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Evaluating Patterns of Research Publications in the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Sri Lanka: a Bibliometric Study

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ABSTRACT

This bibliometric study analyses the characteristics of research publications in the field of Intangible cultural heritage of Sri Lanka between the years of 1998 to 2018. The study is limited to investigate the research publications in traditional dance and folk drama in Sri Lanka. Library catalogue of the University of Visual and Performing Arts, Google Scholar and Emerald database were utilized by this study to examine research publications. Accordingly, 164 publications, both books and journal articles were investigated to find different characteristics such as fields of the study, geographical distribution (nationally, internationally), language wise and year wise distribution, coverage of sub aspects. The results indicate that the majority of publication type is journal articles (51%) published in nationally and internationally. Nevertheless, the study shows that the knowledge in intangible cultural heritage has not been widely distributed internationally since 90% articles found as local publications. And also majority of books (91%) has been published in local language (Sinhala). Rituals is the most popular field of study (49%) of the publications while the research in folk drama, traditional dance, traditional percussion music and allied arts are reported respectively. The study reveals that most of publications in rituals focused on low country rituals practicing in southern part of Sri Lanka. According to the findings, *Kolam* was the most published research field of folk drama in Sri Lanka and highest number of publications in cultural heritage has been found in years 2000 to 2001 and 2006 to 2007.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage, Bibliometric study, Rituals, Traditional Dance, Folk drama

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge plays a vital role in development of the society in different aspects such as education, economic, productivity, tourism, cultural, etc. It is a responsibility of researchers to engage in innovation, dissemination and conservation of the knowledge around the world. Knowledge should be published for the betterments and expansion in any field of study. Many studies have been carried out by researchers and academics on multiple facets of the knowledge. Exploration and publication of indigenous knowledge, cultural heritage and intangible literature are important for the knowledgeable society and it is a responsibility of any nation. (UNESCO, 2008) defined Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) as “oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship knowledge and techniques.” Multiple researches can be found in existing literature which related to the intangible cultural heritage in different context by focusing on different phenomena. (Esfehani & Albrecht, 2018) discussed on interaction of the intangible cultural heritage as a major asset of tourism based on the field study of ethnographic, which was done at the Southern Iraq. The study emphasized that the ICH has been used in tourism as a source of attraction, conservation tool, facilitating culturally sensitive behaviors.

Intangible Cultural Heritage of Sri Lanka has been addressed by many researchers in various phenomena. Thus, very limited approach in international research ground could be seen for the local ICH topics. Sri Lanka is a country which has a rich culture especially in intangible cultural heritage in traditional dance, folk drama and other performing arts which should be transferred from one generation to another with its immense value. (Bailey & De Silva, 2006) discussed on famous Sri Lankan exorcism ritual of *Sanni Yakuma*, *Sanni* demons as its main characters and their associated diseases. (Bartlett, 1989) stated that *Sanni* demon ritual which is being practiced by Sri Lankan Buddhists is shown constitutes behavioral treatment.

This study is focused on conducting bibliometric study on research publications of intangible cultural heritage of Sri Lanka, which had been published locally and internationally for last twenty years. Traditional dance and folk drama in Sri Lanka has been addressed by this research as intangible cultural heritage. Sri Lankan traditional dance consists with three main categories such as Kandyan, Low country and Sabaragamuwa while the *Kolam* and *Sokari* represent folk drama. Numerous rituals related to the above three main divisions of traditional dance can be found in local context such as *Sanni Yakuma*, *Rata yakuma*, *Suniyam Yagaya*, *Kohomba Kankariya* and *Paham Maduwa*, etc. There are many other rituals among the rural areas that has been attached to the normal life of the general community. Some of those rituals were not examined on

studied by any researchers and as a result, they are on the verge of disappearing. *Kolam* is a folk drama which related to the low country dance and should be preserved by proper mechanism. Therefore, this kind of studies would be important for the researchers and academics to recognize the valuable research areas which have not been examined or published yet. Findings of this study would be indicated the research trends and prevailing status of selected subject area and it would be useful for future researches. Furthermore, relevant parties could realize their responsibility on documentation or digitization, conservation and preservation of intangible cultural heritage as a national value.

OBJECTIVES

Investigation of research publication in intangible cultural heritage of Sri Lanka has been done by this study as a bibliometric study in order to identify its publication patterns. Publications over the time period of 1998 to 2008 were examined to address the following objectives.

