

Current Geography Studies in Türkiye

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the master's and doctoral theses completed in the field of geography at the National Thesis Center of Turkey (YÖK) between 2018 and 2023 from a holistic perspective and to provide a new outlook for future studies. To this end, a database was created consisting of theses categorized by year, subject, type, method, university of the author, and the geographical region where the university is located. Within the scope of the study, a total of 1237 graduate theses were analyzed. Of these, 988 belong to master's programs and 249 to doctoral programs, indicating that master's theses outnumber doctoral theses. The most master's theses were produced in 2019 with 250 theses and doctoral theses were produced in 2023 with 66 theses. The least number of master's theses were produced in 2018 with 107 theses and doctoral theses were produced in 2020 with 26 theses. In both master's (519) and doctoral (142) programs, the majority of theses were produced in human and economic geography, followed by those in physical geography (master's (382), doctoral (84)). Within human and economic geography, tourism geography (111) was the most studied subject, whereas geomorphology (155) was the most examined in physical geography. Regarding the methods used in the theses, qualitative methods (488) are more frequently preferred in master's studies, while quantitative methods (121) are utilized in doctoral theses. Among the universities producing the most theses, Istanbul University ranks first in both master's (88) and doctoral (48) programmes. Evaluating the geographical regions of the universities where the authors are located, the Marmara Region ranks first in both master's and doctoral programs. These results will enhance the understanding of academic developments and trends in the field of geography, providing direction for future research. The findings of this study are significant for understanding current geography theses in Turkey. It is believed that increasing the number of postgraduate theses in geography and improving the quantity and quality of students pursuing postgraduate education in this field can provide a positive impetus to Turkey's development.

Keywords: Geography, Master, Doctoral, National Thesis Center.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Geography is one of the important branches of science that people apply to solve the problems they face through observation, research and interpretation because it is a field with a wide scope that integrates the subjects of social sciences and science (Yaşar et al., 2012; Tekeş and Cürebal; 2019). Geography, which is basically a science of the earth, has been defined in quite different ways from Eratosthenes to the present day and has experienced transformations in line with the needs of the time and society (Üçışık and Demirci, 2002). For example, Tümertekin (1978) defined geography as the study

interaction all physical and human phenomena in separately places, and how this mutual influence between places creates patterns and organizes space. Hoşgören (2011) defines it as "describing the features, events and activities of the environment, their formation mechanisms, their relations with each other, their spatial distribution and the similarities and differences in this distribution together with their reasons". These definitions constitute only a few of the dozens of definitions of geography.

Geography provides a broad spectrum of information, ranging from the physical structure of the earth to the spatial distribution of human activities, thoroughly

examining both the natural environment and the interactions between human societies and their environment (Shattuck and Campbell, 2017). Understanding the interactions between natural events, environmental processes, and human activities is a main purpose of geography (Tuan, 1991; Mert and Acarer, 2018; Tekin et al., 2018; Süel et al., 2021).

Geography, as a broad discipline, provides extensive information through research conducted in various subfields. Geographical studies include 4 fields as physical, human, regional and education (Table 1.). Physical geography examines the physical characteristics of the place where people live, while human geography examines the society formed by human beings and their activities on earth. If the relations of physical and human geography features within themselves and with each other are analyzed in a piece of earth, this is a real geographical synthesis. The sub-branch of geography in which such studies representing geographical synthesis and integrity in the real sense are carried out is expressed by Regional Geography (Kayan, 2000). The Geography of Education defines the scope of this emerging interdisciplinary field. It highlights the intrinsic connection between geographical and educational studies by focusing on the geographical factors that impact formal education systems and various methods of knowledge transfer (Brock, 2016).

Table 1. Geography departments and field of science.

Department	Field of Science
Physical Geography	Geomorphology Climatology Hydrography Biogeography Natural disasters Mathematics geography Cartography...
Human and Economic Geography	Population Geography Settlement Geography Political Geography Historical Geography Health Geography Agriculture Geography Transportation Geography Industry Geography Tourism Geography...
Regional Geography	Continental Geography Regional Geography Countries Geography...
Education Geography	Geography teaching methods Subject area textbook review Introduction to the teaching profession Planning and assessment in teaching Teaching technologies ...

