

# Theoretical Evolution of PhD Theses on Public Relations in Turkey Between 1980-2020

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## ABSTRACT

In the context of the chronological development of public relations theory, this research aimed to reveal the theoretical frameworks of the public relations theses studied in Turkey between 1980 and 2020. The study addressed changes and developments in the context of the chronological progress of the public relations theory that developed in America and Europe, and were subjects of theses studied public relations in Turkey. The population of the study, doctoral theses in the field of public relations in Turkey; the sample is the doctoral theses studied in the field of public relations in Turkey and those were acceptable in data collection time. From the 1980s until 2020, the limitation of the study constitutes the titles and summaries of the top public relations dissertation studied in Turkey. In the theoretical part of the study, the chronological development of the theory of rights relations in the process ranging from system theory to dialogic communication was discussed. In the methodology part, the frequency of the theses studying the public relations in Turkey were mentioned and interpreted based on years, subjects, the application areas in public relations, and related disciplines. Analysis revealed that the number of doctoral theses in the field of public relations in Turkey increased quantitatively in recent years. The most studied topic was political communication (n=36) whereas the least was the protocol administration. Addition to this, no thesis had been studied on system theory, contingency theory, which is one of the first theories of public relations. With the development of the theories in America and Europe, it was determined that theses in Turkey were parallels to those in America and Europe in the chronological order in the doctoral theses, albeit with an average of 15 years delay in Turkey.

**Keywords:** Public Relations, Public Relations Theory, PhD, PhD Theses, PhD in Public Relations

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# Türkiye’de Halkla İlişkiler Alanındaki Doktora Tezlerinin 1980-2020 Yıllarındaki Kuramsal Evrimi

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ÖZ

Bu araştırma, 1960’lı yıllardan günümüze kadar uzanan süreçte, halkla ilişkiler teorisinin kronolojik gelişimi bağlamında 1980-2020 yılları arasında Türkiye’de çalışılan halkla ilişkiler tezlerinin teorik çerçevelerini ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Çalışmanın problemi, “Türkiye’de çalışılan halkla ilişkiler tezleri, Amerika’da ve Avrupa’da gelişen halkla ilişkiler teorisinin kronolojik ilerleyişi bağlamında değişime ve gelişime tabi olmuş mudur?” sorusuna odaklanmaktadır. Çalışmanın evrenini, Türkiye’de halkla ilişkiler alanında çalışılan doktora tezleri; örneklemini Türkiye’de halkla ilişkiler alanında çalışılan ve veri toplama sürecinde kabul edilen doktora tezleridir. Araştırmanın sınırlılığını 1980’li yıllardan günümüze kadar Türkiye’de halkla ilişkiler üstüne çalışılan doktora tezlerinin başlıkları ve özetleri oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmanın kuramsal kısmında sistem teorisinden diyalojik iletişime uzanan süreçte halkla ilişkiler teorisinin kronolojik gelişimi ele alınmıştır. Metodoloji kısmında ise içerik analizi yöntemi ile Türkiye’de halkla ilişkiler üstüne çalışılan tezlerin yıllara göre çalışılma sıklığı, sadece halkla ilişkiler teorisi üstüne inşa edilmiş tezlerin konularına göre kronolojik sıralaması, halkla ilişkilerde uygulama alanları ve komşu disiplinler üstünde çalışılan tezlerin içerik analizi nicel verilere değinilmiş ve yorumlanmıştır. Araştırma neticesinde de Türkiye’de halkla ilişkiler alanında doktora tezlerinin geçmişten günümüze nicel olarak arttığı, direkt halkla ilişkiler teorileri üstünde çalışılan tezler incelendiğinde sistem teorisi hakkında tez konusu çalışılmadığı, halkla ilişkilerin ilk teorilerinden olan durumsallık teorisinin son yıllarda Türkiye’de çalışıldığı, ancak diğer halkla ilişkiler teorilerinin Amerika ve Avrupa’da gelişimiyle birlikte Türkiye’de ortalama 15 yıllık bir gecikmeyle de olsa doktora tezlerinde kronolojik sıralamada paralellik gösterdiği tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Halkla İlişkiler, Halkla İlişkiler Teorisi, Doktora, Doktora Tezleri, Halkla İlişkilerde Doktora

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## INTRODUCTION

From the past to the present, different understandings have dominated the field of public relations in parallel with social development and change. These understandings and models have linked public relations activities with social theories and processes by revealing the historical development of public relations and their importance for social existence.

In the first part of the study, in order to describe the theoretical journey of public relations, System Theory, Contingency Theory, Quadruple Public Relations Model, Excellence Theory and Dialogical Communication Management Approach were discussed within the scope of management theories and of historical process and compiled and explained in the context of domestic and foreign literature. In the methodology section, to address the reserach question of "have the public relations theses studied in Turkey at the doctoral level been subject to change and development in the context of the chronological progression of the public relations theory developed in America and Europe?", first, problems related to the title of theses studied in the public relation were examined. In order to address the question, first of all, the theses studied in the field of public relations in Turkey were divided into the category of basic problematics according to their subject headings. In the second stage, the abstracts of the theses addressing public relations and its related fieds, built on the theories of public relations, were examined and categorized according to the number of topics and years of study. In the third phase of the methodology, the abstracts of the theses were reviewed to determine which paradigm theoretically dominated in the doctoral theses studied in the field of public relations in Turkey. Along with these data, the research also tried to describe the developments regarding the academic development of public relations in Turkey.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS THEORIES

