

**Bibliographic Literature Review of Postgraduate Theses Examining
Burnout of Employees in Special Education Institutions**

Özel Eğitim Kurumlarında Çalışanların Tükenmişliklerinin İncelendiği
Lisansüstü Tezlerin Bibliyografik Literatür Taraması

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Abstract

This study aims to bibliographically examine postgraduate theses on burnout among individuals working in special education institutions in Türkiye. A total of 46 postgraduate theses obtained from the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) database were analyzed using document analysis, a qualitative research method. The theses were evaluated based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The findings revealed that the topic of burnout was predominantly addressed at the master's level (95.66%), with a limited number of studies conducted at the doctoral (2.17%) and medical specialization (2.17%) levels. Quantitative research methods (100%) were exclusively used, with relational (54.35%) and descriptive survey (45.65%) designs being the most frequently employed approaches. Studies conducted in the fields of psychology (19.59%) and special education (15.26%) were prominent, while fewer studies were observed in areas such as public health, business administration, and rehabilitation. Among the most frequently examined variables alongside burnout were job satisfaction (11.90%), work engagement (11.90%), and self-efficacy (11.90%), reflecting a focus on individual and professional factors. When examining the geographical distribution of research, it was found that studies conducted at universities in the western regions were more prevalent compared to those in the eastern regions. The study emphasizes the necessity of qualitative and mixed-method research to explore the contextual and multidimensional aspects of burnout. Furthermore, increasing research in underrepresented fields such as health and organizational management could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. This bibliographic review contributes to the existing literature while providing practical recommendations for addressing burnout in special education institutions. It underscores the importance of support mechanisms tailored to the unique challenges faced by employees in this field.

Keywords: Burnout, bibliographical literature review, document analysis, postgraduate theses, special education institutions.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki özel eğitim kurumlarında çalışan bireylerin tükenmişlik konusundaki lisansüstü tezlerini bibliyografik bir şekilde incelemeyi

amaçlamaktadır. Yükseköğretim Kurulu (YÖK) veri tabanından elde edilen 46 lisansüstü tez, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden doküman analizi kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Tezler, önceden belirlenen dahil etme ve dışlama ölçütlerine göre değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular, tükenmişlik konusunun büyük oranda yüksek lisans düzeyinde (%95,66) ele alındığını, doktora (%2,17) ve tıpta uzmanlık (%2,17) düzeyinde ise sınırlı sayıda çalışmaya yer verildiğini ortaya koymuştur. Nicel araştırma yöntemleri (%100) ağırlıklı olarak tercih edilmiş olup, ilişkisel (%54,35) ve betimsel tarama (%45,65) desenleri en sık kullanılan yaklaşımlar olmuştur. Psikoloji (%19,59) ve özel eğitim (%15,26) alanlarında yapılan çalışmalar öne çıkarken, halk sağlığı, işletme ve rehabilitasyon gibi alanlarda daha az sayıda çalışmaya rastlanmıştır. Tükenmişlikle birlikte en sık incelenen değişkenler arasında iş doyumu (%11,90), iş tatmini (%11,90) ve öz yeterlik (%11,90) yer almış; bireysel ve mesleki faktörlere odaklanıldığı görülmüştür. Araştırmaların coğrafi dağılımı incelendiğinde, batıdaki üniversitelerdeki çalışmaların doğudakilere kıyasla daha yoğun olduğu belirlenmiştir. Çalışma, tükenmişlik konusunun bağlamsal ve çok boyutlu yönlerini keşfetmek için nitel ve karma yöntemli araştırmaların gerekliliğine vurgu yapmaktadır. Ayrıca, sağlık ve örgütsel yönetim gibi az temsil edilen alanlarda araştırmaların artırılması, fenomenin daha kapsamlı bir şekilde anlaşılmasını sağlayabilir. Bu bibliyografik inceleme, mevcut literatüre katkıda bulunurken, özel eğitim kurumlarındaki tükenmişliği ele almak için pratik öneriler de sunmaktadır. Çalışma, bu alandaki çalışanların karşılaştığı benzersiz zorluklara yönelik destek mekanizmalarının önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bibliyografik inceleme, doküman analizi, lisansüstü tezler, özel eğitim kurumları, tükenmişlik.