Research is usually carried out in the four main department and in a large number of specific scientific fields. These four main disciplines offer different perspectives and methods, reflecting the comprehensive nature of geography.

Quantitative and qualitative methods used in geographical research play an important role in understanding the different types of data and approaches to analysis in the field (Clifford et al., 2010). Quantitative methods include measuring and analyzing data numerically. These methods are usually based on statistical analyses and are used to understand the quantitative (numerical) characteristics of the data. Qualitative methods provide a more in-depth and meaningful understanding of the data (Zadrozny et al., 2016). These methods focus on the qualitative characteristics of the data and usually include text or observation data (Merriam, 2015). These two methods are used complementarily to understand the broad nature of geography and to examine various geographical phenomena comprehensively.

There are many theses conducted in the field of geography in Turkey. Geography theses are academic research studies in various fields of geography. The database of theses is maintained by the National Thesis Center, conducted by the Council of Higher Education of the Republic of Turkey (NTC, 2024). Theses are added to the National Thesis Center database by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and made available for public use. In this sense, the National Thesis Center provides a central database of master's and doctoral theses, offering an opportunity to examine research trends and academic productivity.

In our country, there are many studies that handle theses as a database. However, these studies have generally been conducted for a specific department of geography. For example, Şardağ (2016) "A content analysis related to graduate theses made in Turkey in the field of geography about tourism", Uzun (2018) "Assessment of graduate theses in the field of human geography: 2008-2017", Taş (2019) "Turkey's Rural Settlements in Graduate Theses and Dissertations", Çifçi (2017) "The Trends of Postgraduate Theses (2006-2017) on Geography Education in Turkey" and Yazıcı (2020) "Physical Geography Education: The Postgraduate Research Trends in Turkey" examined graduate theses on tourism geography, human geography, rural settlements, education geography and physical geography respectively.

The main purpose of this study is to conduct a comprehensive review of master's and doctoral theses in the field of geography in the Turkish National Thesis Centre between 2018-2023. In this context, a database was created through the National Thesis Center, which includes information such as the year of the thesis, subject, type, method, the authors university of the author and the geographical region where the university is located. Results will allow a better understanding of academic developments and trends in the field of geography and will be a direction for future research. In this context, the results of this study provide important findings on current geography theses in Turkey.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The data sources in the study consist of master's and doctoral theses published in the National Thesis Center in the geography department between 2018 and 2023, which are open to public use and can be accessed via the internet. The theses included in the study are the theses that were reached as a result of searches with the keyword 'geography' through the internet database called National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (YOK). In this sense, with the detailed search option of the National Thesis Centre, studies whose discipline is geography and subject are geography were scanned by including the years 2018-2023 and thesis type (master and doctoral). The data obtained were evaluated and content analysis was

performed. Then were interpreted with tables, graphs and maps.

Content analysis is one of the most important techniques frequently used especially in social sciences (Bardin, 1977). Content analysis is a systematic, quantitative and objective method used to describe and analyze the content of any symbolic behavior (Cartwright, 1953).

In this study, a total of 1237 master's and doctoral theses produced between 2018-2023 in the department of geography were evaluated. 988 of the theses are master's theses and 249 of them are doctoral theses. The theses evaluated were classified according to Table 2, and then the created database was examined separately.

Table 2. Example examination of theses made within the scope of geography departments.

Department	Author	Year	Type	Subject	Method	University	Geographical region of the university
Physical Geography	Mesut Demircan	2019	PhD	Sıcaklık verilerindeki kırılma tarihleriyle iklim indekslerinin ilişkisi	Quantitative	Ankara University	Central Anatolia Region
Human and Economic Geography	Oğuzhan Gürgen	2022	Master	Ardeşen ilçe merkezi'nin Kuruluşu gelişmesi ve kentsel fonksiyonları	Qualitative	Atatürk University	Eastern Anatolia Region
Regional Geography	Cumali Ögel	2023	PhD	Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesinin kalkındırılmasında sanayinin rolü ve sorunları	Qualitative	İstanbul University	Marmara Region
Education Geography	Özlem Yücel	2022	Master	Mekânsal kavramların coğrafya ders kitaplarında kullanımı	Qualitative	Marmara University	Marmara Region

Researches in the field of geography are generally conducted in four department of science and many fields of science. In this context, a total of 1237 theses were analyzed separately as master's and doctoral theses according to their branches of science and sub-branches (Table 3). Table 3 includes only the branches of science and sub-branches of the theses included in this study.