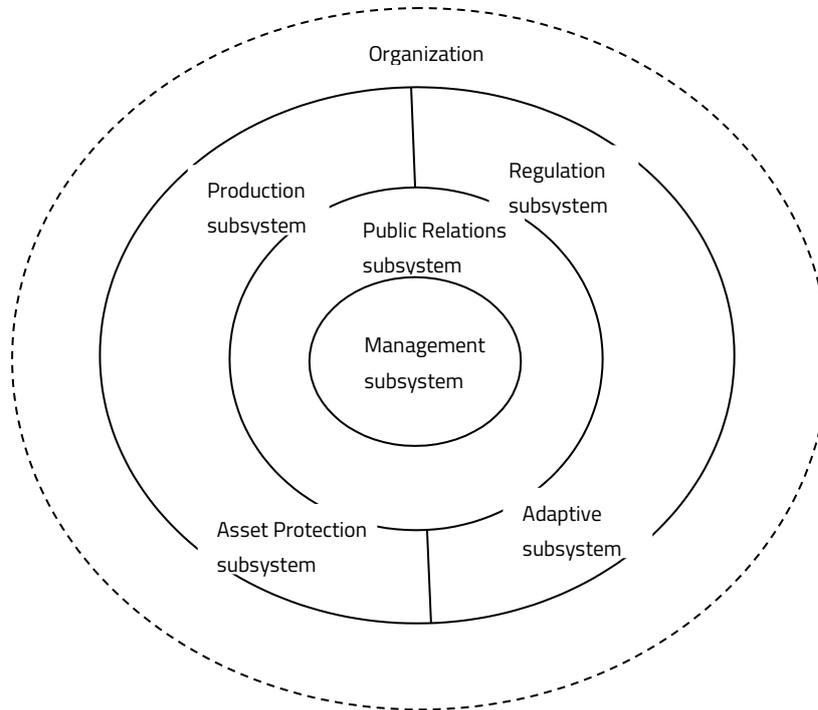
### System Theory and public relations interaction

Systems Theory focuses on the relations and arrangements among the elements that make contact in a whole, rather than arranging the parts and elements in the whole. One of the first contributions was made by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy and the theory has had a great influence on the

scientific perspective over time. Today, it continues to be a fundamental reference in the analysis of systems including families and organizational structures

Public relations is an area that gains its importance for today's administrations. Cutlip et al. (1994, p. 6) define public relations as "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relations between an organization and its publics on which success or failure depends". This definition makes it clear that public relations is a managerial process dependent on the top management of the organization. Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 6) on the other hand, developed an overarching definition by stating the management of communication for public relations between an organization and the public. Grunig and Hunt (1984) depicted public relations as an organizational subsystem in Figure 1.

**Figure 1** Environment, Public Relations and Subsystems (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 9).



The systems approach comprehends an organization/institution as a system and states that this system consists of sub-systems. The systems approach developed in management science affects many areas of social sciences. The connection between public relations and systems theory began to be established by Grunig and Hunt (1984) in their book titled *Managing Public Relations*. They showed public relations as an organizational subsystem in their model. As seen in Figure 1, public relations management undertakes the task of consulting the senior management by explaining the feedback from the social environment and constantly interacting with other units (Grunig, Dozier, & Grunig, 2002, p.

300). In other words, public relations is shown as a subsystem directly connected to the management subsystem associated with all its subsystems. In this perspective, the functional dimension of public relations as an organizational subsystem becomes stronger (Ustakara, 2015, p. 55). At this point, Bertalanffy underlines that real systems are systems that are open to their environment and interact with each other.

### **Contingency Theory and Public Relations Interaction**

In the Contingency Theory, the organization is considered as a system, which different behaviors may be required according to the conditions and the relationship between organizational structure and various processes used within the organization, and internal and external elements of the organization (Sarpkaya, 2010, p. 153; Koçel, 2003, p. 70). Another extremely important point in terms of public relations is that the actors, which we classify as all stakeholders of the business, have different sizes of shares and powers over the business, and it should be noted that their nature and intensity change according to the situation. The external environment is one of the most influential variables of the contingency theory. The external environment implies the legal system and regulations in practice, political effects, the sector and its market, competition and regulations, as well national, geographical, and cultural differences (Aguilera & Jackson, 2003, p. 449). Perceiving threats and opportunities related to the external environment from different perspectives would allow the development of strategies to reduce potential uncertainties (Miles & Snow, 2013, p. 38).

### **The Press Agency/Promotion Model and Public Relations Interaction**

The press agency/promotion model, which is the first model of Grunig and Hunt's public relations models, is defined as "Organized work done to promote an idea, place, product or some person with words, which is stated as news in the media (newspaper, magazine, television or radio) (Okay & Okay, 2002, p. 104).

The primary purpose of this model is to be promoted through attracting the attention of the press. P.T Barnum was the first representative of this period when the art of exaggeration was extensively used. Barnum said that it was not important if the newspapers attacked him unless his name was correctly spelled. "There is no such thing as bad advertising" and "A sucker (customer) is born in every minute" describe the Barnum's approach. According to Barnum, it is not important to stick to the

truth for public control. A public relation expert has to protect his client's image at all costs. It is not an obligation to tell the truth. This model (public relations-celebrity P.R. for stars) is mostly used in entertainment business. The most important thing for public relations experts at the organization is that their customers are in the media as much as possible and given attention (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 25).

In the model pioneered by IVY Lee, the basic logic is that a person or organization informs its target audience about itself and its activities. This model was used extensively until the 1929 economic crisis. It aims to disseminate information without the intention of persuading and to provide accurate information about the organization itself and its activities to its target audience. Since dissemination of information is the main purpose, communication flows from the organization to the target audience. Public relations personnels work like a journalist in this model and convey accurate and objective information about the organization to the target audience. In addition, the communication structure is one-sided in this model, and aimed to spread the information as much as possible rather than persuasion (Peltekoğlu Balta, 2010, p. 102). The two-sided asymmetric model, which started to be implemented in the 1920s and laid the first foundations of real public relations studies, aims at aligning and persuading the public with the starting point of the organization. In addition, it is tried to determine what the public's attitude towards the organization is and how it can be improved. Its purpose is persuasion with clear messages based on scientific data such as sociological theories and research results (Pira, Erhan, Temporary, & Kaya, 2005, p. 24).

