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PRIMARY SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF POSTGRADUATE DISSERTATIONS AND THESES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BUEA

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Abstract

This study was designed to examine primary information sources and its impact on the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses in the University of Buea. The study was guided by one main objective and a major hypothesis. Supported by the Information Quality Theory by William H. Dutton (1999). The study employed a mixed – method approach using the explanatory sequential research design. The sample was made up of 240 postgraduate students, 85 academic staff and 15 faculties' officials (Deans, Vice-Deans – in - charge of research as well as coordinators of post graduate school of the faculties concern). The sampling techniques employed for this study was a multi stage sampling consisting of purposive sampling and the simple random sampling. The instruments use for data collection were a questionnaire for postgraduate students and academic staff and an interview guide for university administrators (Deans, Vice-Deans – in - charge of research as well as coordinators of post graduate school of the faculties concern). Data from close ended questions was analysed using SPSS 23.0, with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistical tools while open ended questions were analysed thematically. The Spearman's rho was used to test the research hypotheses formulated in the study. The descriptive findings indicated that, over 90% of students and 95% of staff responses to the questionnaire revealed that primary information sources are important in dissertation/thesis. From the thematic analysis, faculty officials hold that primary sources of information are the best and should be compulsory for students to use in research. The hypothesis test indicated that, primary sources of information significantly impact the quality of dissertation/thesis carried out by postgraduate students. Therefore, based on the findings, a general recommendation is to implement a university-wide policy that mandates the use of primary sources in all postgraduate dissertations and theses. This policy should be supported by comprehensive guidelines outlining the types of acceptable primary sources and their significance in academic research. Additionally, the university should provide resources and training to help students effectively locate and utilize these sources, ensuring that their research is grounded in authentic and credible information. This approach will not only enhance the quality of academic work but also foster a culture of rigorous scholarship within the institution.

Keywords Primary Sources, Information, Quality, Postgraduate Dissertations and Theses and University of Buea.

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of academic research, particularly at the postgraduate level, the quality of dissertations and theses is paramount. A significant determinant of this quality is the utilization of primary

information sources, which provide firsthand evidence and original data crucial for sound scholarly work (Baker, 2020). The University of Buea, as a leading institution of higher learning in

Cameroon, emphasizes the importance of rigorous research methodologies and the integration of credible sources in academic writing. This focus on primary sources not only enhances the scholarly rigor of postgraduate outputs but also contributes to the advancement of knowledge within various fields of study. Primary information sources, encompassing original research articles, interviews, surveys, and field studies, offer direct evidence that researchers can analyze and interpret. Unlike secondary sources, which synthesize and analyze existing information, primary sources allow for a deeper engagement with the subject matter (Smith & Jones, 2019). This engagement is essential for postgraduate students as they develop their own arguments and contribute to ongoing academic discussions. In a context like the University of Buea, where diverse research topics are explored, the reliance on primary sources can significantly elevate the originality and impact of scholarly work.

Moreover, the integration of primary sources into dissertations and theses fosters critical thinking and analytical skills among postgraduate students. Engaging with firsthand data encourages students to question existing narratives and contribute new insights (Johnson, 2021). For instance, students examining local issues may conduct interviews or surveys that reveal unique perspectives not covered in existing literature. This process not only enriches their research but also aligns with the university's commitment to producing innovative and contextually relevant scholarship. The impact of primary information sources on the quality of postgraduate research extends beyond the individual dissertation or thesis. High-quality research outputs enhance the reputation of academic institutions and contribute to the broader academic community. Research conducted at the University of Buea that employs robust primary data can influence policy-making, inform practice, and inspire further studies (Ngoh,

2022). Consequently, the emphasis on primary sources not only benefits students but also serves the university's mission of contributing to national and global knowledge. However, challenges remain in the effective utilization of primary sources. Access to original data can be limited, particularly in resource-constrained settings like Cameroon. Students may face difficulties in obtaining the necessary permissions for conducting research or in securing funding for data collection (Mokoginta, 2023). These barriers can hinder the quality of research outputs and limit the scope of inquiry. Addressing the impact of primary information sources on the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses in the University of Buea is therefore very important.

