



(ISSN: 2602-4047)

Uçar Çabuk, F. (2023). Examination of Postgraduate Theses on Attachment in The Field of Preschool Education in Turkey (2000-2022), *International Journal of Eurasian Education and Culture*, 8(23), 2854-2872.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.35826/ijoecc.804>

Article Type (Makale Türü): Review Article

EXAMINATION OF POSTGRADUATE THESES ON ATTACHMENT IN THE FIELD OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN TURKEY (2000-2022)

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Received: 25.06.2023

Accepted: 19.09.2023

Published: 01.10.2023

ABSTRACT

The increasing and diversifying of studies in the field of early childhood education regarding attachment, both in terms of quality and quantity, is important. This study was carried out based on the view that systematically revealing the characteristics of postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education would be useful for future research and educators. The aim of the research is to examine postgraduate theses completed in Turkey between 2000 and 2022 on attachment in the field of early childhood education. The study group of the research consists of 84 postgraduate theses related to attachment completed in the field of early childhood education between 2000 and 2022, as registered in the Higher Education Council (YÖK) National Thesis Center. The research was conducted using the descriptive research method of document analysis. The "Attachment Assessment Form" was used as the data collection tool in the research. As a result of the research, it was found that the majority of postgraduate theses related to attachment in early childhood education were master's theses, and there was an increase in the number of theses between 2015 and 2019. It was determined that the most commonly used research method in these studies was correlational scanning, and the study group mostly consisted of children. The keywords "attachment, attachment styles, and early childhood" were frequently used in the relevant theses.

Keywords: Attachment, document analysis, preschool.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of attachment is defined as a continuous emotional bond characterized by the tendency to seek and maintain closeness to a particular figure, especially in stressful situations. Attachment involves the emotional bond between an infant and the person caring for him/her (Ainsworth, 1963; Ainsworth, 1964).

Attachment is not only specific to infancy and childhood, but is a lifelong phenomenon in the developmental process of the individual. Differences are observed in the structure and the way attachment is transmitted over time. The first basic relationship in an individual's life is the mother-child relationship and this basic relationship sets an example for the relationships in the following process (Pehlivan Türk, 2004: 57). While the interaction between the baby and its mother at birth initially serves only for the continuity of the baby's biological existence, it later affects the childhood, adolescence and adulthood periods throughout the child's life (Rodriguez et al., 2011; Hamarta, 2004).

The emotion and behavior regulatory function of attachment patterns is carried out through internal working models that are preserved and processed in implicit-operational memory (Türköz, 2014). It is believed that internal working models develop largely in line with the repetitive patterns of the primary attachment relationship in the first 2-3 years of life and affect the person's mood regulation, capacity to cope with stress and information processing processes (Türköz, 2007: 59-60).

According to Hortaçsu (1993), the foundations of Bowlby's attachment theory are listed below:

1. The first relationship established by the baby is valid for all people and there are some tendencies that will facilitate the start of the relationship between the mother and the baby in this first period.
2. Attachment is everywhere, in all cultures and in all types, but there are physical and social differences in all parts of the world.
3. Attachment is not a characteristic of individuals, but a characteristic of the relationship established.
4. It is stated that if the established attachment relationship ends, this situation will have negative consequences.
5. The quality of the first attachment relationship experienced by the person is different, but they can establish attachment relationships outside of it.
6. Thanks to the first attachment relationship, an internal model of general relationships is created. It is stated that this internal model forms a basis for the relationships that the person will establish in the future.

The mother's mothering behaviors and the infant's attachment behavior are in mutual harmony, and the development of attachment is related to both the mother's sensitivity in responding to cues from the infant and

the nature and amount of their interactions. Attachment dynamics prepare the ground for a mutual exchange between mother and infant (Schore, 2012;. Schore, 2000).

A child who develops socially in the preschool period tends to control himself/herself, express himself/herself, communicate with people, learn, ask questions, ask for help from others, develop healthy relationships and communicate with other people throughout life. In Turkey, research on attachment in preschool children has shown a significant increase especially in recent years. It is possible to come across many studies examining attachment of preschool children in line with different variables.