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Introduction

One of the areas where individuals spend most of their time throughout their lives is undoubtedly the work environment. People dedicate a significant

portion of their lives to being at work or engaging in work-related activities. It is an undeniable fact that work life has both positive and negative effects on individuals. In particular, interpersonal conflicts, highly competitive work environments, efforts to prove oneself, and high expectations from others negatively affect mental health and lead to stress (Cemaloğlu & Erdemoğlu-Şahin, 2007). Stress, which can impact every employee in their work life, can result in decreased performance, physiological disorders, anxiety, depression, behavioral problems, and issues such as burnout (Sabuncuoğlu, 2000). Burnout arises as individuals face increasing difficulties in their professional relationships and develop a growing belief that things are not going well (Gündüz, 2004). The concept of burnout, introduced into the literature by Herbert Freudenberger in 1974, is defined as the deterioration, failure, and exhaustion resulting from excessive demands on one's strength, energy, and resources (Freudenberger, 1974). Christina Maslach, through her studies on burnout among healthcare workers, focused on the concept of burnout, particularly in professional fields (Schaufeli & Enzman, 1998). Thus, various definitions of burnout have been proposed within professional domains. Maslach (1993) defined occupational burnout as a syndrome characterized by hopelessness, helplessness, negative self-perception, chronic fatigue, and the development of negative attitudes and behaviors toward life, work, and others, arising from emotional exhaustion, reduced feelings of accomplishment, and detachment from work. Additionally, those who define burnout as situational describe it as a syndrome characterized by exhaustion and lack of motivation with multiple dimensions (Maslach-Pines & Aronson, 1988). Those who define it as a process view burnout as a psychological erosion process characterized by escalating disappointment (Cherniss, 1990). Based on all these definitions, it is clear that the concept of burnout has a multidimensional structure. Indeed, Maslach and his colleagues (2001) conceptualized burnout as a three-dimensional structure, which includes:

1. Emotional Exhaustion:

Emotional exhaustion refers to the depletion of energy caused by intense emotional and psychological strain during the work process (Jackson et al., 1986). Employees experiencing this dimension often perceive themselves as

overly fatigued and drained (Dolgun, 2010). They may feel that they are no longer beneficial to others and often think they are useless (Torun, 1997). Emotional exhaustion frequently occurs in professions involving intense human interactions, where the reduction in emotional energy, combined with physical exhaustion due to stress, leads to burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). At this stage, professional idealism begins to fade, resulting in significant issues with employee performance, attitudes toward service recipients, and loyalty to the workplace (Demirel & Seçkin, 2009).

2. Depersonalization:

Individuals in this dimension ignore the demands and requests of others, often exhibiting rude and condescending attitudes (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Over time, detachment from work increases, accompanied by aggressive behaviors, pessimism, and a melancholic state (Losyk, 2006). In short, being indifferent to one's work and refusing to sustain it is described as depersonalization (Maslach et al., 2001).

3. Reduced Personal Accomplishment:

Individuals in this dimension feel physically and emotionally exhausted, adopt negative attitudes toward themselves and those they serve, and experience reduced self-efficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). These individuals believe their efforts are futile, leading to feelings of guilt and increased perceptions of failure (Torun, 1997). In particular, it is known that teachers do not have the habit of stopping in order to decrease their achievements, therefore their self-efficacy is damaged over time and they experience occupational burnout (Uzun - Yaprakdal, 2022). Consequently, they lose confidence in themselves while also losing the trust of others (Leiter & Maslach, 2017). The literature indicates that individuals experiencing burnout frequently exhibit sudden anger outbursts, loneliness, persistent irritability, hopelessness, helplessness, and feelings of

frustration (Gündüz, 2004). Furthermore, the literature suggests that the symptoms of burnout can manifest in four domains: emotional, behavioral, psychological, and physical (Deckard et al., 1994).

