Human Subjects Protection based ETD’s in the OATD Resource Discovery Service

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Abstract

Introduction: The aim of this study is to present characteristics and publication patterns of theses and dissertations on human subject protection accessible in Open Access Theses and Dissertations (OATD) resource discovery service, a tool developed by Wake Forest University in the United States.

Methodology: The search strategy that we adopted for finding theses on human subject protection in this resource discovery service was abstract :( human AND research AND protection) AND abstract :(bioethics OR compliance OR regulation) AND pub_dt:[2000-01-01T00:00:00Z TO *]. The search was limited to thesis published in the year 2000 and onwards.

Findings: There were in total 129 records obtained from the search in OATD after removal of duplicate entries. These retrieved records were tabulated in a Google sheet. The authors considered institution, country, language, year of publication, degree obtained and Institutional repository link available for each thesis. We also double-checked whether the entire thesis is available open access or not and what the research pertains to such as the discipline of study. The preliminary investigations reveal that maximum of the theses are from the law discipline. There are also theses from medicine and even environmental engineering discipline. Most of the theses are published in English language; there were theses in Portuguese, Italian language as well. Yearly distribution shows that maximum human subjects’ protection ETDs are from the year 2011-2016. Based on universities and location, most theses are available from the US and UK institutions, as well as from South Africa and Brasil. There were more doctoral theses, compared to master’s theses. Many of the theses had usage statistics available which were established via institutional repositories.

Discussion:

OATD is the best possible resource for finding open access graduate ETDs. OATD facilitate access to ETD’s from over 1100 colleges, universities and research institutions across the world. It has over 3.5 million records and has advanced search options available.
There were several other platforms for accessing theses also available like NDLTD global ETD search, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, and ProQuest PQTD Open. But there are several limitations in finding the ETDs on a particular topic from the NDLTD global search or ProQuest Dissertations & Theses subscription-based service. Through OpenDOAR provides directory of open access repositories, and one can limit the search to ETD’s in a particular Institution, one cannot establish the global picture of theses available on a particular area of research at a wider level. Student research on human subjects’ protection includes interdisciplinary ETDs that consider aspects of stem cell research, HIV vaccination practices, privacy, and confidentiality of research subject participants.

**Conclusion:** Theses deposited in the area of protecting human research subjects are few. The OATD resource discovery service continues to grow in size and coverage. The presence of human subjects’ protection theses in a globally open database will expose important research to more students, ethicists, and developers of public policy that not only exists to protect human participants, but also to provide more credibility and support for safe human participation in clinical trials and research.

Spread Sheet Link:

http://tinyurl.com/theseshumanity