

# **APPRAISAL OF MASTERS DISSERTATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE AND DEMOCRATIC STUDIES (NILDS), ABUJA, NIGERIA (2015 – 2021)**

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## **Abstract**

*The study is a comparative study of the research output on different programmes of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic (NILDS)/University of Benin Postgraduate Students. Its objective is to identify the pre-existing styles, patterns and relationships of the dissertations. An explanatory case study empirical research method was adopted for the study. Using an adapted methodology of Baggio et al. (2014) and multiple data gathering techniques, data was collected based on the 174 Master's dissertations submitted for the 6 years under review that were gleaned as follows: 47(Masters in Legislative Drafting); 44 (Masters in Parliamentary Administration), 6 (Masters in Elections and Party Politics); and 74 (Masters in Legislative Studies). Most of the dissertations used survey research method. This paper found that the abstracts lacked institutional standard; there were no explanations/justifications for non standardization; and research methodology were not identified. No dissertation was submitted in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. A relatively larger number of dissertations studied National Assembly and FCT. The outcomes of this study can serve as a guide to the Management of NILDS/UNIBEN Postgraduate programmes for key policy decisions and planning. Thus, adoption of electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) by the Institute can also be considered because this is in conformity with global best practices as researchers will be able to maximize and get these vast information resources.*

**Keywords:** NILDS, UNIBEN, Postgraduate; Library, Masters' dissertations, Theses.

## **Introduction**

The National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS) began Academic Master's Programmes in October 2013 in the following courses: Masters in Legislative Drafting, Master's in Parliamentary Administration, Masters in Legislative Studies and Masters in Elections and Party Politics. The programmes are available on both full-time and part-time basis and are administered in affiliation with the University of Benin, Nigeria, as well as in collaboration with the Centre for Legislative Studies, the University of Hull, United Kingdom. As part of its mandate, NILDS conducts and supports research on a wide range of topics such as policy analysis, legal analysis, economic analysis, bill analysis, bill drafting, motion and resolutions, etc. As a result, the Institute's library offers a wide range of research materials; does analyses and provides information services to students, legislators, legislative staff, researchers and the public in general (National Institute for Legislative Studies, 2015; National Institute for

Legislative and Democratic Studies, 2020). The library also offers necessary services and records for collecting and sharing information from theses and dissertations.

Theses and dissertations constitute an important part of the library's resource materials. They are not traditionally published but they make significant contributions to knowledge in their own right. Therefore, libraries must ensure that their collections are properly processed, preserved, and made available for teaching, learning, and research. Since these scholarly outputs serve as the foundation for subsequent research because other researchers derive ideas, concepts from previous works in their domain, it is critical from the standpoint of research that the results of previous studies be reached by current researchers (Etuk, 2008; Gayan, 2014; Ilo et al., 2015).

According to Swain (2010), postgraduate theses and dissertations are the windows to high-level research carried out in the university as they are likely to contain information of reasonable quality for prospective researchers, graduate students, policymakers and other practitioners. These valuable research outputs are churned out of the Nigerian universities every year by post-degree candidates (Alan & Pandey, 2012; Salau et al., 2020). However, studies have shown that 80-85% of the outputs from higher education institutions, particularly those from African nations, have never been made available to the academic community or the world (Tansley et al., 2003; Ezema, 2010; Mhongole, 2015). Currently, majority of unpublished theses are difficult to locate because they are only archived in the university library where the student has worked (Mumtaz & Khan, 2020). Agreeably, scholars' works must be available and accessible to other scholars and the general public so that scholars and the general public could apply the knowledge and use the disseminated information as a foundation for their research, resulting in the evolution of knowledge and economic development (Chisenga, 2006; Pinto, 2012; cited in Mhongole, 2015).

