

A study of some characteristics of Ph.D. theses uploaded on Shodhganga

Kumar Gandharv Mishra

Abstract

This study is an attempt to look into the various characteristics of Ph.D. theses uploaded on Shodhganga from some of the reputed universities across India. The study brings some quantitative aspect as well as some important findings from the qualitative analysis of over a hundred Ph.D. theses from these universities. The study brings out the variations and commonness in the characteristics of the Ph.D. theses uploaded and also important findings relevant with global context.

Keywords: Characteristics, Shodhganga, Theses

1. Introduction

Shodhganga provides a unique platform to upload and access the research work by scholars in various institutes and universities across India. It not only prevents the duplication of research work but also makes scholars aware of the research work across India (Inflibnet, n.d.). One of the best outcomes of Shodhganga for newly scholars is that they can come across numerous Ph.D. theses and learn the various aspects of research such as research writing, methodologies, numerous references and bibliographies. Currently, a lot of universities across India have uploaded theses related to the doctoral research work carried out in the different faculties there on Shodhganga. Around a lakh PhD theses have been uploaded on Shodhganga by 261 universities¹ till date.

Writing a PhD thesis usually follows a specific format depending on a given institution and the specific topic of the research. However, the major heads such as introduction, methodology and review of literature are common across every format of the Ph.D. theses. Ph.D. theses have various characteristics² and the platform provides an opportunity to look into the various kinds of theses from all over India. The present study covers the qualitative analysis of 107 PhD theses from various disciplines and different universities across India. The universities selected for the study were the 15 Universities which have been selected under the scheme University with Potential for Excellence (UPE) by UGC (University Grants Commission, n.d.). It also included the University of Delhi and Panjab University.

¹ Data as on 26th September 2016

² The characteristics of a Ph.D. thesis can be the style of writing, the kinds of sections included in it, division of sections and chapters, use of illustrations, images etc.

2. Methodology & Research

A maximum of 20 Ph.D. theses of each university were chosen from Shodhganga. Efforts were made to select the Ph.D. theses uniformly from each faculty³ of the University. Multi stage random sampling was used. However, this was as per the availability of these theses on Shodhganga. The process of selection of theses has been explained below.

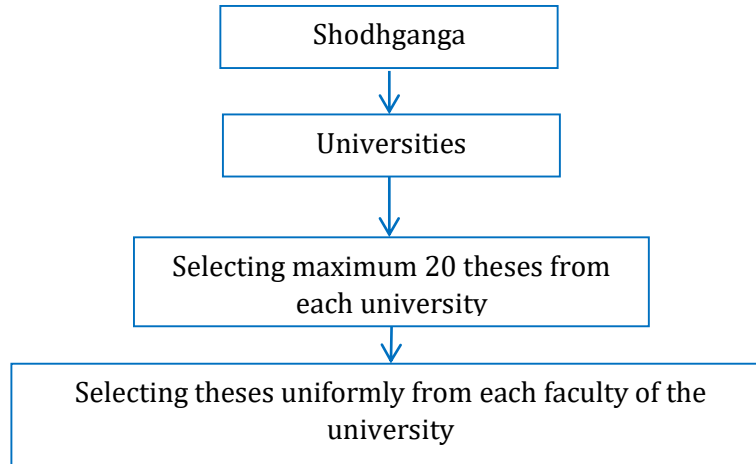


Fig-1: Sampling process for selection of Ph.D. theses for the current study

For example; if a university⁴ had only 3 submissions then only those 3 submissions were considered. During the selection of 20 theses from a university, it was ensured that these 20 theses cover the shown faculties of university uniformly. As shown on Shodhganga, if a university had five faculties - Science, Arts, Commerce-Management, Education, Others then the 20 theses among these 5 faculties got distributed as 4 theses per faculty. 4 theses each from Science, Arts, Commerce-Management, Education, Others were taken for analysis making it 20. However in some of the cases it was not possible to distribute theses uniformly across each faculty. If a university had 6 faculties, then 3 theses per faculty were taken making it 18 and the rest 2 were taken from others. The theses were selected randomly from the faculty. Preference was given to theses which had the latest award date. The theses under this study had their year of award before 2014.

However, a total of 107 Ph.D. theses could be covered from University of Delhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru University, University of Hyderabad, University of Pune, Jadavpur University, Banaras Hindu University, University of Madras, University of Mumbai, North Eastern Hill University, University of Calcutta and Osmania University. The analysis was done on the characteristics of a Ph.D. thesis. The analysis was carried out during August 2015 – September 2015. The

³ The list of faculties of a university as provided or shown on Shodhganga

⁴ The university which was considered for study

analysis evolved with the quest of looking into the possible patterns among the theses, features followed among the theses such as nature of research, inclusion of the list of published works, conferences, seminars related to the doctoral research and common and distinguishing features among the theses if any.

3. Result

The result is based on the qualitative analysis done during August- September 2015 and a quantitative aspect of the result comparing the number of theses uploaded by these universities from August 2015 and September 2016.

