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Examining Postgraduate Theses on Home Healthcare in the Field of Nursing in Türkiye

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ABSTRACT:

Purpose: In this study, it was aimed to review the postgraduate thesis studies on home health in the field of nursing in Türkiye, to reveal the outcomes of the postgraduate theses, and to present tangible data to researchers and nurses providing home health services.

Material and Methods: It is a retrospective descriptive study carried out to examine postgraduate thesis studies on home health in Türkiye in the nursing field. In the literature review, a search was conducted in the Higher Education Council National Thesis Center database between August 20, 2024, and August 29, 2024, to identify postgraduate theses related to home health care in the field of nursing.

Results: 169 postgraduate theses meeting the inclusion criteria were assessed in the research. Of the theses accessed between 20.08.2024-29.08.2024 on home health in the field of nursing, "43" were doctoral theses and "126" were master's theses. While descriptive research is mostly conducted in master's theses, semi-experimental/experimental designs are more prominent in doctoral theses; it has been determined that in both levels, the sample group is predominantly composed of patients.

Conclusion: Quantitative research methods are the majority in both master's and doctoral theses on home health in the field of nursing, and qualitative research methods are in the minority. In addition, although few in number, mixed methods are used as a research type in doctoral theses.

Keywords: Home health; home care; nursing; academic theses

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INTRODUCTION

Home health services are a substantial health care model that facilitates individuals to receive health services in their own living spaces, aiming to enhance the quality of life, particularly in cases such as chronic diseases, old age, and disability. Moreover, it is stated that home health care is highly demanded worldwide, providing long-term medical services to patients at home (Di Mascolo et al., 2021). The efficiency of these services involves a multidisciplinary approach, and nurses are the keystones. Nursing is an essential part of home health care, affecting people's daily lives and health.

Thus, it is indicated that investigating the work of home care nurses is significant for patients and health services in all countries where such nursing is provided (Fjørtoft et al., 2020).

Home nursing care involves a wide range of care services, i.e., clinical care, psychological support, patient training, case management, and social support (McCrory, 2018). Primary, secondary, and tertiary protection level services in home care are proposed to individuals and their families with all age groups or various problems/diseases (Zerwekh, 2010). Nevertheless, the population of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase to 16.0%

worldwide by 2050 (UN, 2020). In Türkiye, it is anticipated that the elderly population aged 65 and over has increased by 22.5% in the past five years and that 22.6% of the general population will be elderly population in 2060 (TurkStat, 2021). With the regulation issued in Türkiye in 2010, the description of the home care nurse has been made, and the duties, authorities, and responsibilities have been established. The home care nurse is described as "Responsible for the provision of nursing services to individuals in need of home care who are bedridden or unable to meet their own needs without the support of someone else," and their duties, powers, and responsibilities are identified (Nursing Regulation, 2010). In this regard, it is important to assess academic studies aimed at strengthening the scientific infrastructure in order to efficiently fulfill the role and responsibilities of the home care nurse and to promote nursing practices. Research topics in the field of home care particularly focus on telehealth and home visits. A meta-analysis highlighted the potential of tele-nursing to improve quality of life, reduce healthcare utilization, and facilitate chronic disease management (Mun et al., 2024), while another study reported that telehealth did not create a statistical difference compared to standard home care but was found to be beneficial in terms of access and peace of mind for patients (McFarland et al., 2021). Findings related to home visits indicate that they are effective in reducing hospital admissions and supporting physical and psychosocial health, but have a negative effect on falls and no significant effect on quality of life (Ergin et al., 2022). Additionally, the safety of home care workers is an important issue; in this context, it is noted that there is a significant risk of sharp object injuries among both healthcare personnel and their assistants (Brouillette et al., 2017).