3.1.Emotional Symptoms:

These include criticizing others, emotionally detached behaviors, lack of interest in others, feelings of failure, boredom, disappointment, hypersensitivity, alienation, and a desire to be alone (Ören-Türkoğlu, 2006).

3.2.Behavioral Symptoms:

These involve the chronicization of tense behaviors, sudden outbursts of anger, crying spells, increased fragility, reduced self-esteem and self-confidence, forgetfulness, difficulty in learning, tendencies toward alcohol and tobacco use, drug dependency, and lack of motivation for work (Sürgevil, 2006).

3.3.Physical Symptoms:

These include chronic headaches, sleep disorders, weight loss or excessive weight gain, chronic fatigue, digestive problems, sexual dysfunction, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart conditions, and similar issues (Demirel-Seçkin, 2009).

3.4.Psychological Symptoms:

These encompass depression, persistent anxiety, excessive fear and worry, a paranoid sense of frustration, failure and the associated guilt, panic attacks, hopelessness, helplessness, anger, and feelings of being unsupported (Sürgevil, 2006).

Recognizing the symptoms of burnout is extremely important to prevent serious consequences that have significant effects on an individual's health, job performance, social relationships, and organizational functioning. Failure to recognize and address these symptoms can lead to much more severe problems. This is particularly true for education workers who are at high risk of burnout due to the intensive emotional, mental, and physical effort required in their profession. Indeed, Antonious and Walters (2000) stated in their study that teaching is one of the most stressful professions, and the burnout resulting from

this stress weakens the quality of teaching. Burnout in education can cause educators to lose interest, adopt a cynical attitude toward students, and engage in inappropriate behaviors (Baysal, 1995). However, it is frequently emphasized in the literature that teachers with high psychological well-being are necessary for students with high psychological well-being (Uzun - Tortumlu, 2024).

Along with all these challenges, burnout is more frequently observed among educational staff, particularly those working in special education institutions (Sarıçam & Sakız, 2014). There are several reasons why burnout is more prevalent among special education workers. Working with individuals with disabilities requires teachers to demonstrate a high level of empathy, patience, and emotional resilience (Lee et al., 2020). This increases the emotional burden on teachers, contributing to their experience of burnout. Additionally, the preparation of individualized education plans and responding to the diverse needs of each student make the workload highly complex and intense. Long-term stress is another critical issue faced by special education teachers (Brunsting et al., 2014). This stress stems from the necessity to meet the varied needs of students and systemic challenges, such as the excessive bureaucratic processes. Moreover, managing problem behaviors requires additional effort, which exacerbates teachers' physical and mental exhaustion. Feelings of professional inadequacy, such as believing that they are not contributing enough to their students' development, can also fuel burnout. Another stressor for teachers is the need for frequent communication with the families of individuals with special needs. Responding to families' demands and regularly providing updates on students' progress further increases the emotional burden on teachers.

Previous bibliographic reviews on burnout often focus on general aspects of the concept, its impact on various professional groups, and its relationship with individual or organizational factors (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schaufeli et al., 2009). However, there is a significant gap in bibliographic analyses addressing burnout among special education staff specifically. Existing studies tend to remain limited to individual samples, lacking comprehensive analyses that account for geographical, occupational, or organizational contexts. This study aims to address these gaps by examining postgraduate theses that focus on burnout among staff working in special education institutions in Turkey. By doing

so, it seeks to offer a broader perspective on the multidimensional and contextual aspects of burnout in this field.

Considering all these factors, this study aims to bibliographically examine postgraduate theses in Turkey addressing the issue of burnout in special education institutions. This research presents a significant opportunity to identify which aspects of burnout in special education have been adequately explored and which areas still have gaps. This process will assist in identifying research gaps, enabling future studies to be more targeted and effective. Furthermore, highlighting trends and different approaches in the literature on burnout will contribute to shaping prevention and management strategies. Bibliographic reviews not only provide theoretical contributions but also form a foundation for practical solutions that can be implemented in special education institutions. The findings of these theses may enable the development of more effective support mechanisms tailored to the needs of teachers and other staff.

