



EXAMINATION OF POSTGRADUATE THESES ON SEXUAL EDUCATION IN TURKEY (1990-2018)

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine general trends in the postgraduate thesis on sexual education carried out in Turkey. Document analysis as one of the qualitative research methods was used in the study. Theses were obtained by searching “sexual education” keyword in National Thesis Center of YOK (Turkey Higher Education Council). Based on the search, 17 theses between the years of 1990 and 2018 were obtained and included in the study. The theses were examined with content analysis based on certain criteria including year, university, institute, department, title of thesis supervisor, research method, data collection tool, data analysis method, sample group, research subject and province. Results were presented with tables and figures showing the frequencies and percentages. Results showed that most of theses were carried out in Institute of Educational Sciences and department of psychology. Quantitative research method and scales were the most frequently used research method and data collection tool. Mostly, sample group of theses consisted of teachers.

Keywords: sexual education, postgraduate thesis, content analysis

1. Introduction

Sexuality is a sensitive issue that concerns every individual, has great effects on people in terms of both physical and mental health, can cause social problems that are difficult to solve and it is one of the most fundamental facts of our health (Poroy, 2005; Ezer et al., 2019). There are some differences in perception of sexuality according to societies and even individuals. Sexuality is a complex phenomenon with biological, psychological, physiological, social, cultural, moral, religious, anthropological, economic and political dimensions (DeLamater & Plante, 2015). It is one of the important health issues of

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adolescence and adulthood and can affect the future life and it is an important element of physical, mental and social well-being.

Sexual education is an educational process starting from infancy to adulthood (Ganji et al., 2018; Akdemir & Sari, 2019). It includes subjects such as knowing the body and sexual characteristics of the individual, knowing the opposite sex, learning sexual identities and controlling their basic sexual motives, and protecting themselves in this sense. Ersoy and Ozkan (2017) states that sexual education plays a very important role in emotional development and social acceptance. In the development and education process, children need to obtain correct information from reliable individuals in order to discover their bodies, develop a healthy sexual identity, understand the importance of sexuality in different periods of life, distinguish true and false information about sexuality, and reject any intimacy they do not want to protect themselves from sexual abuse (Yektaoglu-Tomgusehan & Akcamete, 2017).

It appears that the term sexual education has a wide range of uses. It has been handled by many professional groups in a physiological and biological framework for many years. This has led to its content focusing on reproductive and birth control issues based on biological basis. However, Cok (2003) argues that recently “*sexual education*” tends to turn into the concept of “*sexuality education*”. He also states that today’s “*sexuality education*” approaches to teaching of sexual issues from a broader perspective and is based on the interdisciplinary framework of the issue. The term now also refers to individual skills such as decision-making and taking responsibility, the acquisition of communication skills and information on sexual health and sexuality. The impact of psychology, sociology and similar social sciences in the creation of this new content cannot be denied (Forel, 2019). Considering the multidisciplinary nature of sexual education, it can be defined as education of understanding the physical, emotional and sexual development of the individual, developing a positive personality concept, taking a respectful perspective towards human sexuality, the rights, opinions and behaviors of others and developing positive behaviors and value judgments regarding sexuality (Fine & McClelland, 2006; Larsson et al., 2010).

It should be considered that sexual education has many individual and social benefits (Calisandemir, Bencik & Artan, 2008; Rahmani et al., 2018). Some of these benefits are as follows:

- Through sexual education, the child learns to respect his/her own body and the body of the opposite sex. This situation causes the child to establish healthy relationships with his/her own gender and individuals of the opposite sex in the future life.
- Knowing the child’s own body and features increases self-confidence. Therefore, their assertiveness increases, and they can establish relationships more easily and they can be more successful.
- The individual who obtains information about sexual development from an early age and establishes a solid foundation in this sense knows his/her responsibilities regarding the body.

- The child who receives sexual education appropriate with age gradually becomes balanced in the relations with the opposite sex in later life.
- Children who are informed about bodily changes during adolescence accept their differentiation more quickly and anxiety and fears of inadequacy decrease.
- Knowledgeable people regarding sexuality are more successful in resisting other people's inappropriate offers and pressures. In addition, when children are informed about resisting sexual abuse, many abuse events will be prevented.