Postgraduate theses carried out in Türkiye are an important resource in terms of basing nursing practices on scientific foundations and increasing the quality of service. It is stated that the number of theses, particularly in the field of public health nursing, began to increase after 2001, and master's theses are mostly descriptive (71.7%), whereas doctoral theses are quasi-experimental (46.3%) and experimental (22.8%) (Öncel and Sümen, 2017).

Nonetheless, no study reviewing postgraduate theses on home health services was noted, creating a gap in terms of compiling the knowledge in the field and leading future research. Therefore, the study is critical in terms of reviewing postgraduate theses on home health in nursing, analyzing the present state, and shedding light on future research. It is believed that examining the postgraduate theses on home health in the field of nursing is substantial both in terms of establishing the deficiencies and future studies, planning, and transferring the outcomes to practice. Furthermore, it is thought that this study is important in terms of guiding the academicians who will perform research on home care nursing, due to the reflection of the studies on home care nurses.

The Objective of the Study

This study was performed to investigate the postgraduate theses on home health in the field of nursing in Türkiye, to reveal the outcomes of the postgraduate theses, and to provide tangible data to researchers and nurses providing home health services. Accordingly, the study questions are as follows:

- 1.What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on home health in nursing by years?
- 2.Which group receiving/requiring home care services was preferred in postgraduate theses related to home health care in the field of nursing?
- 3.Which research methods were utilized in postgraduate theses on home health in nursing?
4. What is the thematic distribution of home care topics in postgraduate theses in the field of nursing in Türkiye?

MATERIAL and METHODS

Purpose and Type of the Study

This study was performed to investigate the postgraduate theses on home health in the field of nursing in Türkiye, to reveal the outcomes of the postgraduate theses, and to provide tangible data to researchers and nurses providing home health services. It is a retrospective descriptive study performed to review postgraduate thesis studies on home health in Türkiye in the field of nursing.

Sampling and participant, Data Collection Tools

In the literature research conducted between 20.08.2024-29.08.2024 in the retrospective descriptive type, a search was performed from the database of the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education to establish the postgraduate theses on home health in nursing. In the database, the keywords "home health", "home care", "home health, nurse", and "home care, nurse" were searched. While scanning the database, no limitation was made in terms of the years involved by the postgraduate theses. In the screening, 257 theses were accessed with the keyword "home health", 510 theses with "home care", 1 thesis with "home health, nurse", and 21 theses with "home care, nurse". A total of 789 postgraduate theses were viewed, and

consequently, repetitive theses and theses that were not written in the field of nursing were excluded. Among these theses (n=246), theses not associated with the keyword group (56 theses), theses without full text (20 theses), and 1 thesis being a compilation were excluded from the research since they did not meet the inclusion criteria (n=169). It was noted that "43" of the theses accessed between 20.08.2024-29.08.2024 on home health in nursing were doctoral theses and "126" were master's theses. 169 postgraduate theses that corresponded to the inclusion criteria were assessed in the research. The inclusion criteria in the research were the thesis being written in the field of nursing, access to full text, and not being a review.