Table 3. Distribution of geography studies according to master's-doctoral theses.

Departments of Geography and their fields of science	Master	PhD	Total
Total	988	249	1237
Geomorphology	130	25	155
Climatology	71	21	92
Biogeography	8	3	11
Plant	32	1	33
Paleogeography	5	1	6
Hydrography	32	14	46
Natural disasters	58	13	71
Land use	43	5	48
Cartography	2	1	3
Mathematics	1	0	1
Physical Geography Total	382	84	466
Human and economic	230	67	297
Population	49	2	51
Settlement	13	11	24
Cultural	44	12	56
Political	9	6	15
Historical	5	2	7
Agriculture	22	4	26
Industry	12	9	21
Transportation	1	3	4
Energy	21	0	21
Trade	1	1	2
Offense	9	0	9
Tourism	95	16	111
Health	4	2	6
Environmental issues	3	7	10
Mining	1	0	1
Human and Economic Geography Total	519	142	661
Regions	5	8	13
Countries	15	0	15
Regional Geography	20	8	28
Education Geography	67	15	82
Total	988	249	1237
Percent	80%	20%	100%

When the master's and doctoral theses were evaluated together, a total of 466 theses were found in physical geography, 661 in human and economic geography, 28 in regional geography and 82 in educational geography. The order of these from the most to the least theses is human and economic geography, physical geography, educational

geography and regional geography. Within the scope of physical geography, geomorphology, climatology, biogeography, plant, paleogeography, hydrography, natural disasters, land use, cartography, mathematical geography have been handled. In the field of Human and economic geography, population, settlement, cultural, political, historical geography, agriculture, industry, transportation, energy, trade, offense, tourism, health, environmental issues, mining have been handled. In regional geography, region and countries were studied. Finally, in educational geography, there is a wide range of topics such as geography teaching methods, textbook review, planning and evaluation in teaching.

In the study, Microsoft Excel was preferred for data editing and ArcGIS Pro from GIS software was preferred for mapping. 'R' software was used for creating and visualizing graphics.

3. RESULTS

In this study, postgraduate theses in geography studies registered in the National Thesis Centre were examined. The study covers postgraduate theses registered in the National Thesis Centre between 2018 and 2023. A total of 1237 theses have been evaluated within the scope of the study. Of the theses, 988 are master's theses and 249 are doctoral theses. In this context, a database containing information such as the university to which the authors are connected, the geographical region where the university is located, the subject of the theses, the type of theses, the method used and the year of publication was created through the National Thesis Centre. Thus, master's and doctoral theses in the field of geography were examined in various aspects.

3.1. Evaluation of Master Theses

A master's degree marks the starting point of an academic career; during this process, students aim to select their area of interest and establish connections with academics specialized in that field (Özçakmak, 2017). The master's program can be offered either with or without a thesis. In the thesis-based master's program, the objective is for students to effectively access, assess, and interpret information through scientific research. Conversely, the non-thesis master's program aims to equip students with comprehensive knowledge of their professional field and to illustrate how to apply existing knowledge in practical situations (Akm, 2016).

Within the framework of the study, when the distribution of 988 master's theses made in the department of geography between 2018-2023 according to years is examined, 107 master's theses were produced in 2018, 250 in 2019, 131 in 2020, 134 in 2021, 199 in 2022 and 167 in 2023 (Figure 1). The year with the highest number of theses (250) is 2019. The least number of theses was produced in 2018 (107).