The two-way asymmetric model included the periods when public relations became professional. The main purpose of this model is scientific persuasion. Social science findings and theories, which are necessary to convince the target audience, are extensively used in this model. In the two-way asymmetric model, the communication structure is two-way and the reactions from the target audience are taken into account. However, in this communication structure, the organization outweighs. Reactions from the target audience are used for persuasion. In other words, these reactions are considered important and taken into account in order to change the attitudes and behaviors of the target audience in the direction desired by the institution (Balta Peltekoğlu, 2002, p. 80). In this respect, the two-way asymmetric model is the first to consider the concept of feedback, and it uses techniques to change the behavior of the target audience instead of the organization itself (Theaker, 2008, p. 31).

The two-way symmetric model, which describes public relations programs that includes negotiation and conflict resolution strategies that can be used for necessary changes in the attitudes and behaviors of both the organization and its target groups, is the fourth public relations model.

Public relations educators have made important contributions to the development of the two-way symmetrical model, which reveals the contemporary public relations understanding of the 20th century, in terms of evaluating the views of the target audience and applying the social responsibility of the organization. The first educator to conceptualize the symmetrical model of public relations was Scott M. Cutlip (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994, p. 45). His model is known as the "ideal public relations" model. The public relations specialist acts as a mediator between the organization and the public interest (Theaker, 2008, p. 38). Expressing that both parties control each other, Grunig argues that it is the definition of impure public relations (Geçikli, 2010, pp. 32-33). The model refers to the form of communication, which is not very common in real life, where both parties sacrifice their own behavior for their own safety (Theaker, 2008, p. 32). The administrators of the organization exchange ideas with the groups that make up the people and, as a result, they make the necessary changes in the attitude and behavior of both the administration and the people (Mc Quail & Windahl, 2005, p. 34).

According to Grunig et al. (2002, p. 312), the first two models (Press Agency/Public Information Model and Public Information Model) are mostly craftsmanship/technical public relations. The last 2 models used today (Two-Way Asymmetric and Two-Way Symmetrical Model) represent professionalized public relations. It is not possible to choose one model as superior or inferior to the others; Grunig emphasizes that any model can be applied depending on the purpose, target audience and time.

### **Theory of Excellence in Public Relations**

In 1985, International Association of Business Communication (IABC), one of the public relations professional organizations of the United States of America carried out a research project called "Excellence" to investigate the systematic position and success conditions of public relations. The scope of the project was on how communication should have been institutionally in order to achieve the best possible effectiveness (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995, p. 9).

James E. Grunig, Larissa A. Grunig, and David M. Dozier (2002, p. 306), who lead the project, defined excellent public relations simply as "strategic, symmetrical communication management" and had dealt with excellence strategically and managerially. The starting point of the project consisted of how, why and to what extent communication management contributed to achieving organizational goals more effectively and how this contribution was financially evaluated. Rather than determining the position of public relations, the aim was to reveal how public relations contributed to organizational effectiveness and how public relations departments would be excellent while doing this. Looking at the building blocks of the theory, the role of communication in achieving organizational goals was investigated and the contribution of public relations to increasing the effectiveness of the organization was theoretically explained (Grunig, Dozier, & Grunig, 2002, pp. 13-14).

In the theory of excellence, handling public relations practices in two directions has become possible with the addition of a scientific perspective to the practice. From this point of view, the practices have started to have two-sidedness when the public relations practitioner receives information from the target audience and presents the information to the target audience. Therefore, the dialogue should be in bidirectional communication and thanks to this dialogue, information exchange takes place. The symmetry of the dialogue changes the relations between the organization and the public; that is, it is balanced. Because of all these, it has been argued that among the four models mentioned before, only the bidirectional symmetric model is a break from thinking about the benefit of the organization in manipulating the public (Grunig J. , Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang, & Lyra, 1995, pp. 168-178).

The "Excellence Project" team also conducted a comprehensive review of the management excellence to see if organizations that were considered excellent in every way also had an excellent communication program. As a result of their review, some results found by pointing to the characteristics of excellent public relations management and how communication contributed to management excellence, including Organic structure, entrepreneurship, symmetrical communication systems, leadership, strong and participatory cultures, strategic planning, social responsibility, support for diversity, priority of quality, effective operation systems, importance of social culture (Grunig J. , Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang, & Lyra, 1995, pp. 163-186).

## Dialogical Communication and Relationship Management Approach

The Dictionary of Public Relations defines the concept of dialogue as "an interpersonal communication method based on mutual respect and trust "(InstituteForPr.Org). Dozier et al. (1995, p. 85) defined the relational public relations approach as "the mission and direction of the organization is affected by the relations with the important components (publics) around the organization". Habermas, on the other hand, defined the concept as a relationship in which one party was not dominant and rather included cooperative and mutual communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 324).

At this point, it is possible to examine the developments that enabled the relational approach to emerge as a framework for public relations under four headings (Ledingham, 2001, pp. 288-296). These heading are understanding the central role of relations in public relations studies and practices, reconceptualizing public relations as a management function, understanding the measurement strategies, components and different types of the organization-public relationship, establishing the relation between the organization-public relations with public attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and behaviors, the premises of the relations and developing organization-public relations models that include the process and its results. Kent and Taylor (1998) emphasized that the dialogical communication approach could be used effectively when a great attention was given on the following areas: media choice and effectiveness, internal processes, user expectations and preferences, standardizing the measurement of dialogic principles.

Nowadays, especially after the internet started to be used by organizations, "dialogue" become an increasingly important concept in public relations. It can be stated that public relations practices, which started based on one-way communication and monologue, gradually have moved towards two-way communication and even a dialogic public relations emerged (Özoran, 2017, p. 14). Social media applications in particular have become a tool where the two-sidedness and mutuality of dialogic communication can be seen easily. It plays a key role in the construction of a dynamic, long-term and trust-based process in public relations activities with its ability to communicate directly with target audiences, ensure equality, and receive instant feedback (Can, 2017).

