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Doctoral research trends in metric studies of LIS : Insights and future prospects in India

Dhiman Mondal
Sudip Banerjee
Arabinda Maity

The present study explores the doctoral research trends in the specialized area of metric studies of LIS discipline in India during 1983-2024. In this context, the Shodhganga digital repository of Indian Theses, hosted and maintained by the INFLIBNET centre was consulted to retrieve relevant records. Then, the results were interpreted in terms of chronological distribution of theses, gender participation, leading supervisors, prolific universities, most productive Indian states and the changing landscape of research in metric studies area. A total of 558 doctoral theses were awarded by the Indian universities during 1983 – 2024, observing a significant increase from 2015 onwards. Among doctoral research supervisors, Prof. Vaishali S. Khaparde of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University was found to be the most prolific while Bharathiar University, Alagappa University and Annamalai University were the leading Indian universities. Alternatively, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka and West Bengal were the prominent states in doctoral research. The terms and thematic areas of doctoral outputs over the periods address a gradual evolution and diversification of metric research from traditional bibliometric and citation-based analyses toward more holistic scientometric studies focusing on cross-country comparisons, impact measurement, collaboration network and diverse interdisciplinary perspectives. Further, the introduction of *Webometrics* and *Altmetrics* aligning with the growing influence of digital information environments, web-based evaluation techniques and social medias, explore deeper dynamic patterns in scholarly communication.

Keywords: *Doctoral research, Metric studies, LIS, Bibliometrics, Scientometrics, Citation analysis, Webometrics, Altmetrics, Informetrics.*

Dhiman Mondal †
Ananda Mohan College
Kolkata 700009
West Bengal
India
Sudip Banerjee *
City College of Commerce and Business Administration
Kolkata 700012
West Bengal
India
Arabinda Maity §
Department of Library & Information Science
University of Calcutta
Kolkata 700073
West Bengal
India

ORCID-ID
† 0000-0003-3746-8646
* 0000-0003-4802-5525

E-mail
† dhiman.bon@gmail.com
* sudipbanerjee.lib@gmail.com
§ maityarabindacu@gmail.com

* (Corresponding Author)

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1. Introduction

In library and information science (LIS), India has a long tradition of quantitative studies that can be traced back to the pioneering contribution of Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, who introduced the term librametry in 1948 [1]. The term was conceptually similar to what is now recognized as bibliometrics and served as the foundation for early quantitative assessments in the Indian LIS community.The first bibliometric study from India was published in 1958 by Dutta and Rajagopalan, titled "*Literature Citations in Scientific & Technical Periodicals*" [2], marking a significant milestone in the evolution of quantitative research practices in the country. Later, a decisive phase in the institutionalization of bibliometric research in India emerged in 1963, when the Documentation Research and Training Centre (DRTC) organized a seminar on documentation periodicals, which featured several noteworthy contributions [3]. With the growing scholarly engagement of Indian researchers in bibliometric studies, in 1995 the country's first dedicated journal in this field, JISSI: The International Journal of Scientometrics and Informetrics was launched under the aegis of the International Society for Scientometrics and Informetrics. Although its publication continued only until 1996, the journal left a lasting influence on the trajectory of metric studies within the LIS field in India [1].

Over the decades, metric studies primarily encompassing bibliometrics, scientometrics, and informetrics evolved as a major area of inquiry within LIS scholarship in India to quantify the studies [4]. Consequently,with the rapid advancement of web technologies and social medias, the modern metrics term like 'Webometrics' and 'Altmetrics' were originated in 1997 and 2005 respectively [5]. The present study comprehensively examines the trends and thematic orientationsofdoctoral research on metric studies within the field of LIS in India.

2. Literature Review:

Bibliometric techniques have become an established methodological approach in LIS research for examining publication patterns and research trends. At the global level, the growth and development of LIS research indicate a marked dominance of the United States in publication output, while India demonstrated significant progress rising from the 13th to 5th position worldwide and gaining an annual growth of 16.8% during 2011-2020 [6], [7]. However, the literature growth in LIS domain exhibited irregular and fluctuating patterns during this period [6], [7], [8]. In the Indian context, LIS research output was largely confined to national journals, with relatively limited visibility in high-impact international publications [9]. Between 2016 and 2020, the doctoral research trend was on a rising trend and Information seeking followed by library services was the preferred research themes among doctoral students. A gender gap among research scholars was also identified [10].

