






Research Paper

Analysis of Subject Fields and Methodology in Master's Theses in the Field of Art Research

Mohammad Amin Mohammadi^{*1}, Majid Reza Moghanipour²

1. Corresponding Author: Master's degree in art research, Yazd University of Science and Art, Yazd, Iran  
2. Assistant professor of Art and Architecture department, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran 

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Abstract

Aim: The study of art research dissertations in Iran can provide a perspective of art research. The purpose of this research is to analyze the subject and methodology of art research dissertations. Data were collected through a descriptive-analytical method in a library and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The samples studied include 1732 theses available in the master's degree course in art research from 1996 to the end of 2020. The findings indicate that most of the dissertations in art adopted a descriptive method and the most highly selected subjects were Iranian painting and motifs. Factors such as the subdisciplines of the department and supervisors, access to resources, student's gender and undergraduate field of study were the most important factors influencing the choice of dissertation subject in art.

Keywords: Curriculum, Thesis, Art research, Graduate, Methodology

Introduction

Scientific research is a systematic search process the researchers use to find out the truth of uncertain phenomena or situations. Based on the data obtained, they provide solutions to the problem and then test the solutions to determine the truth of the situation or phenomenon based on their inferences and findings. Each researchers' perception of the truth leads them to specific issues, methods and findings (Blum, 2005). Art research curriculum by nature is one of the contexts that capture the pulse of academic research in art and can therefore direct other branches in this field. Therefore,

considering that more than two decades have passed since this field was introduced at the postgraduate level in Iran, analyzing art research dissertations produced in these years can provide us with a perspective from the most formal form of art research.

Methodology

The main purpose of this research is to introduce and analyze the subject and methodology of art research dissertations. The questions that we are trying to answer in this research are as follows: 1- What is the thematic frequency of master's theses in the field of art research? 2- How are the master's theses in the field of art research categorized in terms of methodology? The research method is descriptive-analytical, and the data were collected through library and documentary methods. The obtained data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Results

The statistical population in this research included 1732 dissertations of the master's degree in art research, which were defended from 1993 to the end of 2020. Out of 1732 defended dissertation titles, 1263 (72.93%) belonged to women and 469 (27.07%) belonged to men. Also, female students were more than male students in all universities except Shahed University. There was no male student at Al-Zahra University because it is for women only. In order to study and analyze the thematic tendencies of students' dissertations in the field of art research, variables of title, abstract, keywords and table of contents were considered. Dewey and Congress method was used for identifying and classifying the subjects. However, since these patterns were less compatible with Iranian indigenous arts, other indicators were considered in consultation with academic experts. Finally, based on these sources, 41 subjects were chosen as criteria for thematic classification of dissertations, and any other subject was labelled as miscellaneous. Thematically, most dissertations (n= 174, 10.04%) were written in the field of Iranian painting. This theme, which is usually done using a descriptive method, is also a common theme in the dissertations of all universities. According to studies and interviews, one of the factors that attract students to this subject is the abundance of relevant Persian sources in Iran. Furthermore, these dissertations themselves were added to these sources over time, and increased its appeal in recent years. Meanwhile, the tendency of educational departments and the expertise of supervisors have been influential in this process, as well. As in 2013 and 2017, half of the defended dissertations on the subject of Iranian painting belonged to a certain

university. Ranking second, Iranian themes was another recurring subject with a frequency of 172 cases (9.93%). This subject, which in some cases is really repetitive and sometimes totally resembles previous works, has attracted students of all universities just like the subject of painting. Most students have used a descriptive approach to the subject while some have adopted a descriptive-analytical method. Extent of undergraduate subdisciplines of this subject such as handicrafts, graphics, carpets, visual arts, industrial arts, writing and painting can be considered as another factor that increases the frequency of this subject among the dissertations. Moreover, female students chose this category of subjects significantly more frequently than male students (81% vs. 19%). Iranian painting and graphics with 108 titles (6.23%), Iranian architecture with 89 titles (5.13%), and Iranian culture with 87 titles (02.02%) were respectively the most common subjects selected by the students. Subjects such as Iranian photography, world culture, world cinema, industrial design, world photography, Iranian calligraphy, sociology of world art, world graphics, art psychology, sociology of Iranian art, media, animation, architecture, art therapy, world architecture and handicrafts, comprised less than one percent of the dissertations, each with fewer than 20 titles.

Discussion and conclusion

In this research, four information sources including methodological information in the title, abstract, methodological subject and the content of the research result were used to classify the methodological data. Based on this information, the dissertations were divided into three categories: descriptive, descriptive-analytical and meta-analytic. The results showed that most of the dissertations adopted a descriptive method. Examining the methodological tendencies of students in the dissertation process revealed that 67.38% of them used the descriptive method and 32.62% resorted to the descriptive-analytical method. Meanwhile, female students are more inclined to some subjects such as painting and motifs. The choice of purely descriptive methods was also observed in the works of female students. Descriptive methods in these dissertations were used more than twice as much as descriptive-analytical methods. The word "review" began 411 titles of dissertations, the word "adaptation" was used in the title of 142 dissertations, "analysis" in 91 dissertations, and "criticism" in 41 dissertations. Factors such as the tendencies of the department and supervisors, access to resources, student's gender and undergraduate field of study were the most important factors influencing the choice of dissertation subject. Based on the results of this study, researchers can be directed to

applied issues and research priorities in Iran. In general, the results of this study revealed a far distance between the objectives of research in art and the objectives set in its curriculum including being knowledge-based, value-oriented, economic and entrepreneurial. Few dissertations have used modern methodology, theorizing, holism, and especially innovation and creativity in the fields of market, economic benefits and practicality of art in their subject areas.

Reference

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