

To Determine the Word Limit of the Final Year Dissertation and Practical Training Report or Project in Universities in Sri Lanka

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Abstract – Dissertation is finding a new knowledge or solving a practical problem in the world which usually consists with 5 basic chapters. Practical training is work in a private, government or any other institute under some kind of supervision. Having a fixed word limit for undergraduate dissertation and practical training report gives benefits to both lecturers and students and it enhances the quality of a research. The population referred here is lecturers in Sri Lanka. Structural mailed questionnaire was applied as the convenience sampling procedure to select a sample of 115 lecturers. In order to explore the patterns in data suitable numerical and descriptive statistical tools were applied and 2 multiple linear regression analyses were performed to examine the relationships hypothesized. Both models were significant under 0.05 alpha level and Minitab 18 software was used to perform above analyses. To present the data tabulations were used. The study shows that the word limit of the final year undergraduate dissertation is determined between 10000 to 15000 words and the word limit of the final year practical training report is determined between 3000 to 8000 words. Lecturers' experience of the lecturing field was identified as the only factor affects to the word limit of the final year dissertation. Number of words in the undergraduate dissertation, credits of the final year practical training and lecturers' yearly practical training supervisions were identified as the factors affect to the word limit of the final year practical training report.

Keywords – Dissertation, Lecturer, Practical training report, Undergraduate, Word limit.

I. INTRODUCTION

Dissertation is finding a new knowledge or solving a practical problem in the world which usually consists with 5 basic chapters such as Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results & Discussion and Conclusion. It is a result of an extreme complex working process. In present undergraduate degrees, master's degrees and doctoral degrees are becoming high and dissertation is a point of success to achieve them with more and more steps [1]. Most of the undergraduate students in specialization degree programs should complete a dissertation to get their bachelor's degree. In Master of Science degrees dissertation is an integral part and also sometimes for PhD student's dissertation is the whole and only work to achieve the doctoral degree. Dissertation is important for all degree level

students to enhance and test their academic performance by developing their own perceptions about a something by using the subject matter knowledge. The aim of a dissertation is to test what students learnt in their undergraduate and post graduate degrees and most of the time it will be done under the supervision of expertise. The word limit of a dissertation depends on the students' degree stage and country. But in generally for undergraduate level 10,000-12,000 words, for master's level 15,000-25,000 words and for PhD level more than 50,000 words will be needed [2].

Practical training is conducted in private, government or any other institute under supervision. Majority of the degree holders entire into the job market once they get graduated. The practical skills rather than theoretical knowledge is essential in the carrier world as a person with full of subject

knowledge without having the knowledge of application the leaning becomes useless. If the practical training is a subpart of the studies of students' it should be directed and planned carefully (JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Finland). The practical training helps to students to gain practical knowledge and skills to work with a community in experts [3].

1.1 Problem Statement

Most of the universities provide the specialization degree programs with both dissertation and practical training. In most of the Bachelor of Science degrees (BSc) specialization students should follow both dissertation and practical training. In Sri Lanka also for all the BSc degree programs in government universities both dissertation and practical training have become compulsory requirements for specialization students. In Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree undergraduate students should follow 2 subjects which are called major and minor subjects. Under the major subject the final research should be written [4], [5], [6] for specialization students. And the students following BA degrees have to choose whether they are doing the dissertation or practical training. Because in BA degree specialization students are compulsorily follow only one choice among them [5]. As well as the dissertation, in practical training students should prepare a report or a project regarding with the same. For both dissertation and practical training there should be a word limit for their final document to enhance the quality of all researches to a same level. Without a word limit some students don't achieve the objective and vice versa. In most universities there is no fixed word limit and if they have a word limit it is not practically applied. Therefore it is obvious to identify what should be the word limit for the final year dissertation and practical training in universities in Sri Lanka.

1.2 Objectives of the study

1.2.1 Main objectives

- ✓ To determine a word limit for final year dissertation in Sri Lankan universities.
- ✓ To determine a word limit for final year practical training report or project in Sri Lankan universities.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

- ✓ To identify the factors affect to determine the word limit for final year dissertation in Sri Lankan universities.
- ✓ To identify the factors affect to determine the word limit for final year practical training report or project in Sri Lankan universities.