Mira and Sevukan [11] showed the availability and trend of LIS PhD theses and revealed that many universities are not contributing LIS theses to Shodhganga. So, University

authorities should give emphasis to regularly upload the theses to Shodhganga. Singh and Babbar [12] noted that LIS research activity in India remained modest until the late 1970s, after which it witnessed a significant surge, showing a decade-wise upward trend. Among the diverse areas of LIS research, bibliometric/ scientometric studies emerged as the most preferred topics, accounting for nearly 9.75% of total Ph.D. dissertations. Over the years, Indian LIS researchers explored a sustained inclination toward bibliometric and scientometric investigations [13], [14]. It has been estimated that over 30% of India's LIS publications were devoted to quantitative analyses [15]. Between 1995 and 2014, a steep increase in bibliometric and scientometric publications by Indian scholars was observed compared to the preceding period of 1970–1994 [1]. Among Indian authors, B.M. Gupta, K.C. Garg and B.K. Sen were identified as the most prolific authors in this sub-domain [16].

Despite this growth, Mondal and Raychoudhury [4] reported that during 1990-2017, Indian authors' representation in the Scientometrics international journal was significant with 208 papers including 29 international collaborative papers. With the evolving paradigms of research evaluation, metrics-based studies have broadened from traditional bibliometric and citation analyses to encompass article-level and author-level performance indicators. In the digital age, Altmetrics further extended this framework by capturing research influence across online platforms and social media channels [17]. Garg and Tripathi [18] observed that bibliometric and scientometric research in India focused on evaluating the progress of science and technology across various disciplines, analysing contributions at national or international levels, and conducting journal-specific bibliometric assessments. Their earlier study [1] also emphasized that the field continues to be predominantly driven by LIS professionals.

Sivakumaren, Bharanidharan and Rajkumar [19] reported that among the leading Central Universities, Aligarh Muslim University accounted for the highest proportion (24.09%) of theses deposited in the Shodhganga repository followed by Banaras Hindu University (14.47%) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (13.83%). Focusing on thematic trends, Ghani [20] observed that the research on Knowledge Management is predominantly undertaken in departments of management sciences and business administration. In another study, Mollah [21] found 359 Ph. D. theses awarded from the Department of Geography of Calcutta University and explored that human geography was the most prominent area of doctoral research.

The literature review clearly indicates a consistent and robust engagement of LIS scholars in bibliometric and scientometric research, mostly based on primary scholarly sources as reflected on bibliographic databases with special reference to Shodhganga repository. However, no systematic investigation has yet been undertaken to examine the trends of doctoral research output in bibliometrics and scientometrics sub-field across the Indian universities. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of doctoral research trends in metric studies conducted by LIS professionals in India.

3. Objectives of the study:

The study explores doctoral research trends in metric studies within the LIS discipline across Indian universities. The specific objectives of the study are to:

i. analyze the chronological distribution of doctoral theses in metric studies from 1983 to 2024;
ii. examine gender participation and gender gap among doctoral researchers;
iii. identify leading supervisors and contributing universities;
iv. determined the most research-productive Indian states and
v. analyse the themes, distribution of keywords and trace the changing landscape of doctoral research

4. Methodology:

The present analytical study is restricted to doctoral theses awarded up to 2024 in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS) by Indian universities, focusing on the sub-field of metric studies. For this purpose, Shodhganga: a reservoir of Indian Theses (https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/) of the INFLIBNET Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujarat was systematically explored between February and May, 2025. Using advanced search strategy, 'Thesis Title' was filtered containing the relevant search terms and phrases such as 'bibliometrics', 'scientometrics', 'informetric', 'altmetric', 'webometric'; 'citation analysis'; 'research output'; 'publication output'; 'research productivity' and 'publication productivity'.