Despite the fact that theses and dissertations are the most valuable scholarly works that require years of investigation, survey, study, research, and writing, they are also regarded as the foundation for graduate education (Gayan, 2014). Previous researches indicate, for instance, that the vast majority of these works, however, languish in college and university libraries and archives (Gayan, 2014). Therefore, unavailability and limited access to scholarly works present problems of repetition of works done by other scholars, limiting knowledge evolution, wasting national resources, effort, and money, and negatively affecting country development (Jain, 2010; Sarker et al., 2010; cited in Mhongole, 2015). According to Ezema and Ugwu (2013), the dissemination, management, and preservation of theses and dissertations in Africa fall short of expectations due to lack of availability through the typical routine of scholarly publication and distribution (Han, 2014). Additionally, in the traditional library process, these resources are sometimes only partially catalogued or not catalogued at all, making them difficult to access (Adetoro Salau et al., 2020). The researchers have also observed lack of compliance to institutional standards and limited accessibility in this present study area as postgraduate master's dissertations lack uniform standard. This calls for a pattern of efficient recording and arrangement that comes from systematically cataloguing the records of human communication (Igbashal & Agoh, 2011).

This research aims at assessing Postgraduate Masters' dissertations submitted to the Institute's library between 2015 and 2021 and make significant contributions to extant literature

as follows: First, this study contributes to the preservation, archive, record and management of scientific academic research output. Second, this is the first study to be conducted on Postgraduate Masters' dissertations in NILDS' academic setting. Finally, the study will assist managers of postgraduate studies in identifying underlying issues, if any, with Masters' Dissertations that were submitted to the Institute and ascertaining the role of librarians in providing specific management strategies for making them accessible to researchers.

The study is structured into the following sections: Section 1 contains introduction, statement of the problem and objectives; Section 2 discusses the literature review. The methodology used for data analysis is described in section 3. The results, summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations as well as limitations and suggestions for future research are covered in section 4.

### **Statement of the problem**

Theses and dissertations are widely recognised as part of data life cycle because they provide researchers with long-term support to reference information for the future. This implies that effective planning by librarians in charge of postgraduate theses and dissertations collection would make it easily accessible to users. Studies have shown that there is lack of proper archiving and dissemination of findings on theses and dissertation, most tertiary institutions lack awareness, even at the departmental level, about what is truly produced within their walls. As a result of this, important information remains unknown and unutilized by majority of information seekers both inside and outside institutions (Day, 2004; Lukanda, 2017). The researchers also observed lack of compliance to institutional standards and limited accessibility in this present study area as postgraduate masters' dissertations lack uniform standard. Failure to systematically arrange these dissertations collections may result in huge loss of information, which may affect the productivity of researchers and prevent the sharing of valuable information on economic development and planning. Thus, there is an urgent need to investigate and systematize available information from Master's dissertations of Postgraduate students at the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, Abuja, Nigeria, and making their specific characteristics available to researchers, information consumers, and the general public might improve the accessibility and quality of scholars output at the Institute. However, the extent to which is the case in this study's locale is yet unknown. To this end, we proposed an empirical analysis to understand the current situation of NILDS/UNIBEN's Postgraduate Masters' dissertations in relation to the following variables: Year of submission; Masters' dissertations by academic programmes; distribution of the studies by research subjects' areas; research methodology and theoretical framework adapted, organisations studied/covered; and the geographical location where the study was carried out in order to make it accessible for optimal usage.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to investigate the Postgraduate Masters' dissertations submitted to the Institute's library between 2015 and 2021. The specific objectives are to:

- i. identify the Masters' dissertations submitted to the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, Abuja, Nigeria.
- ii. find out Masters' dissertations by academic degrees programmes in the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, Abuja, Nigeria.

- iii. find out subject area of study by the Postgraduate students of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, Abuja, Nigeria.
- iv. identify Masters' dissertations by research methodology used and theoretical framework/model applied
- v. find out organisations/institutions studied by the Postgraduate students in the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, Abuja, Nigeria.
- vi. analyze the dissertations in relation to the geographical location where the study was carried out.
- vii. find out academic titles of their respective supervisor(s) in the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, Abuja, Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

Theses and dissertations are grey literature and useful research materials in libraries and information centers. As a result, the methods used by academic libraries to manage theses and dissertations must be investigated (Ilo et al., 2015). Saka and Alhassan (2008), for instance, conducted documentation by consulting the Accession Register of the Department of Library Science, University of Maiduguri. Every page of the project list was counted, noting the year of submission, geographical distribution, major titles, and types of research conducted. The findings revealed that North East covered 192 (52.2 %) of the 355 BLS projects submitted to the Department, while case study covered 176 (49.58%). The title, "problems, development, and prospects of libraries" was used for 46 (12.96 %) of the 355 projects. This showed that theses and projects in Nigerian universities lack proper indexing and require improvement.