Considering these aspects, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on the burnout of employees in special education institutions by year?
2. What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on the burnout of employees in special education institutions by academic level?
3. What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on the burnout of employees in special education institutions by research method?
4. What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on the burnout of employees in special education institutions by the universities where they were conducted?
5. What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on the burnout of employees in special education institutions by the department in which they were conducted?
6. What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on the burnout of employees in special education institutions by the other variables examined in these studies?

2. Research Model

In this study, document analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, was chosen to reveal trends in postgraduate theses on the burnout of individuals working in special education institutions according to various characteristics. Document analysis, a form of documentary review, involves obtaining data by examining existing documents and records (Karasar, 2012). Document analysis includes various procedures for analyzing electronic and printed materials containing information about the phenomenon or phenomena targeted for investigation (Bowen, 2009). Documents that can be subjected to document analysis include notes, meeting minutes, brochures, maps, books, magazines, scripts, reports, articles, theses, archives, and newspaper articles (Patton, 1980).

3. Sample

The data in this research were obtained from postgraduate studies available in the database of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) Documentation Department. Postgraduate theses related to the burnout of individuals working in special education institutions within this database were examined. When forming the sample group, an initial search was conducted using the keyword "special education," resulting in a total of 643 postgraduate theses. Subsequently, the term "burnout" was included in the search, narrowing the results to 53 postgraduate theses. These theses were reviewed by two different researchers according to inclusion and exclusion criteria, and as a final result, it was decided that the sample group for the study would consist of 46 postgraduate theses.

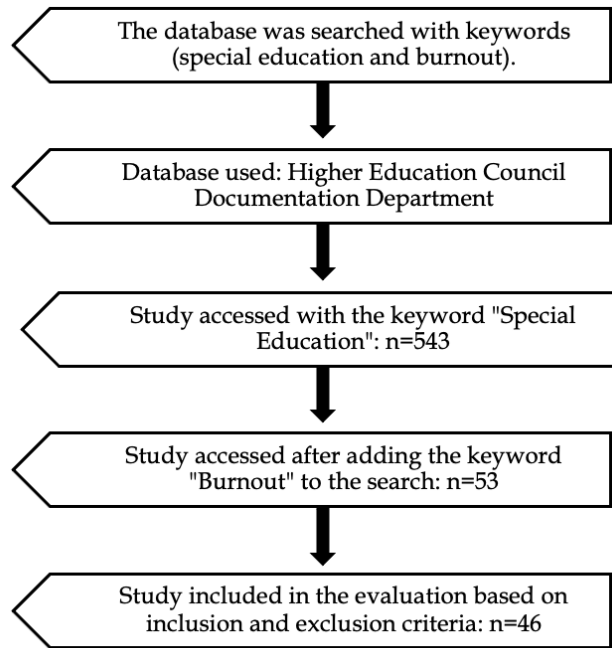


Figure 1. Study Search Flow Diagram

3.1.Inclusion Criteria

1. Postgraduate theses completed up to the year 2024 were included in the study.
2. Postgraduate theses where the study group consisted of employees working in special education institutions were included in the study.

3.2.Exclusion Criteria

1. Theses where the entered keywords ("special education," "burnout") were used in different contexts or unrelated scientific fields entirely outside the scope of the topic.
2. Burnout studies conducted in special education institutions along with other institutions.

3. Studies conducted with prospective professionals (e.g., teacher candidates, physiotherapist candidates, etc.).

4.Data Collection and Analysis

During the data collection process, techniques such as literature review, examination, and note-taking were employed. In this regard, the data collection method for this research is the document review technique. Document analysis in this study was carried out in five stages: (1) accessing the documents, (2) checking for authenticity, (3) understanding the documents, (4) analyzing the data, and (5) utilizing the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

The Thesis Review Form used in this study consists of six sections: the types and years of publication of the theses, their distribution according to university types, their distribution by departments, the methods used in the theses, and other variables related to the concept of burnout. This form was designed to enable the bibliographic analysis and evaluation of each examined thesis. A pilot study was conducted to test the applicability and validity of the Thesis Review Form. In this pilot study, the form was applied to 5 theses by two independent evaluators, and based on the feedback obtained during this process, some adjustments were made to the form. These adjustments contributed to making the form more comprehensible and systematic.