The retrieved results of records containing theses title, researcher, guide, university and submission year, were individually scanned and shortlisted to develop a database in MS-Excel. Later, each record was manually checked to ensure relevance and accuracy. Non-LIS entries and duplicated records were carefully eliminated. Namsor name analysis online database was consulted to identify the authors' genders and the results were subsequently verified manually. Finally, records of 558 doctoral theses were considered for further analysis and interpretation. Additionally, to examine and visualize the distribution of keywords in thesis titles, the study utilized two web-based tools: Voyant Tools (https://voyant-tools.org/) for text analysis and WordItOut (https://worditout.com/) for word cloud generation.

5. Data analysis and interpretation

5.1 *Chronological break-up of theses submissions:*

Figure 1 reveals the chronological distribution of submission of awarded Ph.D. theses as depicted in the Shodhganga database. A total of 558 doctoral theses were awarded by different Universities in India on different aspects of metric studies, reflecting their enduring influence on doctoral research in the country. The research journey in the field of

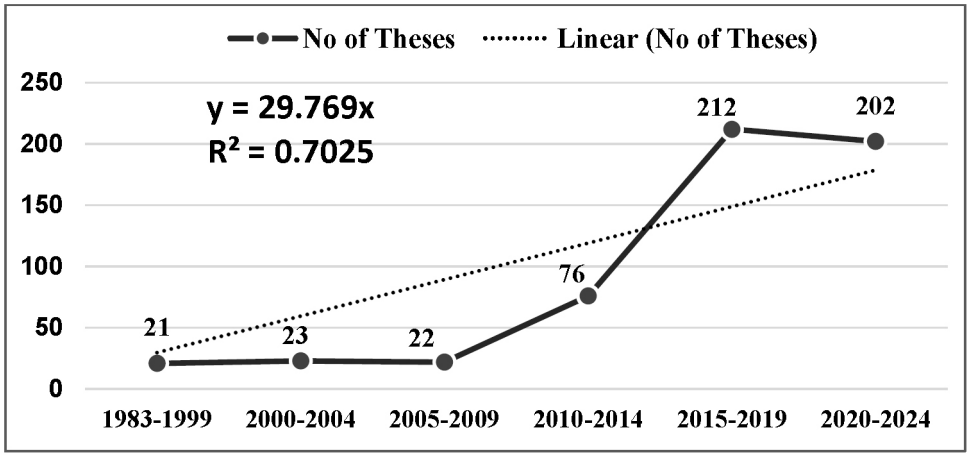


Figure 1

Chronological distribution of awarded Ph.D. Thesesduring 1983-2024

metric studies began in 1983 with three doctoral theses, one each from the University of Burdwan, Karnatak University and Banaras Hindu University. Only 21 theses were submitted across Indian universities until 1999. Moreover, the highest number, 212 theses (38%), was submitted during the period 2015-2019, followed by 202 theses (36.2%) in 2020-2024 and 76 theses (13.62%) in 2010-2014. Two theses were found without any mention of the submission year. The largest number of 54 theses (9.67%) was submitted in the year of 2022 closely followed by 53 theses (9.5%) in 2021 and 50 theses (8.96%) in 2019. Doctoral research in metric studies in India is showing a sharp increase and the R^2 value indicates a linear trend in the research output of metric studies over the period.

5.2 *Gender wise distribution of doctoral researchers:*

Table 1 presents the gender-wise distribution of doctoral researchers. Out of a total of 558 researchers, 363 (65.1%) were male, while 195 (34.9%) were female. An increase in female participation was observed over time, rising from 27.3% during the initial period, 1983–1996 to 36.9% in the most recent phase, 2011–2024. Despite this improvement, male researchers continued to dominate, accounting for 63.1% in the latest period.

Overall, female constituted 34.9% of the total doctoral researchers, indicating a gradual movement towards gender balance, although a noticeable gap persists. However, the present finding was slightly lower than earlier reports, which indicated a higher female participation rate of 41.6% in the LIS domain in India during 2016–2020 [10].