In a similar study, Nwezeh (2010) confirmed that the theses in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria were not catalogued but shelved alphabetically. In the same vein, Vijayakumar and Vijayakumar (2007) confirmed that user access to theses suffer due to lack of easily accessible bibliographic sources such as abstract, index, and classification, which are required to provide comprehensive coverage of these materials. Ilo et al., (2015) also discovered that approximately 50% of universities do not catalogue these materials. Approximately, 90% of all institutions investigated do not do abstract on theses. They reported that 90% of the institutions investigated use wooden shelves while 60% use wooden cabinets to shelve and display theses information resources. The results also revealed that the major strategies put in place for preserving these materials include proper ventilation and prohibiting of eating in the projects' section. It was also discovered that the universities investigated allowed external users to consult their theses and projects. This was supported by Nwezeh (2010) who equally discovered that external users are allowed to use the theses and projects in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. It was also discovered that giving limited time to users is one of the major strategies the libraries use to prevent misuse of theses and projects. This may present significant difficulties in retrieving and utilizing needed materials.

On the other hand, Saka, Abbass, & Salman (2017) examined the management of undergraduate and postgraduate research output at University Libraries in Nairobi (Kenya) and Abuja (Nigeria). The research focused on the coverage of research work by programmes, the structure of research work submission, and methods for processing and preservation. The challenges of efficient research output management in university libraries were also explored.

The results revealed that Bachelors and Masters' theses were largely submitted and acquired by university libraries. The submissions were made in both hard and soft copies. Space was a serious hindrance to the management of research output in Kenyan and Nigerian University Libraries. These documents were processed and preserved using shelving. This showed that the storage of theses and dissertations in African Universities requires serious improvement.

In a related study, Saka & Ahmed (2019) conducted a study on assessment of coverage of undergraduate research in Library and Information Technology at Federal University of Technology (FUT), Minna, Nigeria. The empirical study focused on the coverage of subject areas, organisations studied, and geographical coverage by the undergraduate research output. Results showed that a total of 572 completed research outputs were physically examined and analysed. The results showed that majority of the studies were on universities, followed by academic and public libraries, and they were from different subject areas within and outside the field of librarianship. The study also revealed that organisations studied were covered by different geographical zones and majority were conducted in Niger State. This demonstrated that the existing studies did not consider library and information science as a priority area of research. As a result, students should be encouraged to concentrate on studies relating to libraries as well as to consider other geopolitical zones when conducting research.

Finally, the literatures reviewed above have made significant contributions to the current field of study. However, there is no study that has used the same variables to examine Postgraduate Masters' dissertations in legislative academic setting in Nigeria. This is the gap that this study seeks to fill. Therefore, this study makes a significant contribution to higher education institutions in Nigerian by bringing to light, the need to adopt proper management of theses and dissertations through well-organised arrangements and documentation system. This will assist researchers in getting the most out of these vast information resources.

## **Methodology**

An explanatory case study research method was adopted for the study. Using an adapted methodology of Baggio et al. (2014) and multiple data gathering techniques, data was collected based on the four Masters' degree programs using the Institute Library's accession registers. Multiple data gathering technique were utilized to validate the data. The population for this study comprises all the 174 Masters' dissertations submitted to the Institute's library during the period under review. Total enumeration was used to give comprehensive coverage of all the Masters' dissertations in all the four Masters' degree programmes, which included 47 Masters' dissertations in Legislative Drafting, 44 Masters' dissertations in Parliamentary Administration, 6 Masters' dissertations on Elections and Party Politics, and 74 Masters' dissertations in Legislative Studies. These were calculated based on the number of postgraduate students that graduated between 2015 and 2019. Specialized and newly introduced Masters in Constitutional Law and Constitutional Development in 2018/2019 were excluded since students taking them were yet to produce Masters' dissertations. To acquire reliable statistics, each dissertation was analysed using frequency tables and percentages.