- i. To identify the type of research publications of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Sri Lanka during the time period of 1988 to 2018.
- ii. To examine the topics covered by the publications.
- iii. To study the distribution of sub topics among the main subjects which was ranked highest number of publications.
- iv. To determine the geographical distribution of contribution in highly published materials.
- v. To observe the language wise distribution of publications.
- vi. To identify the year wise distribution of research publications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term of bibliometric is defined as “Statistical analysis of books, articles, or other publications” in the Oxford living dictionaries. It is a kind of quantitative analysis of research publications in various disciplines. Bibliometric studies have been completed by numerous researchers in different disciplines by evaluating various characteristics such as trends, publication patterns, subject coverage, geographical and language distribution. Existing literature indicated that many researchers have attempted to evaluate scholarly journals by their studies. (Falagas, Karavasiou, & Bliziotis, 2006) analyzed twelve Tropical Medicine category journals and studied its geographical distribution of different world regions. (K. . Singh & Chander, 2014) conducted a research by investigating 37 issues of library management journal during the period of 2006-2012. Authorship pattern, Volume wise distribution, length of the article and types of

publications were examined in this study. According to the results, single author articles are in the top level (56.55%) and journal articles is the most cited material type.

Bibliometric studies have been used as a tool to identify current trends and research culture of the selected disciplines by the authors in different subject areas. They were examined by different characteristics of the publications through its references. (Bakri & Willett, 2011) concentrate on investigating Computer Science research publications of staff members in 19 departments of Malaysian Universities. Their findings show that publications and citations are in low level and the most of new universities had been identified as non-research universities as they focused more on teaching rather than research. (Loan & Shah, 2018) studied the scholarly literature on Terrorism which has been published in India and Pakistan. Out of 125 results retrieved from Web of Science only 105 works were relevant. According to the study, India contributed 54% and Pakistan 46% in publication on Terrorism. Individual researchers contributed the majority of (93%) articles.

Publication pattern of the scholarly publications in fields of Arts and Humanities show differences from technical subjects as they might be based on different nature of disciplines. (Al, 2006) stated that the researchers in Arts and Humanities had been counted on monographs as medium of their publications while the researchers of other disciplines had published their articles in scholarly journals. Bibliometric characteristics such as publication type, language wise distribution and authorship pattern too had been examined in this study based on 507 journal articles on Arts and Humanities which were indexed in Arts and Humanities citation index. According to the findings, 83% articles were published by single authors. Identification of different characteristics of the research publications will lead to aware on publication trends of particular subject area. Accordingly, (G. Singh, Mittal, & Ahmad, 2007) examined more than 1000 articles in order to identify the growth and characteristics of the digital literature. The study reveals that majority of articles had been published under the single authorship and were in English language. It seems that researchers are tend to be more interested in doing their researches as individual works than collaborative effort.

METHODOLOGY

Total number of 164 research publications, both in journal articles and books had been examined in this study as a bibliometric study to evaluate the publication pattern of intangible cultural heritage of Sri Lanka. Research publications in twenty years during the time period of 1998 to 2018 were selected for the study based on library collection of University of Visual and Performing Arts, Sri Lanka, Google scholar and Emerald Database. The study has been limited to investigate publications on traditional dance and

folk drama of Sri Lanka as ICH. Keywords such as cultural heritage, Intangible cultural heritage, traditional dance + Sri Lanka, Folk drama, intangible literature, etc. used to search publications through Google scholar and Emerald Database by using Boolean operators. Journals which were published in selected period by University of Visual and Performing Arts, were explored here to identify the publication patterns of ICH. The data which was analyzed by using spreadsheet software and results, has presented by tables and figures as needed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This bibliometric study has been conducted based on the research publications in intangible cultural heritage of Sri Lanka during the time period of 1998 to 2018. Findings were discussed by analyzing 164 research publications, both books and journal articles based on the objectives of the study.