Görgü (2018) conducted a study to examine the relationship between attachment styles and social behaviors of 5-6-year-old children attending school and their mothers' attachment styles and personality traits. As a result of the study, although the attachment style of children differed according to the gender of the child and the duration of school attendance, no significant difference was found between the attachment style of children in terms of who took care of the children in the first year of life, the mother's age, education level, employment status and attachment style variables. Another finding of the study was that there was a significant difference between the personality traits of mothers and attachment styles of children. In another study on attachment, Geçin (2016) examined the relationship between attachment and school adjustment of 5-6 year old children attending kindergarten. Children's attachment levels did not differ significantly according to gender, mothers' employment status and education level, the person who took care of them between the ages of 0 and 1, birth order and number of siblings, and the person who recently took care of them. Aksekili (2017) examined the relationship between attachment styles, perception of moral and social rules, and social behaviors of preschool children aged 60 months and older. In the study, 47 children were interviewed. As a result of the study, no significant relationship was found between children's attachment levels to their mothers and their demographic characteristics. In addition, it was determined that there was a negative and low relationship in terms of significance between children's physical aggression score and attachment score, moral authority score, and moral rule score. In another study, Işık (2019) determined the attachment styles of 110 children who were 6 years old in 2006 and examined the social status of the same children when they reached the age of 19. A total of 4 girls and 4 boys with the highest attachment score (secure) and the lowest attachment score (insecure) were studied. As a result, it was found that secure or insecure attachment in early years affects and shapes social relationships in later ages. İlaslan (2009) conducted a study to investigate whether there is a significant difference between children's attachment behaviors according to gender, mother's education level, mother's employment status, child caregiver (caregiver or mother), and mothers' attachment styles. As a result of the study, no significant difference was found between children's attachment behaviors and gender, child care style and mother's employment status; however, it was found that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of children's attachment behaviors according to mothers' attachment styles.

In related studies, it is stated that if attachment is not secure during infancy, the likelihood of the baby having problems in childhood and adolescence increases (Joeng et al., 2017); Soysal et al., 2005; Spruit et al., 2020). The mother's warm behavior and positive acceptance ensure the child's secure attachment (Perris & Anderson, 2000). Bowlby (1980) emphasized that after the baby is born, it is strongly attached to the mother or mother figure within twelve months. According to Hazan and Shaver (1994), since the baby is vulnerable and unprotected after birth, it is overly dependent on the outside world and cannot live without the protection and attention of an adult. For this reason, infants engage in attachment behavior because they need the mother or caregiver.

In the literature, there are studies investigating attachment with different variables such as parental attitudes (Güner & Şendil, 2013; Perris & Anderson, 2000; Neal & Frick Horbury, 2001; Karavasilis et al., 2003; Caldera & Hart, 2004), social skills (Öztürk, 2019; Seven, 2006), self-perception (Evirgen & Gözün Kahraman, 2018; McCarthy, 2011; Sümer & Şendağ, 2009), emotion regulation skills (Şahin & Arı, 2015). Studies on attachment in the literature are becoming more and more diverse in terms of number, variables and content. Although studies on attachment have increased in recent years, it can be said that studies on attachment in preschool period in our country are still limited. With this study, it is thought that a systematic examination of postgraduate theses (200-2022) on attachment in preschool education can give direction to future studies on the subject.

The aim of this study is to examine the theses completed in Turkey between 2000 and 2022 on attachment in preschools. In line with this purpose, the following questions are sought to be answered:

1. What is the distribution of the postgraduate theses on attachment completed between 2000-2022 in the field of preschool education in Turkey according to their types?
2. How is the distribution of theses on attachment completed between 2000 and 2022 in the field of preschool education in Turkey according to years?
3. What is the distribution of the postgraduate theses on attachment completed between 2000-2022 in the field of preschool education in Turkey according to the universities where they were completed?
4. What is the distribution of the postgraduate theses on attachment completed between 2000-2022 in the field of preschool education in Turkey according to the institutes where they were completed?
5. What is the distribution of the postgraduate theses on attachment completed between 2000-2022 in the field of preschool education in Turkey according to keywords?
6. What is the distribution of the postgraduate theses on attachment completed between 2000-2022 in the field of preschool education in Turkey according to research design?
7. What is the distribution of the postgraduate theses related to attachment completed between 2000-2022 in the field of preschool education in Turkey according to the sample group?