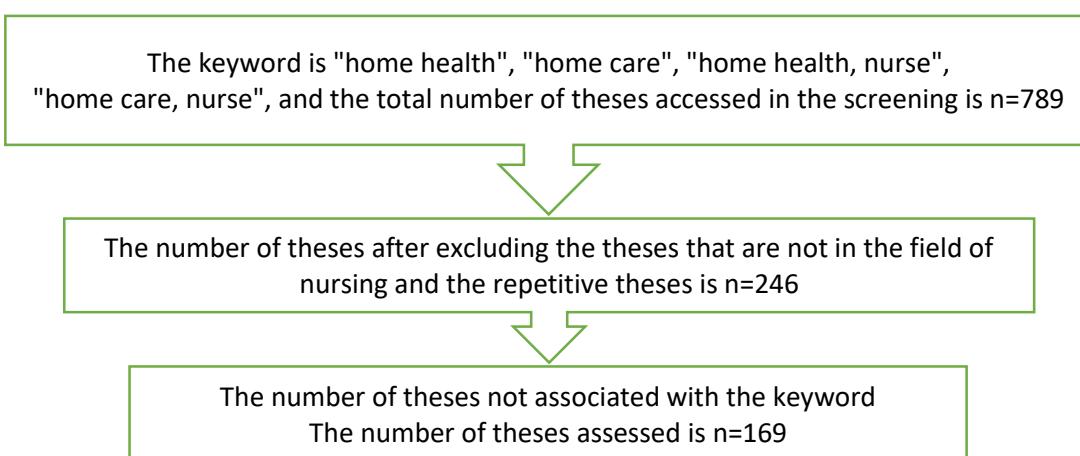


Figure 1. The process of including thesis studies in the study

Statistical Analysis

Frequency and percentage calculations were employed in the analysis of the data.

Ethical Approval

This retrospective descriptive literature study does not have an ethics committee report. As the research is a literature review, it has no effect on humans or animals.

Limitations of the Study

1. The research is limited to 169 postgraduate thesis studies, involving 126 master's theses and 43

doctoral theses.

2. The research is limited to thesis studies registered with the National Thesis Center.

RESULTS

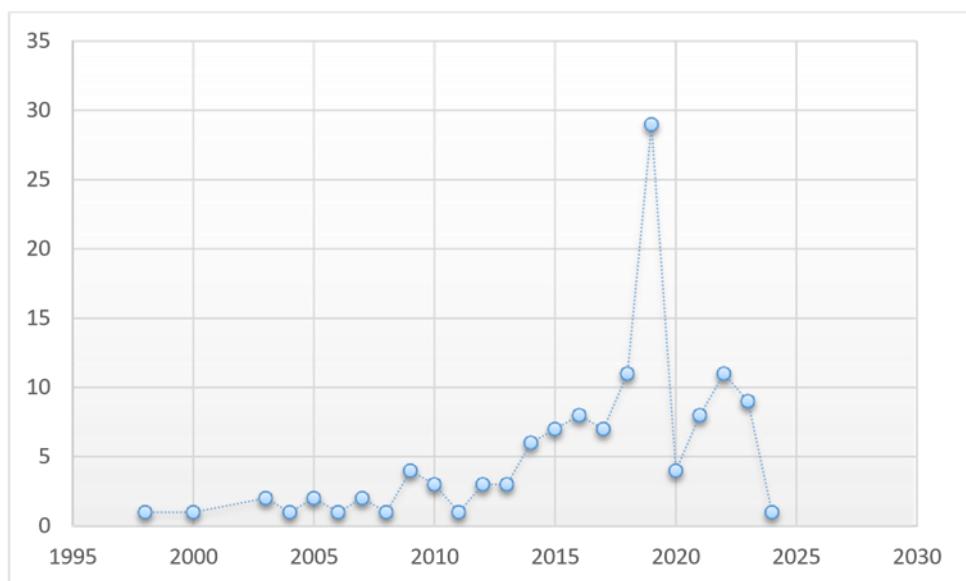
In the research, a total of 169 postgraduate theses on home health in the field of nursing were reviewed, including 126 master's theses between 1998 and 2024 (Graph 1) and 43 doctoral theses between 2000 and 2023 (Graph 2). Of the theses examined, 74.56% are master's theses and 25.44% are doctoral theses.