Table 1

Distribution of doctoral researchers by gender

Period	Female	Male	Total
1983-1996	3 (27.3%)	8 (72.7%)	11
1997-2010	12 (20.3%)	47 (79.7%)	59
2011-2024	180 (36.9%)	308 (63.1%)	488
Total =	195	363	558
%	34.9	65.1	100

5.3 *Most prolific supervisors:*

Table 2 depicts the most prominent Indian supervisors who guided at least 5 doctoral theses in various approaches to metric studies. The top 13 supervisors guided a total of 94 theses, representing 16.84% of the total output. Among them, Prof. Vaishali S. Khaparde of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Maharashtra guided the highest number of 13 theses. This was followed by Dr. C. Baskaran, Prof. R. Jeyshankar and Dr. M. Surulinathi with 9 theses each. Overall, supervisors from South Indian universities were found to dominate this field.

Table 2

Most prolific supervisors who guided at least 5 theses

Rank	Supervisor	University	No. of Thesis
1	Prof. Vaishali S. Khaparde	Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University	13
2	Dr. C. Baskaran	Alagappa University	9
	Prof. R. Jeyshankar	Alagappa University	9
	Dr. M. Surulinathi	Bharathidasan University	9
5	Dr. Raja S	Alagappa University	7
	Prof. Shashank S. Sonwane	Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University	7
	Prof. S. Thanuskodi	Alagappa University	7
8	Prof. R. Balasubramani	Bharathidasan University	6
	Prof. M. Nagarajan	Annamalai University	6
	Dr.Sarangapani R	Bharathiar University	6
11	Prof. G. Devarajan	University of Kerala	5
	Prof. Keshava	Tumkur University	5
	Dr. J.P.S. Kumaravel	Madurai Kamaraj University	5

5.4 *Institutional distribution of Theses:*

Table 3 presents the top universities that awarded Ph.D. theses on different approaches to metric studies. Here, the 42-years period has been equally categorised into three blocks

Table 3

Most prolific universities that awarded at least 10 Ph.D. Theses

Rank	University	No. of Theses			Total Theses	Gender Ratio Female: Male
		1983-1996	1997-2010	2011-2024		
1	Bharathiar University, Tamil Nadu	0	0	41	41 (7.33%)	12:29
2	Alagappa University, Tamil Nadu	0	0	36	36 (6.44%)	16:20
3	Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu	1	8	24	33 (5.9%)	15:18
4	Bharathidasan University, Tamil Nadu	0	1	29	30 (5.37%)	09:21
5	Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Maharashtra	0	1	28	29 (5.2%)	8:21
6	Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tamil Nadu	0	1	17	18 (3.22%)	4:14
7	Madurai Kamaraj University, Tamil Nadu	0	1	16	17 (3.04%)	2:15
	Karnatak University, Karnataka	3	6	8	17 (3.04%)	2:15
9	Periyar University, Tamil Nadu	0	0	16	16 (2.87%)	8:8
10	University of Madras, Tamil Nadu	0	7	5	12 (2.15%)	3:9
	University of Mysore, Karnataka	0	2	10	12 (2.15%)	6:6
12	Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Maharashtra	0	0	11	11 (2%)	2:9
13	Andhra University, Andhra Pradesh	0	6	4	10 (1.8%)	2:8
	University of Calcutta, West Bengal	0	0	10	10 (1.8%)	4:6

having 14 years each. A total of 558 Ph.D. theses were awarded by 110 Indian Universities. Of these, Bharathiar University, Tamil Nadu topped the list with 41 theses (7.33%) with a gender ratio of 12 females to 29 males. This is followed by Alagappa University with 36 theses (6.44%) and Annamalai University with 33 theses (5.9%). Alagappa University and Annamalai University exhibit relatively balanced gender distribution, whereas Bharathidasan University reflects a noticeable gender disparity with lower female participation. The research scenario during 1983-2010 showed that the leading universities recorded minimal or no research contributions during 1983-2010 whereas it showed a significant increase in doctoral output during the later period, 2011-2024.

Collectively, the leading 14 universities produced a total of 292 theses that accounted 52.33% share of the total output. Notably, eight of these leading universities were from Tamil Nadu. Overall, the analysis highlights a regional imbalance in doctoral research production, with southern universities particularly those in Tamil Nadu playing a dominant role. The participation of a wide range of Indian universities indicates that metric studies have achieved a well-established position within the LIS domain and continue to attract substantial scholarly attention.