METHOD

This study, which aims to investigate the postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education in Turkey, is a descriptive study designed using document analysis. In qualitative studies, document analysis is an effective method used to access primary or secondary document sources. Primary documents are original studies written by a theorist or researcher, which are not compilations of various studies. Secondary documents, on the other hand, are studies that have an intermediary between the research and the reader, summarize or provide information about previous studies (Balci, 2016). Some of the data sources in scientific studies are books, journals, experts, theses, conference documents, previous research scans. University libraries and computer-aided scans help in accessing documents (Balci, 2016). Document analysis has the advantages of providing information about unobservable situations, providing records of real events, accessing more information in a short time, being more cost-effective, and receiving information directly without interpretation (Çelebi & Orman, 2021).

According to Forster, there are five stages to be followed in document analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

Access to documents: Before starting the research, it is important for the researchers to ask themselves whether they really need the documents in this research, what kind of documents they need, where they can be obtained, and to be able to answer them in order to avoid wasting time in the research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

Checking the authenticity (originality): In document analysis, after the documents are accessed, their authenticity should be questioned (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

Understanding the documents: The next stage after obtaining the documents is to understand and analyze the documents (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

Analyzing the data: The data obtained should be subjected to content analysis.

Using the data: In the final stage of document analysis, the researcher must answer whether the partial or full use of the documents may harm or benefit certain institutions and individuals.

In this article, the journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics, and journal ethical rules were followed. The responsibility belongs to the authors for any violations that may arise regarding the article. Since this study examined theses that are open to the public and no procedures were performed on any living creature, ethics committee permission was not required.

Working Group

The study group of the research was selected by purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling method is a type of sampling determined in line with the research purpose without leaving it to probability. Purposive

sampling method is classified according to the method of creating the sample (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). Purposive sampling method is advantageous because it is more affordable and saves time for the researcher.

While collecting the data in the study, the "Advanced Search" option on the national thesis center (<https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/>) page on the official website of YÖK was selected and "2000-2022" was selected as the year range. "Attachment" and "preschool" were selected as the word(s) to be searched, "include in" was selected in the search type section, and the permission status was selected as "with permission". A total of 91 theses were reached. Four theses were not included in the study group because they were in the field of specialization in medicine, one thesis in proficiency in art, one thesis in computer engineering and one thesis in theology. Thus, 84 graduate theses were identified and the study group was formed.

Data Collection Tool

In the study, the "Attachment Assessment Form" created by the researcher was used as a data collection tool. The evaluation form consists of the year of the thesis, university, institute, type of thesis, method, model and keywords. This form was prepared by the researcher and edited and finalized by taking the opinions of two experts. Data collection for the theses was carried out through the National Thesis Center (<https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/>).

Data Collection Process

In the research, data were collected through document analysis. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2021), document analysis is a method of analysis that increases the validity of written sources used to access information from past to present, either alone or by accompanying other research methods. The strengths of the document analysis method in research are listed as; accessing information in a shorter time, saving money and time, helping to access information in situations where people or institutions cannot be reached directly, having less participant subjectivity compared to research in which the sample group consists of individuals, using data from a wide time interval, and progressing the research independently of time and space. In the study, the words "attachment" and "preschool" were searched from the advanced search page of YÖK Thesis by selecting the thesis name, index, abstract options in the field sections to be searched, and by selecting the expression "let it be in" in the search type section. The date range was selected as 2000-2022. Studies that were appropriate to the subject were saved. The data screening process started in January 2023 and was completed in March 2023. The data were collected by scanning the graduate theses on the National Thesis Center (<https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/>) page on the official website of YÖK in accordance with the purpose of the study.

After the theses that were decided to be included in the study group were determined, all theses were coded as B1-B84 and saved in the folder. The studies to be used were organized in Microsoft Excel application by specifying the year, university, institute, type, keywords, research method, model and statistical techniques.

Data Analysis

In this study, postgraduate theses completed between 2000 and 2022 in the field of preschool education related to attachment were examined. Content analysis was preferred to analyze the data. Content analysis method aims to analyze the data in depth and to reach the connections and concepts between the data. The stages to be followed during data analysis can be listed as: coding the data, finding themes, organizing codes and themes, defining and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). Pre-determining the headings under which the study will be analyzed in content analysis is very necessary for the correct interpretation of the research results. The postgraduate theses on attachment examined in this study were coded by an independent coder, taking into account the research questions prepared in line with the main purpose of the study. The agreement between the coders was calculated using Miles and Huberman's (1994) reliability formula. Agreement between coders= $873 / 873 + 15 \times 100 = 98\%$. All coding was done and tables with frequency-percentage values related to each variable were created. The tables were transformed into graphs in order to present the findings in a more understandable and effective way.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented in order in accordance with the research problems.