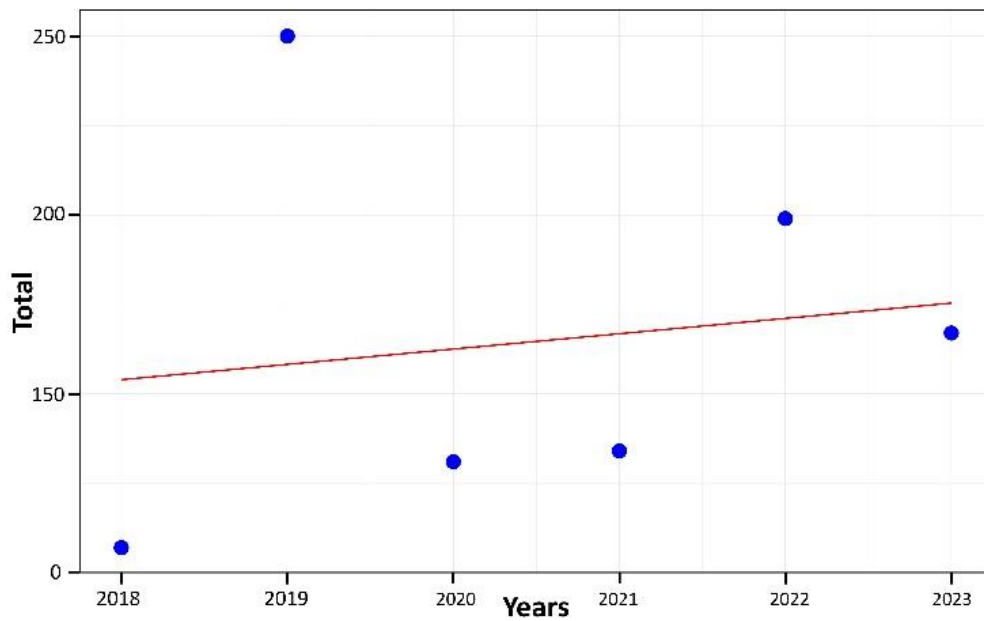


Figure 1. Temporal distribution of master's theses.

According to the evaluations, the first 10 universities that produced the most theses are İstanbul (88 theses), Atatürk (80 theses), Karabük (75 theses), Çanakkale (64 theses),

Marmara (58 theses), Akdeniz (51 theses), Ondokuz Mayıs (47), Harran (43), Fırat (42) and Ankara (37) universities, respectively (Figure 2).

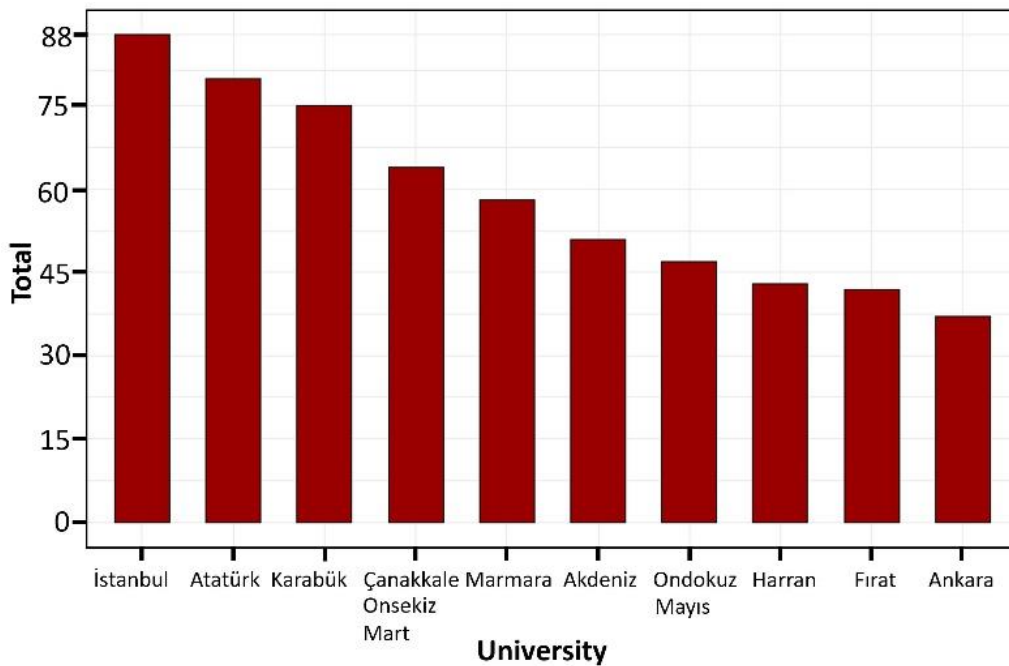


Figure 2. First 10 universities producing the most master's theses in the field of geography.