Examining the distribution of master's theses by

years, it is observed that the first thesis in Türkiye on home health in the field of nursing was written in 1998. Afterwards, it was determined that there was no thesis on home health in the field of nursing in master's theses until 2000. Reviewing the distribution of 126 master's theses examined by years, it was determined that 1.6% of them were written between 1998-2002, 6.3% between 2003-2007, 9.5% between 2008-2012, 24.6% between 2013-2017, 50% between 2018-2022, and 7.9% between 2023 and the date of the research (Graph 1, Table 1). It is noted that master's theses on home health in the field of nursing were mostly written between 2018-2022. However, examining the titles of the master's thesis' advisors, it was determined that 33.3% of the thesis advisors had the title of Prof. Dr., and 0.8% had the title of Prof. Dr. + Assoc. Prof. Dr., 30.2% had the title of Assoc. Prof. Dr., and 35.7% had the title of Dr. Asst. Prof., and it was seen that the majority of the thesis advisor titles were Dr. Asst. Prof. Meanwhile, examining the research types of master's theses, it is indicated that 7.9% are in the experimental/quasi-experimental research type, 4.8% in the randomized controlled research type, 2.4% in the qualitative research type, 1.6% in the methodological research type, 7.9% in the cross-sectional research type, and 75.4% in the descriptive research type. It is seen that descriptive studies are the vast majority of master's theses. In the master's

theses on home health in the field of nursing, the majority of the sampling group consists of patients; yet, it was determined that the first three groups were 40.5% patients, 33.3% caregivers, and 10.3% mothers/parents (Table 1).

When examining the classification of master's thesis topics related to home healthcare in the field of nursing (n=126) according to themes, the highest number of theses fall under the category of the psychosocial status of home caregivers (30 theses, 23.8%). This is followed by home care for individuals with chronic illnesses (19 theses, 15.1%) and home care for the elderly (16 theses, 12.7%). Other themes include home care for mothers, children, and newborns (12 theses, 9.5%), post-surgical home care and discharge education (12 theses, 9.5%), home care services and institutional regulations (8 theses, 6.3%), education, technology, and telehealth applications in home care (13 theses, 10.3%), and healthcare worker experiences and professional practices (10 theses, 7.9%). In addition, scales were developed in the master's theses included in the study to determine "the home care needs of oncology patients" and "the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of healthcare workers providing home healthcare services and patients/patient relatives benefiting from these services regarding medical waste" (tez.yok.gov.tr).



Graph 1. Distribution of master's theses by years (1998-2024)

Table 1. Distribution of master's theses by years, advisor titles, research type, and sampling group

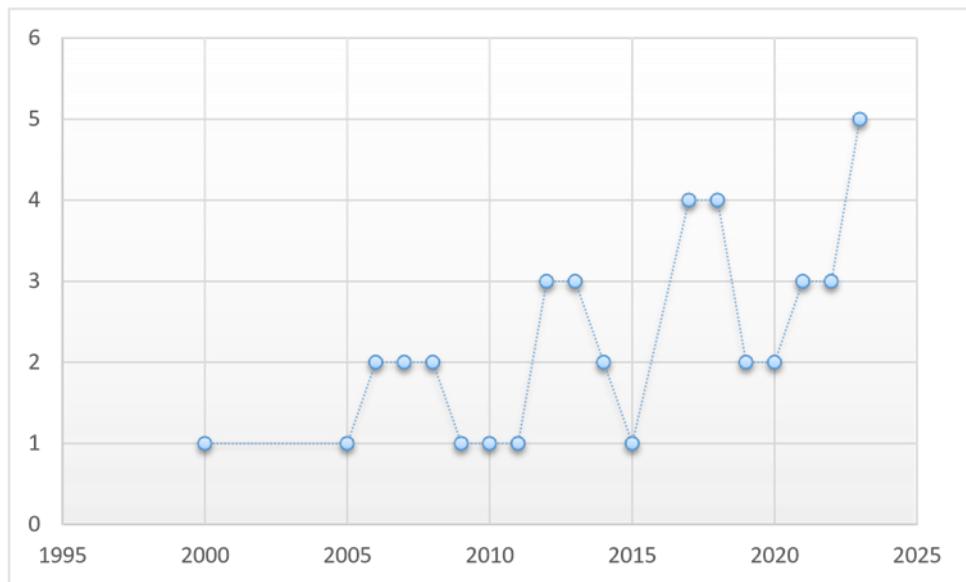
Introductory Features	Number	Percent
Years		
1998-2002	2	1.6
2003-2007	8	6.3
2008-2012	12	9.5
2013-2017	31	24.6
2018-2022	63	50
2023-....	10	7.9
Advisor's Title		
Prof. Dr.	42	33.3
Prof. Dr. + Assoc. Prof. Dr.	1	0.8
Assoc. Prof. Dr.	38	30.2
Dr. Asst. Prof.	45	35.7
Research Type		
Experimental/Quasi-experimental	10	7.9
Randomized controlled	6	4.8
Qualitative	3	2.4
Methodological	2	1.6
Cross-sectional	10	7.9
Descriptive	95	75.4
Sampling group		
Patient	51	40.5
Caregiver	42	33.3
Mother/parent	13	10.3
Nurse/healthcare worker	9	7.1
Patient and caregiver	8	6.3
Patient, patient's family, manager	1	0.8
Patient, patient relative, healthcare worker	1	0.8
Nursing students	1	0.8
Total	126	100.0