Sexual education is an important issue that needs to be addressed since early childhood. Scientific researches are required to raise awareness and increase the importance of sexual education. Therefore, they will play an important role in its spread. Although there has been an increase in the number of scientific studies on sexual education in the recent years, it seems that the number of studies on this issue is not sufficient. With this research, an in-depth study was conducted by examining postgraduate thesis on sexual education. It is important to know the general trends of these studies to determine the course of future research and close the gaps in the field.

This study aims to examine general trends in the postgraduate thesis on sexual education carried out in Turkey. In line with this general aim, answers to the following questions were sought in this study:

- What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on sexual education carried out in Turkey according to;
 - year of publication?
 - university?
 - institute?
 - department?
 - title of thesis supervisor?
 - research method?
 - data collection tools?
 - data analysis method?
 - sample group?
 - research subject?
 - province?

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

Document analysis as one of the qualitative research methods was used in the study in order to examine the general trends in postgraduate thesis on sexual education in Turkey according to various variables. Document analysis covers the process of examining written materials containing information about the phenomenon or cases that are targeted to be investigated (Bowen, 2009; Yildirim & Simsek, 2016).

2.2. Data Collection

In order to search thesis in the field of sexual education, all postgraduate thesis in this field were tried to be reached by using “sexual education” as a keyword from YOK Thesis Center which is the database of Higher Education Council of Turkey for all postgraduate thesis carried out in Turkey. After this search, 17 postgraduate theses on sexual education were obtained and included in the study for analysis. It was determined that 16 of the theses were master thesis and 1 was doctorate thesis and thesis were carried out between the years of 1990 and 2018.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

In order to analyze the data obtained, a data analysis form was created by the authors via Google Forms. In this form, year, university, institute, department, title of thesis supervisor, research method, data collection tool, data analysis method, sample group, research subject and province titles are included. After entering the data by the first author of the study under 11 main titles determined, the data entered by the second author of the study were checked. Disputes were discussed and consensus reached by the authors.

2.4. Data Analysis

After entering the data, each thesis included in the study was examined according to the content analysis criteria previously determined by the researchers. This study can be evaluated in the descriptive content analysis title, as it provides information about trends in theses in the field of sexual education. Descriptive content analysis are systematic studies that include discussing studies on a particular topic, evaluating their tendencies and research results in a descriptive dimension (Calik & Sozbilir, 2014).

Following the content analysis, all the data obtained were recorded in the SPSS database. This database was created in line with the determined criteria and the findings were analyzed in SPSS 23.0 program. In the research, frequency (f) and percentage (%) were revealed by using content analysis. These descriptive statistics are presented and interpreted in the form of graphs, figures and tables.

3. Results

3.1. Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to year of publication

According to Figure 1, the first postgraduate thesis on sexual education in Turkey was carried out in 1990. When the postgraduate theses are examined in terms of frequency, it is seen that maximum number of thesis is in 2015 (n=3), 1993 (n=2) and 1990 (n=3). In other years, 1 thesis on sexual education has been made. These results revealed that thesis on sexual education do not show a consistent increase or decrease trend over the years.

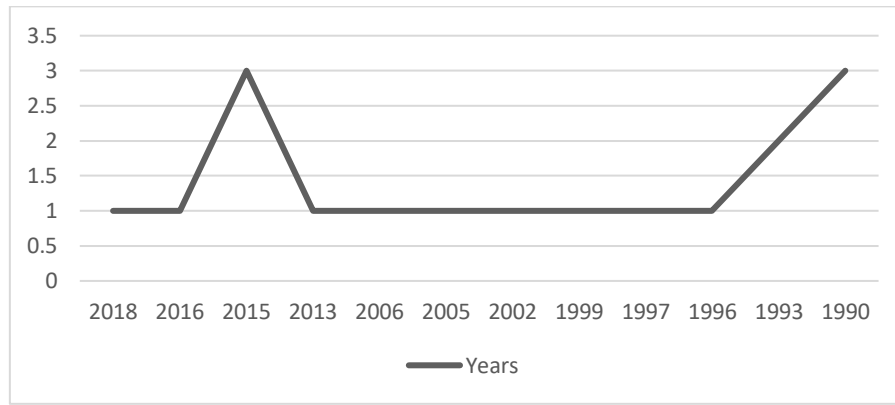


Figure 1: Distribution of thesis according to year

3.2. Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to university

Table 1: Distribution of thesis according to university

| University | f | % |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Marmara University | 4 | 23.5 |
| Hacettepe University | 3 | 17.6 |
| Gazi University | 2 | 11.8 |
| Ankara University | 2 | 11.8 |
| Canakkale 18 Mart University | 1 | 5.9 |
| Nisantasi University | 1 | 5.9 |
| Maltepe University | 1 | 5.9 |
| Necmettin Erbakan University | 1 | 5.9 |
| 9 Eylul University | 1 | 5.9 |
| Anadolu University | 1 | 5.9 |
| Total | 17 | 100 |