The distribution of postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education according to their types is given in Figure 1.

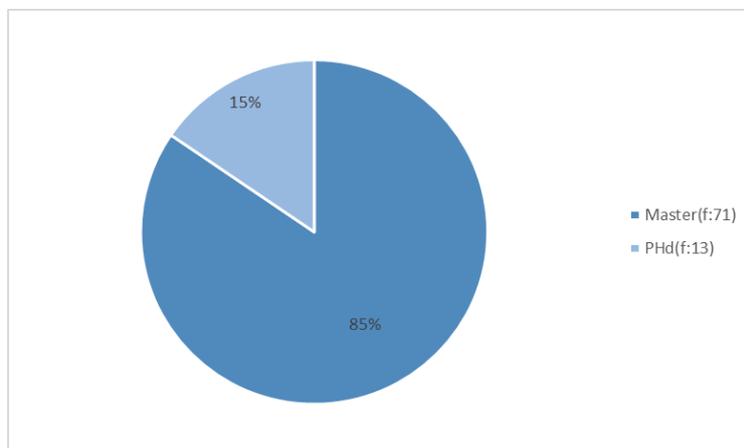


Figure 1. Distribution of Theses by Type.

Figure 1 shows that 85% of the postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education are master's theses and 15% are doctoral theses.

The distribution of postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education according to years is given in Figure 2.

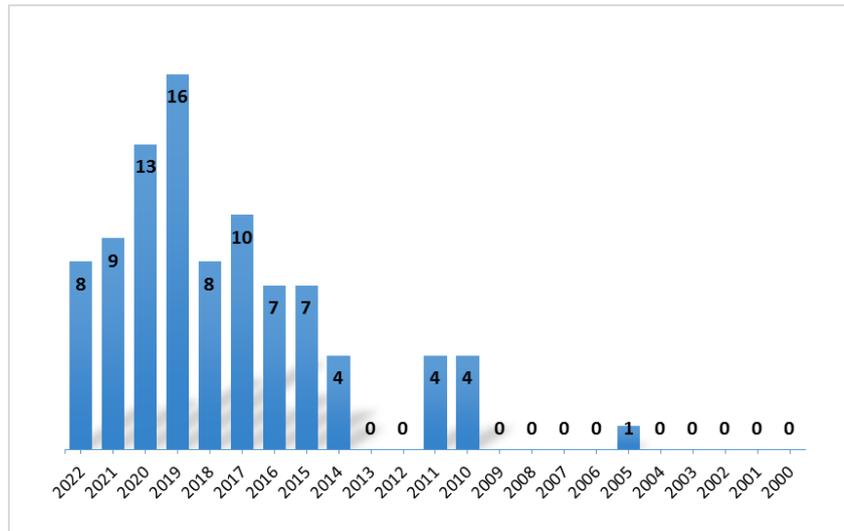


Figure 2. Distribution of Theses by Years.

Figure 2 shows that the most graduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education were completed in 2019 (f:16); 2020 (f:13) and 2017 (f:10). There were no postgraduate theses completed in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013.

The distribution of postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education according to universities is given in Figure 3.