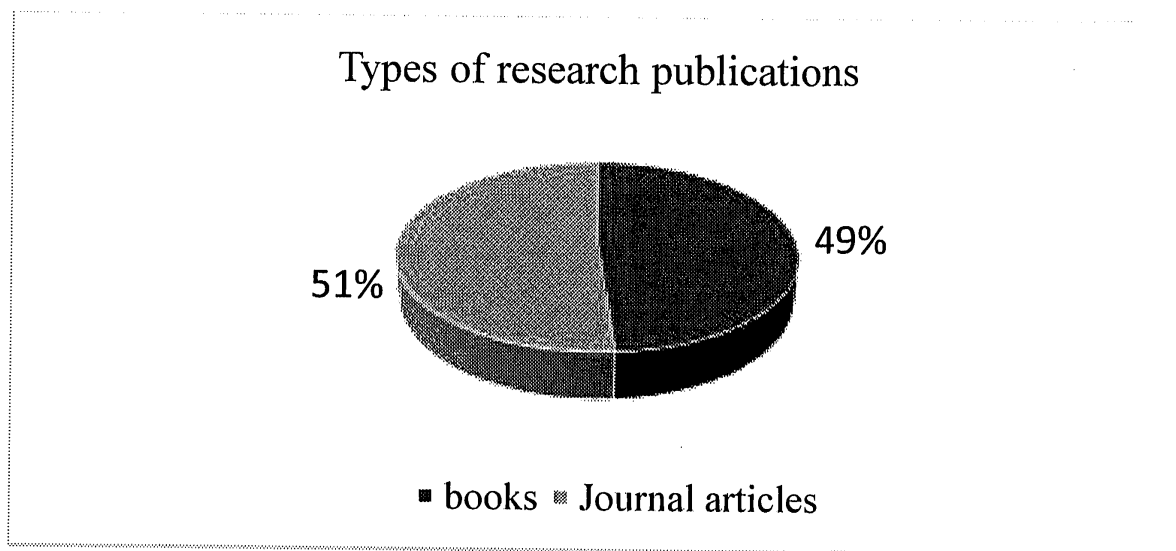


Figure 1: Type of research publications analyzed in the study

Figure 1 presents the distribution of types of research publication basically examined in this study and it reveals that the majority of publications are journal articles (51%). Nevertheless considerable number of book publications in ICH of Sri Lanka are also found in selected time period. According to contemporary literature, most of the studies had been completed using research papers which had been published in particular journals or indexing databases. Both books and journal articles were investigated in this study in order to identify the publication trends of the cultural heritage.

Table 1: Topics covered by the publications

| Topics | Number of publication | Percentage of publications |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Rituals | 80 | 49% |
| folk drama | 28 | 17% |
| Local dance | 14 | 8% |
| Traditional drumming | 11 | 7% |
| Biography | 8 | 5% |
| God | 7 | 4% |
| Allied art | 6 | 4% |
| Assets used in rituals | 4 | 2% |
| Demons concept | 3 | 2% |
| Other | 3 | 2% |
| Total | 164 | |

Table 1 indicates that topic wise distribution of research publications of traditional dance and folk drama in Sri Lanka. The majority of publications were covered the topics which related to rituals (49%) followed by folk drama (17%), local dance (8%), traditional drumming, biography, god, allied arts, assets used in rituals and demons concept. Interest and importance of rituals in exorcisms among general community in Sri Lanka and its cultural value, might be the reason to indicate highest level of publications for the research in same field. Basically Kandyan, low country and Sabaragamuwa dance were covered by publications in local dance.

Table 2: Sub topics covered by the rituals related publications

| Sub topics distribution of publications in rituals | Type of Publications | | Total number of Publications |
|--|----------------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| | Books | Journals | |
| Literary value of the rituals | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Low country Dance related rituals | 19 | 22 | 41 |
| Folk belief | 2 | | 2 |
| Evaluation of rituals | 1 | | 1 |
| Kandyan dance related rituals | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Sabaragamuwa dance related rituals | 2 | 12 | 14 |
| Buddhism and rituals | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| common topics | | 3 | 3 |
| other | | 2 | 2 |
| Total number of publications | 31 | 49 | 80 |

Sub topics, which had been covered by rituals related publications, were the focus in above table 2. It indicates that the highest number of publications is in low country dance related rituals (41) while the second highest number represents in Sabaragamuwa dance related rituals (14). It has been observed that there are many rituals, which related to the Low country dance, compared to other sub topics and could be addressed interestingly by the researchers.

