sulekaw@kln.ac.lk, udayangani@kln.ac.lk

Abstract

The main aim of this study was to ascertain the contribution made by postgraduate scholars through the research projects they undertake as part of their studies at the University of Kelaniya. The study sample consisted of 1,012 theses pertaining to doctoral and master's degree theses submitted at the University of Kelaniya. Ms-excel was used to analyse and interpret data. It was clearly identified that Art subject disciplines were the most trending subject areas of the University of Kelaniya. It was observed that within the period of time concerned in the study, most of the research focussed on arts subject areas while majority of theses came in the category of MSc degree while the number of theses submitted in the categories of DBA, MBA and MSc degrees were a few. Therefore, it could be concluded that the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Kelaniya has to take steps to popularise postgraduate research work in other subject areas and in-depth categories such as doctoral degrees

Keywords: Research trends, Postgraduate theses, Postgraduate research, Research production

Introduction

Research is simply defined as a systematic investigation of any field of study, conducted by an investigator to reveal new facts, theories, or principles, or determining the current state of knowledge of the subject (ODLIS, 2014). At the same time, the research directs the proper way for future development of any subject areas and owing to the research a new subject disciplines could be occurred (Islam, Islam, N. & Mondal, 2018). In other words, research is capable enough to find solutions or conclusions for any subject matter (Mittel, 2011). Academic and research institutions are mostly involved in current research thus contributing to new knowledge and theories. (Kang & others, 2014). In order to identify gaps, quantitative and qualitative analysis of past research become necessary for the research world.

One of the main tasks of any academic institution is to support research in all applicable subject disciplines. One of the ways to approach this issue is the facilitation though research at postgraduate degree programmes and to disseminate research findings in the society. At the same time, academic institutes or research institutes play a valuable role offering postgraduate research and try to communicate the major issues or trends in the society (Ozturk, 2017). The Faculty of Graduate studies, University of Kelaniya has been selected as the academic institution focussed in this research study. Currently, it offers a range of postgraduate degree programmes which include Ph.D., DBA, M.Phil., MSc., MHRM, M.Com, MSc., MBA and M.A. degrees coordinated by the Faculties of Commerce & Management, Computing & Technology, Humanities, Medicine, Science and Social Sciences. In all these degree programmes there is a research component which requires candidates to engage in a research study and submit a thesis. In case of a Doctoral or M. Phil. degree the research itself become the major component. Theses submitted in the university are handed over to the main library to enable subsequent use and conservation. The thesis collection at the main library consists of 1,700

theses submitted in the university during the period 1960 to 2020. In analysing the research contribution, the theses collection referred-to above and its index were used as the main source of data. Due to Covid-19 epidemic and resulting restrictions on movement, this research was limited to theses submitted during the period 2010 to 2020.

In the both national and international research arena, there was more research related to the research trends, research contribution and doctoral contribution related to the subject disciplines. Some of the research studies carried out in this area has focussed their attention to explore research work pertaining to a particular subject discipline such as Library and Information Science (LIS) or covering a particular geographic region. For example, there are numerous research studies focussed on the trends of LIS discipline (Islam, Islam, N. & Mondal, 2018; Mittal, 2011; Moahi, 2008; Chatterjee, Rath, & Poddar, 1995). There are a few research studies focussed on postgraduate theses in Sri Lanka. Angamma and Jayatissa (2015) carried out a bibliometric study of LIS postgraduate theses. However, this study is the first attempt of addressing domestic research contribution and research output at the University of Kelaniya.

Objectives

The principal objective of this study was to identify the distribution of subject disciplines as selected by postgraduate research scholars. At the same time, this study was to identify the contribution to the research fields of subject areas of selected postgraduate theses. Finally, this study tried to investigate contribution of the research world by the postgraduate degree programmes of University of Kelaniya.

Methodology

This study was based on the descriptive research and primary data obtained from the thesis collection held at the University of Kelaniya main library. Out of the total collection of 1,700 theses accumulated during the period 1960 to 2021, 1012 theses collected over the period 2010 to 2020 selected for the study. These theses are related to Ph.D., M.Phil., MSSc., MHRM, M.Com, MSc., DBA, MBA and M.A degrees offered by the University of Kelaniya. Content analysis was used to identify the research areas and the research contribution of the subject disciplines during the selected period. Collected primary data was descriptively analysed by using Ms-Excel and presented accordingly.

Results

As 1,012 theses out of a collection of 1,700 were used for the study, 59.5 percent of the study population included in the sample. The majority of postgraduates theses (40%) originated from the faculty of Social Sciences whereas the respective percentages from the faculties of Humanities, Commerce & Management, Science and Medicine respectively becoming 27%, 25%, 7% and 1%. Figure 1 shows the subject-wise distribution of theses. Accordingly, the highest number of research reported from the subject discipline of Linguistics with 174 (17.19%) theses, while Human Resource Management, Mass Communication and Library and Information Sciences disciplines degrees achieved second, third and fourth rankings with 126 (12.45%), 104(9.98%) and 88(8.70%) theses respectively. The research output on History, Philosophy, Zoology, and

Mathematics were found to be less.