## METHODOLOGY

### Aim

This research aims to reveal the theoretical frameworks of the public relations theses studied in Turkey from the 1980s to 2020 in the context of the chronological development of public relations theory in the world from the 1960s to the present.

### Problem

The main problem of the study is that the public relations theses studied at the doctoral level in Turkey have been subject to change and development in the context of the chronological progression of the public relations theory developed in America and Europe. The sub-problems of the study are:

Q1. What is the frequency and time frame of the public relations theses studied in Turkey at the doctoral level?

Q2. What is the frequency and timeframe of writing theses that focus only on public relations theories in public relations theses studied at doctoral level in Turkey?

Q3. What are the application areas of public relations and the frequency and time frame of working with other disciplines in public relations thesis studied at doctoral level in Turkey?

### Population, Sample and Limitations

The population of the study, doctoral theses in the field of public relations in Turkey; the sample is the doctoral theses studied in the field of public relations in Turkey and those were accessible in data collection time . From the 1980s until 2020, the limitation of the study constitutes the titles and summaries of the top public relations dissertation studied in Turkey.

### Research Model

In the research, a content analysis method was used. According to Aziz (2013, pp. 131-132), content analysis is "a research technique that makes repeatable and valuable inferences from the data in a message". An unbiased and systematic numerical definition is made in the content analysis, which is revealed by the quantification of uncountable and non-displayable written-video data.

## Data Collection Time

Data were collected between 01.06.2020 and 02.07.2020 on the website of the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education. Based on a data collection tool, the titles and summary texts of the theses studied in the field of public relations at the doctoral level were examined.

## Analysis of Data

After examining the doctoral theses under the discipline of "public relations", in the data analysis, first, the numerical ratio of the theses according to the years and the frequency of their writing were determined. In the time period of "01.06.2020-02.07.2020", when the data were collected, 487 doctoral theses identified in the field of public relations were divided into 56 themes according to the main problematics they focused on, along with the frequency of their work. After the summary texts of the theses were analyzed, doctoral theses in nine categories, which were built directly on public relations theories, were interpreted according to the time in which they were studied. In the third stage, the content analysis of the theses studied on the application areas of public relations and related disciplines was made. At the last stage, it was determined which public relations theory the theses were built on, either directly or indirectly.

## Writing Frequency of Public Relations Theses by Years

According to the data obtained from the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), the first study in the field of public relations in Turkey was studied by Alaeddin Asna in 1990. Then, 63 doctoral theses were published in 1990-1999. 135 doctoral theses were studied between 2000-2009 and 384 doctoral theses between 2010-2020. It has been observed that the number of doctoral theses studied in the field of public relations in Turkey has increased quantitatively from the 1990s to the 2020s. The reason for this quantitative increase in the number of doctoral theses in public relations would be the increase in the number of universities in higher education in Turkey and in the number of communication faculties, especially in the time period of 2010-2020.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In certain periods in Turkey (1973-1975, 1982, 1992, 2006-2008) occurred an increase in the number of universities. Today, however, "a university in every city" vision of the movement in Turkey is no longer included university city (Şimşek, 2020, p. 609).

**Table 1** Writing Frequency of Public Relations Theses by Years  
(data obtained according to the examination conducted between 01.06.2020-02.07.2020).

YEAR	NUMBER	YEAR	NUMBER	YEAR	NUMBER	TOTAL
2020	10	2008	23	1996	10	
2019	37	2007	7	1995	3	
2018	37	2006	13	1994	4	
2017	50	2005	15	1993	4	
2016	25	2004	12	1992	1	
2015	40	2003	14	1991	1	
2014	14	2002	4	1990	2	487
2013	28	2001	10			
2012	20	2000	8			
2011	25	1999	14			
2010	28	1998	9			
2009	15	1997	5			

According to the data of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and the Turkish Public Relations Association (TÜHİD), the number of state and private universities in Turkey that have “Public Relations and Promotion/Advertising Programs” is 80 (YÖK ATLAS, 2020; TÜHİD, 2020), of these 44 are state universities and 36 are private universities. While state universities generally provide education all over Turkey, private universities are mainly located in Istanbul, Ankara and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. When we look at the number of doctorate students in state and private universities, which graduate thousands of students every year, a different picture emerges. Since five of the six private universities (2010-2020) that provide public relations education in Turkey graduated only 18 (3%) out of a total of 487 doctoral students in the field. These data show that private universities that provide education in the field of public relations do not fulfill the responsibility of training academic staff, who are the basic human resources of universities, and they mainly focus on undergraduate education. It was observed that private universities providing education in the field of public relations met the faculty they need mainly from individuals graduated in doctoral programs from state universities.

On the other hand, approximately 96% (469) of 487 doctoral students in the field of public relations graduated from state universities. The first doctorate degree in public relations was given by Istanbul University in 1990. However, Ankara University Faculty of Communication, where the foundations of the communication faculty and public relations department were laid in 1966, is the first faculty in Turkey

On the other hand, Selcuk University Faculty of Communication (97 students), Istanbul University Faculty of Communication (95 students) and Marmara University Faculty of Communication (94) are the universities that gave the highest numbers of doctoral graduate in the field of public relations.

Universities that do not have communication faculties but carry out interdisciplinary studies in the field of public relations have also graduated doctorate students. These are Ondokuz Mayıs University Department of Islamic History and Arts (1995), Çukurova University Graduate School of Sciences, Department of Agricultural Economics (2004), Balıkesir University Tourism and Hotel Management Department (2006), Niğde University Business Administration Department (2007), Afyon Kocatepe University Department of Business Administration (2009), İnönü University Department of Public Administration (2011). These data reveal that the discipline of public relations can be studied not only within itself, but also with other disciplines, which makes it an interdisciplinary discipline.

### **Public Relations Theory Approaches in Doctoral Theses Studied and Frequency Rates According to the Years of Study**

The theses that had directly studied on public relations theories were theoretically divided into 9 categories based on the doctoral theses carried out in the communication faculties under the department of public relations.