Context and Justification of Study

Primary information sources play a pivotal role in shaping the quality and originality of postgraduate dissertations and theses. Primary sources are original materials that provide firsthand evidence or data, such as interviews, surveys, experiments, and historical documents. Their importance lies in the fact that they offer direct insights into a research question, enabling scholars to construct arguments based on unmediated evidence (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). At the University of Buea, where diverse research disciplines thrive, the reliance on primary sources is crucial for developing a robust academic foundation that enhances the credibility of postgraduate work. The University of Buea, as a leading institution in Cameroon, aims to foster a research culture that emphasizes the use of rigorous methodologies and authentic data. The integration of primary information sources in postgraduate research not only enriches the academic discourse but also aligns with global standards of scholarly excellence (Kumar, 2019). By utilizing primary sources, students are able to contribute to existing knowledge in their fields, addressing local and

regional issues with empirical evidence. This is particularly important in a context where secondary sources may be limited or lack relevance to specific local challenges.

However, the challenges associated with accessing and utilizing primary sources cannot be overlooked. Many postgraduate students at the University of Buea face logistical difficulties, such as limited access to archives, databases, and field sites necessary for collecting primary data (Nkwenti, 2020). Additionally, the skills required to collect, analyze, and interpret primary information are often underemphasized in the curriculum, potentially leading to a reliance on secondary sources that may not adequately support their research objectives. This gap can diminish the overall quality and impact of their dissertations and theses, as the depth and rigor of the research may be compromised. The effective use of primary information sources is crucial for enhancing the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses at the University of Buea. While the potential for original contributions to knowledge is significant, addressing the barriers to access and training in primary research methods is essential for fostering a vibrant research environment. As the university continues to evolve, encouraging a systematic approach to primary data collection and analysis will be vital in ensuring that its graduates are well-equipped to meet the demands of contemporary scholarship (Mokogwu, 2021).

In essence, the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses is paramount in establishing academic credibility and contributing to the body of knowledge within various fields of study. Ideally, these scholarly works should be grounded in robust research methodologies that prioritize the use of primary information sources, such as original data collected through interviews, surveys, and experiments. Such primary sources

are essential for generating authentic insights and fostering innovative solutions to local and global issues. At the University of Buea, the expectation is that postgraduate students will engage deeply with primary data to enhance the originality and rigor of their research. However, the reality at the University of Buea presents a stark contrast to this ideal. Many students encounter significant challenges in accessing primary information sources due to logistical barriers, such as limited funding, inadequate research facilities, and restricted access to relevant archives or databases. Additionally, there is often a lack of adequate training in primary research methodologies, which hampers students' ability to effectively gather and analyze original data. As a result, many dissertations and theses tend to rely heavily on secondary sources, which may not sufficiently address specific research questions or reflect local contexts. The consequences of this reliance on secondary sources are profound. When postgraduate research lacks a solid foundation in primary data, it risks diminishing the overall quality and impact of academic work. This can lead to superficial analyses that fail to engage critically with the subject matter, ultimately undermining the scholarly contributions of graduates from the University of Buea. Furthermore, the absence of rigorous primary research can affect the institution's reputation as a center of academic excellence and innovation, limiting the potential for local and international collaborations. It becomes clear that addressing the gap between the ideal and real situations is crucial for enhancing the quality of postgraduate research at the University of Buea.

This study has as objective to evaluate the impact of primary information sources on the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses in the University of Buea. Specifically looking at it from the student's perspective, academic staff and administrative staff.

Based on the above objective, one general hypothesis was tested which verified how primary sources of information significantly impact the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses in the University of Buea.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Primary sources of information are those sources which contain original information that has been published, reported or recorded for the first time (Douglas, 2015). The information could be collected through different methods like surveys, observations, physical testing, mailed questionnaires, questionnaire filled and delivered. In research and academics, a primary source refers to information collected from sources that witnessed or experienced an event firsthand. This definition is supported with the definition by the Library of Congress which sees primary sources as the raw materials of history—original documents and objects which were created at the time under study, in contrast to secondary sources, which are accounts or interpretations of events created by someone without firsthand experience, -Using Primary Sources. The information could be collected through different methods like surveys, observations, physical testing, mailed questionnaires, questionnaire filled and delivered by enumerators, private interviews, telephonic interviews, focus groups and case studies

(Douglas, 2015).