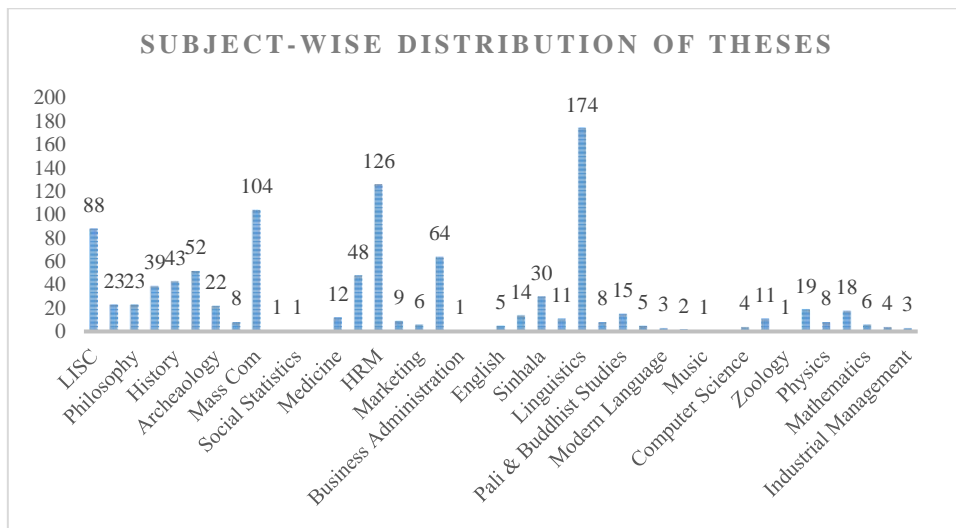


Figure 1: Subject-wise distribution of theses (Source: Analysed data, 2021)

Figure 2 shows the distribution of research according to the degree programme. Accordingly, M.S.Sc. degrees represented the highest number of the theses (301 or 30%) while M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes secured second and third places with 233 (23%) and 132 (13%) theses respectively. M.H.R.M. and M.A. theses contribution was over hundred during the selected period. M.Com., M.Sc, M.B.A., D.B.A., and M.L.S. theses production is a few.

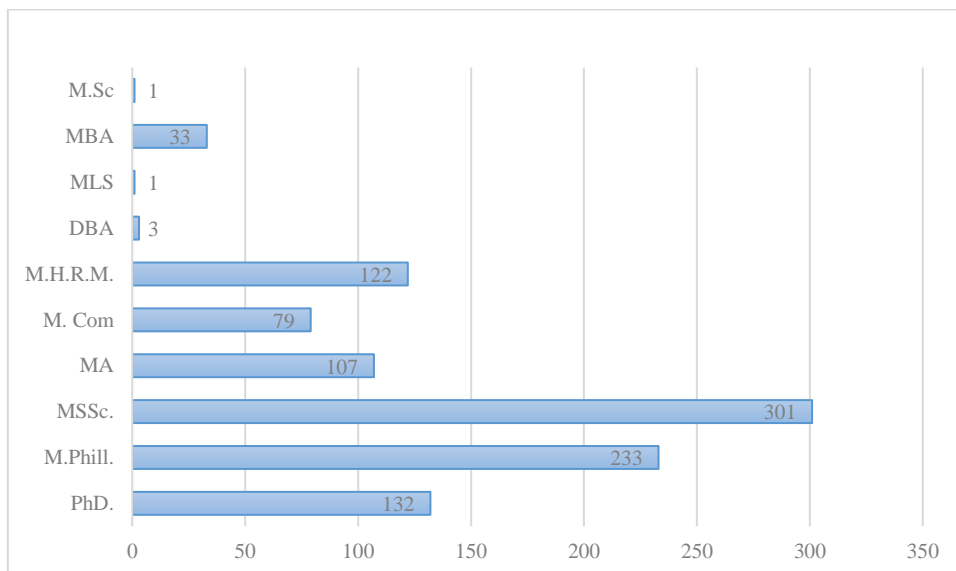


Figure 2: Distribution of theses according to the degree programmes

(Source: Analysed data, 2021)

Discussion/ Conclusion

The principal objective of this study was to identify the distribution of subject disciplines as selected by the postgraduate research scholars and the results clearly shows that majority of postgraduates theses were related to Art subjects while Commerce and Management disciplines assuming the next position. However, there are a very little number of research conducted at the postgraduate level in Science and Medicine disciplines. Based on the analyzed data, the Linguistics identified as the most trending subject theme in the University of Kelaniya. Besides, Human Resources Management, Library and Information Science and Mass Communication are the most prevalent subjects for researches.

Master of Social Sciences degree programmes are the highest contributor in the field of postgraduate research at the University of Kelaniya. Production of Master of Philosophy and Doctoral researchers were slightly developing research programs. Contribution of DBA, MBA and MSc. to the research field was very low.

Recommendations

It is visible from this study that there are a lot of subject areas which requires the attention of the Faculty of Graduate Studies in encouraging potential researchers to engage in research studies thereby generating new knowledge useful to the community at large. Towards that end, gaps of knowledge have to be identified and encouragement has to be provided to potential postgraduate research scholars to select such topics for their research studies. At the same time, librarians and other research scholars could explore the coverage of subjects to identify the gaps. Not only above-mentioned suggestions but also updating accurate database based on the theses collections will more beneficial for researchers to distinguish the gaps of research fields.

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