After the pilot test, the final version of the Thesis Review Form was used on 46 theses. Each thesis was evaluated by two independent researchers in accordance with the form, and the obtained data were compared to ensure interrater reliability. In cases of discrepancies, consensus meetings were held, and the data were consolidated. This process was a significant step in improving the reliability of the data. Additionally, to ensure data reliability, the following formula was used in the study: "Reliability = $100 \times \text{Number of Agreements} / (\text{Number of Agreements} + \text{Number of Disagreements})$." This formula yielded a reliability score of 84%, which exceeds the generally accepted threshold of 80% (Miles - Huberman, 1994).

The creation of this form was informed by the studies conducted by Güven and Aslan (2018) and Güven, Aslan and Akyol (2017). The Thesis Review Form consists of six sections:

1. The publication types and years of the theses,
2. Distribution of theses by university types,
3. Distribution of theses by departments,
4. Methods used in the theses,
5. Variables related to burnout in the theses,
6. Additional variables related to burnout.

The collected data were entered into the QDA Miner Lite program, and frequency and percentage analyses were conducted. The findings obtained from the analyses were discussed within the framework of the literature, and various recommendations were provided to researchers.

5.Ethical Principles Observed in the Research

In this study, the researchers explicitly stated the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the documents to be examined, documented the keywords used in the database search, and explained the stages of document analysis. To ensure data reliability, the researchers conducted inter-observer reliability measurements in two stages. The research data are limited to the information obtained from the analyzed theses.

Findings

In this study, 46 postgraduate theses examining the burnout of employees in special education institutions were analyzed. The distribution of the theses prepared within this scope by year is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Theses by Year

Year	Frequency	Percentage (%)
2023	7	15,26
2022	5	10,87
2021	3	6,52
2019	8	17,39

2018	5	10,87
2017	2	4,34
2016	5	10,87
2015	1	2,17
2013	2	4,34
2011	2	4,34
2010	1	2,17
2008	2	4,34
2007	3	6,52
Total	46	100

Upon examining Table 1, it is observed that approximately 17.39% (n=8) of postgraduate theses examining the burnout of employees in special education institutions were conducted in 2019. Following this, around 15.26% (n=7) of the theses were prepared in 2023. After 2023, 10.87% (n=5) of the theses were completed in the years 2022, 2018, and 2016. In 2021 and 2007, 6.52% (n=3) of the theses were prepared, while in 2017, 2013, 2011, and 2008, 4.34% (n=2) were completed. In 2015 and 2010, only 2.17% (n=1) of the theses were prepared.

It is also notable that no postgraduate theses on the burnout of employees in special education institutions were prepared in 2020, 2014, 2012, or 2009. The distribution of theses by postgraduate academic level is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Theses by Academic Level

Type of thesis	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Master's Degree	44	95,66
Doctorate	1	2,17
Medical Specialization	1	2,17
Total	46	100

Upon examining Table 2, it is observed that approximately 95.66% (n=44) of the postgraduate theses examining the burnout of employees in special education institutions were conducted at the master's level. Additionally, only 2.17% (n=1) of the theses were at the doctoral and medical specialization levels. The distribution of theses by research method is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Theses by Research Method

Research Method	Research Design	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Quantitative	Descriptive Survey	21	45,65
	Relational Survey	25	54,35
Qualitative	-	-	0
Mixed Methods	-	-	0
Total		46	100

Upon examining Table 3, it is observed that 100% (n=46n=46n=46) of the theses employed quantitative research methods. Additionally, 54.35% (n=25) of the studies used a relational survey design, while 45.65% (n=21) employed a descriptive survey design.