Postgraduate thesis on sexual education were carried out at 10 different universities in Turkey. According to Table 1, when the frequency of postgraduate thesis related to sexual education was examined in terms of universities, the highest number of postgraduate thesis was carried out at Marmara University (n=4, 23.5%), this result was followed by Hacettepe University (n=3, 17.6%), Gazi University (n=2, 11.8%) and Ankara University (n=2, 11.8%). In the remaining 6 universities, 1 thesis has been made on sexual education (5.9%).

3.3. Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to institute

Table 2: Distribution of thesis according to institute

| Institute | f | % |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Institute of Educational Sciences | 7 | 41.2 |
| Institute of Social Sciences | 7 | 41.2 |
| Institute of Health Sciences | 2 | 11.8 |
| Institute of Life Sciences | 1 | 5.9 |
| Total | 17 | 100 |

When the findings concerning the distribution of thesis written on sexual education in Turkey examined in terms of institutes, Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Sciences (n=7, 41.2%) were found to be the institutes with the highest number of thesis on sexual education. In addition, it was determined that number of thesis in the field of sexual education in the Institute of Health Sciences is 2 (11.8%) and the number of thesis from the Institute of Science is 1 (5.9%).

3.4. Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to department

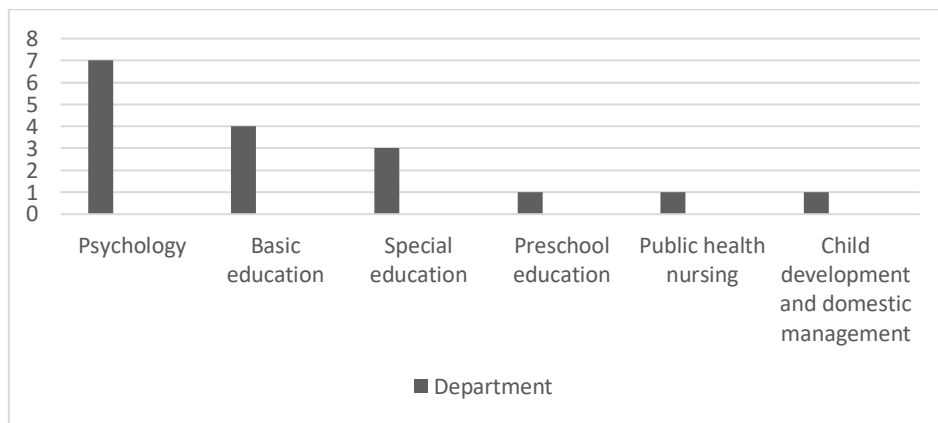


Figure 2: Distribution of thesis according to department

When Figure 2 is examined, it is seen that thesis on sexual education are mostly carried out in the departments of psychology (n=7), basic education (n=4) and special education (n=3). It was revealed that 1 thesis has been made in the branches of preschool education, public health nursing and child development and domestic management.

3.5. Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to title of supervisor

Table 3: Distribution of thesis according to title of supervisor

| Title | f | % |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Prof. Dr. | 5 | 29.4 |
| Assoc. Prof. Dr. | 4 | 23.5 |
| Assist. Prof. Dr. | 8 | 47.1 |
| Total | 17 | 100 |

Table 3 shows the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to title of supervisor. When the results are examined, it is seen that most of the thesis were supervised by academicians with Assist. Prof. Dr. title 8 (47.1%). Results also showed that other remained theses were supervised by academicians with Prof. Dr. (n=5, 29.4%) and Assoc. Prof. Dr. (n=4, 23.5%) titles.

3.6. Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to research method

Table 4: Distribution of thesis according to research method

| Research method | f | % |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Quantitative method | 12 | 70.6 |
| Qualitative method | 5 | 29.4 |
| Total | 17 | 100 |

According to Table 4, quantitative research methods (n=12, 70.6%) are the most frequently used research method in the postgraduate thesis on sexual education. The second frequently used research method was found as qualitative research method (n=5, 29.4%).