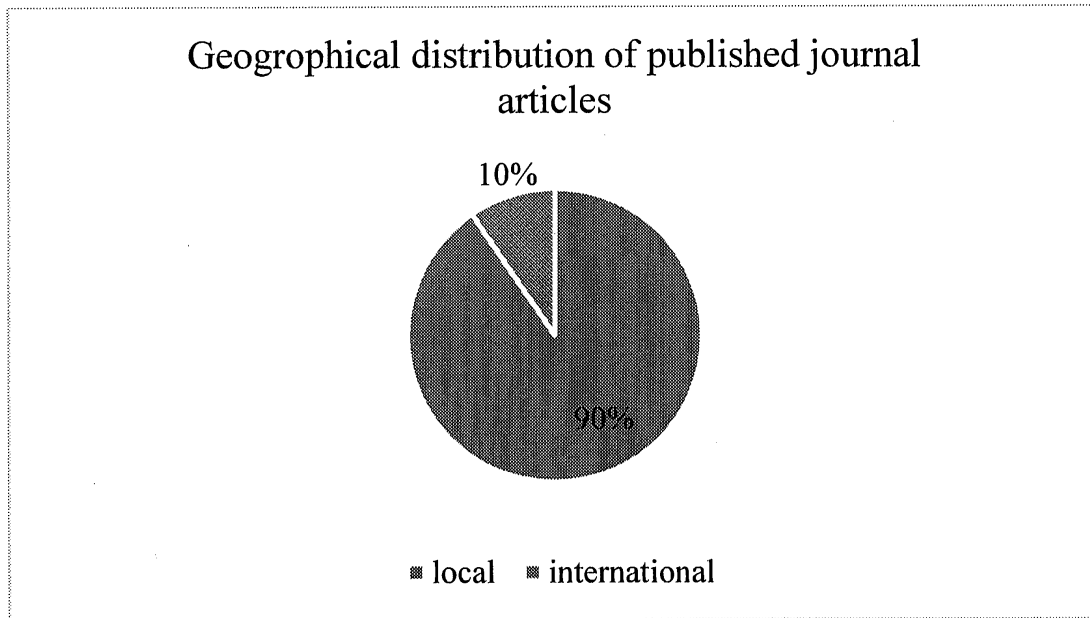


Figure 2: Geographical distribution of published journal articles

The data related to the geographical distribution of journal articles is revealed by the figure 2. It denotes that the highest number of research articles (90%) in traditional dance and folk drama was published in local journals. There is an enormous gap between the numbers of journal publications in locally and internationally. It further stresses that the indigenous knowledge in ICH of Sri Lanka has not been widespread internationally. Furthermore most of local journal articles were published in local "Sinhala" language, might be explaining difficulties of some features of traditional dance and folk drama in English language. Some of the charms, Ślōka, poetical features and facts related to rituals are in Sanskrit language and therefore it should be expressed in its original language. This has made a great barrier to translate those ritual related works into English.

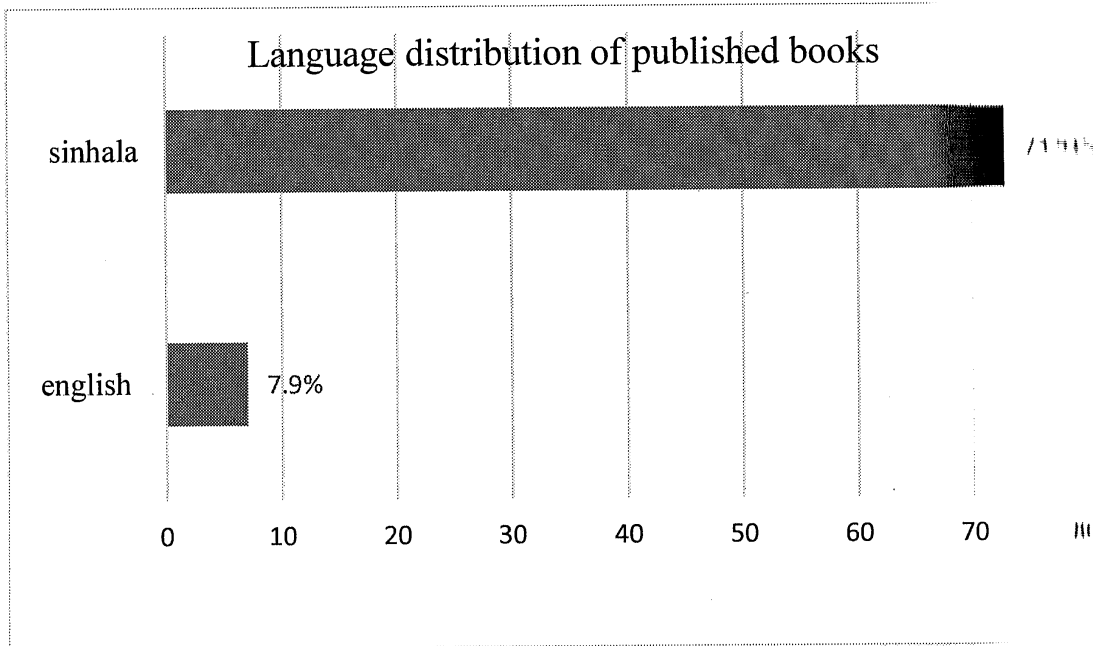


Figure 3: Language wise distribution of published books

Figure 3 shows that the most of the books in traditional dance and folk drama were published in Sinhala language and this might be the same reason behind on journal articles. But many studies found English as a mostly used language by researchers to publish journal articles or books in their context. According to the findings of (Chen et al., 2007), research articles available in digital libraries were published in multiple languages and most of them were in English language. (Nazim & Ahmad, 2008) found that the 97.5% articles in Nanotechnology were published in English language and remaining were published in different languages such as Chinese, Japanese, German, etc.