Among the theses involved in the research on home health in nursing, it is noted that the first doctoral thesis in Türkiye was written in 2000. Nevertheless, based on the inclusion criteria of the study from 2000 to 2005, it was detected that there was no doctoral thesis on home health in nursing (Graph 2). When examining the classification of doctoral thesis topics related to home healthcare in the field of nursing (n=43) according to themes, the highest number of theses (n=11, 25.6%) were in the area of elderly and chronic disease care. This is followed by interventions based on models and theories (n=9, 20.9%), oncology and palliative care (n=7, 16.3%), and interventions targeting caregivers (n=6, 14.0%). Other themes include women's and children's health (n=5, 11.6%) and technology and innovative approaches (n=5, 11.6%). In addition, "self-efficacy scales for caregivers of bedridden patients" and "medical device-related pressure ulcer risk assessment" scales have been developed in doctoral

theses within the scope of the study (tez.yok.gov.tr). Table 2 presents the distribution of doctoral theses by years, thesis advisor titles, research type, and sampling group. Examining the distribution of 43 doctoral theses reviewed by years, it is noted that 2.3% of them were written between 2000-2004, 18.6% between 2005-2009, 23.3% between 2010-2014, 25.6% between 2015-2019, and 30.2% between 2020 and the date of the research. It is observed that doctoral theses on home health in nursing have increased over the years. Nonetheless, reviewing the advisor titles of the doctoral theses, it was seen that 65.1% of the thesis advisors had the title of Prof. Dr., 7.0% had the title of Prof. Dr. + Assoc. Prof. Dr., 20.9% had the title of Assoc. Prof. Dr., 2.3% had the title of Prof. Dr. + Dr. Asst. Prof., and 4.7% had the title of Dr. Asst. Prof. and it was seen that the majority of the thesis advisors had the title of Prof. Dr. In addition, examining the research types of doctoral theses, it is seen that 41.9% are in

the quasi-experimental/experimental research type, 30.2% in the randomized control research type, 7.0% in the quantitative, 13.9% in the qualitative, quasi-experimental/experimental research type, and 7.0% in the methodological/methodological and quasi-experimental research type. It is seen that the

majority of doctoral theses consist of quasi-experimental/ experimental studies. In the doctoral theses on home health in nursing, the largest sample group was patients with a rate of 44.2%, 23.3% caregivers, 20.9% patients and caregivers, and 11.6% women who gave birth (Table 2).



