Quality Research in LIS in India: An Examination of the Contribution of Ph.D. Scholars

UDITA GUPTA*
MANOJ KUMAR JOSHI**

The paper presents publication analysis of doctoral candidates completing their Ph.D. in the year 2020. For identification of theses awarded by Indian universities in LIS in 2020, the notifications of the doctoral theses published in the column "Theses of the Month" (Social Sciences) of *University News* (weekly journal published by Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi) 2020 (volume 58) were consulted. Total 21 theses were accepted by Indian universities in Library and Information Science (LIS). During the period 2015-2022, total 92 documents were produced by these 21 scholars. Out of these, 46 papers were published in peer reviewed journals, 21 in Scopus, 01in Web of Science, and 07 in UGC CARE listed journals. Total 40 papers were based on Ph.D. work of the authors which include, 26 in peer reviewed journals, 11 in Scopus indexed journals and 03 in UGC CARE listed journals. Authors conclude that LIS doctoral candidates are broadly active researchers and publish beyond their Ph.D. work also. But quality of research publications in the LIS field still needs improvement.

Keywords: *Research Quality; LIS Research; Doctoral Research*

1 INTRODUCTION

Doctoral research has many attributes. Expert assessment of potential researcher and research topic, expert guidance during conduct of the study, fulfillment of other requirements of academic degree, and defending the work during generally open viva-voce examination, are some of the distinguishing features of doctoral research. Every university in India develops its system of

* Research Scholar, Dept. of Lib. & Inf. Sc., Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra
Email: udi.jnv@gmail.com

* Professor, Dept. of Lib. & Inf. Sc., Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra
Email: manojkj01@yahoo.com

conducting doctoral research, which largely follows the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines. But rigorousness of and adherence to established procedures, varies among different universities leading to differing quality of research theses.

Research quality is generally assessed by four criteria, "Subjective evaluation (peer review); number of publications; research productivity; [and]citations."[1]But research quality assessment may not be as simple as quantifying the different aspects.Due to emphasis on certain aspects like statistical analysis, "other aspects of research such asrelevance of the research in the context of actual issues and problems encountered in the academic profession or larger society, involvement of the researcher in research, transformation of the researcher during the research process and ultimately the outcome of research which is to solve the real problems in the field or intervention of some sort are neglected."[2]

The doctoral research hasalso been criticized for many operational reasons such as selection of candidates for doctoral research, poor quality of theses, flawed process of selection of examiners for thesis evaluation, plagiarism, and institutional support and so on.This criticism ranges across all disciplines and aspects of research process."In India, though there have been select remarkable successes; the entire research ecosystem – for basic and applied research – has not progressed uniformly."[3]Inadequate research funding has been frequently cited for poor quality of research in the country. A decade old observation holds true even today that "advanced countries are known to spend around 30% of their total research and development expenditure in the university sector. In India, the figure was calculated as 6%."[4]Being an integral part of Indian educational system, LIS research, particularly doctoral research has also been subjected to wide criticism since the beginning. When doctoral research in LIS was still in infancy, the UGC decision of setting a deadline of "December 1992 (then advanced to December 1993) for obtaining the Ph.D. degree to get an exemption from the (difficult) national level test for teaching jobs in universities/colleges has done incalculable damage to research standards."[5]this decision led to a sequence of events having spiraling effect on deterioration of research standards. In order to catch the deadline many institutional requirements such as minimum period of research, were relaxed. Persons without sufficient grooming got their Ph.D. degrees. Some of such ill-equipped researchers later might have become research supervisors. LIS research has also been criticized for pursuing largely theoretical areas and lack of use of appropriate channels for dissemination of research results."Working librarians rarely use research results to solve their professional problems…Research has become divorced from reality- a theoretical exercise at best."[6]

Such issues have been addressed from time to time at individual supervisor, departmental, institutional, and national levels. There are limits to individual

efforts, and their effectiveness may vary from person to person and situation to situation. Therefore, a discussion of these efforts may lead to extend the limits of the present paper. The institutional mechanism and national/ governmental guidelines which are to be followed invariably have more effectiveness, and, thus, have been briefly discussed here

In the 21st century, comprehensive guidelines were first issued under the title "UGC (Minimum Standards and Procedure for Award of M.Phil./Ph.D. Degree), Regulation, 2009."[7] These regulations provided the eligibility criteria for M.Phil./Ph.D. supervisor; procedure for admission; allocation of supervisor; coursework; evaluation and assessment methods; and depository with UGC. New regulations issued in 2016[8]dealt in detail on all aspects of both the research programmes. These include admission criteria; admission procedure; allocation of supervisor; duration of the programmes and relaxation in time to women and persons with disability; Research Advisory Committee and its functions; conditions for colleges to be eligible to offer M.Phil./Ph.D. programmes; and M.Phil./Ph.D. through distance/part-time mode. The 2018 regulations[9]amended the 2016 regulations by making a provision of five percent relaxation in entrance examination to be allowed to the candidates of SC/ST/OBC (Non-Creamy layers)/Differently abled categories.These provisions were expected to bring procedural uniformity and improve the quality of research in Indian universities.

