

A content analysis of the postgraduate thesis written on special education in turkey based on various variables (2009-2014)

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine postgraduate thesis studies conducted between the years of 2009 and 2014 in special education field in Turkey based on various variables and figure out how many of these thesis is related with hearing disability. A total number of 146 postgraduate thesis have been found in the thesis scanning center of Higher Education Council (YOK) of Turkey. 126 of these thesis were master thesis and 20 of them were doctorate thesis. Data of the research were analyzed in SPSS 20.0 program. According to the results, it was revealed that quantitative method is the most preferred method in postgraduate thesis and there is much more number of master thesis than doctorate thesis. According to the distribution of thesis based on disability group, thesis are mostly related with special education and there is least number of thesis related with dyslexia. Besides, there were not much number of studies conducted with individuals with disability. Recommendations and implications for further research are also provided based on the results.

Keywords: special education, postgraduate thesis, individuals with hearing disability, content analysis

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1. Introduction

Special education has a great importance in education systems of the world and Turkey as well. It is essential for individuals with special needs to receive education and have social, cultural, economic and political rights since the services and conditions provided to other people can lead them to experience difficulties. Therefore, it is a necessity for every society to resolve this inequality based on physical and legal regulations. Individuals with special needs have the right to live independently in the society and they need to be accepted by the society as well. Education is the basic solution for individuals with special needs to fulfill their needs, become a beneficial individual for the society, live an independent life and be self-sufficient. However, general education typically remains as inadequate for individuals with special needs. Therefore, "special education" should be provided to these individuals based on legal regulations in education (Citil, 2009).

Majority of the individuals with special needs have disabilities in different domains and they are defined as individuals who show different developments compared to their peers because of their disabilities (Cavkaytar & Diken, 2006).

The beginning of special education studies in our country dates back to old times. Palace Schools in Ottoman period are regarded as an example for education of gifted children. Mister Grati opened a class for children with visual and hearing disability within Istanbul Business School in 1889 (Guyen, 2008).

When the importance and necessity of communication for individuals in the society in order to understand each other better are considered, individuals with hearing disability come to mind. If we do not have enough knowledge about these individuals, it would be impossible to make conversation with them. Therefore, opportunities provided to these individuals should not produce obstacles for them. This situation is closely related with special education and it can be only improved if participation into social life is ensured (Isik, 2013). It would be sufficient to take an action based on knowing that individuals with hearing disability also have the right to access and benefit from all opportunities as everyone and this should be achieved in order to provide better life conditions for them (Demirci, 2009). Education and scientific research related with this issue would contribute to the increase in awareness in the society.

The basic aim of conducting a scientific study is to transfer the obtained result to large masses (Alkan, 2014). Review and analysis of postgraduate studies might provide crucial information about components such as general and current trends, methods and subjects to researchers who newly become acquainted with concepts related with scientific reporting technics and scientific research culture. Researchers who follow the discipline might gain some impressions about changing or developing approaches towards their research based on these studies. Conducting scientific research, producing knowledge and discovering new findings are the most important social functions of universities. Therefore, postgraduate education studies in universities are really important in terms of producing scientific knowledge (Karkin, 2011).

1.1. Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine postgraduate thesis studies conducted between the years of 2009 and 2014 in special education field in Turkey based on various variables and figure out how many of these thesis is related with hearing disability. Answers to the following questions were sought in this study based on these aims:

1. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on disability groups?
2. In which years postgraduate thesis related with special education in the literature were conducted?
3. How many of postgraduate thesis related with special education in the literature are master thesis and how many of them are doctorate thesis?

4. What is the numerical distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the used quantitative, qualitative and mixed research methods?
5. How many of the references used in postgraduate thesis are native and how many of them are foreign references?
6. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on universities?
7. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the title of the thesis supervisor?
8. How many of postgraduate thesis related with special education in the literature are related with hearing disability which is one of the sub-titles of special education?

1.2. Importance of the Study

This study is important since it would be a guide for other researchers by gathering postgraduate thesis on special education under a single framework. Besides, there are insufficient number of studies examining postgraduate thesis on special education and hearing disability and therefore it was seen essential to conduct this study.

2. Method

2.1 Research Model

Content analysis which is one of the qualitative methods was used in this study. Content analysis is the examination of knowledge obtained from archives, documents, newspapers, visual documents such as cinema and series and various mass media in order to make sense of these knowledge for social scientists. In other words, examination of judgments, news, historical archives of certain dates, how TV images are reflected and novels might be examples of content analysis method (Camnalbur, Bayraktar & Amuce, 2013; Khakpour, 2012).

2.2 Data Collection

Postgraduate thesis which are open-access related with special education conducted within the years of 2009 and 2014 in YOK Thesis Scanning Center were included in this research. 146 postgraduate thesis have been reached and downloaded for this study. Some selection criteria were identified in order to determine which thesis would be included in this study.