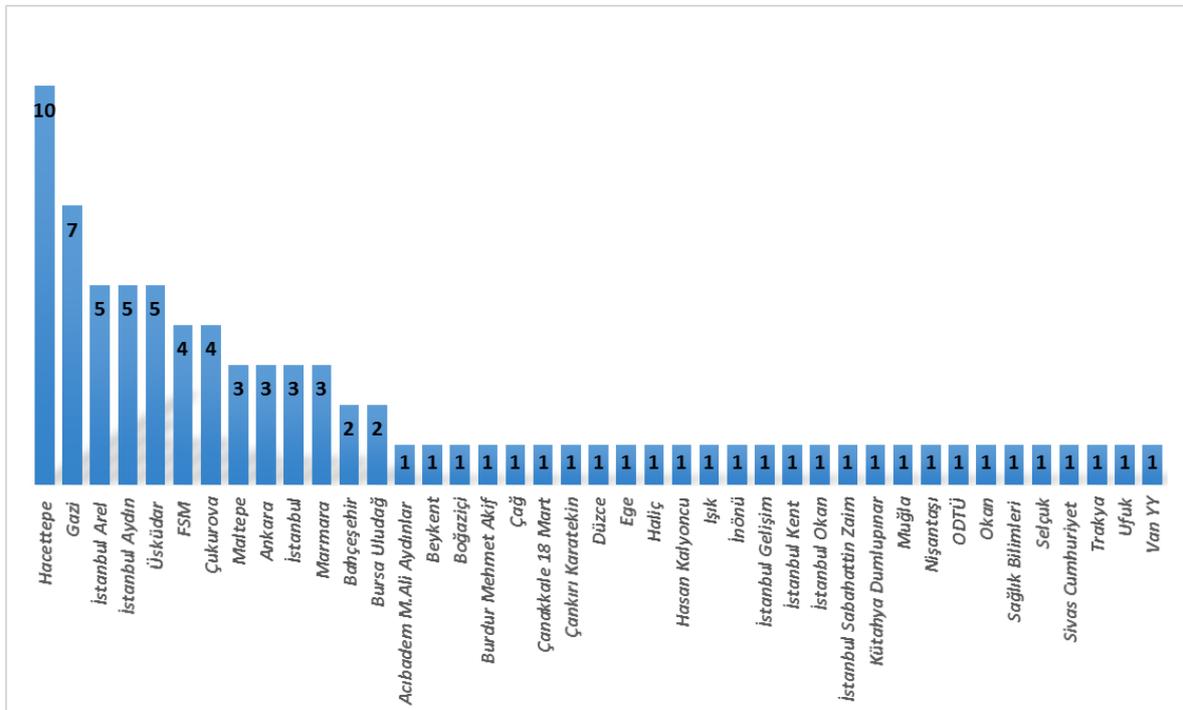


Figure 3. Distribution of Theses by Universities.

According to Figure 3, postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education were mostly conducted at Hacettepe University (f:10), Gazi University (f:7), Istanbul Arel University (f:5), Istanbul Aydın University (f:5), Üsküdar University (f:5).

The distribution of postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education according to institutes is given in Figure 4.

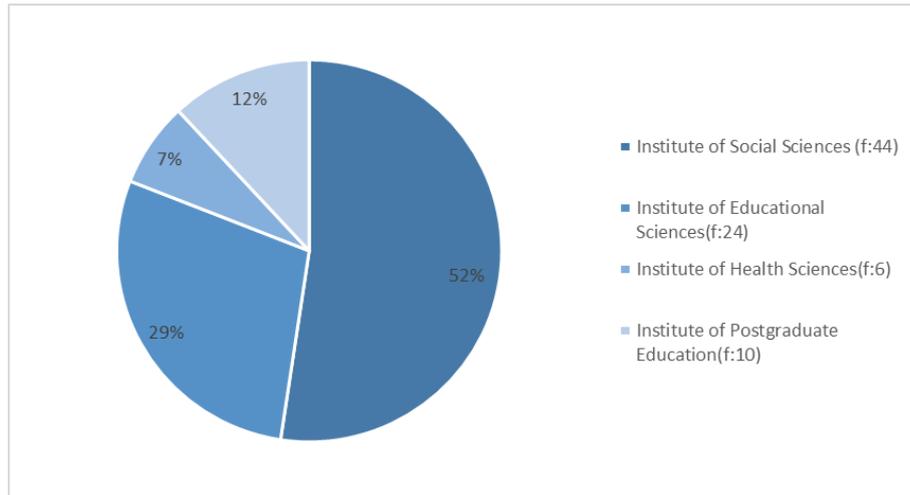


Figure 4. Distribution of Theses by Institutes.

Figure 4 shows that most of the postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education were conducted in the Institutes of Social Sciences (f:44) and Educational Sciences (f:24).

The keywords used in the postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Keywords in The Theses.