University	Year-2015	Year-2016
Jawaharlal Lal Nehru University ,JNU	4459	4458
University of Hyderabad , Telangana	658	1004
Jadavpur University , WB	3	3
University of Pune (Savitri Bhai Phule Pune University)	290	1244
University of Madras	1	700
Madurai Kamraj University ,TN	0	1
North-Eastern Hill University,Shillong	41	1096
University of Calcutta,WB	1	2
University of Mumbai	1	4
Osmania University , Hyderabad	228	245
Banaras Hindu University	1	1
University of Rajasthan	4	116
University of Mysore	512	1847
Karnatak University	223	3540
Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Punjab	447	673
University of Delhi	508	507
Panjab University	0	5616

Table -1: Comparison between the numbers of theses uploaded by university in the year 2015 and 2016⁵

⁵ Data as on 12 August 2015 and 16 September 2016

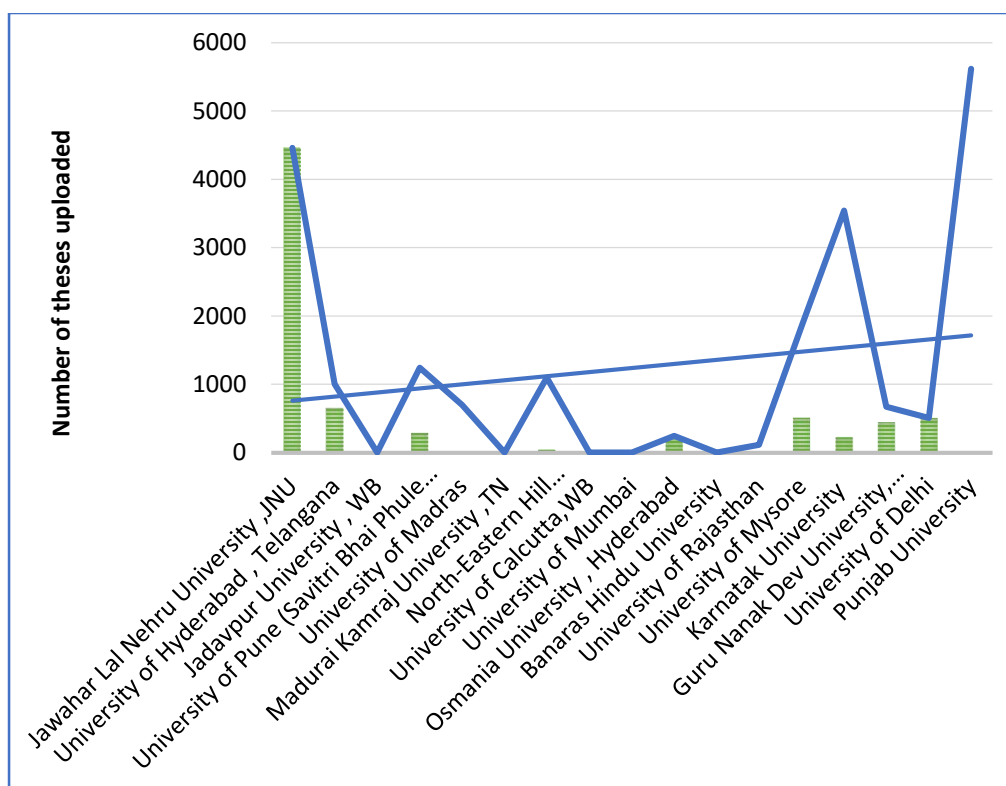


Fig-2: Graph comparing the submissions of Ph.D. theses in the year 2015 & 2016

The graph depicts that majority of the universities have contributed significantly during the last one year. Among the 15 UPE⁶, 9 universities have increased the contribution while the contribution remains stagnant for the rest. The UPE need to make use of the Infflibnet according to the UPE scheme by UGC (UGC XI Plan Guidelines).

4. Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis covered a wide range of theses from faculties such as Arts, Commerce-Management, Education, Engineering/Technology, Law, Medicine, Science, Veterinary Science and Others. Based on the study, some of the major findings are described below:

- a. There were only few theses which included their list of published works, conferences and seminars related with their Ph.D. research work. Only 5 theses included the list of published works in the thesis while rest didn't mention list of published works. These five theses belong to science faculty.
- b. Five of these universities have still less than 10 submissions of Thesis. There are couple of universities across India which had cases of awarding numerous fake degrees in numbers of 300-400. Such institutions have negligible submission on Shodhganga. One such university has 1 submission on shodhganga, while other does not have their presence on Shodhganga.