## **Findings of the Study**

174 Masters' dissertations were submitted to the Institute's library between the period of 2015 and 2021. Available records show the lowest Masters dissertations at 4 (2.72%) in

2015. The reason for that was because the academic programmes just commenced, and therefore a relatively small number of students wrote and presented dissertations. The years 2018 and 2019 recorded the highest number of dissertations and theses because the number of postgraduate students that graduated was 58 (39.45%) and 58 (39.45%), respectively. Years 2016 and 2017 showed the number of theses presented as 16 (10.88%) and 11 (7.48%), respectively. Additionally, it was discovered that no Masters students graduated in 2020 and there was no submission of Masters' dissertations to the Institute's library that year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

47 studies (23.12%) Academic programmes were (carried out under) Masters in Legislative Drafting; 44 (26.53%) on Masters in Parliamentary Administration; 6 (3.44%) on Masters in Elections and Party Politics; and 77 (50.34%) on Master in Legislative Studies. The reason for recording the highest number of Masters Dissertation in Legislative Studies was because the requirements covered different areas of specializations while a programme like Master's in Legislative Drafting has specialized and stringent requirements such as a first degree in Law as a prerequisite for admission into the programme based on Nigeria University Commission (NUC) Guidelines.

**Table 1: Distribution of Masters' Dissertations by Subject areas of study, 2015-2021**

<b>Subject areas of study</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Anti-Corruption	2	1.14
Bill Scrutiny	3	1.72
Budget	1	0.57
Bureaucracy and Public Services	5	2.87
Capacity building	5	2.87
Civil Education/Political Participation	1	0.57
Civil Society Organization	4	2.29
Committees	26	14.94
Common Law	1	0.57
Constituency Project	5	2.87
Constitutional Amendment	2	1.14
Delegated Legislation	7	4.02
ECOWAS Parliament	2	1.14
Electoral Violence	1	0.57
Gender Role	2	1.14
Good Governance	2	1.14
ICT	2	1.14
Job Performance	7	4.02
Law Making	3	1.72
Leadership	1	0.57
Legal Instruments	2	1.14
Legislation	2	1.14
Legislative Drafting	20	11.49
Legislative Morality	1	0.57
Legislative Oversight	20	11.49

Legislative Practice and Procedure	11	6.32
Legislative Scrutiny	1	0.57
Legislative Turnover	3	1.72
Legislative-Executive Relationship	6	3.44
Media and Practice	4	2.29
Parliamentary and Public Awareness	4	2.29
Parliamentary Reporting	2	1.14
Parliamentary Staff	3	1.72
Party Democracy	1	0.57
Powers, Privileges, and Immunity of the Legislature	2	1.14
Public Hearing	1	0.57
Public Perception	1	0.57
Treaty	2	1.14
Vote Buying	1	0.57
Voting Behavior	1	0.57
Women in Governance	4	2.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** *Authors' compilation*

Table 1 shows Committees, Legislative Oversight and Legislative Drafting are the dominant areas of study with 26 (14.94%); 20 (11.49%); and 20 (11.49%), respectively. This shows that the area has been (mostly) studied within the 6 years. This is followed by Legislative Practice and Procedure with 11 (6.32%); 7 (4.02%) for Job Performance and Delegated Legislation. Next to this was Legislative-Executive Relationship with 6 (3.44%) while Bureaucracy and Public Services, Capacity Building, and Constituency Project with 5 (2.89%). 4 (2.29%) of the titles of the projects have been compiled in the areas of Civil Society Organizations, Media and Practice, Parliamentary and Public Awareness, and Women in Governance. 3 (1.72%) for Bill Scrutiny, Law making, Legislative turnover, and Parliamentary Staff/Aides. The penultimate subjects in order of subject areas covered are the “Anti-Corruption, Constitutional Amendment, ECOWAS Parliament, Gender role, Good governance, ICT, Legal instruments, Legal instruments, Legislation, Parliamentary Reporting Powers, Privileges and Immunity of the Legislature, and Treaty” with 2(%) subject areas of study each. The lowest of the subject area of study were those of Budget, Electoral Violence, Leadership, and Public Hearing, Public Perception, Vote Buying and Voting Behaviour with each of them having 1 (0.68%) subject areas of study.