When the analyzed master's theses are examined based on the geographical region of the university to which the author is affiliated, the order is as follows: Marmara Region (299), Eastern Anatolia Region (184), Black Sea Region (133), Mediterranean Region (132), Central Anatolia Region (107), Aegean Region (67), Southeastern Anatolia Region (66), (Figure 3).

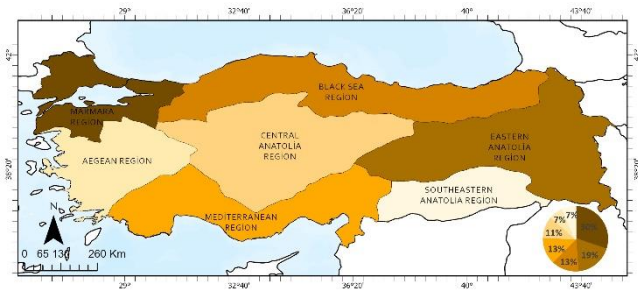


Figure 3. Distribution of master's theses on the basis of geographical regions.

The subjects of the master's theses evaluated in the study are divided into 4 classes as physical, human and economic, regional and educational geography. Accordingly, there are 382 theses in physical geography, 519 in human and economic geography, 20 in regional geography and 67 in educational geography (Figure 4). In master's theses, human and economic geography ranked first, while regional geography ranked last. Geomorphology, climatology, natural disasters, land use and plant geography are the top 5 most studied subjects in physical geography compared to other subjects. Human and economic geography, tourism, population, culture, agriculture and energy are the most studied subjects in human and economic compared to other subjects. In regional geography, country geography has been studied the most. There is a general distribution between subjects in educational geography.

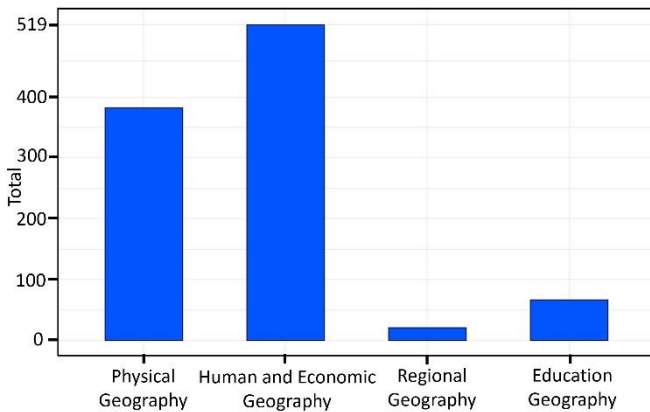


Figure 4. Distribution of master's theses according to branches of science.

Finally, 488 of the theses analyzed were qualitative, 378 were quantitative and 122 were mixed method. One of the most important sections of graduate theses is the methodology. When the method titles of the theses examined within the scope of the research are examined, some of the theses do not have a method title at all, while some of the theses have a method title, but there is no information about which method was applied in the study, how the data were analyzed, and which methods were followed in the study.

3.2. Evaluation of Doctoral Theses

The goal of the doctoral program is to create a new scientific methodology that introduces innovation to the field or to adapt an existing method for application in a different area, thereby equipping students with the skills necessary to design and conduct original research (Özdemir, 2018).

Within the scope of the study, when the temporal distribution of 249 doctoral theses made department geography between 2018 and 2023 is analyzed, 27 theses were produced in 2018, 34 theses 2019, 26 theses 2020, 47 in 2021, 49 in 2022 and 66 in 2023 (Figure 5). Although there is a decline in doctoral theses in 2020, there is a gradual increase between the other years in general. The year with the highest number of theses (66) is 2023. The least number of theses was produced in 2020 (26).

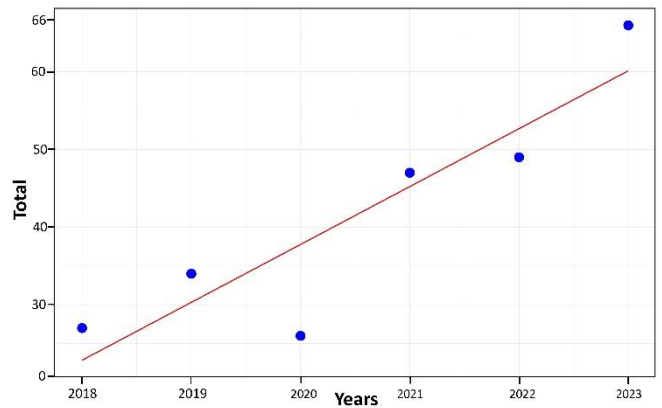


Figure 5. Temporal distribution of doctoral theses.