⁶ Universities with Potential for Excellence

- c. Few Ph.D. theses also had corrections with pen even after submission of PhD theses. Formats of writing also varied. The discrepancies were also revealed in the form of fonts and improper writing techniques.
- d. Theses from a central university revealed a different style of Ph.D. Research. Most of the Ph.D. researches are interlinked with different institutions like Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants .Such practices should be encouraged to inculcate quality research environment across the country.
- e. Innovation:

In November 2015, the Innovative ETDs award was presented during the ETD 2015 Symposium at Jawahar Lal Nehru University. The NDLTD's ETD Awards recognize innovative theses and dissertations and leadership within the ETD community. These awards are presented each year at the annual ETD Symposium (NDLTD, n.d.). The Innovative ETD Award recognizes student efforts to transform the genre of the dissertation through the use of innovative research data management techniques and software to create multimedia ETDs.

The winner's work was on "*Digital Illustration: The Costume Designer's Process For East Tennessee State University's Spring Dance Concert 2012*", available at <http://dc.etsu.edu/etd/1504> (NDLTD, 2015). In her thesis, the researcher has made use of technology, embedded videos into the thesis and other innovative practices of using links, images, photos and videos related to her thesis work. Previous awardees had also made the use of technology, visualisations, multimedia and animations across their thesis. Their hard work and innovative work yielded them an ETD award. Similar to this context, the researcher could come across a thesis, which made use of technology and embedded videos related to her research work in the thesis. It was such only one thesis among the 107 PhD theses analysed. The researcher had worked on "*Bharatanatyam as a therapy for mentally challenged*" (<http://hdl.handle.net/10603/3777>). The researcher work also reflects the interdisciplinary aspects of research.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

On the basis of the above analysis (both quantitative and qualitative), it can be said that despite the involvement of universities in uploading its scholarly and research work on Shodhganga, some universities of high repute in India are lagging behind in uploading theses on Shodhganga. The universities coming under the scheme of UPE by UGC ought to show their involvement on this digital platform and set up an example for other universities of India. These universities should constantly keep uploading the PhD theses on Shodhganga not for the sake of uploading but on order to provide a wide-range of scholarly work carried out at their institution. It is also a great opportunity to showcase their scholarly work across India and world. In fact, making use of and involvement with Infilbnet and other such platforms is a part of UPE as UGC asks universities about these during consideration for UPE (UGC XI Plan Guidelines).

- i. Good research writing is an indicator of quality research work. With the growing digital age, innovative practices such as giving space to digital contents should be encouraged. Research and writing PhD theses should not only be for the sake of research and PhD writing but also for evolving characters of quality.
- ii. Practice for Innovative ETDs should also be started in the context of Indian theses and such quality theses should be given special appearance on Shodhganga. It would not only help give recognition to the researcher, but also inspire and motivate other researchers to inculcate such practices in their Ph.D. theses. It is high time that Indian theses appeared in the innovative ETDs awards. Practices of using technology, multimedia, animations, links and other innovative approaches should be promoted among the researcher community and Shodhganga can act as a great platform for showcasing, awarding and increasing such practices.
- iii. As Shodhganga has become a common platform for the repository of Indian theses, the theses reflect India's scholarly work worldwide; hence efforts should be promoted in writing quality PhD theses from upcoming researchers. It is easy to assume that once a PhD theses has got uploaded on Shodhganga, researchers especially across India would be able to search and access the research work related to their interest, but it doesn't ensure his/her access to an innovative or most viewed PhD theses. Efforts can be put there to showcase similar theses on Shodhganga.
- iv. The lists of publications were found only with 5 PhD theses. Such practice of including the list of publications (during the doctoral research work) should be encouraged while uploading the PhD theses on Shodhganga. It would help the scholar community gain insights into the research and its various dimensions. The various kinds of theses from various disciplines and university available on Shodhganga can help look into the trend of researches going on in India.
- v. As Shodhganga reduces the chance of duplication of research, it should also act as tool for claims of PhD theses by researchers and institutions. It would act as deterrent in malpractice of awarding fake doctoral degrees by some of the universities across India.

6. Acknowledgement

The researcher would like to thank the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource and Development for taking this study as one of the parts of his internship work in the Ministry.

References

1. Inflibnet. (n.d.). *About Shodhganga*. Retrieved from Inflibnet:
<http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/>
2. NDLTD. (2015, November 6). *Award Details*. Retrieved from NDLTD:
<http://www.ndltd.org/ndltd-awards/innovative-etd-awards/awards>
3. NDLTD. (n.d.). *ETD Innovation Award*. Retrieved from NDLTD:
<http://www.ndltd.org/ndltd-awards/innovative-etd-awards/>
4. University Grants Commission. (n.d.). *UGC XI Plan Guidelines*. Retrieved from University Grants Commission:
<http://www.ugc.ac.in/oldpdf/xiplanpdf/ugcinfonetdigitallibconrtim240409.pdf>
5. University Grants Commission. (n.d.). *Universities & Colleges*. Retrieved from University Grants Commission: [http://www.ugc.ac.in/page/Universities-\(UPE\).aspx](http://www.ugc.ac.in/page/Universities-(UPE).aspx)

About Authors

1. **Kumar Gandharv Mishra**, Post-graduation, M.Sc. (Mathematics Education), Cluster Innovation Centre, University of Delhi, Delhi -110007
E-mail: kgm2kgm@gmail.com