Graph 2. Distribution of doctoral dissertations by years (2000-2023)

Table 2. Distribution of doctoral theses by years, advisor titles, research type, and sampling group

Introductory Features	Number	Percent
Years		
2000-2004	1	2.3
2005-2009	8	18.6
2010-2014	10	23.3
2015-2019	11	25.6
2020-....	13	30.2
Advisor's Title		
Prof.Dr.	28	65.1
Prof.Dr. + Assoc. Prof. Dr.	3	7.0
Assoc. Prof. Dr.	9	20.9
Prof.Dr. + Dr. Asst. Prof.	1	2.3
Dr. Asst. Prof.	2	4.7
Research Type		
Experimental/Quasi-experimental	18	41.9
Randomized controlled	13	30.2
Qualitative	3	7.0
Qualitative, Experimental/Quasi-experimental	6	13.9
Methodological / Methodological, Quasi-experimental	3	7.0
Sampling group		
Patients	19	44.2
Caregivers	10	23.3
Patient and caregiver	9	20.9
Women giving birth	5	11.6
Total	43	100.0

DISCUSSION

In this study, the postgraduate theses related to home health care in the field of nursing in Türkiye were evaluated in terms of variables such as thesis type, method, year of completion, advisor title, sample group, and themes in thesis topics. No studies have been found in the literature on postgraduate thesis reviews related to home health services at the national level in the field of nursing. It was aimed to draw a general framework for home health research in the field of nursing and to collect data that may guide future studies. In this context, the developments and orientations in the thesis studies over the years have been revealed. There are studies in the literature demonstrating that master's theses are more than doctoral theses in numbers (Akalın and Şahin, 2022; Korhan et al., 2018; Çalışır Kundakçı 2023). In the study, it is observed that research on the psychosocial status of caregivers is predominant in the classification of master's thesis topics according to themes. This is followed by studies focusing on home care services, particularly for the elderly and chronically ill, and research on other themes. This distribution reveals that master's theses primarily address individual-focused topics (the psychosocial status of caregivers, services for chronically ill patients and the elderly), while areas such as service processes, technology, and education are represented in a more limited number of theses. The distribution of doctoral theses in the field of home healthcare, classified according to themes, shows that they primarily focus on the care of elderly and chronically ill patients, while studies based on theoretical models and interventions, as well as oncology/palliative care, also occupy an important place. A more limited number of theses have focused on areas such as supporting caregivers, women's and children's health, and innovative technology-based approaches. This situation highlights that the field of home healthcare is particularly focused on the needs of elderly and chronically ill patients, while other areas are still in the development phase. In the study, it is observed that there was a significant increase in master's theses between 2018-2022 (n=63, 50%) (Table 1). The primary reasons for this increase can be attributed to the growing aging population and the associated rise in care needs.

Indeed, the population aged 65 and over in Turkey was 6,895,385 in 2017, increasing by 22.6% over five years to 8,451,669 in 2022, showing a significant rise from 2017 to 2022 (TurkStat, 2023). According to data from the Turkish Institute of Public Health and Chronic Diseases (TIPHCD) Home Healthcare Services Report (2021), the number of patients benefiting from home healthcare services increased from 890,869 in 2011 to 1,437,523 in 2019, representing a 61% increase during this period (TIPHCD, 2021). Furthermore, the Ministry of Health's guidance of home health services through institutional regulations and standards may have accelerated the reflection of this interest in academia. In this context, home healthcare services began comprehensively with the 2005 regulation and entered a new phase in 2023 with the definition of the use of remote healthcare services in home healthcare services (Official Gazette, 2005; 2023). On the other hand, the global effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its reflections on economic, social, and community life, the fact that preventing infectious diseases is cost-effective, and the information that home health services and home care nursing have been identified as an effective model during the pandemic are also documented in the literature (Örsal and Duru, 2020). Although there has been an increase in doctoral theses over the years, no significant increase has been seen (Table 2). In this respect, along with being a similar finding to the literature, it may be said that recent academic studies on home health in the field of nursing have gained significance. Indeed, in a scoping review of doctoral dissertations in nursing, home care was among the core topics in the dissertations examined (Da Silva et al., 2025). A study reports that the need for doctoral-level nursing research should ultimately be directed toward professional needs that affect patient care (Wilkes et al., 2015). A review study on the effectiveness of home nursing services for the elderly also states that future research should be based on a theoretical foundation that explains why and how the intervention works (Eltaybeni et al., 2023). Evaluating the postgraduate theses in terms of research types, it is noted that descriptive studies (75.4%) are in the majority in master's theses (Table 1). In this sense, it may be suggested that the issues