Table 4. Distribution of Theses by University

University	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Abant İzzet Baysal U.	1	2,17
Ahi Evran U.	1	2,17
Akdeniz U.	1	2,17
Aksaray U.	1	2,17
Anadolu U.	2	4,34
Beykent U.	2	4,34
Biruni U.	1	2,17
Çağ U.	1	2,17

Çukurova U.	1	2,17
Dicle U.	1	2,17
Dumlupınar U.	1	2,17
Eskişehir Osmangazi U.	2	4,34
Fırat U.	2	4,34
Gaziantep U.	1	2,17
Gelişim U.	1	2,17
Hacı Bektaş Veli U.	1	2,17
Haliç U.	1	2,17
İnönü U.	1	2,17
Kastamonu U.	1	2,17
Maltepe U.	2	4,34
Marmara U.	3	6,51
Necmettin Erbakan U.	3	6,51
Niğde Ömer Halis Demir U.	1	2,17
Nişantaşı U.	1	2,17
Okan U.	2	4,34
On Sekiz Mart U.	1	2,17
Pamukkale U.	1	2,17
Selçuk U.	1	2,17
Sivas Cumhuriyet U.	1	2,17
Süleyman Demirel U.	1	2,17
Türk Hava Kurumu U.	1	2,17

Ufuk U.	1	2,17
Uluslararası Kıbrıs U.	1	2,17
Uşak U.	2	4,34
Üsküdar U.	1	2,17
Total	46	100

Table 4 shows that postgraduate theses on the burnout of employees in special education institutions were conducted at a total of 35 different universities. The highest number of theses were prepared at Marmara University and Necmettin Erbakan University, each accounting for 6.51% (n=3) of the total. These universities are followed by Anadolu University, Beykent University, Eskişehir Osmangazi University, Fırat University, Maltepe University, Okan University, and Uşak University, each contributing 4.34% (n=2). The remaining 27 universities each accounted for 2.17% (n=1) of the theses. The distribution of theses by academic department is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of Theses by Academic Department

Academic Department	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Business Administration	2	4,34
Child Development	1	2,17
Educational Administration	5	10,87
Educational Programs	1	2,17
Educational Sciences	2	4,34
Elementary Education	3	6,52
Guidance and Psychological Counseling	3	6,52
Management and Organization	1	2,17

Music	1	2,17
Nursing	1	2,17
Physical Education and Sports	2	4,34
Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation	2	4,34
Psychiatry	1	2,17
Psychology	9	19,59
Public Health	3	6,52
Public Policy and Management	1	2,17
Recreation	1	2,17
Special Education	7	15,26
Total	46	100

Upon examining Table 5, it is observed that approximately 19.59% (n=9) of the theses analyzing burnout levels of employees in special education institutions were conducted in the psychology department. Theses prepared in the special education department account for 15.26% (n=7). Additionally, 10.87% (n=5) were completed in the educational administration department, while 6.52% (n=3) were prepared in public health, elementary education, and guidance and psychological counseling departments.

Table 6. Variables Examined Alongside Burnout in Theses

Variable Examined with Burnout	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Anxiety	2	4,76
Classroom Management Skills	1	2,38
Depression	2	4,76
Empathic Tendency	4	9,56
Ethical Behavior	1	2,38

Ethical Climate	1	2,38
Fatigue	1	2,38
Job Satisfaction	5	11,90
Life Satisfaction	2	4,76
Mindfulness	1	2,38
Perceived Organizational Support	1	2,38
Perceived Role Conflict	1	2,38
Physical Activity	1	2,38
Professional Satisfaction	1	2,38
Professional Self-Esteem	1	2,38
Psychological Needs	1	2,38
Quality of Life	1	2,38
Self-Adequacy	5	11,90
Self-Efficacy	1	2,38
Sleep Quality	1	2,38
Subjective Well-Being	1	2,38
Teaching Mood	1	2,38
Work Engagement	5	11,90
Work Stress	1	2,38
Total	42	100

As shown in Table 6, the most frequently examined variables alongside burnout were job satisfaction, work engagement, and self-efficacy, each accounting for 11.90% (n=5). Empathic tendency followed as the second most examined variable, at 9.56% (n=4). Variables such as anxiety, depression, and life satisfaction were each examined in 4.76% (n=2) of the theses.

Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

Upon examining Table 1, the year 2019 saw the highest number of theses with 8 studies (17.39%), indicating that the topic of burnout was intensely researched and discussed during that period. In recent years (2022 and 2023), an increase in research activity has also been observed. For example, in 2023, 7 theses (15.26%) were completed, showing a significant momentum in research. However, some stagnation is noticeable during the years 2010–2016. For instance, only one thesis (2.17%) was conducted in both 2010 and 2015. Nevertheless, a resurgence was observed in 2016 (10.87%). The topic of burnout has gained increasing academic attention, particularly in recent years. This indicates that issues such as burnout and work-life balance are becoming more prominent in contemporary educational institutions.

In the literature, burnout has been a frequently studied concept in both work life and the education sector, especially in recent years. This increase can be attributed to factors such as the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, remote education, and increased workloads. It is also noted in the literature that employees in the field of special education face a higher risk of burnout compared to other educational domains (Leiter & Maslach, 2017). This aligns with the intensified research focus in recent years. The lower number of theses during the 2007–2010 period suggests that burnout was either not sufficiently recognized or that the focus on special education was limited. However, the growing awareness after 2010 has contributed to the development of the burnout literature. The data demonstrates an increasing awareness and interest in burnout over the years. This highlights the need for special education institutions to focus more on necessary interventions and measures to mitigate the risk of burnout. Turkish special education professionals face unique challenges, including managing individualized education plans, addressing students' diverse needs, and balancing intense emotional demands with limited institutional support. The emotional burden is exacerbated by frequent interactions with families and bureaucratic obstacles, which increase stress and exhaustion. Additionally, insufficient training and lack of access to professional development opportunities further hinder their ability to cope effectively with these challenges. These factors highlight the need for targeted interventions, including

comprehensive support systems, mental health resources, and workload adjustments tailored to the specific demands of special education settings, particularly in underrepresented regions of Turkey. Consistent with the literature, exploring the reasons for this increase in research within a broader socio-economic and educational policy context would be beneficial.

Upon examining Table 2, 95.66% (44 theses) of the studies were conducted at the master's level, indicating that the topic has predominantly been addressed by master's students. However, doctoral studies (2.17%) and medical specialization theses (2.17%) together account for only two studies. This suggests that the topic has not been sufficiently explored in the context of in-depth academic research (doctorate) or within the medical discipline (medical specialization). It is thought that this result is due to the fact that special education departments in the majority of universities in Turkey provide postgraduate education at master's level. This situation can be interpreted as the fact that not enough professors and associate professors are trained to work in special education departments in our country.

Table 2 reveals that psychosocial topics such as burnout are more commonly the focus of master's level research and are rarely explored in greater depth, such as in doctoral studies. The literature notes that master's theses often contribute significantly to the body of knowledge by addressing localized issues through individual efforts (Mertens, 2021). This may explain why burnout is more frequently examined through applied research at the master's level. The low number of doctoral studies suggests that the theoretical depth of burnout as a topic might remain limited. The literature emphasizes the need to address psychological concepts like burnout within broader organizational or socio-economic contexts (Leiter & Maslach, 2017). The scarcity of doctoral theses may indicate that such topics are not sufficiently integrated across academic disciplines. The rarity of medical specialization theses (2.17%) suggests that burnout, particularly among employees in special education, has not been adequately examined from the perspective of physical and mental health. The literature highlights the link between burnout in teachers and special education employees with physical health problems (Dearing, 2020).

Upon examining Table 3, it is observed that all studies (100%) were based on quantitative methods. This indicates that the topic has been addressed through measurable and generalizable outcomes. Additionally, nearly half of the studies (45.65%) aimed to describe and explain the current situation, while the majority focused on examining relationships between variables. The absence of qualitative and mixed methods suggests that the studies may have missed opportunities to explore deeper, context-specific meanings.