Keyword	f	Keyword	f	Keyword	f
Attachment styles	30	Self-regulation	4	Empathy	2
Attachment	24	Father-child Relationship	4	Separation anxiety	2
Preschool period	20	Father involvement	4	School phobia	2
Pre-school	11	Child	4	Safety of attachment	2
Preschool children	10	Social emotional development	4	Divorce	2
Behavior problems	9	Social behavior	3	Teacher-child interaction	2
Pre-school education	8	Insecure attachment	3	Trait anxiety	2
Social skills	8	Technology addiction	3	Emotional competence	2
Emotion regulation	8	Parent	3	Adult separation anxiety	2
Parental attitudes	8	Social competence	3	Temperament	2
Peer relationships	6	Separation anxiety in children	3	Attachment status	2
Self-identity	5	Adult attachment	3	Psychological well-being	2
Mother	5	Emotion socialization	3	Adaptation to school	2
Secure attachment	4	Self theory	2	Interpersonal problem solving	2

In Table 1, it is seen that the most frequently mentioned keywords in graduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education are attachment styles (f:30), attachment (f:24), preschool period (f:20), preschool (f:11), preschool children (f:10) and behavior problems (f:9).

The distribution of postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education according to the research design is given in Figure 5.

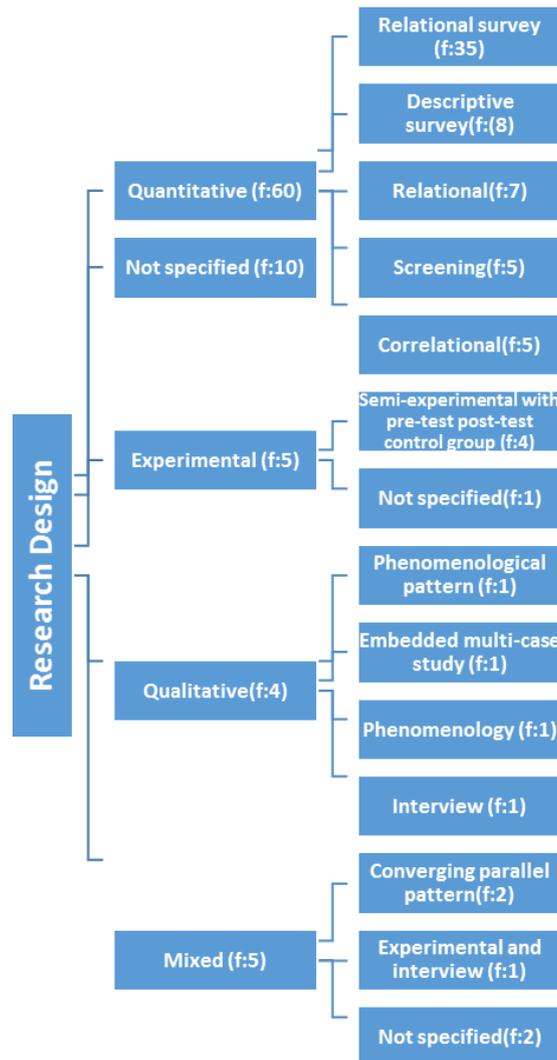


Figure 5. Distribution of The Theses According to Research Design.

Figure 5 shows that the most commonly used research methods are relational survey method (f:35) and descriptive survey (f:8). It is noteworthy that some research methods (e.g. action research, grounded theory, etc.) were not used in any postgraduate thesis. In some studies, it is seen that the research model is not specified.

The distribution of postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education according to the sample group is given in Figure 6.

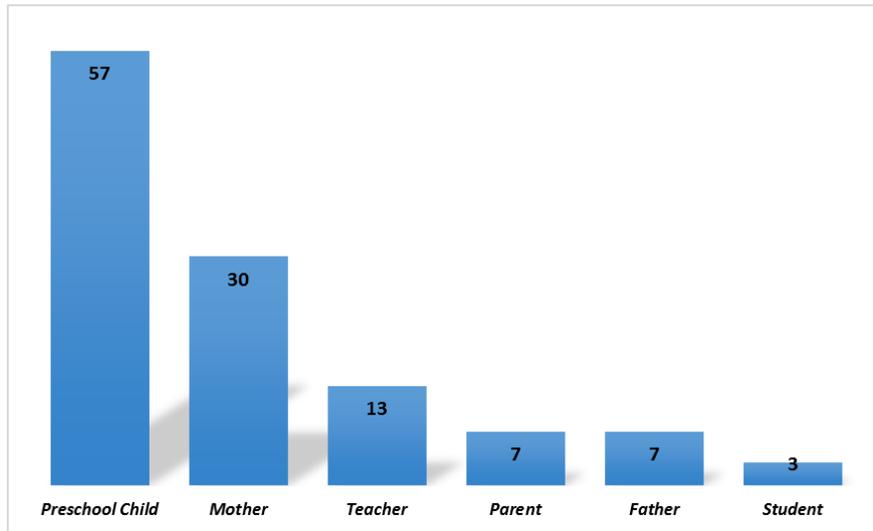


Figure 6. Distribution of The Theses According to Sample Group.