**Table 2: Distribution of Masters’ Dissertations by Research Method used, 2015 – 2021**

<b>Research method used</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Case Study Research	3	1.72
Case Study Research & Observation	1	0.57
Content Analysis Research Design	3	1.72
Cross-Section Method	1	0.57
Descriptive Research Method	14	8.04
Descriptive Survey Design & Documentary Research Design	4	2.29
Direct Observation	1	0.57
Doctrinal & Empirical Method	4	2.29

Doctrinal and Non-doctrinal Method	2	1.14
Doctrinal Research Approach	29	16.66
Doctrinal, Empirical & Comparative methods	1	0.57
Documentary Research	1	0.57
Ex-post-facto method	7	4.76
Historical Method	1	0.57
Library Research Method	2	1.14
Library-type method/Descriptive	3	1.72
Mixed Research Design	2	1.14
Qualitative Content Analysis	1	0.57
Qualitative and Quantitative Research Method	5	2.87
Qualitative Research	10	5.74
Quantitative Survey Design	3	1.72
Survey Research & Observation	1	0.57
Survey Research Design	70	40.22
Survey Research, Case Study & Purposive	1	0.57
1 Thesis did not have an abstract	1	0.57
3 Theses did not explain or it was not possible to identify the research method	3	1.72
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** *Authors' compilation*

Survey research method was the methodology adopted for 70 (40.22%) of the projects. This was followed by Doctrinal Research Approach for 29 (16.66%) projects. Descriptive Research Method for 14 (8.04%) projects while 10 (5.74%) used Qualitative Research Methodology, 7 (4.76%) Ex-post-facto methods, and 5 (2.87%) used Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods. There were also Descriptive Survey Design & Documentary Research Design, and Doctrinal & Empirical Method for 4 (2.29%) projects each. It was followed by Case Study Research, Content Analysis Research Design, Library-type Method/Descriptive, and a Quantitative Survey Method with 3 (1.72%) projects each, and 2 (1.36%) projects for Doctrinal & Empirical Methods, Library Research Method and Mixed Research Design. The least was the Case Study Research & Observation, Cross-Section Method, Direct Observation, Doctrinal, Empirical & Comparative Methods, Documentary Research, Historical Research, Qualitative Content analysis, Survey Research & Observation, Survey Research, and Case Study & Purposive having 1 (0.68%) thesis each. 1 (0.57%) did not have an abstract and 3 (1.72%) neither explained nor justified their choices.

**Table 3: Distribution of Masters' dissertations by Theoretical Framework used, 2015 – 2021**

Theoretical framework/model used	N	%
Accountability Theory	4	2.29
Advocacy Model of Legislation	1	0.57
Behavioral Models, Political System Models	1	0.57
Bureaucracy Theory	1	0.57
Check and Balance Model	3	1.72
Classical Games Theory	1	0.57