These can be historical documents, literary texts, artistic works, experiments, journal entries. The researcher has a big role to play when collecting primary information since those sources which contain original information that has been published, reported or recorded for the first time are widely scattered and it is difficult to locate the information contained in them (Kragh, 1990). There is little agreement to this as most at times postgraduate students are faced with the problem of carrying on proper observation, surveys, administer questionnaires, do case study and conduct interviews in the process of data collection. For a researcher to carry out proper collection there should not be any bias. A post graduate student will tell his or her supervisor that he or she is in the field meanwhile he or she is not, since the student is sure that the supervisor cannot come to the field to check the work done. Most post graduate students would testify of 120 sampling size meanwhile it was just 20 used making the sources narrow. According to Douglas (2015), primary sources of information are reviewed through the following methods which include: survey, observation, interview, questionnaires.

According to Raimo (2018), different primary sources are used in different research fields as seen in table 1

Table 1: Different Primary Sources Used in Different Research Field

History	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Letters and diaries 2 Photographs and video footage 3 Official documents and records 4 Physical objects
Art and Literature	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Novels and poems 2 Paintings and art installations 3 Films and performances
Communication and Social Studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interview 2. Recordings of speeches 3. Newspapers and magazines 4. Social media posts

Law and Politics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Court records 2 Legal texts 3 Government documents
Sciences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Empirical studies 2 Statistical data
Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Letters 2. Research results 3. Work of art 4. Speeches 5. Patents

Source: Raimo (2018)

According to Chowdhury (2011), characteristics of primary sources of information include;

- Primary sources can either be first-hand observation/analysis, or accounts contemporary with the events described.
- Primary sources document events, people, and viewpoints of the time.
- When research is more era, rather than event driven, the scope of possible primary sources broadens considerably.
- Primary sources represent one person's perspective; frequently they will be used with secondary/tertiary sources to broaden the lens through which a researcher is looking at an event, era, or phenomenon.
- It is important when using anything as a primary source that the researcher be cognizant of and sensitive to the bias of the observer/analyzer that created the primary source, and also to the broader cultural biases of the era in which the primary source was created.
- The researcher's perspective, or the arguments or points for which a researcher plans to use a

- primary source as evidence, is significant in determining what sources will be primary.
- Reproductions of primary sources remain primary for many research purposes.
- Some attributes are based more on the perspective represented in the source and context in which the source is being used by the researcher.

Using primary sources of information leads to high quality of research since research today is scientifically done where a problem is identified and solved bringing out new knowledge. With survey, questionnaire, interviews, case study and so on the minds of the participants are searched bringing out the real problem and thus motivating solution. Knowledge is real but must be backed by a theory. To find primary documents on the web, try the following Internet search topic + primary source. Primary sources are constantly compressed, organized and rearranged according to some definite plan and communicated through another set of publications called secondary sources of information. An added advantage of primary sources over secondary sources is that, Primary sources are more credible as evidence, but good research uses both primary and secondary sources.

According to Douglas (2015), primary sources of

information are reviewed through the following methods which include: books, survey (Murphy-Hill, Zimmermann and Nagappan, 2013), observation, interview (Murphy-Hill and Murphy, 2011) and questionnaires with its challenges which include the following:

Choosing a Population: Before interview script and research questions are developed and fully defined, the population for the study is chosen. There is the problem of whether or not to maintain flexibility where the community could define some process by which to consider important subpopulations in a study design and define them.

Recruiting Participants: The problem as to whether to use snowball sampling recruiting participants through personal contacts, by posting flyers or email.

Behaviours vs. Generalizations: It is difficult to differentiate between facts about participants' behaviour and participants' opinions about how one should behave. How studies could be designed that would allow participants differentiate between facts and opinions, how to study based on principles, rather than on intuition.