3.7. Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to data collection tools

Table 5: Distribution of thesis according to data collection tools

| Data collection tool | f | % |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Scale | 12 | 70.6 |
| Interview form | 5 | 29.4 |
| Total | 17 | 100 |

According to Table 5, scales (n=12, 70.6%) were the most frequently used data collection tool in the postgraduate thesis. The other frequently used data collection tools were interview forms (n=5, 29.4%). These findings were found to be consistent with the distribution of quantitative and qualitative research methods as research methods used in the thesis.

3.8. Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to data analysis methods

Table 6: Distribution of thesis according to data analysis methods

| Data analysis method | f | % |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Statistical methods | 12 | 70.6 |
| Forming themes | 3 | 17.6 |
| Content analysis | 2 | 11.8 |
| Total | 17 | 100 |

Table 6 shows that there are 3 different data analysis methods used in the postgraduate thesis on sexual education. According to the findings, the most commonly used data analysis method was statistical methods (n=12, 70.6%). This result was followed with forming themes (n=3, 17.6%) and content analysis (n=2, 11.8%).

3.9. Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to sample group

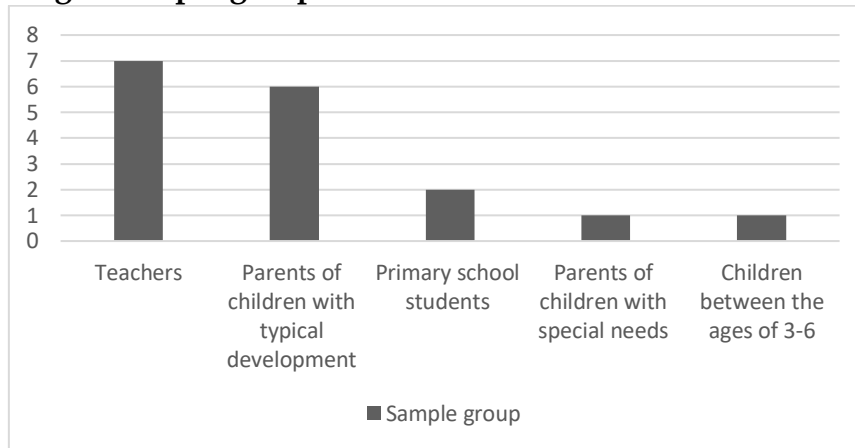


Figure 3: Distribution of thesis according to sample group

According to Figure 3, sample groups in the postgraduate thesis on sexual education were teachers (n=7), parents of children with typical development (n=6), primary school students (n=2), parents of children with special needs (n=1) and children between the ages of 3-6 (n=1).

3.10. Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to research subject

Table 7: Distribution of thesis according to research subject

| Research subject | f | % |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Effectiveness of sexual education informative program given to families | 4 | 23.5 |
| Teachers' views on sexual education | 3 | 17.6 |
| Views of families of children with special needs regarding the sexuality of their children | 3 | 17.6 |
| Problems and needs of teachers when providing sexual education | 2 | 11.8 |
| Effectiveness of sexual education program prepared for primary school students | 2 | 11.8 |
| Sexual education studies of teachers working with children with intellectual disabilities | 1 | 5.9 |
| Scale development study for adolescents' attitudes towards sexual education | 1 | 5.9 |
| Effectiveness of sexual education program for children aged between 3 and 6 years | 1 | 5.9 |
| Total | 17 | 100 |

Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to research subject are shown in Table 7. As it can be seen from the table, there are 8 different research subjects studied in the thesis. According to the results, effectiveness of sexual education informative program given to families, teachers' views on sexual education and views of families of children with special needs regarding the sexuality of their children were the most frequently studies research subjects.