Cognitive Mobilization Theory	1	0.57
Communication Theory	2	1.14
Concept and Principles of Bill Scrutiny	2	1.14
Conflict Theory	1	0.57
Delegate Model	1	0.57
Delegated Legislation	2	1.14
Democratic Participant Theory, Agenda Setting Theory, Hypodermic Needle Theory of Communication	1	0.57
Development Theory, Globalization Theory	1	0.57
Distributive Benefit Theory, Model of Representation, Trusteeship Model, Delegate Model, Mandate Model, Resemblance Model	1	0.57
The doctrine of Deliberative Democracy	2	1.14
Elite Theory	3	1.72
Elite Theory, Marxist Theory of Conflict, Principal-Agency Theory	1	0.57
Evolution Theory	1	0.57
Feminism Theory	4	2.29
Fraser's Theory of Recognition	1	0.57
Game Theory	1	0.57
Guardian-Spender theory	1	0.57
Hans Kelsen's Doctrine of the Constitution	1	0.57
Horizontal Vs Vertical Accountability Theory	1	0.57
Horizontal Vs Vertical Theory	1	0.57
Howard's Theory of Legislation	1	0.57
Human Capital Theory	2	1.14
Human Capital Theory, Social Learning Theory, Reinforcement Theory	1	0.57
Information theory, Distributive theory	1	0.57
Informational Efficiency Theory	1	0.57
Informational Theory	3	1.72
Innate Abilities Theory, Skill Cultivation Theory, Institutional Positioning	1	0.57
Institutional Theory	4	2.29
Integration Theory	2	1.14
Karl Marx's Dialectical Materialism and Internal Democracy & Policy Formulation Model	1	0.57
Leader-Member Relation (LMR) Theory, Contingency Theory, Situation Leadership Model	1	0.57
Legitimacy Theory	1	0.57
Liberation Theory	1	0.57
Literal Rule, Golden Rule, Mischief Rule	1	0.57
Management by Objective Theory	1	0.57
Management Process and Organization Theory	1	0.57
Maslow's Theory, Herzberg Motivation-Hygiene Theory, Personality Theory	1	0.57
New Paradigm Approach	1	0.57

Organizational Theory	1	0.57
Participatory Democracy/Positive Liberty Democracy, Positive Political Theory, Strong Democracy Theory	1	0.57
Political Representation Theory	1	0.57
Principal Stewardship Theory, Principal-Agency Theory	1	0.57
Principal/Agency Theory	3	1.72
Principal/Agency Theory, Accountability Theory, Social Contract Theory	1	0.57
Principle of Effectiveness	1	0.57
Public Choice Theory	3	1.72
Public Choice Theory, Public Value Choice, Voting Theory, Social Choice Theory	1	0.57
Public Choice Theory, Public Value Theory	1	0.57
Public Participation Theory	2	1.14
Rational Actor Model	1	0.57
Regional Integration	1	0.57
Scientific Theory, Rational Choice Theory	1	0.57
Social Contract Theory	4	2.29
Social Contract Theory Sub-constituency Politics Theory of Representation	1	0.57
Sociological Theory, Psychological Model, Rational-Choice Theory	1	0.57
Social Exchange Theory	1	0.57
Social Responsibility Theory	4	2.29
Social Responsibility Theory& Agenda Setting Theory	4	2.29
Social Transformation Framework	1	0.57
Structural Functional Analysis, Positivist Formalist School	1	0.57
Structural Functionalism Theory, Minimalist and Maximalist Theory	1	0.57
Structure Functional Theory	13	7.47
Structure, Conduct, and Performance Theory	4	2.29
Subsidiary Legislation Model	1	0.57
System Theory	7	4.02
System theory, Theory of Bureaucracy	1	0.57
System theory, Theory of Structural Functionalism	1	0.57
Textual Approach, Intentional Approach/Purposeful Approach	1	0.57
Theory of Communication, Authoritarian Theory, Libertarianism or Free Press Theory, Social Responsibility Theory, Soviet Media/Communist theory, Development Communication Theory, Democratization/Democratic Participant Media Theory	1	0.57
Theory of Citizens Perception of Election Quality	1	0.57
Theory of Formal Training of Legislative Drafters	1	0.57
Theory of legislative Drafting	1	0.57
Theory of Organizational Effectiveness, Goal-Model Theory	1	0.57
Theory of Plain Language, Reader Expectation Theory, Theory of Legal Writing	1	0.57
Theory of Separation of Power	8	4.59

Theory of separation of Power and Checks and Balances	4	2.29
Thornton's Concept	1	0.57
Trait Factor Personality Theory	1	0.57
Travaux Preparatoires	1	0.57
Universal Dignity Theory	1	0.57
22 Theses that did not have Theoretical Framework/Model used	22	12.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** *Authors' compilation*