1.3 Importance of the study

This study provides many benefits to both students and lecturers who enrolled with the dissertation or practical training. Because having a word limit for students documentaries saves the time of both lecturer and the students. Undergraduate level is only a one level of education. The quality of that level should be maintained. The final output of the university students displays by their own findings on the subject. All of the students should be in a same level of work. Unnecessary wording in reports and thesis also wastes the valuable time of lecturers and students and reliable marking scheme can be also set by having a word limit.

1.4 Limitations of the study

In this research an online questionnaire was used to collect data. Therefore some lecturers were not responded for the survey. Hence lecturers are very busy the numbers of questions asked by them were less. It was caused to get limited data from the lecturers. And also there are so many private universities in Sri Lanka. But this study only considered about the ideas of lecturers from main few private universities in Sri Lanka.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study was based on the universities in Sri Lanka. There are 16 government universities and several private universities in Sri Lanka. The lectures in the universities are conducted by lecturers with different seniority levels. Therefore they were identified as the best persons with having good grounds to determine students' education materials. All the lecturers in government and private universities were the population of this study and university lecturer was the sampling unit of this study. To select the sample convenience sampling technique was used as the data was collected only from reachable lecturers through internet because of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Figure 2.1: Categories of the sample

Senior Professor
Proffessor
Senior Lecturer Grade II
Senior Lecturer Grade I
Lecturer
Lecturer (Probationary)
Temporary Lecturer

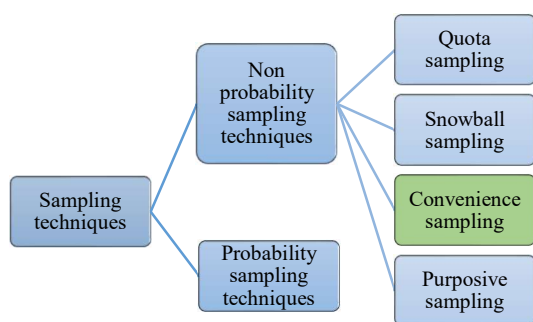


Figure 2.2: Elastration of the sampling technique

As this research aimed to findout lecturers own and present ideas primary data collection method was used to conduct the survey. A structured mailed questionnaire was sent to the lecturers' previously collected email addresses and 115 responses were gained. It was considered as the sample size. The questionnaire items were decided by using author's own perceptions.

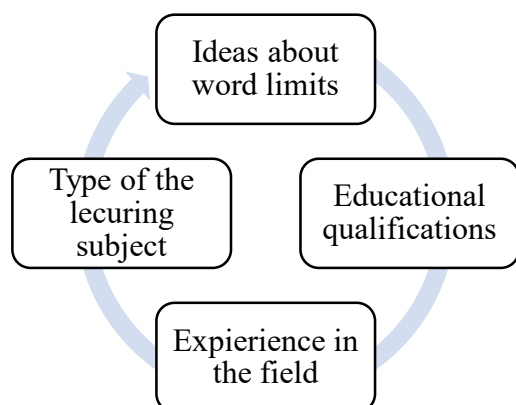


Figure 2.3: Elastration of the questionnaire

The mode of thinking was inductive because through this research a new knowledge was generated. The quantitative research approach was used to conduct the survey. The response variable was the word limit of a dissertation or training report. The main data analyzing technique was the multiple linear regression analysis and suitable descriptive statistics. To further description graphical analysis using pie charts, column charts, bar charts and tabulations were used to interpret the data and correlation analysis also to be used. Minitab 18 software was used to do all analysis techniques.

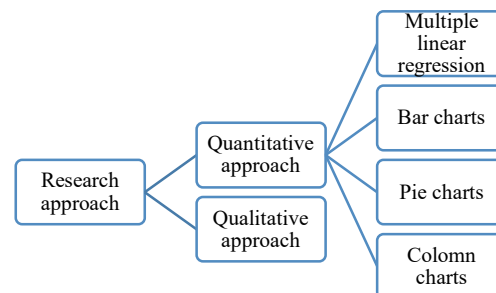


Figure 2.4: Elastration of the analysis techniques

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Test the word count between final year dissertation and practical training report

- ✓ Test the word count between final year dissertation and practical training report should be equal or not,

Null hypothesis $H_0: \mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0$

Alternative hypothesis $H_1: \mu_1 - \mu_2 \neq 0$

T-Value	DF	P-Value
9.76	192	0.000

If $P\text{-Value} < \alpha$, we have enough evidence to reject H_0 .

0.0 < 0.05, therefore we have enough evidence to reject H_0 .

It indicates the word limit between final year dissertation and practical training report should not be equal.

