

Chapter 20

Research Methodologies Used in Library and Information Studies Masters' Degree Dissertations at the University of Botswana

Olefhile Mosweu

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4404-9458>

University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Tshepho Mosweu

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2144-7544>

University of Botswana, Botswana

ABSTRACT

Although universities have different models for their Master's degrees, most programmes consists of course-work and research-based components. The Master's degree of the University of Botswana's (UB) Department of Library and Information Studies requires students to carry out research and write a dissertation in the final year. Research methodology is an integral component of research, including in postgraduate research. Using the descriptive content analysis technique from a census of dissertations, this chapter examines the Master's dissertations submitted in the field of library and information studies at UB between 2008 and 2018 in order to determine the trends in the research methodologies used. The findings of the study showed that although DLIS Master's degree dissertations generally conformed to globally accepted research methods in humanities; most of them did not specify the research philosophy adopted for the studies. This study found that the most dominant research approach was combined qualitative and quantitative approaches.

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INTRODUCTION

Undertaking research on trends in library and information science (LIS) is ever current and topical amongst the LIS research community and practitioners (Kawalec, 2013; Ngulube & Ukwoma, 2019). As an aspect of scholarly communication, research involving theses, dissertation, conference proceedings, books, patents, and journal articles has become significant. It is important to undertake the analysis of the research output in the discipline (Chakravarty & Sharma, 2016). Research trends in LIS have taken different forms. Some studies have analysed international and national trends in LIS research based on journal articles. Studies conducted in China, Finland, Australia, the United Kingdom, Spain and Turkey have compared topic distribution, subtopics, approaches and methods in national LIS research studies (Rochester & Vakkari, 2003). Some scholars have also conducted studies on trends in research methodologies in Africa. Ngulube (2005) investigated research procedures used by Master of Information Studies students at the University of Natal between 1982 and 2002 with special reference to their sampling techniques and survey response rates. Ocholla et al. (2012) conducted an informetrics study in eastern and southern Africa using content analysis. Similarly, Onyancha, Ngoepe and Maluleka (2015) undertook an informetrics analysis of the nature, patterns and trends of archival science research, including records management and training in sub-Saharan Africa. This chapter sought to describe the methodological trends from the masters' dissertation in Archives and Records Management, and Library and Information Studies, at the University of Botswana covering the years 2008 to 2018.

The Department of Library and Information Studies (DLIS) is one of the eleven (11) departments under the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Botswana. Having been set up in 1979, DLIS has made exceptional contribution to the education and training of library and information personnel in Botswana and the Southern, Central, West and East African regions (Jain & Jorosi, 2015). Although the Department initially started by training paraprofessional up to the diploma level, it currently provides the following programmes:

- Diploma in Archives/ Records Management
- Bachelor's Degree in Library and Information Studies (Single major)
- Bachelor's Degree in Library and Information Studies (Double major)
- BA (Library & Information Studies- double major)
- Bachelor of Information Systems (Information Management –single major).
- Masters' in Library and Information Studies (MLIS)
- Masters' in Archives and Records Management (MARM)
- A PhD. in Library and Information Studies
- A Ph.D. in Archives and Records Management (Jain & Jorosi, 2015)

The University of Botswana Masters' degree in Library and Information Studies was started in 1994 while a Master's in Archives and Records Management was started ten (10) years later in 2004 (Moahi, 2007; Jain & Jorosi, 2015). This was an effort by the University to address challenge of lack of archives and records management in Botswana (Katuu & Ngoepe, 2017). Additionally, Jain and Jorosi (2015) posit that the need to produce information professionals in Botswana who could fit in the labour market that was increasingly becoming technology driven led to the introduction of the masters' programme. Currently the normal minimum entrance qualification for the two master's programmes (MARM and MLIS) is a Bachelor's degree in any subject obtained from the University of Botswana or any other

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