According to the evaluations, the first 10 universities that produced the most theses are İstanbul (48 theses), Ankara (24 theses), Marmara (22 theses), Atatürk (21 theses), Ondokuz Mayıs (16 theses), Karabük (15 theses), Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart (11 theses), Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam (11 theses), Fırat (10 theses) and Harran (8 theses) universities, respectively (Figure 6).

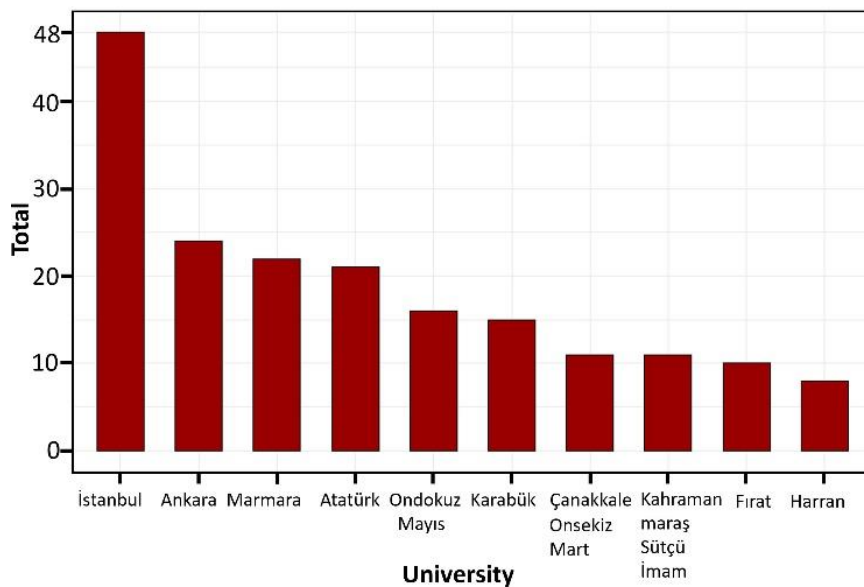


Figure 6. First 10 universities producing the most doctoral theses in the field of geography.

When the analyzed doctoral theses are examined based on the geographical region of the university to which the author is affiliated, the order is as follows: Marmara Region (100), Eastern Anatolia Region (39), Black Sea Region (33), Central Anatolia Region (32), Aegean Region (21), Mediterranean Region (16), Southeastern Anatolia Region (8), (Figure 7).

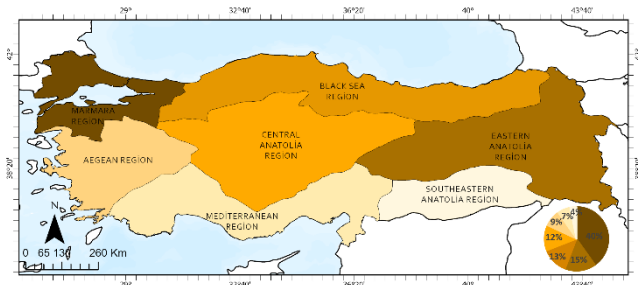


Figure 7. Distribution of doctoral theses on the basis of geographical regions.

The subjects of the doctoral theses analyzed in the study are divided into 4 classes as physical, human and economic, regional and educational geography. Accordingly, it has been determined that there are 84 theses in physical geography, 142 in human and economic geography, 8 in regional geography, and 15 in the field of educational geography (Figure 8). In doctoral theses, human and economic geography ranked first, while regional geography ranked last. The basic 5 most studied subjects in physical geography are geomorphology, climatology, hydrography, natural disasters and land use. Human and economic geography, tourism, culture, settlement, industry and environmental issues are the most studied subjects in human and economic compared to other subjects. In regional geography, regional geography has been studied the most. There is a general distribution between subjects in educational geography.