- ✓ Test the word count of final year dissertation should be less than or not to the word limit of practical training report.

Null hypothesis $H_0: \mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0$

Alternative hypothesis $H_1: \mu_1 - \mu_2 < 0$

T-Value	DF	P-Value
9.76	192	1.000

If $P\text{-Value} < \alpha$, we have enough evidence to reject H_0 .

1.000 > 0.05, therefore we do not have enough evidence to reject H_0 .

It indicates the word count of final year dissertation should not be less than to the word limit of practical training report.

- ✓ Test the word count of final year dissertation should be greater than or not to the word limit of practical training report.

Null hypothesis $H_0: \mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0$

Alternative hypothesis $H_1: \mu_1 - \mu_2 > 0$

T-Value	DF	P-Value
9.76	192	0.000

If $P\text{-Value} < \alpha$, we have enough evidence to reject H_0 .

0.000 < 0.05, therefore we have enough evidence to reject H_0 .

It indicates the word count of final year dissertation should be greater than to the word limit of practical training report.

3.2 The word limit for final year dissertation

According to the lecturers responses the statistics of word limit for final year dissertation in Sri Lankan universities are as follows:.

Table 3.2.1

Mean	12577
First Quartile	10000
Median	10000
Third Quartile	15000
Mode	10000
Minimum	2000
Maximum	30000

Source: Sample survey (2020)

- ✓ The average number of words is 12577.
- ✓ When the lecturers' preferred word counts are arranged into ascending order, the first 25% represents 10000 words.
- ✓ When the lecturers' preferred word counts are arranged into ascending order, middle count represents 10000 words.
- ✓ When the lecturers' preferred word counts are arranged into ascending order, the first 75% represents 15000 words.
- ✓ Most of the lecturers' preferred 10000 number of words as the word count.
- ✓ The minimum word count was 2000 and the maximum word count was 30000.

The word limit should be in between 2000 and 30000 words. But considering all above descriptive statistics the

word limit of the final year undergraduate dissertation was determined as 10000 to 15000 words in conclusion.

3.3 The word limit for final year practical training report

According to the lecturers responses the word limit for final year practical training report in Sri Lankan universities are as follows:.

Table 3.3.1

Mean	6128
First Quartile	3000
Median	5800
Third Quartile	8000
Mode	5000
Minimum	350
Maximum	20000

Source: Sample survey (2020)

- ✓ The average number of words is 6128.
- ✓ When the lecturers' preferred word counts are arranged into ascending order, the first 25% represents 3000 number of words.
- ✓ When the lecturers' preferred word counts are arranged into ascending order, middle count represents 5800 number of words.
- ✓ When the lecturers' preferred word counts are arranged into ascending order, the first 75% represents 8000 number of words.
- ✓ Most of the lecturers' preferred 5000 words as the word count.
- ✓ The minimum word count was 350 and the maximum word count was 20000.

The word limit should be in between 350 and 20000 words. But considering all above descriptive statistics the word limit of the final year practical training report was determined in between 3000 to 8000 words in conclusion.

3.4 Regression Analysis for Final Year Undergraduate Dissertation

Test of Model Significance

H_0 : Model is not significant

H_1 : Model is significant

If $P\text{-Value} < \alpha$ (0.05), H_0 can be rejected at 95% confidence level.

Analysis of Variance

Table 3.4.1

Source	DF	Seq SS	Adj SS	Adj MS	F-Value	P-Value
Regression	1	168624287	168624287	168624287	4.84	0.030
Experience	1	168624287	168624287	168624287	4.84	0.030
Error	113	3933742321	3933742321	34811879		
Total	114	4102366609				

Source: Sample survey (2020)

According to the above table,

$P\text{-Value} < \alpha$, there are enough evidence to reject H_0 .

$0.000 < 0.05$, therefore there is enough evidence to reject H_0 at 95% confidence level.

It indicates that the model is significant and this model is suitable to describe the factors affect to determine the word limit of final year dissertation.

Test of Parameter Significance

H_0 : Model is not significant

H_1 : Model is significant

If $P\text{-Value} < \alpha$ (0.05), H_0 can be rejected at 95% confidence level.

Coefficients

Table 3.4.2

Term	Coef	SE Coef	T-Value	P-Value	VIF
Constant	14555	1054	13.81	0.000	
Experience	-142.7	64.9	-2.20	0.030	1.00

Source: Sample survey (2020)

Regression Equation for Final Year Undergraduate Dissertation

Lecturers' Limit U = $14555 - 142.7$ experience of the lecturing field was identified as the only factor affects to the word limit of the final year dissertation.