5.5 *Geographical distribution of Theses:*

Table 4 presents the most productive states that contributed at least 10 theses on various aspects of metric studies in the LIS domain. Here, the 42-years period has been equally categorised into three blocks having 14 years each. A total of 20 states and 4 union territories collectively produced 558 doctoral theses. Among them, Tamil Nadu recorded the highest number with 235 theses (42.1%) with a gender ratio of 82 females to 153 males. This was followed by Maharashtra with 68 theses (12.18%), Karnataka with 61 theses (11%), and West Bengal with 31 theses (5.5%). In the case of Maharashtra, Karnataka, and West Bengal, the gender ratios indicate noticeable gender disparity with male researchers outnumbering female researchers.

The top 12 states together produced 508 theses, representing 91.04% of the overall output. While the earlier period, 1983–2010 recorded relatively limited doctoral production, the later period, 2011–2024 witnessed a marked expansion, reflecting the growing emphasis on research output in India. States from different regions of India actively contributed to doctoral research, highlighting the significant impact of metric studies within the LIS domain. Notably, the southern states emerged as the dominant contributors in these research areas. In contrast, a few states such as Jammu & Kashmir, Telangana, Manipur, Meghalaya, and Uttarakhand contributed only a limited number of theses.

Table 4

Most prolific states that awarded at least 10 theses

Rank	Name of the State	No of Theses			Total	Gender Ratio Female : Male
		1983-1996	1997-2010	2011-2024		
1	Tamil Nadu	1	19	215	235 (42.1%)	82:153
2	Maharashtra	0	7	61	68 (12.2%)	14:54
3	Karnataka	3	10	48	61 (11%)	19:42
4	West Bengal	2	1	28	31 (5.55%)	9:22
5	Andhra Pradesh	0	8	12	20 (3.6%)	6:14
6	Odisha	2	7	8	17 (3.04%)	9:8
7	Rajasthan	0	0	16	16 (2.87%)	7:9
	Uttar Pradesh	1	1	14	16 (2.87%)	4:12
9	Delhi	0	0	11	11 (1.97%)	6:5
	Gujarat	0	0	11	11 (1.97%)	5:6
	Kerala	0	4	7	11 (1.97%)	7:4
12	Madhya Pradesh	0	0	10	10 (1.8%)	5:5

5.6 *Metric Methods in Doctoral Research:*

Figure 2 presents the distribution of different metric approaches and their relative share in doctoral research productivity. The field of metric studies encompasses several quantitative assessment techniques applied to evaluate scholarly communication and research performance. Among these, *Scientometrics* emerged as the most dominant term, appearing 281 times (48.36%) in thesis titles, followed by *Bibliometrics* with 160 occurrences (27.54%) and *Citation Analysis* with 95 occurrences (16.35%). In contrast, a very small number of theses was found to be incorporated the terms *Altmetrics* and *Informetrics*, each appearing only four times. The earliest identified theses using *Bibliometrics* and *Citation Analysis* date back to 1983, while the usage of *Scientometrics* first appeared in 2001. Subsequently, the terms *Informetrics*, *Webometrics*, and *Altmetrics* began to appear in 2006, 2010, and 2020, respectively. The o*thers* category includes theses using alternative

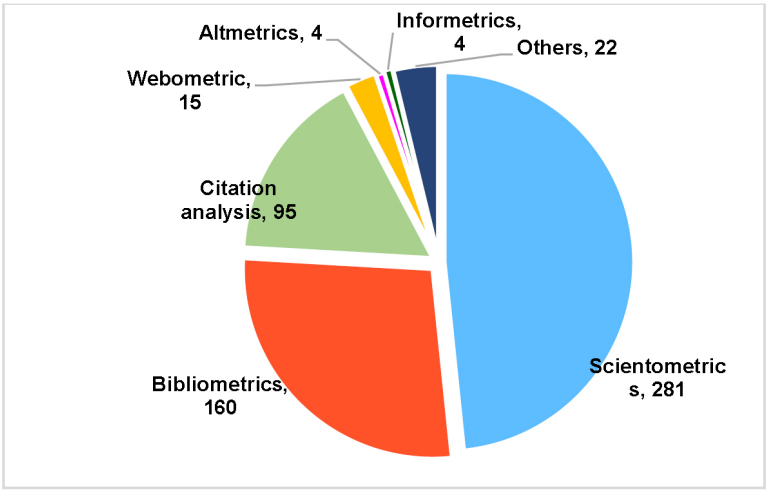


Figure 2

Distribution of different metric methods during 1983-2024

descriptors such as *research productivity*, *research output*, *mapping*, and *indicators* to represent various aspects of quantitative analysis in scholarly communication. However, some papers may appear in more than one category due to its interdisciplinarity. Overall, the data addresses a steady progression in the methodological landscape of metric studies, evolving from foundational bibliometric analyses to technologically advanced and diversified research approaches.