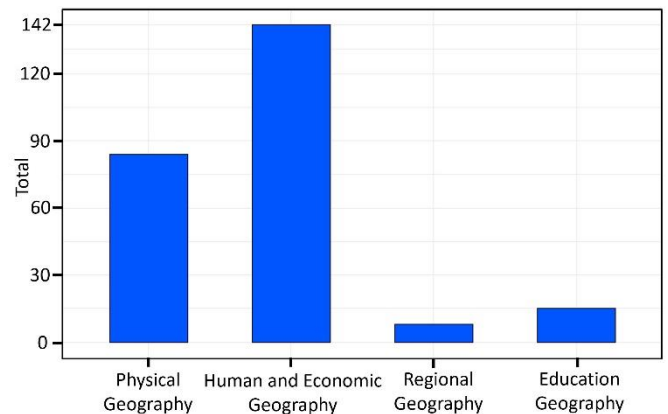


Figure 8. Distribution of doctoral theses according to branches of science.

Of the analyzed theses, 99 were qualitative, 121 were quantitative and 29 were mixed method theses. This shows that quantitative methods are becoming increasingly important, especially in terms of data analysis and objective measurement of outcomes. Nowadays, the basis of studies has shifted towards analysis and inquiries. In geography studies, engineering methods for analyzing, questioning and mapping data have gained importance.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

There are many things that need to be done in order to develop geography science and education in Turkey in a way that will respond to social and current needs. In order to advance the science and education of geography in a way that meets societal demands, various strategic approaches should be developed (Gerber and Williams, 2002). Comprehensive databases on geography studies should be created, these data should be made available for academic research, and in this process, deficiencies and new trends in current research topics should be identified (Miller and Goodchild, 2015). These databases will be a valuable

resource for future research that will both fill existing gaps and guide research trends. In this context, master's and doctoral theses at universities can provide an important resource for identifying existing gaps and areas for improvement. In particular, it can offer in-depth information on how to align with current issues and societal needs. In this study, master's and doctoral theses in the field of geography in the Turkish National Thesis Center between 2018 and 2023 were examined. A database consisting of information such as the year of production, type, topic, method, the university of the author, and the geographical region of the university of the theses examined has been evaluated. Thus, the general trends of the theses were tried to be revealed. According to the evaluations, there were more master's studies (988) than doctoral studies (249) in the field of geography. However, there is an increase in PhD studies year on year, indicating that the field continues to develop and research activities are increasing. Similarly, Kaya (2013) stated that there was an increase in doctoral theses in geography education after 2004, but this increase was lower than the increase in master's theses, and this situation was due to the low number of doctoral researchers. Among the universities producing the most theses, Istanbul University ranks first in both master's (88) and doctoral (48) programmes. In addition, when the geographical regions of the universities to which the authors of the theses evaluated are affiliated are examined, the Marmara Region ranked first as the region that produced the most thesis in both master's and doctoral programs. The subjects frequently addressed in the master's and doctoral theses examined within the scope of the research were also determined. In both master's (519) and doctoral (142) programs, most theses on human and economic geography were produced. This is followed by theses on physical geography (master's (382), doctoral (84)). In human and economic geography, tourism geography was studied the most (111), while in physical geography, geomorphology was studied the most (155). Likewise, Uzun (2018) determined tourism geography as the most studied human and economic geography subject in his study. This distribution may reflect the diversity of methods used in the research fields. In this context, the analysis revealed that qualitative methods (488) were more commonly used in master's studies, whereas quantitative methods (121) were more dominant in doctoral studies. This shows that quantitative methods are becoming increasingly important, especially in terms of data analysis and objective measurement of outcomes. These results will allow for a better understanding of academic developments and trends in the field of geography and will provide direction for future research. There is a limited number of studies on the orientations of geography studies in Turkey (Çifçi, 2017). In this context, the results of this study provide important findings on current geography theses in Turkey. According to the results of this study, it is thought that increasing the number of graduate theses in the field of geography and improving the quantity and quality of students who want to do graduate education in the field can give a positive impetus to Turkey's development. The relevant results were obtained from officially published and accepted theses. It is thought that the study will contribute in this respect.

Ethics Committee Approval

N/A

Peer-review

Externally peer-reviewed.

Author Contributions

All studies were carried out by the corresponding author.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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