Table 3 shows that out of the 174 Masters' dissertations, 152 (87.35%) stated the theoretical framework(s) used but 22 (12.64%) did not state their theoretical framework. The description of the theoretical frameworks used, and the associations from which they were identified in the 152 Masters' theses, are presented as follows: 1 (0.57%) each theoretical framework on Advocacy Model of Legislation; Behavioral Models; Political System Models; Classical Games Theory; Conflict Theory; Delegate Model; Democratic Participant Theory, Agenda Setting Theory, Hypodermic Needle Theory of Communication; Development Theory, Globalization Theory; Distributive Benefit Theory, Model of Representation, Trusteeship Model, Delegate Model, Mandate Model, Resemblance Model; Doctrine of Deliberative Democracy; Elite Theory; Marxist Theory of Conflict; Principal Agent Theory; Evolution theory; Fraser's Theory of Recognition; Game Theory; Guardian-Spender Theory; Hans Kelsen's Doctrine of constitution; Horizontal Vs Vertical Accountability Theory; Horizontal Vs Vertical Theory; Howard's Theory of Legislation; Social Learning Theory; Reinforcement Theory; Information theory; Distributive Theory; Informational Efficiency Theory, etc.

Also, 2 (1.14%) used Communication Theory; 2(1.14%) used Concept and Principles of Bill Scrutiny; 2 (1.14%) used Delegated Legislation; 2 (1.14%) used the Doctrine of Deliberative Democracy; 2(1.14%) used the Human Capital Theory; 2 (1.14%) observed the Integration Theory; 2(1.14%) used Public Choice Theory; 2(1.14%) used Public Participation Theory. In addition, 3(1.72%) used the Check and Balance Model; 3 (1.72%) used Elite Theory; 3 (1.72%) used the Informational Theory; 3(1.72%) used the Principal-Agent Theory and also 3 (1.72%) used Public Choice Theory as a theoretical framework.

In addition, 4(2.29%) used Accountability Theory; 4 (2.29%) applied Feminism Theory; 4 (2.29%) used Institutional Theory; 4 (2.29%) utilized Social Contract Theory; 4 (2.29%) used Social Responsibility Theory and Social Responsibility Theory & Agenda Setting Theory, and also 4 (2.29%) adopted Theory of Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances. It is assumed that the name of the author/theory/model respective to the theoretical framework was kept as stated in the theses.

Based on the above, the major theoretical frameworks used (whether stated in the Masters theses, associated with the other frameworks or not) were: Structure Functional Theory which was mentioned 13 (7.47%) times in the studies; followed by Theory of Separation of Power with 8 (4.59%), and System Theory with 7 (4.02%) in the studies.

**Table 4: Distribution of Masters’ Dissertations by Organization/Institution studied, 2015-2021**

<b>Organization studied</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
APC (All Progressive Party)	1	0.57
ECOWAS	2	1.14
EFCC, ICPC, CCB	1	0.57
Federal Ministry of Agriculture	1	0.57
INEC	4	2.29
Judiciary	1	0.57
Local Government Area (LGA)	2	1.14
National Assembly	148	85.05
NEPAD	1	0.57
Nigeria Correctional Service	1	0.57
State Houses of Assembly	11	6.32
Supreme Court	1	0.57
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** *Authors’ compilation*

Table 4 shows the distribution of the organizations/institutions studied by the various dissertations presented to the Department of Studies. Except for ECOWAS and Local Government Areas (LGA) which had 2 (1.14%) dissertations each, the rest showed an even distribution of single works. Analyzing the dissertations based on the relationship of the highest organizations/institutions studied in the three Masters’ Programmes in table 6 shows that National Assembly outnumbered the State Houses of Assembly by 148 (85.05%) against 11 (6.32%) in the presentation of theses submitted to the Institute’s Library from the Department of Studies.