The 2009 regulations, perhaps, for the first time, stated that "Ph.D. candidates shall publish one research paper in a referred Journal before the submission of the thesis/monograph for adjudication, and produce evidence for the same in the form of acceptance letter or the reprint"(point 16). This provision was further extended in 2016 regulations, to incorporate M.Phil. programme and provided that "M.Phil. scholars shall present at least one (1) research paper in a conference/seminar". The conditions of publication for Ph.D. were extended to one research paper in a refereed journal and "two paper presentations in conferences/seminars" (point 9.4).

This requirement of publication of one research paper in a referred journal along with introduction of API (Academic Performance Indicator) based career advancement for faculty, opened a new dimension of publication related concerns in the form of flood of predatory journals.

2 OBJECTIVES

The study has been intended to achieve the following objectives:
 (i) Identify the theses produced in LIS in Indian universities in 2020;

 (ii) Find out the papers produced by the researchers completing Ph.D. in 2020;

 (iii) Find out the coverage of these papers in Web of Science(WoS), Scopus, UGC CARE listed journals and peer reviewed journals; and

(iv) Find out the Ph.D. based papers published in different journals.

3   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For identification of theses awarded by Indian universities in LIS in 2020, the notifications of the doctoral theses published in the column "Theses of the Month" (Social Sciences) of *University News* (weekly journal published by Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi) 2020 (volume 58)were consulted. Thus, total 22 theses were identified. One thesis in the section of Library and Information Sciencewas from Psychology, so it was not considered for this study. Following the compilation of data about theses from *University News*, the name of the researcher with affiliationwas searched as a search stringin the authorsearch in Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science (WoS) to collect data regarding publications of that researcher. That search was limited to a timespan ranging from 2015 to 2022.The Retrieved data from Google Scholar was also matched to UGC CARE listed journals. The obtained data from Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and UGC CARE listed journals was matched to the researchers' Ph.D. theses titles to ensure that the retrieved publications werebased on their doctoral work.

4   DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The 21 theses identified from the *University News*column provided the names and institution of the researchers.

41 PUBLICATIONS COVERED IN GOOGLE SCHOLAR

The Google Scholar search of each of the 21 researchers retrieved total 92 documents. The Data collected from Google Scholar is organized into 5 categories as shown in Table 1.

Table 1:Sources of Google Scholar Publications

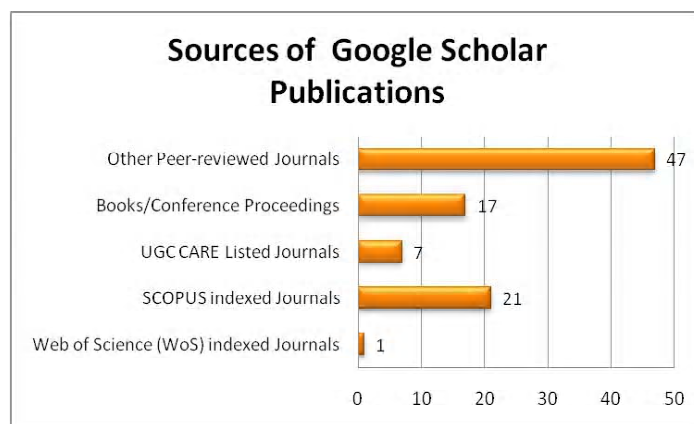| S.No.	Source/Database	Documents
1.	Web of Science (WoS) indexed Journals	01
2.	Scopus indexed Journals	20+01
3.	UGC CARE Listed Journals	07
4.	Books/Conference Proceedings	17
5.	Other Peer-reviewed Journals	47
Total		**92**

Figure 1: Sources of Google Scholar Publications

Table 1and Figure 1reveal that out of the retrieved documents only 01 document was indexed in Web of Science database which was common in Scopus and WoS.Total 21 documents were from Scopus indexed journals, 07 from UGC CARE listed journals, 17 documents were published as book chapters/conference proceedings and most of the documents i.e.,47 were published in other peer-reviewed journals. Out of these 47 articles, 03 articles published in thejournal *Library Philosophy and Practice* were not indexed in Scopus; hence these articles were also counted in other peer reviewed journals.