Interview Refinement: Adapting Semi-Structured Interviews. Interview enables the interviewer to ask questions that were not on the interview script in order to further explore potentially interesting things that participants said. If answers to a particular question became consistently uninformative, it is removed from the script. Interview stopped yielding new types of information, or when it had reached saturation. Ending studies upon reaching saturation is standard practice in other fields as well the challenge here is how would a researcher identify and validate what when studies reach saturation point and how should a study protocol be designed so that it is easy to use and to change.

Interview Preparation: An Ounce of Practice.

Conducting interviews is an important part of the interview design process. It helps refine the interview script so that it flows well and is not based on flawed assumptions, and helps prepare the interviewer for problems that can arise when conducting real interviews. While any guide to performing interviews will say that practicing is an essential part of developing interviews, using this practice effectively seems to depend largely on experience and intuition, and a criterion to evaluate choices.

Recognizing what is Interesting: Working the Crowd. When analyzing interview data, the graduate research assistant performing the data analysis also was on the lookout for interesting responses and interesting patterns in the data. However, determining what is interesting requires an understanding of the current research community (Davis, 1971), an understanding that generally comes only from the experience afforded by being a member of it for more than a few years.

Data Overload: Professional transcription services could be paid, to validate by hand by our research staff, since most post graduate students are not statistician. Coding these transcripts required many passes over the data, since some pertinent codes only emerged in later interviews.

From a theoretical point of view, the Information Quality Theory by William H. Dutton (1999) serves as a foundational framework for understanding the role of information quality in research outcomes. Dutton posits that the credibility, reliability, and relevance of information sources significantly impact the effectiveness of the research process. This theory is particularly relevant in academic settings, where the quality of primary sources can enhance the rigor of dissertations and theses. By focusing on the attributes of information, Dutton highlights the necessity for researchers to critically evaluate their sources, which is essential for producing

high-quality academic work (Dutton, 1999). Despite its strengths, Dutton's theory has been critiqued for its somewhat narrow focus on the quality attributes of information without adequately addressing the broader context in which this information is utilized. While Dutton emphasizes credibility and reliability, the theory could benefit from integrating a more nuanced understanding of how contextual factors—such as the researcher's background, institutional support, and disciplinary norms—affect the perception of information quality. This broader perspective could provide a more comprehensive framework for evaluating research outcomes, especially in diverse academic environments like the University of Buea (Hirschheim & Klein, 2003).

The theory emphasizes the importance of credible and reliable information sources. In the context of postgraduate research, using high-quality primary sources can significantly enhance the credibility of a dissertation or thesis. For students at the University of Buea, this means that meticulous evaluation of sources can lead to more rigorous arguments and conclusions, thereby strengthening the overall quality of their academic work. It also provides a framework for evaluating the quality of information, which is essential for postgraduate students who must navigate a vast array of available sources. Dutton's focus on attributes such as relevance, accuracy, and timeliness can guide students in selecting appropriate primary sources. This structured approach can help ensure that their research is grounded in solid evidence, which is crucial for achieving academic success and contributing to the body of knowledge in their fields.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed – method approach using the explanatory sequential research design. The study adopted an exploratory design because it necessitates the collection of opinions and views

from a sample from the population, considered representative of the entire population. The population for this study was made up of all Master's and PhD students of University of Buea and all postgraduate lecturers and supervisors of postgraduate school with a total population of 500 academic staff and 2,305 postgraduate students. The target population for this study consisted of post graduate students (master's and PhD) of the 2020/2021 batch including academic staff (lecturers, Deans, Vice - Deans - In - charge of Research and Coordinators of Post Graduate School of the University of Buea in the Faculties of Arts, Education, Engineering and Technology, Science, and Social and Management Sciences. The accessible population is 864 (post graduate students and academic staff. The sample was made up of 240 postgraduate students, 85 academic staff and 15 faculties' officials (Deans, Vice-Deans – in - charge of research as well as coordinators of post graduate school of the faculties concern). The sampling techniques employed for this study was a multi stage sampling consisting of purposive sampling and the simple random sampling. The instruments use for data collection were a questionnaire for postgraduate students and academic staff and an interview guide for university administrators (Deans, Vice-Deans – in - charge of research as well as coordinators of post graduate school of the faculties concern). Data from the close ended questions was analysed using SPSS 23.0, with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistical tools while open ended questions were analysed thematically. The hypotheses of the study were tested using a non-parametric test (Spearman's Rho test) presented at 95% level of confidence interval with alpha set at 0.05 levels accepting 5% margin of error.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are be presented and supported by literature and the works of other

researchers. Quantitative data are presented first followed by qualitative data.