**Table 2** Public Relations Theory Approaches and Frequency Rates in the Studied Doctoral Theses

<b>TOPICS</b>	<b>2020-2010</b>	<b>2009-2000</b>	<b>1999-1990</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Four Models of Public Relations	5	6	3	14
Dialogical Communication	7	0	0	7
Situational Public Relations	2	0	0	2
Relationship Management	6	2	0	8
Theory of Excellence	4	1	0	5
Negotiator, Participatory Public Relations	5	1	0	6
Strategic Public Relations	10	2	2	14
Symmetrical Communication	6	1	1	8
Critical-postmodern Public Relations	4	2	0	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>67</b>

In the quantitative sense, although the thesis topics increased numerically in the period from the 1990s to the 2020s, it was observed that the theoretical perspective had also been enriched in the

context of the theoretical developments in the field of public relations. It was observed that in public relations such as dialogical communication, relationship management, excellence approach, deliberative communication, doctoral theses were mainly studied in the context of the theories put forward in the late 1990s and 2000s in America and Europe. However, it was determined that Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models in public relations were studied in all of the time intervals of 2010-2020, 2000-2009, 1990-1999.

In the study, one-research questions was related to the frequency and timeframe of writing theses that focus only on public relations theories in public relations theses studied at doctoral level in Turkey. When the theses studied in the public relations and promotion/advertising departments at the doctoral level in Turkey were examined in the context of the question, it was observed that only 67 of the 487 theses were built on the theories directly in the public relations discipline. The study time and frequency rate of these theories showed that the theoretical development of the discipline of public relations in America and Europe, albeit not exactly the same, was generally in parallel with an average of 15 years.

The systems approach, built on was considered as the main paradigm in the discipline of public relations in the 1970s-1980s, especially in the United States (Edwards, 2006, pp. 143-164) Grunig and Hunt (1984) built organizational communication on systems theory. However, none of the doctoral theses studied in the field of public relations in Turkey have worked directly on systems theory. Since the discipline of public relations began to develop gradually in the field of practice in both the academic and public and private sectors in the 1960s, it showed that the public relations theories that emerged and developed in the United States did not find an academic response in Turkey.

In the 1960s-1980s in the America and Europe, when the theoretical framework wasn't developed in the field of public relations, scientists were working with the theories borrowed from other disciplines to solve the problems related to public relations (communication, sociology, organizational theories, psychology, marketing, journalism, etc.) (Ihlen & Ruler, 2007, p. 244).

The first theoretical study of public relations, the four-model, and doctoral-level studies on the contingency theory of publics, included in the theory of strategic public relations, were studied in Turkey between the years 2010-2020, not in the 1970s-1980s. The topics of the theses studied according to

the contingency model were the implementation of public relations on stakeholders in a strategic and effective way with the contingency theory, and the organization's determination of strategy by dividing the publics into segments in the face of problems.

The quadruple model is one of the most studied theoretical models, equally in every period from 1990 to the 2020. The subjects of the theses studied on the quad model included recognition and promotion in institutions, persuasive asymmetrical communication, external promotional activities of organizations, promotion and recognition-persuasion in political communication, quadruple model in internal communication, promotion and information through the media, in the quadruple model management, informing and mutual decision making, 4-way model in corporate communication, etc.

The other important theoretical issues studied in the field of public relations in Turkey was also symmetrical on communication theory. In the context of symmetrical communication in Turkey in the last decade, it has been studied in eight doctoral thesis. The general topics of these theses were the dimensions of symmetrical communication, the evaluation of two-way symmetric communication in the structuring of businesses, the use of symmetric communication in communication with the public in local governments, the concept of sustainable communication in organizations based on the two-way symmetric communication theory, the effect of symmetric communication on the sustainability of city brands, symmetrical use of social media in organizations, symmetric communication in social networks as a public space and use of two-way symmetric communication in order to ensure consumer confidence.

In 1984, the project of excellence in public relations started in order to measure how, why and to what extent communication was in America and the effect of success in achieving the organization's aim (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, pp. 3-4). As a result of the project completed in the second half of the 1990s, the theory of excellence in public relations emerged. In Turkey, mainly the reflection of the excellent public relations theory doctoral thesis corresponded to in 2010-2020s. Organizations' business strategies, relations with external stakeholders, corporate transmission, etc were topics studied. Its contribution to the organization in the context of excellent public relations theory has been investigated.

On the other hand, under the umbrella of public relations and strategic management approach, perfection of public relations over the last decade in Turkey was took place within the most studied doctoral thesis on theoretical context. Strategic communication management thesis overall ad strategic

governing role, strategic public relations in measurement and evaluation, strategic issues management to ensure the balance of the stakeholders, public relations organizations in Turkey (traditional-strategic) concept, strategic communication management in the preservation of cultural heritage, organizations and society in terms of strategic public relations and the sustainability of strategic communication management were studied.

The dialogical communication studies, which started with Pearson's (1989), "theory of public relations ethics" study, continued with the "dialogic communication theory" of Kent and Taylor in the second half of the 1990s (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Dialogical communication theory was among the most important theories, especially in web-based public relations. Dialogic communication theory dissertations on seven dates between 2015 and 2020 in the field of public relations in Turkey was written. Therefore, dialogic communication theory with close to 20 years delay in Turkey was started studied in the academic field. In this doctoral theses, the contribution of dialogic communication to customer relationship management, its use in social media, its function between stakeholders and the organization, communication with stakeholders on new media, etc. were studied.