3.11. Results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on sexual education in Turkey according to province

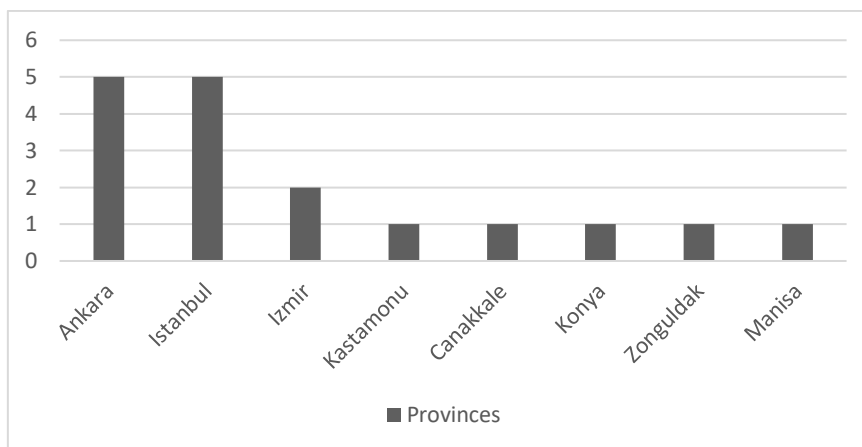


Figure 4: Distribution of thesis according to province

According to Figure 4, it was revealed that 10 theses were carried out in Istanbul and Ankara provinces of Turkey and 2 theses were carried out in Izmir. In addition, results showed that 1 thesis were carried out in each province including Kastamonu, Canakkale, Konya, Zonguldak and Manisa. This result indicated that sexual education attracted a great importance in three largest provinces of Turkey.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, postgraduate thesis on sexual education in Turkey from past to present were examined in this study in terms of different variables in order to reveal the research trends. In this context, a total number of 17 thesis on sexual education obtained from YOK Thesis Center were examined based on year, university, institute, department, title of supervisor, research method, data collection tool, data analysis method, sample group, research subject and province. When the literature is examined, it is seen that number of similar studies regarding examining postgraduate thesis on sexual education in Turkey is limited. Therefore, it is considered that:

As a result of this research, it is seen that there are 17 theses on sexual education in Turkey. Therefore, it can be stated that that sexual education has not reached the place it deserves. However, it should not be overlooked that the child will have numerous benefits starting from knowing, loving and respecting himself, his personality, emotions and body. These benefits will cover the adulthood process and it is also known that an early sexual education will promote prevention of sexual abuse (Celik, 2018; Ryckman et al., 2020).

According to the results, the first thesis on sexual education was written in 1990 in Turkey and 17 theses were obtained until 2019. As a result of the 29-year literature review, it can be revealed that there is no linear and consistent increase in the number of studies on sexual education. In contrast with the result, Beyazit (2015) found that although the thesis on child abuse have increased in recent years which is a similar issue to sexual

education and sexuality, more researches are required and emphasized the importance of increasing the number of academic studies on this subject.

Thesis examined in this study were studied as research topics in 10 different universities and were covered in research topics in 4 different institutes including educational sciences, health sciences, social sciences and life science institutes. Results also showed that sexual education is the subject of research mostly in institutes of educational sciences and social sciences.

Furthermore, results showed that titles of academicians who supervised postgraduate thesis on sexual education in Turkey were *Assist. Prof. Dr. and Prof. Dr.* In 17 theses on sexual education, qualitative research method was used in 5 thesis and quantitative research method were used in 12 theses as a research model. As in educational sciences and social sciences institutes, it should be recommended by thesis supervisors to study on sexual education in other institutes by directing master and doctorate students in postgraduate programs. Students can be encouraged and motivated to study on sexual education in order to reveal and improve existing situations. According to the results, the most frequently used data collection tools in the thesis are scales and interview forms. It is considered that these results are in line with the frequency of quantitative and qualitative research methods. It was also determined that the most frequently used data analysis method was statistical method and it was followed by forming themes and content analysis.

It has been observed that thesis related to sexual education are carried out mostly in the branches of psychology, basic education and special education. For this reason, it can be said that more studies should be carried out with the aim of both measuring the level of knowledge about sexual education and guiding attitudes of family, teachers, individuals with special needs and children of preschool age who are most vulnerable to abuse (Stiritz, 2017; Treacy et al., 2018).

In the thesis examined in the present study, the most studied sample group was teachers and the least studied sample groups were children between the ages of 3-6 and families of children with special needs. Postgraduate thesis on sexual education in Turkey are divided into 8 general different topics. According to the results, effectiveness of sexual education informative program given to families, teachers' views on sexual education and views of families of children with special needs regarding the sexuality of their children were the most frequently studies research subjects. It was also determined that 10 of the 17 theses were carried out in Istanbul and Ankara provinces of Turkey and 2 theses were carried out in Izmir. This result indicated that sexual education attracted a great importance in three largest provinces of Turkey.

There are some limitations of the present study. Postgraduate thesis in YOK Thesis Center database of Turkey were examined in this study. It is recommended to carry out meta-analysis of thesis or research articles related to sexual education in other countries and databases. In addition to quantitative and qualitative research methods, experimental or mixed research method designs are also required in this field of sexual education.

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