In Figure 6, when the distribution of postgraduate theses on attachment in the field of preschool education is examined according to the sample group, it is seen that there are mostly preschool children (f:57), mothers (f:30) and teachers (f:13).

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION and SUGGESTIONS

This study was conducted to examine the postgraduate theses on attachment in preschool education in Turkey between 2000 and 2022. As a result of the research, it was concluded that the number of master's theses on attachment completed between 2000-2022 in the field of preschool education was higher than the number of doctoral theses. This situation can be explained by the fact that master's programs, which have increased in our country especially in recent years, are more in number than doctoral programs. In addition, generally, more students are admitted and graduated from master's programs than doctoral programs. This situation is thought to affect the superior number of master's theses on attachment. Similarly, Aydoğdu (2019) examined the theses on foster families and found that almost all of the theses examined (90.32%) were master's theses. Gülay Ogelman and Güngör (2022) examined theses on peer relations in the field of preschool education and found that there was a significant increase in master's theses between 2016-2019 compared to other years. The researchers explained this situation with the scarcity of measurement tools for peer relations. It can be thought that the limited number of measurement tools has a negative effect on the diversification of theses.

In the study, it was determined that the first postgraduate study on attachment in the field of preschool education in Turkey in 2000-2022 was conducted in 2005. It was determined that the number of completed postgraduate theses on attachment increased in 2015-2019 and tended to decrease in 2020-2022.

Since 2015, the increase in the number of postgraduate theses on attachment can be attributed to the increase in the awareness of the importance of attachment in preschool education, especially in the preschool period in recent years, and the increase in demand by researchers from the field and other disciplines interested in the field with each passing day. In addition, it can be said that the increase in the number of data collection tools on the subject has increased the number of related graduate theses. The decrease in 2020-222 can be thought to be due to the emergence of Covid-19 disease in our country in 2020 and the transition to distance education with the pandemic.

In the study, it was determined that postgraduate theses on attachment completed between 2000 and 2022 in the field of preschool education in Turkey were carried out in 41 universities, the majority of which were state universities. However, it was determined that the number of private universities also increased significantly. Especially in recent years, the increase in the number of private universities in our country and the increase in the number of master's and doctoral programs opened in these universities can be thought to have affected the increase in the number of postgraduate theses in private universities on the subject. It was concluded that most of the postgraduate theses on attachment were conducted at Hacettepe and Gazi Universities, respectively. This is thought to be due to the fact that Hacettepe and Gazi Universities are well-established universities and have been providing graduate education for a long time. In addition, it is thought that the number and titles of faculty members in the departments where the thesis is carried out are sufficient to open these programs and the infrastructure of the existing programs in these universities is established.

In the distribution of postgraduate theses according to institutes, it was concluded that most of the theses were conducted in the Institute of Social Sciences and the Institute of Educational Sciences. Especially in the past years, since the Institute of Educational Sciences was not available in many universities, it can be said that preschool education theses were carried out under the roof of the Institute of Social Sciences. In addition, the fact that the subject of attachment is also researched in different disciplines such as psychology and sociology can be thought to affect the increase in the number of theses in the Institute of Social Sciences.

In the distribution of postgraduate theses on attachment according to keywords, the most common keywords used were attachment styles, attachment, preschool period and preschool. It is an expected situation that the keyword attachment styles is frequently used in theses related to attachment and attachment styles are investigated. In addition, it is also expected that the keywords preschool and preschool period are frequently preferred in this research conducted in the field of preschool education. According to Dinç and Gültekin (2003), the preschool period, in which there is a rapid learning and development, should be evaluated in the best way. For this reason, it can be said that research on the preschool period will contribute to both the support of development and the organization of educational programs and educational content.