- ✓ When lecturers' experience is constant, words of the final year undergraduate dissertation will be 14555 words.

- ✓ When lecturers' experience is increasing 1 year, words of the final year undergraduate dissertation will be decreased by 143 words.
- ✓ There is a negative relationship between lecturers' experience and the number of words of the final year undergraduate dissertation.

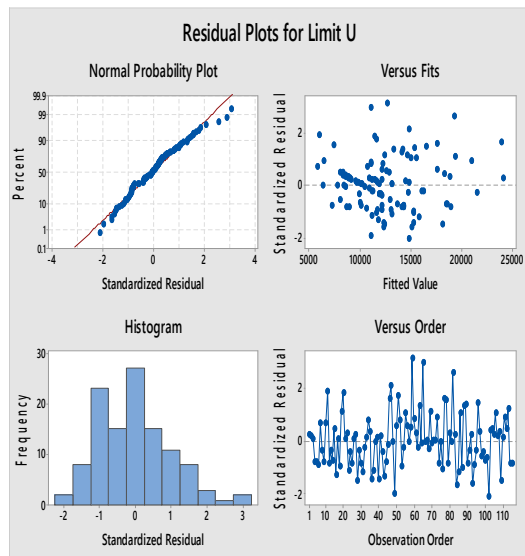


Figure 3.4.1

Source: Sample survey (2020)

The fitted values are approximately lying on the actual values in the normal probability plot. There is a random pattern of the residuals in residual versus fits and residual versus order plots. And also the histogram is approximately normal. It indicates this model is good.

3.5 Regression Equation for Final Year Practical Training

Test of Model Significance

H_0 : Model is not significant

H_1 : Model is significant

If $P\text{-Value} < \alpha$ (0.05), H_0 can be rejected at 95% confidence level.

Analysis of Variance

Table 3.5.1

Source	DF	Seq SS	Adj SS	Adj MS	F-Value	P-Value
Regression	13	864470045	864470045	66497696	8.84	0.000
Limit Dissertation	1	579078986	415615039	415615039	55.25	0.000
Credits Training	1	23341828	51678296	51678296	6.87	0.010
Yearly Training	1	51637946	54031713	54031713	7.18	0.009
First degree	5	69907145	90166468	18033294	2.40	0.042
Highest degree	5	140504138	140504138	28100828	3.74	0.004
Error	101	759760607	759760607	7522382		
Total	114	1624230652				

Source: Sample survey (2020)

According to the above table,

$P\text{-Value} < \alpha$, there are enough evidence to reject H_0 .

$0.000 < 0.05$, therefore there is enough evidence to reject H_0 at 95% confidence level.

It indicates that the model is significant and this model is suitable to describe the factors effect to determine the word limit of final year practical training report.

Test of Parameter Significance

H_0 : Model is not significant

H_1 : Model is significant

If $P\text{-Value} < \alpha$ (0.05), H_0 can be rejected at 95% confidence level.

Coefficients

Table 3.5.2

Term	Coef	SE Coef	T-Value	P-Value	VIF
Constant	2094	807	2.59	0.011	
Limit Dissertation	0.3431	0.0462	7.43	0.000	1.16
Credits Training	146.1	55.7	2.62	0.010	1.33
Yearly Training	-25.17	9.39	-2.68	0.009	1.19
First degree					
BA	-1460	629	-2.32	0.022	1.49
B.Com	-679	1099	-0.62	0.538	1.19
BBM	-745	1527	-0.49	0.627	1.20
BBA	853	1386	0.62	0.540	1.22
Other	-4111	1596	-2.58	0.011	1.31
Highest degree					
MPhil	691	880	0.79	0.434	1.11
MSc	-772	725	-1.07	0.289	1.15
MA	-762	1080	-0.71	0.482	1.15
BSc	-804	1160	-0.69	0.490	1.18
BA	5783	1518	3.81	0.000	1.18

Source: Sample survey (2020)

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of all the parameters are less than 10 and all values are around 1. It indicates that fitted model is good and no any Multicollinearity situation.