2.2.1 Content Analysis Criteria

- Disability Group
- Year
- Method
- Master/Doctorate Thesis
- Number of Native and Foreign References
- Title of the Thesis Supervisor
- University
- Being related with hearing disability or not

In addition to these criteria for content analysis, keywords of the study were Attention and Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia, Down Syndrome, Physical Disability, Hearing Disability, Autism, Learning Disability, Special Education, Gifted Individuals and Special Education.

2.3 Data Analysis

Following content analysis, all obtained data were recorded in a database of SPSS 20.0 program. This database was constituted based on the determined criteria and the data were analyzed in SPSS program. Data were analyzed based on content analysis and frequency and percentage analysis were applied.

3. Results

3.1 Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on disability group

Table 1. Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on disability group

Disability Group	f	%
ADHD	6	4,1
Dyslexia	3	2,1
Down Syndrome	4	2,7
Physical Disability	6	4,1
Hearing Disability	30	20,5
Autism	28	19,2
Learning Disability	13	8,9
Special Education	42	28,8
Gifted Individuals	14	9,6
Total	146	100

In table 1, the descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages for disability group are demonstrated. According to the results, there were 42 thesis (28.8%) related with special education which has the highest ratio and 3 thesis related with (2,1%) dyslexia which has the lowest ratio.

3.2 Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on years

Table 2: Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on years

Years	f	%
2009	18	12,3
2010	24	16,4
2011	30	20,5
2012	23	15,8
2013	29	19,9
2014	22	15,1
Total	146	100

As it can be seen in Table 2, the highest number of thesis is in 2011 (20.5%), and the lowest number of thesis is in 2009 (12.3%). It can be said that there is not a steady increase in the number of thesis through the years.

3.3 Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on thesis level

Table 3. Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on thesis level

Level of Postgraduate Thesis	f	%
Master Thesis	126	86,3
Doctorate Thesis	20	13,7
Total	146	100

As it can be seen from Table 3, 126 of the postgraduate thesis (86.3%) were master thesis and 20 of the postgraduate thesis (13.7%) were doctorate thesis between the years of 2009 and 2014.

3.4 Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on research method

Table 4. Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on research method

Thesis Level	Method	f	%
Master	Quantitative	70	55,6
	Qualitative	30	23,8
	Mixed	26	20,6
	Total	126	100
Doctorate	Quantitative	11	55,0
	Qualitative	3	15,0
	Mixed	6	30,0
	Total	20	100
General	Quantitative	81	55,5
	Qualitative	33	22,6
	Mixed	32	21,9
	Total	146	100

In Table 4, distribution of the postgraduate thesis based on the used research methods are demonstrated. As it can be seen, quantitative method was the most frequently used method in 70 master thesis (55.6%) and 11 of the doctorate thesis (55.0%) mostly used quantitative method as well. Overall results showed that 80 of the 146 master and doctorate thesis (55.5%) used quantitative research method.

3.5 Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the number of native references

Table 5. Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the number of native references

Number of Native References	f	%
0-50	86	58,9
51-100	42	28,8
101-150	16	11,0
151-200	1	0,7
201-250	1	0,7
Total	146	100

Table 5 shows the distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the number of native references. As it can be seen, the mostly used number of native references was between 0 and 50 (58.9%) which refers to 86 of the 146 postgraduate thesis in total.

3.6 Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the number of foreign references

Table 6. Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the number of foreign references

Number of Foreign References	f	%
0-50	106	72,6
51-100	30	20,5
101-150	5	3,4
151-200	3	2,1
201-250	2	1,4
Total	146	100

Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the number of foreign references is shown in Table 6. The results indicated that the mostly used number of foreign references was between 0 and 50 (72.6%) which refers to 106 of the 146 postgraduate thesis in total.

3.7 Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on universities

Table 7. Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on universities

Universities	f	%
Cukurova University	3	2,1
Yeditepe University	7	4,8
Hacettepe University	5	3,4
Ankara University	9	6,2
Maltepe University	4	2,7
Middle East Technical University	3	2,1
Ataturk University	1	0,7
Bogazici University	2	1,4
Kahramanmaras Sutcu Imam University	1	0,7
Selcuk University	6	4,1
Gazi Osmanpasa University	2	1,4
Gazi University	12	8,2
Suleyman Demirel University	2	1,4
Beykent University	1	0,7
Istanbul University	9	6,2
Marmara University	16	11,0
Nigde University	2	1,4
Anadolu University	9	6,2
Firat University	6	4,1
Istanbul Arel University	3	2,1
On Dokuz Mayis University	4	2,7
Karadeniz Teknik University	2	1,4
Trakya University	2	1,4

Dumlupınar University	1	0,7
Erciyes University	1	0,7
Dokuz Eylul University	5	3,4
Kocaeli University	1	0,7
Akdeniz University	3	2,1
Abant İzzet Baysal University	8	5,5
Afyon Kocatepe University	2	1,4
Halic University	2	1,4
Necmettin Erbakan University	5	3,4
Sakarya University	2	1,4
Mugla Sitki Kocman University	1	0,7
Mersin University	1	0,7
Usak University	2	1,4
Balıkesir University	1	0,7
Total	146	100

As it can be seen from Table 7, there are various universities conducting thesis studies related with special education between the years of 2009 and 2014. Among these universities, Marmara University has the highest number of thesis (11.0%).