In 1984, Ferguson included stakeholder engagement in public relations theory, arguing that relationships were the essence of public relations. Relationship management is defined as the management function that ensures the establishment and maintenance of mutually beneficial relations between the public and the organization, which causes the success or failure of the organization in public relations (Broom & Sha, 2013, p. 29). Persuasion-oriented public relations has moved towards stakeholder-based relationship management. In Turkey, doctorate studies in the field of public relations focused on relationship management had started as a theoretical perspective in academic studies with a delay of about 15-20 years compared to America and Europe. The theory created in America began to be used as a theoretical perspective in academic studies 10-15 years later in Turkey. Eight doctoral dissertations focused on relationship management, studying topics of relationship management with customers, the effect of relationship management on employee satisfaction, the position of organizations against relationship management, the role of relationship management in public diplomacy and reputation management, and the contribution of relationship management with stakeholders to the organization. In short, the main theme of the theses on relationship management

was the contribution of the relationship management to the institution, which the organization put forward with internal and external stakeholders-publics.

Although the concept of negotiation was emphasized in the doctoral theses in public relations studies in Turkey, it was mainly evaluated in the context of dialogic communication in the theoretical context, game theory in the approach of excellence, and consensus public relations. In the field of public relations, negotiation and participation have also become one of the prominent concepts, as the communication and relations of organizations with their stakeholders and publics have become important within the framework of dialogue, relationship and symmetrical communication in the last 30-year period. In the doctoral theses, the concept of negotiation has increased as a numerical ratio (6 theses), especially in 2010-2020, and has become one of the important concepts studied. These theses mainly focused on conflict resolution between stakeholders and organizations, improving relations between the state and the public, and using them as the main tool of consensus.

In the doctoral theses in the field of public relations in Turkey it was observed that a small number of doctoral theses (6) were focused on a critical context. In these theses, post-modern culture and public relations campaigns, postmodern politics and discourse, the fiction of the discourses represented in the mass media, their distance from reality, and job satisfaction in public relations within the organization have been studied.

The main research problem was addressed (are the public relations theses studied at the doctoral level in Turkey subject to change and development in the context of the chronological progress of the public relations theory developed in America and Europe?) as a result of the analyzes and interpretations made. In the doctoral dissertations on public relations theories in Turkey, it was seen that the system theory was not used as the basic paradigm of the theses, the contingency theory (1966), which is the first theory of public relations, had been studied only twice in the last ten years in Turkey, and the quadruple model was a main theoretical subject. As a result, the theses have been studied equally in every ten-year time period from the 1990s to the present, and an average over the theories created in the last 30 years in the field of public relations such as relationship management, excellence approach, dialogical communication, critical public relations, strategic public relations, deliberative

communication. Even with a 15-year delay, it was observed that doctoral candidates have been carried out their theses in parallel with the theoretical studies in Europe and America.

### **Classification of Theses According to the Application Areas of Public Relations and Neighboring Concepts**

The theses written in the field of public relations in Turkey since the 1990s haven't been built directly on the theory of public relations in an organizational sense. Most of the theses studied on public relations were the fields of activity of public relations (corporate communication, media relations, media representation, social responsibility, public relations, strategic communication, crisis management, reputation management, image management, corporate identity, event management, consultancy, sponsorship, political public persuasion-oriented studies in relations, public diplomacy, perception management, etc.) and disciplines and concepts related to public relations (theories in sociology, communication, etc., information technologies, business, communication, brand, media literacy, organization management, politics, marketing, advertising, social media, consumer behavior, discourse, rhetoric, etc.).

**Table3** Application Areas of Public Relations and Concepts Adjacent to Public Relations

<b>PUBLIC RELATIONS APPLICATION AREAS</b>				
<b>TOPICS</b>	<b>2020-2010</b>	<b>2009-2000</b>	<b>1999-1990</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Perception Management	6	1	0	7
Public Relations Training	2	3	0	5
Ethics in Public Relations	2	0	0	2
Persuasive Messages	5	0	2	7
Public Relations	2	0	0	2
Interpersonal communication	2	5	0	7
Crisis Communication	3	0	0	3
Corporate communications	23	4	0	27
Lobbying	0	1	1	2
Customer Relations Management	2	1	0	3
Measurement and Evaluation in Public Relations	0	1	1	2
Organization Management, Culture, Communication	1	13	1	15
Politics, Political Communication	30	8	7	45
Protocol Management	1	0	0	1
Advertisement	11	12	3	26

Social Media, New Communication Technologies	40	1	0	41
Social Responsibility	10	6	1	17
Discourse, Rhetoric	4	3	3	10
Sponsorship	2	2	1	5
International Public Relations	3	0	0	3
<b>CONCEPTS ADJACENT TO THE PUBLIC RELATIONS</b>				
<b>TOPICS</b>	<b>2020-2010</b>	<b>2009-2000</b>	<b>1999-1990</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Other theories	5	1	0	6
Internet, Science Technology	13	8	0	21
Business	1	0	8	9
Communication	0	2	0	2
Leadership	3	1	0	4
Brand	19	4	2	26
Media Literacy	2	0	0	2
Media, Representation and Discourse in Media	19	6	4	29
Organization Management, Culture, Communication	1	13	1	15
Marketing, Marketing Communication	9	7	1	17
Politics, Political Communication	30	8	7	45
Popular culture	3	1	0	4
Postmodernism	3	0	0	3
Advertisement	11	12	3	26
Social Media, New Communication technologies	40	1	0	41
Discourse, Rhetoric	4	3	3	10
City, Destination Marketing	13	1	0	14
Consumer Behavior and Communication	7	5	0	12

The doctoral theses studied on public relations in Turkey were broad in terms of the fields of activity of public relations and neighboring concepts. However, when the summary parts of the doctoral theses were examined, it was observed that the theses on the practice of public relations and related concepts were directly or indirectly based on the four-way communication model, the publicity-press agency model, the public information model and the asymmetric two-way communication part. It was seen that the studies in the doctoral theses mainly focused on public relations promotion and recognition.