42 PUBLICATIONS COVERED IN WEB OF SCIENCE (WOS)

In the Web of Science database, only 01 document was retrieved by the author (Maurya, Sanjay Kumar) in the journal *Scientometrics*. It was in international collaboration after the award of Ph.D. and the subject was also not related with Ph.D. work.
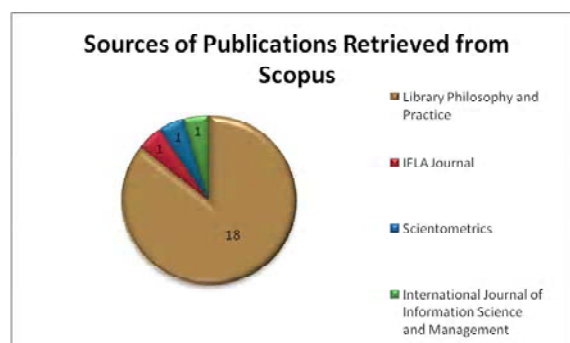
43 PUBLICATIONS COVERED IN SCOPUS

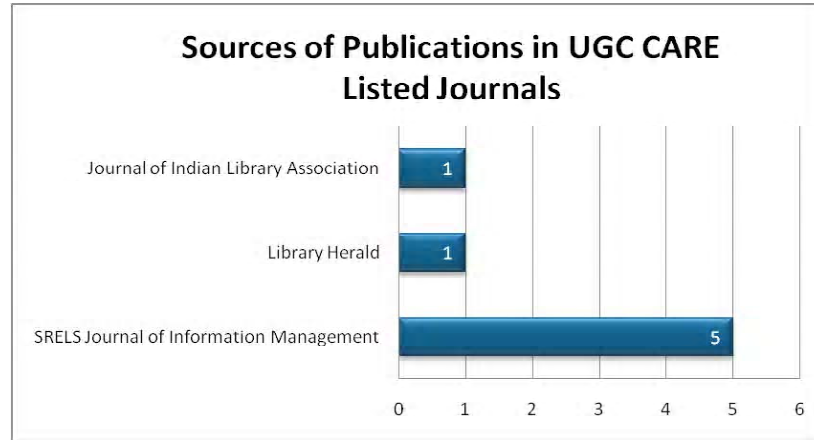**Figure 2: Sources of Publications Retrieved from Scopus**

Out of the 21 researchers, only 08 researchers had their profile in Scopus database. Total 21 publications were retrieved with the name of these 08 researchers. Figure 2 shows that majority of publications i.e., 18 were published in the journal *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 01 each in *IFLA Journal*, *International Journal of Information Science and Management* and*Scientometrics*. Detailed analysis of publications covered in Scopusis shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Publications in Scopus

S.No.	Name of Author	Publications	With Supervisor	Pre Ph.D.	Post Ph.D.	Ph.D. Related
1	Maurya, Sanjay Kumar	4	2	2	2	2
2	Rahman, Mukutor	3	3	3	-	1
3	Parmar, AmitaBipinchandra	2	2	-	2	-
4	Guite, Florence	4	4	3	1	4
5	Lalnunpuii, Esther	2	2	1	1	2
6	Singh, Angom Jeevan.	2	2	2	-	2
7	Om Prakash	2	-	2	-	-
8	Parmar, Rakesh Dudhabhai	2	-	-	2	-
Total		**21**	**15**	**13**	**8**	**11**

Table 2shows that out of 08 authors,06 had most of the publications with their Ph.D. supervisor, and01 author (Maurya, Sanjay Kumar) had02 publications in international collaboration. Only 02 authors had nopre Ph.D. publication in Scopus. Only 05 authors had Ph.D. related publicationsin Scopus and 03 authors had02 publications eachin Scopus indexed journals but none of them was related to their Ph.D. title.

44 UGC CARE LISTED JOURNALS

Figure 3: Sources of Publications in UGC CARE Listed Journals

Total 07 publications from 05 authors were published in UGC CARE-listed journals. Figure 3shows that out of the 07 publications 05 were from the *SRELS Journal of Information Management*, and 01each from the *Journal of IndianLibrary Association*, and *Library Herald*.