3.8 Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on title of the thesis supervisors

Table 8. Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on title of the thesis supervisors

Title of the Thesis Supervisor	f	%
Prof. Dr.	40	27,4
Assoc. Prof. Dr.	40	27,4
Assist. Prof. Dr.	63	43,2
Dr.	3	2,1
Total	146	100

Table 8 shows the distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the title of the thesis supervisors. According to the findings, titles of 63 thesis supervisors (43.2%) are Assist. Prof. Dr. and titles of 3 thesis supervisors are Dr. (2.1%).

3.9 Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the relevancy of the thesis with hearing disability

Table 9. Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the relevancy of the thesis with hearing disability

Relevancy with Hearing Disability	f	%
Relevant	32	21,9
Not Relevant	114	78,1
Total	146	100

Distribution of postgraduate thesis related with special education based on the relevancy with hearing disability is provided in Table 9. As it can be seen, most of the postgraduate thesis are not relevant with hearing disability in which 114 of the 146 thesis (78.1%) have not discussed hearing disability as a subject.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In recent years, special education has begun to be frequently studied and it is really important to obtain more information about special education research in order to improve the life conditions of the individuals with special needs, educational rights, policy and practices in special education area (Minou & Manuchehr, 2012). Accordingly, the aim of the present study was to examine postgraduate thesis studies conducted between the years of 2009 and 2014 about special education in Turkey based on various variables and figure out how many of these thesis is related with hearing disability. A total number of 146 postgraduate thesis have been found in the thesis scanning center of Higher Education Council (YOK) of Turkey. 126 of these thesis were master thesis and 20 of them were doctorate thesis. Various results were obtained from this study which examined the postgraduate thesis studies about special education in last 5 years in Turkey based on various criteria in order to reveal the current trends in special education area. In this section, the results of the study were discussed with relevant findings in the literature and some recommendations for future research and limitations of the study were also provided based on the results in the following sections.

The results showed that most of the postgraduate thesis were related with special education and the lowest number of the thesis were related with dyslexia. This result revealed that there was a special interest to the issues related with special education by the researchers. In a study which examined the articles related with special education published in the last 5 years, the research sample of the articles mostly consisted of individuals with physical disability; however results of the present study revealed that the number of thesis related with physical disability was low (Demirok, Baglama & Besgul, 2015). Therefore, it could be interpreted that more thesis are needed about other categories of disability such as physical disability and dyslexia which is also a rarely studied disability group.

According to the results, it is seen that the highest number of thesis is in 2011 (20.5%), and the lowest number of thesis is in 2009 (12.3%). In other words, it was figured out that special education has been mostly studied in the year of 2011. It can be said that there is not a steady increase in the number of thesis through the years.

Furthermore, the results showed that the number of master thesis related with special education is more than the number of doctorate thesis. This result of the present study is similar with the findings of Kildan and Ahi (2013). In addition, quantitative method was the most frequently used method in both master and doctorate thesis. This result revealed that quantitative method is the most preferred research method in both master and doctorate thesis.

According to the results, the mostly used number of native references was between 0 and 50 which refers to 86 of the 146 postgraduate thesis in total. Besides, the mostly used number of foreign references was also between 0 and 50 which refers to 106 of the 146 postgraduate thesis in total. Various universities have conducted thesis studies related with special education between the years of 2009 and 2014. Among these universities, Marmara University has the highest number of thesis. According to the findings, titles of thesis supervisors are mostly Assist. Prof. Dr. and the number of thesis supervisors with Dr. titles are the lowest. This result is consistent with the findings of Coskun, Dundar and Parlak (2014). Overall results showed that most of the postgraduate thesis are not relevant with hearing disability. In other words, insufficient number of thesis have discussed hearing disability as a subject. Therefore it can be

said that the number of studies on hearing disability should be increased since the number of students with hearing disability in regular schools increases from day to day (Vitulic & Lesar, 2014). Besides, new issues about hearing disability such as technology-assisted instruction for individuals with hearing disability is also being discussed in the literature recently (Girgin, Kurt & Odabasi, 2011).

4.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations might be provided based on the results of the study:

- More studies should be conducted related with dyslexia which is one of the disability groups.
- Studies might be conducted in order to figure out the relationship between the titles of thesis supervisors and the features of thesis.
- More studies should also be conducted with individuals with hearing disability in order to have more information about hearing disability and reveal the situation in Turkey.

4.2 Limitations of the Study

- This study is limited to postgraduate thesis which are open-access on special education conducted within the years of 2009-2014 in YOK Thesis Scanning Center.
- This study is limited to the criteria indicated in the sub-aims of the present study.

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