Table 6: Students' Responses on the impact of primary sources of information on the quality of post graduate dissertation/thesis

Items	Stretched				Collapsed	
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD
Primary sources contribute to quality of research	160 (66.7%)	80 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	240 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Credibility of research depends on primary sources	88 (36.7%)	120 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	32 (13.3%)	208 (86.7%)	32 (13.3%)
Primary source bears authentic information	136 (56.7%)	88 (36.7%)	16 (6.7%)	0 (0.0%)	224 (93.3%)	16 (6.7%)
Some information can only be gotten through primary sources	136 (56.7%)	88 (36.7%)	8 (3.3%)	8 (3.3%)	224 (93.3%)	16 (6.7%)
Multiple Responses Set (MRS)	520 (54.1%)	376 (39.2%)	24 (2.5%)	40 (4.2%)	896 (93.3%)	64 (6.7%)

n=240

The findings from students regarding the impact of primary sources of information on the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses indicate a strong consensus, with 93.3% agreeing that these sources significantly enhance research quality. In contrast, only 6.7% expressed skepticism about the value of primary sources. This overwhelming support underlines the critical role that primary sources play in academic research. According to Hart (1998), primary sources are invaluable in academic research as they provide original data and firsthand evidence, which are essential for developing strong, credible arguments. This perspective aligns with the students' views, suggesting that their understanding of the importance of primary sources is rooted in a recognition of the need for authenticity and direct engagement with the material. Creswell (2014) emphasizes that engaging with primary sources encourages critical thinking and analytical skills among researchers. When students analyze original materials, they are more likely to develop nuanced understandings of their topics, which can lead to higher-quality dissertations and theses. This aligns with the students' overwhelming agreement that primary sources enhance research quality, as they enable deeper engagement with

the subject matter.

The findings from the student cohort reveal a unanimous agreement (240 or 100%) on the importance of primary sources in contributing to the quality of research. Additionally, a significant majority, 224 students (93.3%), recognized that primary sources provide authentic information, while 208 students (86.7%) acknowledged that the credibility of research is heavily dependent on these sources. These results highlight the critical role that primary sources play in the academic research process. A study by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) underscores the importance of primary sources in upholding research integrity. By grounding their work in original data, students not only enhance the quality of their dissertations and theses but also contribute to maintaining high academic standards. The students' agreement on the critical role of primary sources reflects an understanding of the ethical dimensions of research quality. According to Hart (1998), primary sources are essential for providing direct evidence and firsthand accounts, which are crucial for ensuring the authenticity of research findings. This aligns with the students' belief that primary sources bear authentic information, reinforcing the idea that engaging with original materials is

fundamental for producing credible academic work.

Table 7: Staff Responses on the impact of primary sources of information on the quality of post graduate dissertation/thesis

Items	Stretched				Collapsed	
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD
Primary sources contribute to quality of research	60 (60.0%)	40 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	100 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Credibility of research depends on primary sources	70 (70.0%)	25 (25.0%)	5 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)	95 (75.0%)	5 (5.0%)
Primary source bears authentic information	60 (60.0%)	40 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	100 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Some information can only be gotten through primary sources	45 (45.0%)	40 (40.0%)	10 (10.0%)	5 (5.0%)	85 (85.0%)	15 (15.0%)
Multiple Responses Set (MRS)	235 (58.7%)	145 (36.3%)	15 (3.7%)	5 (1.3%)	380 (95.0%)	20 (5.0%)

n=100

The findings from the academic staff at the University of Buea indicate a strong consensus on the importance of primary sources of information, with 95.0% affirming that these sources significantly enhance the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses. This overwhelming agreement underscores the critical role that primary sources play in academic research and the overall integrity of scholarly work. According to Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2008), primary sources are essential for conducting rigorous academic research as they provide firsthand evidence and original data. These sources allow researchers to engage directly with the material, fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The faculty's acknowledgment of the importance of primary sources aligns with this assertion, suggesting that when postgraduate students utilize these sources, they are better equipped to produce high-quality research that is both credible and valuable to their fields.