related to home health in the field of nursing are still being addressed at the beginning level, and the focus is on due diligence studies. On the contrary, it is noted that there are more experimental/quasi-experimental (41.9%) and randomized controlled (30.2%) studies in doctoral theses. Accordingly, it may be stated that more advanced research methodologies have been adopted at the doctoral level, and intervention-based studies have come to the fore. The distribution of thesis advisor titles in the study also supports this context, and it is observed that advisors with the title of Prof. Dr. (n=28, 65.1%), who are more experienced academicians, are predominant in doctoral theses (Table 2). Besides, it is stated that the type of experimental research is high in studies investigating nursing theses (Durmuş İskender and Eren, 2020; Akalın and Şahin, 2022). In another study, it is reported that mostly randomized controlled experimental method is utilized in doctoral dissertations (Türen et al., 2020). In addition to the fact that the findings are similar to the literature in this sense, it may be suggested that employing experimental research methods is an expected situation due to the nature of doctoral programs. In the study, there are also a small number of qualitative studies in master's theses (n=3, 2.4%) and qualitative studies in doctoral theses (n=3, 7.0%), however, there are postgraduate thesis studies in the research type together with experimental studies as well (n=6, 13.9%). In the literature, the strengths of mixed approaches are indicated with aspects such as utilizing the outcomes to enhance their generalizability, providing a holistic picture of the phenomenon, and responding to research questions in a larger and wider range (Çetinkaya and Özsoy, 2021). In the study, it may be stated that similar perspectives have developed with the literature in the studies in which qualitative methods and experimental/quasi-experimental methods are employed together in doctoral theses. Evaluating the postgraduate theses in terms of sample groups, patients (40.5%) and caregivers (33.3%) are prominent in master's theses; patients (44.2%) and caregivers (23.3%) are prominent in doctoral theses. Also, double samplings (20.9%) including patient-caregiver in doctoral theses attract attention. In this

sense, it might be stated that the effects of home health services on both the patient and the caregiver are examined with a holistic approach.

CONCLUSION

This study examined master's theses prepared in the field of nursing in Türkiye related to home health care in terms of their distribution according to thesis type, method, advisor title, sample group, and themes. The findings show that descriptive studies and studies focusing on the psychosocial status of caregivers are prominent in master's theses, while doctoral theses tend to focus more on the elderly and chronically ill and involve experimental/quasi-experimental and randomized controlled studies. These results reveal that home health topics in the field of nursing are still in their infancy, particularly at the master's level, while at the doctoral level, there is a shift towards more methodologically advanced research. In this regard, increasing research on current approaches such as the use of technology in home health services, digital health applications, and telehealth, and focusing on relatively understudied areas such as women's and children's health, people with disabilities, caregiver–patient interaction, increasing intervention-based, experimental, and mixed-method research to strengthen the existing knowledge base, and further addressing service processes, care quality, patient safety, and economic dimensions in home care services are recommended for future studies. First, the study is limited in that it only includes postgraduate theses in the field of nursing; theses in other disciplines focusing on home health care are excluded. Second, the study is limited to the information reported in the theses; the implementation processes of the research or whether they were published were not evaluated. Third, the findings reflect only the Turkish context; therefore, international generalizations are not possible. In conclusion, this study reveals the current status of postgraduate theses related to home health services in the field of nursing and highlights trends in the national literature. It also provides preliminary data that will guide future research by indicating areas of focus for new studies, both theoretically and methodologically.

Conflict of Interest

There are no potential conflicts of interest.

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