5.7 *Keywords' distribution and trending areas till 2000:*

Figure 3 illustrates the data related to keywords and corresponding frequencies with visualization mapping. A total of 23 doctoral theses were produced from 1983 to 2000.

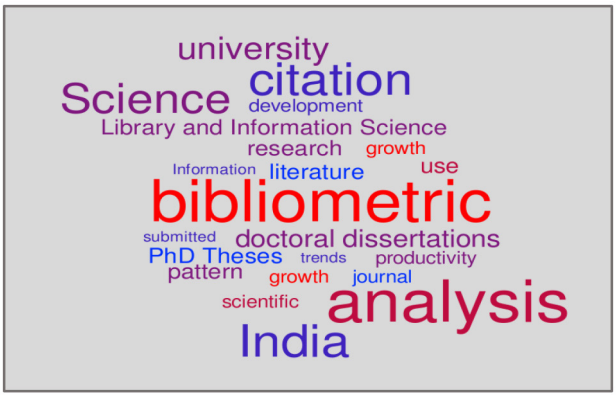


Figure 3

Word cloud visualization of 22 terms that appeared at least 2 times

Among the terms, 'bibliometrics' and 'analysis' recorded the highest frequency, occurring 15 times, followed by 'citation' and 'India,' each appearing 11 times. The keyword trends clearly indicate a strong orientation toward bibliometric and citation analysis as dominant methodologies. These approaches were applied across a range of scientific disciplines, including medical sciences, physical sciences, astronomy, nuclear sciences, biological sciences, pure sciences, and health sciences, during different time spans. Alternatively, doctoral dissertations from Indian universities were the preferred documentary sources among researchers, suggesting a trend of assessing research output.

5.8 *Keywords' distribution and trending areas from 2001 to 2012:*

Figure 4 presents the distribution of keywords and their frequencies, supported by visualization mapping. Between 2001 and 2012, a total of 76 doctoral theses were completed. The term 'analysis' appeared most frequently with 43 occurrences, followed by 'scientometric' with 32 times, 'research' with 31 times, and 'bibliometric' with 29 times. This trend addresses that scientometric approaches gradually emerged as the predominant methodological orientation during this period, while bibliometric and citation analysis continued to occupy significant positions within the research landscape.

Beyond doctoral dissertations, journals and bibliographic databases became increasingly important as sources of scholarly communication and evidence. The dataset also reveals a thematic transition from conventional, discipline-bound subjects toward a more diverse range of interdisciplinary scientific and technological domains, including biotechnology, air pollution, AIDS, drug discovery, aerospace engineering, marine sciences, cancer research, stem cell studies, robotics, and nanotechnology. Furthermore, the data indicate the adoption of more contemporary methodological frameworks—particularly informetrics and webometrics indicating an expansion of research practices beyond the traditional scope of bibliometrics.