In the research, there are also keywords that include concepts related to family such as mother, father-child relationship, father involvement, parental attitudes. There are studies in the literature that the family's being active in the child's life supports the child's academic success, cognitive development, social emotional development, in short, all areas of development (Bağçeli Kahraman et al., 2017; Driessen et al., 2005; Gülmez, 2014; Gözcü Binbir & Ertürk Kara, 2020; Günay Bilaloğlu, 2014; Kiraz & Aytaç, 2020; Kınık et al., 2016; Tezel Şahin & Özyürek, 2016; Uğur Ulusoy, 2018; Yücetaş Artan, 2019). The role of the family is important in the development of the child. The communication-attachment style of the child with his/her mother is closely related to feelings of satisfaction and happiness. It is known that secure children in the attachment relationship are advantageous in establishing and maintaining close relationships with peers, parents and others, trusting themselves and perceiving themselves more positively than insecure children (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994; Colman & Thompson, 2002; as cited in Seven, 2006). In this context, it is considered important to investigate the issue with family variables in studies on attachment. In addition, many researchers in the literature have examined the effect of the attachment relationship established with the mother on the child's developmental areas and obtained important findings (Cassidy, 1988; Kerns, Klepac, & Cole, 1996; Rosenthal & Kobak, 2010).

As a result of the research, social skills, social behavior, social emotional development, social competence, social competence, peer relations, emotion regulation were found among the keywords used in graduate theses on attachment. This finding can be considered as researching attachment with social emotional development and related variables. Attachment is also effective on children's ability to adapt to new social environments (Granot & Mayselles, 2001). Attachment behaviors activated according to attachment styles make it easier or harder to adapt to changes (Crittenden, 1995). Based on the literature, studies examining the effects of attachment on children's social and emotional, cognitive, language and psychomotor development are thought to contribute to the field.

As a result of the research, it was determined that the research method of the postgraduate theses on attachment completed between 2000 and 2022 in the field of preschool education in Turkey was mostly quantitative research method. Similarly, in the study conducted by Taşkın Gökçe and Kandır (2019), in which scientific studies conducted in Turkey on the development and evaluation of executive functions in early childhood were examined, it was determined that there was no qualitative research and there were very few studies in mixed research design. Akkaş Baysal & Kırat (2022) examined the master's theses completed in the field of curriculum and instruction and found that quantitative research methods were more preferred. Çopur & Tezel Şahin (2022) examined studies on family involvement in preschool and Arslan (2022) examined postgraduate studies on father involvement in early childhood and found that quantitative research methods were more preferred. Baba et al. (2011) explained that this may be due to the fact that quantitative research methods are carried out in a shorter time compared to other methods. Başaran and Belgin Aksoy (2020) examined 58 research articles on school readiness in the preschool period in 2014-2018 and suggested that

experimental and longitudinal studies should be increased and plans should be made targeting holistic development instead of a single developmental area.

In the study, it was concluded that in the postgraduate theses on attachment completed between 2000 and 2022 in the field of preschool education in Turkey, the study group was mostly preschool children, mothers and teachers. In this study, in which the graduate theses conducted in preschool education were investigated, it is an expected situation that the theses on the subject are mostly conducted with preschool children. In addition, it can be thought that the fact that the scales used in studies on attachment are generally applied to children is effective in the emergence of this result. This can be explained by the adoption of a child-based approach due to the nature of attachment. In a similar study conducted by Ahi and Kildan (2011), postgraduate theses completed in the field of preschool education were examined and it was determined that children were the most common study group in the theses.

As a result of the study, it is thought that the number of postgraduate theses on attachment in preschool in 2000-2022 in our country is not sufficient despite the increase in recent years. It was determined that most of the completed postgraduate theses on the subject were in quantitative research design and were conducted with preschool children. It is thought that graduate thesis studies in this field will benefit preschool children, educators, parents and researchers working in the field. In this context;

It may be recommended to conduct new studies on attachment in preschool using different research methods and data collection tools.

In the study, postgraduate theses completed on attachment in preschool education in Turkey between 2000-2022 were examined. In future studies, it may be recommended to examine the articles published on the subject.

In this study, it was determined that there were more studies in quantitative research method. It may be recommended to use qualitative and mixed research methods in future studies.

ETHICAL TEXT

In this article, the journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics, and journal ethical rules were followed. The responsibility belongs to the authors for any violations that may arise regarding the article. Since this study examined theses that are open to the public and no procedures were performed on any living creature, ethics committee permission was not required.

Author Contribution Rate: The author's contribution rate is %100.

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