Table 3: Publications in UGC CARE listed Journals

S.No.	Name of Author	Publications	Journal Title	With Supervisor	Pre Ph.D.	Post Ph.D.	Ph.D. Related
1	Guite, Florence	1	SRELS Journal of Information Management	1	-	1	1
2	Maurya, Sanjay Kumar	2	Journal of Indian Library Association	1	-	1	-
			Library Herald	1	-	1	-
3	Ray, Aswini Kumar.	1	SRELS Journal of Information Management	1	1	-	1
4	Singh, Angom Jeevan.	2	SRELS Journal of Information Management	2	1	1	2
5	Verma, Nitesh Kumar	1	SRELS Journal of Information Management	-	-	1	-
Total		**07**		**06**	**02**	**05**	**04**

Table3 reveals that, out of 05 authors only 1 author did not have any publication with his supervisor in UGC CARE listed journals. Only 02 authors hadprePh.D. publications and 01 of them (Singh, Angom Jeevan) also had postPh.D. publication in UGC CARE listed journals. Out of 05, only 03 authors had publications related to their Ph.D. work in UGC CARE listed journals.

45 PUBLICATIONS IN PEER - REVIEWED JOURNALS

Out of the total 92 documents, more than half of the documents i.e., 47 were published in peer reviewed journals. Most of them were published during their Ph.D. time period. Total 26 publications were related to the research scholars' Ph.D. research area.

5   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study is based on only 21 doctoral theses accepted by Indian universities in Library and Information Science (LIS) during the year 2020. The results of this study may not reflect the broader picture of doctoral research in LIS in Indian universities because this number is relatively small as compared to universities offering Ph.D. course. This small number of doctoral theses in a year may be due to COVID-19 pandemic, when many research scholars whowere at the verge of completion of their Ph.D., could not submit. However, the results can be indicative of emerging and prevailing trends in the LIS field. The 21 research scholars whose theses were accepted by Indian universities produced a total of 92 documents during more than 7 years from 2015-2022. It is observed that more than half of the documents i.e., 47 were from peer-reviewed journals and the authenticity of the peer -reviewed journals may not be ascertained. Out of the 47 documents, total 26 publications were related to their Ph.D. research work.

A total of 28 publications were published in relatively quality assessed journals such asWoS, Scopus and UGC CARE listed journals. Out of these, 11 publications in Scopus and 04 in UGC-CARE listed journals were related to research scholars' Ph.D. work. These results do not present a gloomy picture as UGC requirement accepted by different universities make it mandatory to have publication in peer reviewed journals. Research scholars were not only publishing research articles to fulfill the mandatory requirements; most of them were active researchers publishing beyond their Ph.D. work. This is reflected by the fact that during the period under investigation, 10 papers were published outside the Ph.D. work in Scopus indexed journals and 03 inUGC CARE listed journal.

At the end, it can be said that LIS doctoral candidates are broadly active researchers and publish beyond their Ph.D. work also. But quality of research publications in the LIS field still needs improvement.

REFERENCES

1 VARGHESE (M). Quality and benchmarking in research. University News. 2013; 68-69.

2 SANTWANI (S A). Academic research: The process and product. University News. 53, 17;2015; 3-9.

3 GHOSH(R). National Educational Policy 2020: A shot in the arm for R & D in India.Association of Indian Universities.2021;New Delhi. (https://www.aiu.ac.in/documents/AIU_Publications/ Wednesday_Essay/6.%20National%20Education%20Policy%202020 A%20Shot%20in%20the%20Arm %20 for%20R&D %20in% 20IndiaE ssay% 20by%20 Dr.%20 Rupamanjari %20 Ghosh_ 31%20 March%2021.pdf).

4 SONI(R), SODHA(M), and PANDEY (K). Scientific research in Indian universities. University News, 49,18;2011;6-14.

5 SATIJA(M). What ails doctoral research in library and information science in India?. DESIDOC Journal of Library and Information Technology. 30,5; 2010; 61-66. (https://publications.drdo.gov.in/ojs/ index.php/djlit/article/view/615/281).

6 SATIJA (M). Doctoral research in library and information science in India: Some observations and comments. Libri. 49, 4;1999; 236-242.

7 UGC. UGC (Minimum Standards and Procedure for Award of M.Phi./ Ph.D. Degree), Regulation, 2009. Gazettee of India, Part-III, Sect.-IV(28); 2009, July 11.(https://www.ugc.ac.in/oldpdf/regulations/ mphilphdclarification.pdf).

8 UGC. University Grants Commission (Minimum Standards and Procedure for Award of M.Phil./Ph.D. Degrees), Regulations, 2016. Gazette of India, Part-III, Section-IV(278);2016, July 05. (https:// www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/4952604_UGC-(M.PHIL.-PH.DDEGREES)-REGULATIONS,-2016.pdf).

9 UGC.University Grants Commission (Minimum Standards and Procedure for Award of M.Phil./Ph.D. Degree), Regulation, 2009. Gazette of India, Part-III, Sec.-IV(325); 2018, August 27. (https:// www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/8303216_1st-Amendment—M.PhilPh.D.-Regulations.pdf).