For example, there are theses on politics and political communication on public relations, persuasion of voters, promotion and propaganda of politicians. In addition, some theses were on brand

promotion, promotion of cities in theses on city marketing. Some theses focus on marketing, promotion of product-service and persuasion of target audience, reputation management- corporate identity- crisis-sponsorship management theses on information and promotion, corporate communication. Also, there are theses on recognizing and promoting, public diplomacy and international public relations on country promotion and asymmetric communication, perception management on how to use and directing asymmetric communication, different categories of government and private organizations, informing and promoting the organization to the public in the media, asymmetric and symmetrical forms of communication in social media, introducing the organization itself and informing its target audience through new information technologies, corporate social promotion with full responsibility, information and marketing of the organization, propaganda in ideological studies, that is, the promotion model of public relations, the use of publicity, information and asymmetric communication in image management, image and reputation creation with corporate advertising, etc. available. These data from theses addressed Grunig and Hunt's 4-fold public relations model for research question "Q3. What is the theoretically dominant paradigm in public relations theses studied at the doctoral level in Turkey?". On the other hand, there were also descriptive studies in doctoral theses, which were based on the data without relying on any theory to determine the public relations practices in organizations. Doctoral theses on how public relations were applied and should have been applied in organizations without relying on any theoretical perspective, which determined the status of education in the field of public relations in Turkey, were the subjects included in descriptive studies.

## **RESULT AND EVALUATION**

In the doctoral theses studied in the field of public relations in Turkey in a theoretical framework, it was determined that there were only 67 theses built directly on public relations theories. 67 doctoral theses were divided into nine categories. The study time and frequency rate of these theories showed that the theoretical development of public relations in America and Europe, not the same, generally progressed in parallel with an average of 15 years. Based on the theses studied public relations at the doctoral level in Turkey, it can be said that the public relations theory developed in America and Europe is subject to change and development in the context of its chronological progress. The majority of the doctoral thesis in the field of public relations in Turkey was based on the context of paradigm. Out of 487

doctoral theses, only 6 of them were handled within the framework of critical public relations. Interdisciplinary studies have been carried out under the umbrella of public relations with different disciplines.

However, when the summary texts of the studies were examined, it was seen that the theses studied on the application areas of public relations and the concepts related to the public relations came to the fore. According to the summary texts of these theses, it was determined that the 4-way communication model introduced by Grunig and Hunt in 1984 in public relations was used extensively, directly or indirectly, and even the promotional-propaganda, public information, and asymmetric communication form. Although the doctoral theses studied in public relations in Turkey were theoretically different (relationship management, excellence theory, contingency theory, symmetric communication, dialogic communication, deliberative communication, strategy, public relations), it was revealed that the focus was mainly on the 4-way model in the theoretical context. In other words, 4-way model paradigm emerged the dominant theoretical construct in the theoretical sense of doctoral theses as. To sum up, this study summarized information about the frequency and period of studying public relations theories in doctoral theses in Turkey. For this reason, the study is important in terms of shedding light on other researches in the field of public relations in the theoretical context.

## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Bu araştırma, 1960'lı yıllardan günümüze kadar uzanan süreçte, halkla ilişkiler teorisinin kronolojik gelişimi bağlamında 1980'li yıllardan itibaren Türkiye'de çalışılan halkla ilişkiler tezlerinin teorik çerçevelerini ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir.

Araştırmanın ilk bölümünde halkla ilişkilerin kuramsal yolculuğunu tanımlayabilmek adına, tarihsel süreçte yönetim teorileri kapsamında ele alınmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu bağlamda Sistem Teorisi, Durumsallık Teorisi, 4'lü Halkla İlişkiler Modeli, Mükemmellik Teorisi ve Diyolojik İletişim Yönetimi Yaklaşımı yerli ve yabancı literatür bağlamında derlenerek betimlenmiştir. Sistem teorisi ile halkla ilişkiler açık sistem yapısında örgütte bir alt sistem olarak örgüt ve çevresi ile ilişkisini kuran bir yapı olarak ele alınmıştır. Durumsallık yaklaşımında örgütlerin kendilerine has yapıları dâhilinde analiz yapıp dış çevreye uyum sağlayarak proaktif ve reaktif yaklaşımları bir arada kullanmaları gerektiği belirtilmiştir. Grunig ve Hunt'in dörtlü halkla ilişkiler modelinde halkla ilişkilerde kullanılan iletişim yöntemleri incelenmiştir.

Mükemmellik teorisinde etkili örgütlerde halkla ilişkilerin en iyi hangi özelliklere sahip oldukları değerlendirilmiştir. Diyalojik halkla ilişkiler teorisi ise halkla ilişkilere daha çok "etik" açıdan yaklaşmakta ve diyaloğun prensipleri üstünde yoğunlaşmaktadır.

Çalışmanın ikinci kısmı olan metodoloji bölümünde temel problem *"Türkiye'de doktora seviyesinde çalışılan halkla ilişkiler tezleri Amerika'da ve Avrupa'da gelişen halkla ilişkiler teorisinin kronolojik ilerleyişi bağlamında değişime ve gelişime tabi olmuş mudur?"*. sorunsalıdır. Alt probemler ise, "S1. Türkiye'de doktora seviyesinde çalışılan halkla ilişkiler tezlerinin konularına göre çalışılma sıklığı ve zaman dilimi nedir?; S2. Türkiye'de doktora seviyesinde çalışılan halkla ilişkiler tezlerinde sadece halkla ilişkiler teorileri üstüne odaklanan tezlerin yazılma sıklığı ve zaman dilimi nedir?; S3. Türkiye'de doktora seviyesinde çalışılan halkla ilişkiler tezlerinde teorik olarak hakim paradigma nedir?". Araştırmanın evreni, Türkiye'de halkla ilişkiler alanında doktora tezleri; örneklemi ise Türkiye'de halkla ilişkiler alanında yapılan ve veri toplama süresi içinde kabul edilen doktora tezleridir. Çalışmanın sınırlılığını da 1980'lerden 2020'ye kadar Türkiye'de çalışılan halkla ilişkiler tezlerinin başlıkları ve özetleri oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın metodoloji bölümünde problemlerin cevaplarını bulabilmek amacıyla YÖK'ün Ulusal Tez Merkezinde bulunan halkla ilişkiler üstünde çalışılan tezler başlıklarına ve özet metinlerine göre genelden özele doğru analiz edilmiştir. Öncelikle halkla ilişkiler alanında çalışılan tezler konu başlıklarına göre temel sorunsallar kategorisine ayrılmıştır. Yapılan araştırmada içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Veri toplama sürecinde YÖK'ün Ulusal Tez Merkezi web sayfasında, "01.06.2020-02.07.2020" tarihleri arasında yapılan araştırmaya göre Türkiye'de yükseköğretim kurumlarında doktora düzeyinde halkla ilişkiler alanında çalışılan tezlerin başlık ve özet metinleri incelenmiştir.