Regression Equation for Final Year Practical Training

$$\checkmark \text{ Limit Training} = 2094 + 0.3431 \text{ Limit U} + 146.1 \text{ Credits P} - 25.17 \text{ Yearly P}$$

If all the other factors are constant and lecturers' first degree and highest degree are BSc and PhD respectively, the number of words of the final year practical training report is 2094.

$$\checkmark \text{ Limit Training} = 7876 + 0.3431 \text{ Limit U} + 146.1 \text{ Credits P} - 25.17 \text{ Yearly P}$$

If all the other factors are constant and lecturers' first degree and highest degree are BSc and BA respectively, the number of words of the final year practical training report is 7896.

$$\checkmark \text{ Limit Training} = 634 + 0.3431 \text{ Limit U} + 146.1 \text{ Credits P} - 25.17 \text{ Yearly P}$$

When all the other factors are constant and lecturers' first degree and highest degree are BA and PhD respectively, the number of words of the final year practical training report is 634.

$$\checkmark \text{ Limit Training} = 6416 + 0.3431 \text{ Limit U} + 146.1 \text{ Credits P} - 25.17 \text{ Yearly P}$$

When all the other factors are constant and lecturers' first and highest degree is BA, the number of words of the final year practical training report is 6416.

$$\checkmark \text{ Limit Training} = -2017 + 0.3431 \text{ Limit U} + 146.1 \text{ Credits P} - 25.17 \text{ Yearly P}$$

When all the other factors are constant and lecturers' first degree and highest degree are other and PhD respectively, the number of words of the final year practical training report is 2017.

- ✓ Limit Training = $3765 + 0.3431 \text{ Limit U} + 146.1 \text{ Credits P} - 25.17 \text{ Yearly P}$

When all the other factors are constant, words of the final year practical training report is 3765 and lecturers' first degree and highest degree are Other and BA respectively,

- ✓ When words of an undergraduate dissertation are increased by 1 word, the words of the final year practical training report will be increased by 0.34 words.
- ✓ When credits of the final year practical training is increased by 1 credit, the words of the final year practical training report will be increased by 146 words.
- ✓ When the lecturers' yearly practical training supervisions is increased by 1 report, the words of the final year practical training report will be decreased by 25 words.

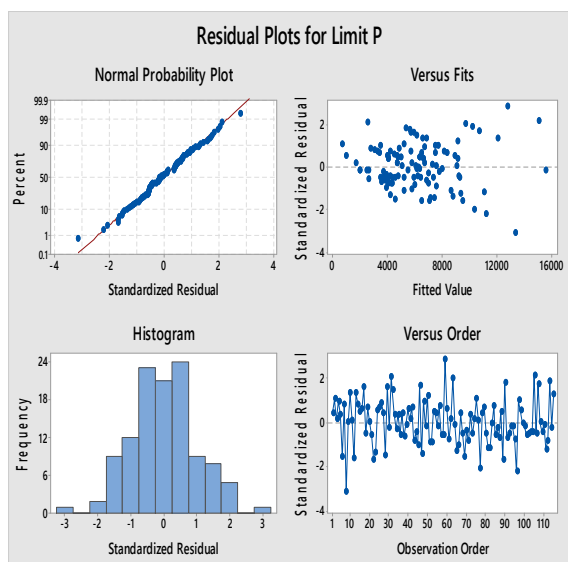


Figure 3.5.1

Source: Sample survey (2020)

The fitted values are approximately lying on the actual values in the normal probability plot. There is a random pattern of the residuals in residual versus fits and residual versus order plot. And also the histogram is approximately normal. It indicates this model is good.

IV. CONCLUSION

- ✓ Word count of final year dissertation should be greater than the word limit of practical training report.
- ✓ The word limit of the final year undergraduate dissertation was determined between 10000 to 15000 words.

- ✓ According to the regression analysis when lecturers' experience is constant, words of the final year undergraduate dissertation will be 14555 words.
- ✓ The word limit of the final year practical training report was determined between 3000 to 8000 words.
- ✓ Lecturers' experience of the lecturing field was identified as the only factor affects to the word limit of the final year dissertation.
- ✓ When lecturers' experience of the lecturing field is increased, word limit of the final year dissertation will be decreased.
- ✓ Number of words in the undergraduate dissertation, credits of the final year practical training and lecturers' yearly practical training supervisions were identified as the factors affecting the word limit of the final year practical training report.
- ✓ Word count in the undergraduate dissertation and the word limit of the final year practical training report has positive relationship.
- ✓ Credits of the final year practical training and the word limit of the final year practical training report has positive relationship.
- ✓ Lecturers' yearly practical training supervisions and the word limit of the final year practical training report has negative relationship.

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