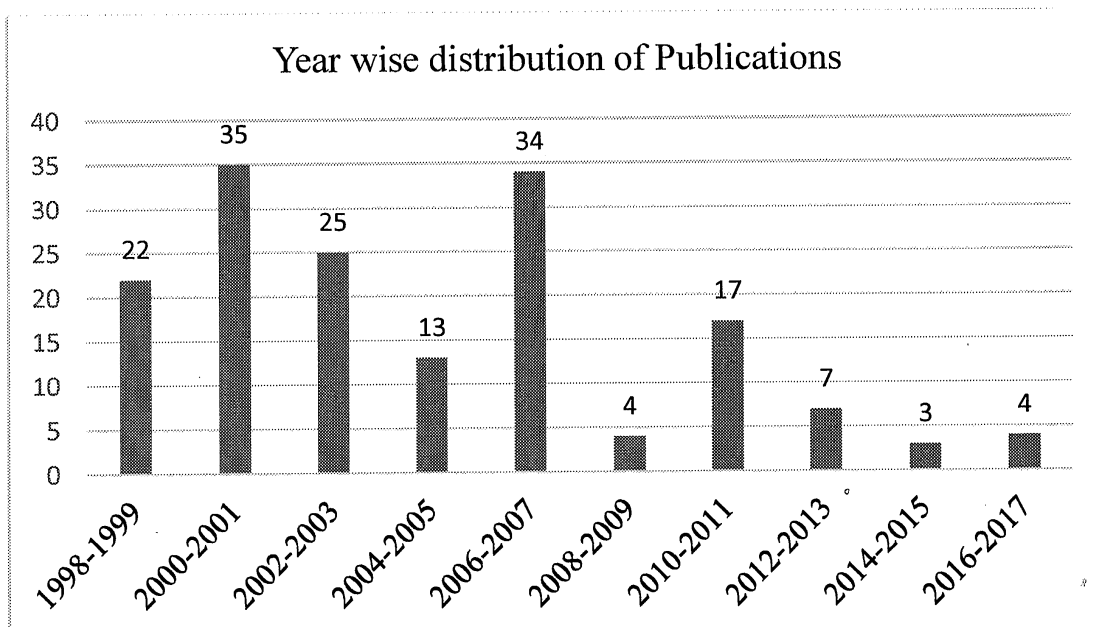


Figure 4: Year wise distribution of Publications

Figure 4 indicates that the majority of publications in traditional dance and folk drama were published in the year 2000 to 2001 (35 Nos) and 2006 to 2007 (34 Nos). According to the findings there is a significant subsidence of publication trends after 2007. Least publications were found during the time period of 2014 to 2015 and it is a matter that needs much attention of the researchers and responsible parties. When it is compared with second part of the twenty years, which considered in this study, first ten years show special development in publication trends.

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to analyze the research publications in ICH of Sri Lanka to determine its publication patterns and trends. This study can be used to identify further research areas to be paid attention by the researchers in respective field of the study. According to the study, journal articles were found as majority of publications type of ICH in selected period. But there is no any significant differences between books and journal articles as type of publications. Findings of the study reveals that the majority of the publications were addressed on rituals of Sri Lanka followed by folk drama, local dance, etc. There are numerous rituals in local context which are considered as one of the major asset of the rich culture of Sri Lanka. Rituals in low country dance is recorded highest number of publications. It was found that the field of ICH, Sri Lanka has not been approached enough to international research community since the study shows very less percentage on International publications. Furthermore, results shows that the most of the publications are in *Sinhala* language and it is a barrier to reach international research ground. There might be difficulties in publishing certain fields of ICH in English language due to its complications in explaining poets, *mantra*, *Ślōka*, etc. correctly. And also some traditional artists who expertise in rituals and folk drama are not willing to transfer their knowledge and experience with the researchers and they themselves are not skilled with English language. Highest number of publications in cultural heritage found in year 2000 to 2001 and 2006 to 2007 as well as there is a significant subsidence of publications in last ten years. There should be proper mechanism to selection, preservation, conservation, dissemination of ICH by the responsible bodies as national requirement. Being a main academic body of ICH, University of Visual and Performing Arts could be involved here by launching national level projects. Researchers should be able to focus their attention more on certain fields of ICH which are needed to be published and in turn could address to international journals and research conferences with their research findings. Intangible cultural heritage of Sri Lanka should be treated as a national resource which must be preserved for next generation.

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