İkinci aşamada tezlerin özet metin bölümleri incelenerek halkla ilişkiler teorileri üstüne doğrudan inşa edilerek çalışılan doktora tezleri tespit edilip konu sayısı ve çalışılma yıllarına göre kategorilere ayrılmıştır. Metodolojinin üçüncü safhasında halkla ilişkilerin uygulama alanları ve komşu disiplinler üstünde çalışılan tezlerin özet metinleri okunarak Türkiye'de halkla ilişkiler alanında çalışılan doktora tezlerinde teorik olarak hangi paradigmanın hâkim olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu verilerle birlikte araştırmada, Türkiye'de halkla ilişkilerin akademik olarak gelişim seyrine dair gelişmeler de betimlenmeye çalışılmıştır.

Halkla ilişkiler alanında çalışılan doktora tezleri odaklandıkları temel sorunsallara göre 56 kategoriye ayrılmıştır. Bu kategoriler de çalışılma sıklıklarına göre (1990-2000/2001-2010/2011-2020) üç farklı zaman diliminde incelenmiştir.

Türkiye’de halkla ilişkiler alanında çalışılan doktora tezleri kuramsal çerçevede incelendiğinde direkt halkla ilişkiler kuramları üstüne inşa edilen sadece 67 tez olduğu tespit edilmiştir. 67 doktora tezi de kendi içinde 9 kategoriye ayrılmıştır. Bu kuramların da çalışılma zamanı ve sıklık oranı halkla ilişkiler disiplininin Amerika ve Avrupa’daki kuramsal gelişimi bire bir olmasa da genel itibariyle ortalama 15 yıllık bir gecikme ile paralel seviyede ilerlediğini göstermektedir. Türkiye’de doktora seviyesinde çalışılan halkla ilişkiler tezleri Amerika’da ve Avrupa’da gelişen halkla ilişkiler teorisinin kronolojik ilerleyişi bağlamında değişime ve gelişime tabi olduğunu söyleyebiliriz.

Türkiye’de sadece halkla ilişkiler teorileri üstüne çalışılan doktora tezleri incelendiğinde sistem teorisinin tezlerin temel paradigması olarak kullanılmadığı, halkla ilişkilerin kendine has ilk kuramı olan durumsallık kuramının (1966) Türkiye’de son on yılda sadece 2 kez çalışıldığı, 4’lü modelinin doğrudan teorik konu olarak tezlerde 1990’lardan günümüze kadar her on yıllık zaman diliminde çalışıldığı, ilişki yönetimi, mükemmellik yaklaşımı, diyalojik iletişim, eleştirel halkla ilişkiler, stratejik halkla ilişkiler, müzakereci iletişim gibi halkla ilişkiler alanında son 30 yılda oluşturulan teoriler üstünde de Türkiye’de ortalama 15 yıllık bir gecikmeyle de olsa Avrupa ve Amerika’daki teorik çalışmalara paralel şekilde doktora tezi olarak araştırmalar yapıldığı gözlemlenmiştir.

Ancak çalışmaların özet metinleri incelendiğinde halkla ilişkilerin uygulama alanları ve halkla ilişkilere komşu kavramlar üstünde çalışılan tezlerin ağırlıklı olarak ön plana çıktığı görülmüştür. Bu tezlerin özet metinlerine göre doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak halkla ilişkilerde Grunig ve Hunt’ın 1984’de ortaya koyduğu 4’lü iletişim modelinin yoğun şekilde kullanıldığı hatta tanıtım-propaganda, kamuoyu bilgilendirme ve asimetric iletişim şeklinin tezlerde ağırlıklı olarak çalışıldığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu da Türkiye’de çalışılan halkla ilişkiler alanındaki doktora tezlerinin, teorik olarak farklı (ilişki yönetimi, mükemmellik teorisi, durumsallık teorisi, simetrik iletişim, diyalojik iletişim, müzakereci iletişim, strateji halkla ilişkiler) bakış açılarından ele alınmasına rağmen araştırmaların doğrudan veya dolaylı şekilde, temel itibariyle teorik bağlamda 4’lü model üstünden tanıma ve tanıtıma odaklanıldığını ortaya

koymuştur. Bu verilerde bize Türkiye’de halkla ilişkiler alanında çalışılan doktora tezlerinde teorik anlamda baskın paradigmanın 4’lü model olduğu göstermektedir.

Türkiye’de halkla ilişkiler alanında çalışılan doktora tezlerinin büyük çoğunluğunun ana akamı paradigmada bağlamında çalışıldığı tespit edilmiştir. 487 doktora tezi içinden sadece 6 tanesi eleştirel halkla ilişkiler çerçevesinden ele alındığı gözlemlenmiştir. Farklı disiplinlerle de halkla ilişkiler çatısı altında disiplinler arası çalışmalar yapılmıştır.

Araştırma verileri genel olarak değerlendirildiğinde çalışma, Türkiye’de doktora tezlerinde halkla ilişkiler teorilerinin çalışılma sıklığı ve zaman dilimi hakkında bilgi vermektedir. Bu nedenle çalışma, halkla ilişkiler alanında yapılacak diğer araştırmalara teorik bağlamda ışık tutması açısından önem arz etmektedir.

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