**Table 5: Distribution of Masters’ Dissertations by Geographical coverage, 2015-2021**

<b>Geographical coverage</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Abia State	2	1.36
Bayelsa State	2	1.36
Enugu State	1	0.68
FCT Abuja	157	90.47
Kebbi State	1	0.68
Nasarawa State	2	1.36
Ondo State	1	0.68
Osun State	2	1.36
River/Zamfara	1	0.68
Taraba State	1	0.68
Yobe State	1	0.68
Zaria, Kaduna State	1	0.68
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** *Authors’ compilation*

A careful assessment of the titles and content of the dissertations was done to identify the study areas to the country’s geographical coverage in Table 5. The highest number of Masters’

Dissertations of 157 (90.47%) were carried out in FCT, Abuja. This is probably because the Postgraduate Programmes were designed to develop the capacity of legislators. It could also be because the FCT offers the required contiguity for field work. This was followed by Abia State, Bayelsa State, Nasarawa State, Osun and West Africa with each of them having two dissertations 2 (1.14%), respectively. Other States such as Enugu, Kebbi, River/Zamfara, Taraba, Yobe, Zaria (Kaduna State) show even distribution of single works.

**Table 6: Distribution of academic titles of the supervisors, 2015 – 2021**

Academic titles of the supervisors	Frequency	Percentage %
PhD	114	65.51
Professor	56	32.18
Dissertations without the academic title of the supervisors	4	2.29

**Source:** *Authors' compilation*

Table 6 shows that out of the 174 theses, 170 (99.3%) had academic titles. In all, 114 (65.05%) of the supervisors of Masters' dissertations have Ph.D. academic titles while 56 (32.18%) were Professors, and 4 (2.29%) did not state their supervisors' academic titles.

### Summary of findings

The study has shown the following:

1. Masters in Legislative Studies produced the highest number of Academic dissertations.
2. In terms of the organizations studied, the National Assembly was mostly studied by a relatively larger number of students. This may be due to the contiguity of the Institute, as well as the specialization of the programmes.
3. In terms of the geographical distribution of the study, FCT-Abuja had the highest number of studies.
4. Survey Research Method was the most frequently used research method for the dissertations.
5. The layout of the abstract did not seem to have an institutional standard or norm.
6. There is no clear format on style of writing on the following: the table of contents, references, the number of words and/or text characters for abstract, or the presence or number of pages, among others.
7. One dissertation did not have an abstract; 3 did not have research methodology, and 22 did not provide any explanations, or it was not possible to identify the theoretical framework/model used.
8. No dissertations were written and produced in the year 2020 due to the outbreak of COVID-19 Pandemic.

### Conclusion

This study has provided some basic insights into the Masters' dissertations of Postgraduate Studies of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) in the context of a legislative academic setting in a developing country. Despite the lapses observed during this systematic examination and analyses of NILDS/UNIBEN Postgraduate Masters' dissertations, it has been established that their uptake of innovations especially in the areas of oversight functions, legislative drafting, committees, and legislative practice and procedure is

quite high. Absence of uniform format in the style of writing cannot however be solely attributed to ignorance on the part of the students rather it could be attributed to other external factors such as lack of adherence to project guidelines and supervisors' competence. Implementing the recommendations below is likely to produce the required improvement in the uniform format of writing style, and solutions to others noted challenges in the study.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested to the Management of Postgraduate Studies in NILDS:

1. Accurate and up-to-date Masters' dissertations comprising submission of both the soft and hard copies to the library for easier accessibility.
2. As a matter of policy, a soft copy of a dissertation should be deposited by the writer to the library for proper planning, storage and archival storage in the institutional digital repository.
3. NILDS should mandate the Staff handling Masters Theses to submit up-to-date records of soft copies of the Masters Theses especially for the years 2015-2021.
4. Postgraduate students should be encouraged to go farther afield and undertake research on national issues rather than concentrate on legislative aspects.
5. Postgraduate students should be advised to diversify the scope of their research to enable them use other research methods and theoretical models.
6. There should be a clear and specific layout of project format, style of writing as well as institutional standards or norms on the abstract writing style.
7. Feedback mechanisms to evaluate supervisors and the postgraduate students and the attachment of a co-supervisor for each project will improve the quality of theses.
8. NILDS' library should be encouraged to introduce and adopt electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) techniques in line with global best practices.

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