In theses conducted in Turkey, burnout has predominantly been studied using quantitative methods. This can be attributed to the widespread use of burnout scales and the advantages of standardized data collection tools (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). However, it has also been noted that quantitative methods have limitations in fully capturing contextual and individual experiences (Creswell, 2014). The strong emphasis on examining relationships between variables demonstrates a significant interest in the causes and effects of burnout in these studies.

Moreover, the literature highlights that qualitative studies could provide a better understanding of the phenomenology of burnout and offer richer insights into individuals' experiences (Hobfoll, 1989). Mixed methods are considered ideal for obtaining both generalizable findings and in-depth contextual information. The literature also emphasizes the effective use of mixed methods, particularly in educational research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2006). The reliance solely on quantitative methods in these studies suggests that while the research focuses on generalizable outcomes, it may neglect individual and contextual dimensions. Future research should incorporate qualitative and mixed methods to address burnout more comprehensively.

Upon examining Table 4, it is observed that studies were conducted at 36 different universities. This indicates that academic institutions across Turkey have shown interest in the topic of burnout, and related studies are distributed throughout the country. However, the universities where the most theses were conducted are Marmara University (6.51%) and Necmettin Erbakan University (6.51%). The studies were conducted at both public and private universities, demonstrating that the topic of burnout is approached from various academic

structures and perspectives. For instance, while public universities such as Marmara University and Anadolu University contributed, private universities such as Beykent University and Üsküdar University also played a role.

Although there is some geographical diversity among the universities, a higher concentration of studies was conducted at universities in western regions of Turkey. Fewer theses were carried out at universities in eastern regions, such as Dicle University and Firat University. The fact that studies were conducted at 36 different universities highlights the broad academic interest in burnout across regions and institutions. However, increasing the number of studies in universities located in eastern and southeastern regions could enable a more comprehensive exploration of burnout in different contexts.

Upon examining Table 5, it is observed that the fields of Psychology (19.59%) and Special Education (15.26%) have the highest number of theses. In the literature, burnout is frequently associated with individual stress factors and work-life balance within the discipline of psychology (Leiter & Maslach, 2017). Similarly, it is often emphasized that employees in special education face a high risk of burnout due to workloads, emotional demands, and challenging working conditions (Brunsting et al., 2014). Disciplines such as Business Administration (4.34%), Public Health (6.52%), and Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation (4.34%) hosted fewer studies. However, their inclusion demonstrates that burnout in special education institutions is a multidisciplinary topic. The high frequency of studies in education-related departments reflects intense academic interest in the job stress and burnout issues faced by teachers and educational leaders. The contributions from health-related fields such as Public Health and Physiotherapy suggest that healthcare professionals may face similar burnout challenges in special education institutions. The relatively low number of studies in Business Administration and Management fields indicates that exploring burnout from an organizational perspective in special education institutions is not yet sufficiently common.

Upon examining Table 6, it is evident that job satisfaction (11.90%), work engagement (11.90%), self-efficacy (11.90%), and empathic tendency (9.56%) are the most frequently examined variables alongside burnout in special education

institutions. Indeed, a review of the literature reveals that job satisfaction (Karaköse & Güney, 2024) work engagement (Bayarçelik & Hıdır, 2020; Atalay & Çakirel, 2022), self-efficacy (Gönüldaş & Gümüşkaya, 2022), and empathic tendency (Ağapınar & Güler Şahin, 2014) are variables frequently studied in relation to burnout.

The examination of a total of 24 different variables indicates that burnout is addressed in a multidimensional manner. Variables such as job satisfaction, work engagement, and self-efficacy are critical for understanding the core elements of burnout. However, less frequently studied variables should be further explored to provide a broader perspective on the organizational and individual dimensions of burnout. Future research should focus on mixed-method studies to explore the relationships between these variables more comprehensively. In particular, topics such as ethical behavior, role conflict, and quality of life could be examined in greater depth to enhance the understanding of burnout from diverse perspectives.

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