The findings from the academic staff at the

University of Buea reveal a unanimous consensus on the pivotal role of primary sources in enhancing the quality of research. Specifically, 100% of the staff agreed that primary sources contribute authentic information, while 75.0% emphasized that the credibility of research hinges on these sources. Furthermore, 85.0% of the respondents affirmed that quality information for research is predominantly obtained through primary sources. Together, these insights highlight the essential nature of primary sources in academic research. As noted by Becker and Carley (2017), primary sources are fundamental to research as they provide direct evidence and firsthand accounts, ensuring the authenticity of the information used. This authenticity is crucial for establishing a solid foundation for research arguments and conclusions. The faculty's unanimous agreement underscores the importance of engaging with primary sources to produce work that is not only credible but also grounded in genuine evidence.

Table 8: Findings on the Impact of Primary Sources of Information on Post Graduate Dissertation/Thesis Quality – Thematic Responses

Question	Grounding	Response
What are the types of primary sources of information you will recommend to students?	10	<i>Ten respondents would recommend primary sources of information like Journal article and book to their students.</i>
	5	<i>Five respondents would recommend primary sources of information like Thesis and Experiment to their students</i>
Do you think it is a must or optional for primary sources of information to be used in dissertation/thesis?	15	<i>Fifteen respondents supported the fact that primary sources of information must be used in dissertation/thesis since it gives reliable and valid information. They went further to say Primary source of information provides raw information and first-hand evidence giving direct access to the subject of dissertation/thesis. Primary sources of information is good in almost all nature of dissertation/thesis</i>

Findings gotten using interview guide in response to the impact of primary sources of information on dissertation/thesis quality of post graduate student from deans, vice- dean-in –charge of research and coordinators of post graduate school. Based on the findings the following can be highlighted; with respect to the type of primary sources of information to be recommended to students 66.7% of the respondents revealed that they would recommend journal articles and books while 33.3% of the respondents indicated that they would recommend thesis and experiment. This distinction underscores the perceived value of journal articles and books in contributing to the quality of dissertations and theses. According to Hart (1998), journal articles and academic books are often regarded as the gold standard in research due to their rigorous peer-review processes and comprehensive analysis. Hart argues that these sources provide well-established theoretical frameworks and empirical data that can significantly enhance the quality of academic writing. The preference for such sources among respondents aligns with this perspective, suggesting that they are viewed as more reliable and authoritative compared to other forms of primary data.

Conversely, the recognition of theses and experimental data as valuable sources, albeit to a lesser extent, reflects the findings of Creswell

(2014), who emphasizes the importance of diverse sources in research. Creswell notes that while journal articles and books provide foundational knowledge, original research, such as theses and experiments, can offer unique insights and practical applications that enrich academic discourse. This duality in source recommendation highlights the need for postgraduate students to engage with both established literature and original research to achieve a well-rounded understanding of their topics.

With respect to whether primary sources of information should be used in dissertation/thesis, 100% of the respondents revealed that it is a must to use primary source of information in dissertation/thesis as it is good in all nature of dissertation/thesis, gives reliable and valid information thus dissertation/thesis quality. This explains why the university officials, lectures, supervisors and the entire academic world recommend primary sources of information during research initiatives. Researchers obtain primary information by watching an event itself,

observe informants in real action to get firsthand information, meet community actors to obtain novel and indigenous information. Stakeholders in the research world recommend primary sources because secondary and tertiary sources cannot provide all the information. Invention and innovation in every field is best where primary sources are exploited in the best way. The primary sources of information are the best, it cannot be optional to use because it roots research to reality. Sometimes, access to other sources of information is impossible such that, it becomes a rule of thumb to use primary sources of information in research. The above findings of this study align with earlier remarks made by Douglas (2015) and Raimo

(2018) that, primary sources of information are reviewed through survey, observation, interview, and questionnaires and are very important in research. This is also supported by Wilson's Information Seeking Behaviour (1999) who stated that through survey, observation, interview, and questionnaires a person may engage in when identifying their own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information

Verification of Hypothesis: The use of primary sources of information does not significantly impact the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses in the University of Buea.