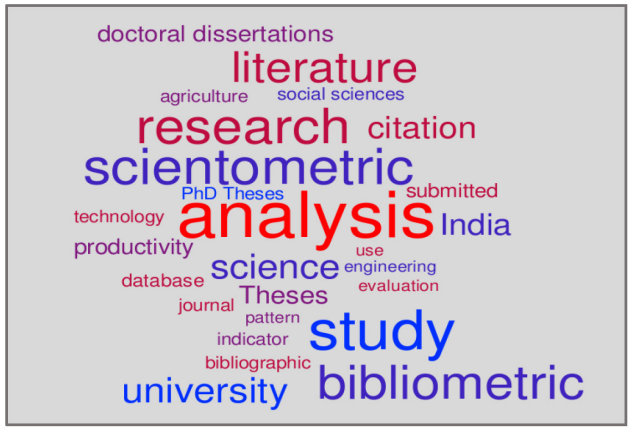


Figure 4

Word cloud visualization of 22 terms that appeared at least 5 times



Figure 5

Word cloud visualization of 20 terms that appeared at least 20 times

5.9 *Keywords' distribution and trending areas from 2013 to 2024:*

Figure 5 outlines the data related to keywords and corresponding frequencies with visualization mapping. A total of 457 doctoral theses were produced between 2013 to 2024. The term 'scientometric' was the most popular term with 248 occurrences, followed by 'research' with 243 times, 'analysis' with 206 timesand 'bibliometric' with 116 times.

The methodological landscape demonstrates a pronounced emphasis on scientometric and bibliometric approaches for evaluating scholarly productivity across diverse interdisciplinary domains. These encompass biomedical and health sciences e.g., genetics, cancer, HIV/AIDS, malaria, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, tuberculosis, immunology, biotechnology as well as technological frontiers such as computer science, nanotechnology, robotics, solar energy and wireless communication. Further, recent topics like COVID-19, digital marketing, big data, AI, wireless communications, sensor networks, climate change, global warming shows responsiveness to emerging global research fronts.While the majority of studies concentrate on Indian institutional performance, a subset incorporates international comparative analyses involving BRICS nations, G7 countries, and Asia-Pacific regions. Very few adopt altmetrics, webometrics, social network analysis, or text mining to explore deeper patterns in scholarly communication.

6. Findings and Conclusion:

The evolution of research in metric studies within the discipline of LIS in India can be traced back to 1983, with a remarkable surge in doctoral output observed from 2015 onwards. By 2024, a total of 558 doctoral theses had been produced in this specialized area across Indian universities. Among research supervisors, Prof. Vaishali S. Khaparde of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University emerged as the most prolific contributor, followed by Dr. C. Baskaran and Prof. R. Jeyshankar of Alagappa University, and Dr. M.

Surulinathi of Bharathidasan University. Institutionally, the LIS departments of Bharathiar University (7.33%), Alagappa University (6.44%), and Annamalai University (5.9%) demonstrated the highest research productivity in metric studies. At the state level, Tamil Nadu led decisively with 42.11% of the total output, followed by Maharashtra (12.18%), Karnataka (11%), and West Bengal (5.5%). In contrast, states such as Jammu & Kashmir, Telangana, Manipur, Meghalaya, and Uttarakhand recorded relatively modest contributions. The analysis of gender participation across states and universities indicates that, although female representation in doctoral research has improved in recent years, male dominance continues to persist.

The thematic progression of metric research in India reflects an expanding methodological and conceptual horizon. Early research (1983–2000) predominantly employed citation analysis to explore literature use patterns of scholarly communication within traditional disciplinary contexts. During the intermediate phase (2001–2012), the focus gradually shifted toward scientometric and bibliometric analyses, incorporating informetric and webometric methods across interdisciplinary scientific domains, accompanied by an increasing emphasis on cross-national comparative studies. The contemporary phase (2013–2024) witnessed a methodological transformation with the integration of advanced data-driven techniques such as altmetrics, webometrics, social network analysis, and text mining, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of information dynamics in the digital and global research environment.

Overall, metric research in India's LIS scholarship has evolved from traditional bibliometric analyses to more comprehensive assessments, prioritizing cross-country comparisons, group of institution evaluation, scientific impact and interdisciplinary perspectives [1], [16]. The rise of *Webometrics* and *Altmetrics* reflected the growing adoption of digital evaluation methods, though their limited presence in doctoral research indicates that such approaches were still emerging and warrant deeper academic exploration. However, the findings presented here do not fully represent the entire scope of metric studies research output in India. This limitation arises because several universities have not yet uploaded all of their doctoral theses to the Shodhganga repository, resulting in the absence of a lot theses from the database used in this study. Further, several limitations associated with the Shodhganga repository were observed, including delays in thesis submission, the presence of duplicate records and inconsistencies in metadata standards [22]. These challenges related to data quality and standardization may affect the reliability and completeness of analyses based on its contents.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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