Table 5: Relationship between primary sources of information and the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses in the University of Buea

		Primary sources of information	Quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses
Spearman's rho	r-value from students	1	0.301**
	p-value from students	.	.000
	r-value from staff	1	0.468**
	p-value from staff	.	.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings on the relationship between primary sources of information and quality of dissertation/thesis from the analysis of students' and staff questionnaires are shown that, there is a positive significant relationship both from students' ($r=0.301$, $P=0.000$) and staff ($r=0.468$, $P=0.000$) analysis respectively. Therefore, the findings reject the H_0 that the use of primary sources of information does not significantly impact the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses in the University of Buea and accepted H_1 that the use of primary sources of information significantly impact the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses in the University of Buea. According to these researchers, using primary sources of information leads to high quality of research since research today is scientifically done

where a problem is identified and solved bringing out new knowledge. The minds of the participants are searched bringing out the real problem and thus motivating solution. Knowledge is real but must be backed by a theory. Like it was realized in the interview of this study, these researchers also said that primary documents can be found on the web. This is because, the primary sources contribute to the quality of a research to become very credible and contain authentic information concerning the phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, there are certain information resources that can only be obtained through primary sources. This is in line Dutton (1999) theory who underscores the relationship between information quality and research outcomes. High-quality primary sources can lead to more innovative and

insightful research findings. For postgraduate students at the University of Buea, employing this theory can encourage them to engage deeply with their sources, fostering critical thinking and original contributions. This proactive engagement ultimately enhances the impact of their dissertations and theses on the academic community and beyond.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings from the study underscore the critical role that primary information sources play in enhancing the quality of postgraduate dissertations and theses at the University of Buea. With over 90% of students and 95% of staff affirming the importance of these sources, it is evident that there is a strong consensus within the academic community regarding their value. This widespread agreement highlights the need for postgraduate students to prioritize primary sources in their research endeavors, as these sources provide the authenticity and rigor necessary for high-quality academic work. Further, the thematic analysis revealed that faculty officials advocate for the compulsory use of primary sources in research. This recommendation reflects a commitment to maintaining high academic standards and ensuring that students engage with original data. By emphasizing the necessity of primary sources, faculty officials are not only promoting best practices in research but also fostering an environment where students can develop critical thinking and analytical skills. This shift towards compulsory use could significantly enhance the quality of research outputs, benefiting both students and the academic institution as a whole. Finally, the hypothesis testing confirmed that primary sources of information have a significant impact on the quality of dissertations and theses produced by postgraduate students. This finding reinforces the notion that relying on original

research and firsthand data is essential for producing credible and rigorous academic work. As such, the university should consider implementing strategies to encourage the use of primary sources, including workshops, resources, and support systems, to further enhance the research capabilities of its postgraduate students. Overall, the findings advocate for a stronger integration of primary sources in the research process, ultimately elevating the academic standards at the University of Buea. It is generally recommended that the university should implement a policy mandating the use of primary sources in all postgraduate research projects. This requirement would ensure that students engage with original data and firsthand evidence, thereby enhancing the credibility and rigor of their dissertations and theses. Faculty officials should provide clear guidelines on the types of primary sources that are acceptable and offer examples to assist students in their research. To support the effective use of primary sources, the university should organize workshops and training sessions focused on research methodologies and information literacy. These programs could equip students with the necessary skills to identify, evaluate, and utilize primary sources effectively. Faculty members can collaborate with librarians and research experts to facilitate these sessions, ensuring that students understand the importance and application of primary sources in their academic work. The university should invest in expanding access to primary source materials, both digitally and physically. This could include subscriptions to academic databases, digitization of archival materials, and partnerships with other institutions to share resources. By improving access to primary sources, the university can foster a research environment that encourages students to explore original data, ultimately enhancing the quality of their dissertations and theses.

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