

## An Analysis of Graduate Theses in the Context of Sustainability and Early Childhood: The Case of Türkiye

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### ABSTRACT

Behaviours developed in early childhood play a crucial role in shaping individuals' future conduct; therefore, raising awareness of sustainability from an early age has great importance. Academic studies in this field constitute a vital data source for understanding the development of research in a specific area and for predicting its future directions. Postgraduate theses represent one of the most comprehensive outputs of this study. In this study, a bibliographic analysis of the number, years, types, and fields of theses completed in Türkiye between 2008 and 2024 that use the concepts of "sustainability," "early childhood," and "sustainability and early childhood" in their titles was examined. The thesis determined according to the concepts of "sustainability" and "early childhood" separately in the titles of postgraduate theses. It was determined that the majority of these theses were in the fields of fine arts, economics, construction, finance, and agriculture. However, there were very few studies that addressed the concepts of "sustainability and early childhood" together in the titles of the postgraduate theses examined. In conclusion, it was recommended that the variety of thesis studies conducted in higher education institutions be increased and that the number of doctoral theses incorporating the concepts of "sustainability and early childhood" should be increased.

#### Keywords:

early childhood,  
sustainability,  
graduate education,  
bibliometric analysis,  
awareness

## Sürdürülebilirlik ve Erken Çocukluk Bağlamında Lisansüstü Tezlerin İncelenmesi: Türkiye Örneği

### ÖZ

Çocukların, özellikle erken çocukluk döneminde edindikleri tutum ve davranışların, ileriki yaşlarda sergileyecekleri davranışların temelini oluşturduğu düşünüldüğünde, erken yaşlardan itibaren sürdürülebilirlik konusunda farkındalık yaratılması gerekmektedir. İlgili alandaki akademik çalışmalar da belirli bir alanda yürütülen çalışmaların gelişim süreçlerini ortaya koymak ve gelecekteki yönelimlerini anlamlandırmak için önemli bir veri kaynağı oluşturduğunu göstermektedir. Lisansüstü tezler de bu veri kaynağı içinde araştırmacılar tarafından yürütülen en önemli çalışmalardan biridir. Bu çalışmada, 2008-2024 yılları arasında Türkiye'de tamamlanan tezlerin başlıklarında "sürdürülebilir", "erken çocukluk" ve "sürdürülebilir ve erken çocukluk" kavramlarının kullanıldığı tezlerin sayısı, yılları, türleri ve alanları üzerine bibliyografik bir analiz yapılmıştır. Araştırmada incelenen lisansüstü tezlerin başlıklarında "sürdürülebilirlik" ve "erken çocukluk" kavramlarının ayrı ayrı ele alındığı birçok çalışma yapıldığı belirlenmiştir. Bu tezlerin çoğunlukla güzel sanatlar, ekonomi, inşaat, finans ve tarım alanlarında yapıldığı tespit edilmiştir. Ancak, incelenen lisansüstü tezlerin başlıklarında "sürdürülebilirlik ve erken çocukluk kavramları"nın birlikte ele alındığı çok sınırlı sayıda çalışma olduğu belirlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak Yükseköğretim Kurumlarında yürütülen tez çalışmalarının çeşitlendirilmesi ve "sürdürülebilirlik ve erken çocukluk" kavramlarını içeren lisansüstü tezlerin sayısının artırılması önerilmektedir.

#### Anahtar kelimeler:

erken çocukluk,  
sürdürülebilirlik,  
lisansüstü eğitim,  
bibliyometrik analiz,  
farkındalık

## Introduction

The concept of sustainability is understood as a framework that provide changes in the systems without reducing living standards. Within this scope, rather than being a consumer society, a society that does not hesitate to take social responsibility is more environmentally sensitive and can develop economic and social solutions (Özmehmet, 2008; Bulut and Polat, 2019). Within this understanding, the many processes required to realize the concept of sustainable development. According to the Brundtland Report, published by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCRD), sustainable development is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations. Sustainable development aims to expand to meet the needs and expectations of all people for a better life in many areas (WCED, Brundtland Report, 1987).

The literature review indicated that the environmental (climate change, natural resources, ecosystems), economic (poverty, economic growth), and sociocultural (human rights, equality, peace) dimensions were most emphasized (Purvis et al., 2019). The issue of sustainable development was addressed at the 2002 Earth Summit, and it was noted that the economic, environmental, and sociocultural dimensions should not be considered separately in sustainable development (UNESCO, 2005). For this reason, the relevant dimensions should be evaluated holistically, given their interrelatedness.

In recent years, problems such as rising environmental pollution, climate change, global warming, species extinction, declining natural resources, war, poverty, and unemployment have led to increased demand for sustainability in society, and, as a result, stringent government policies have been implemented. In particular, the United Nations conducts various studies to promote global sustainability and address global problems. In 2015, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were prepared to address sustainability issues in depth, with 17 goals and 169 targets to be achieved over the next 15 years, starting in 2016 (United Nations, UK, 2015).

Education is essential for the world to reach a better future. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also emphasizes that education is critical to sustainable development and that all individuals should learn about sustainability (UNESCO, 2014). In particular, the United Nations designated the period 2005-2014 as the "Decade of Education for Sustainable Development" to underscore the importance of sustainability through education and to highlight the role of education (UNESCO, 2007). In United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development at 2012, it was stated that a sustainable future could not be achieved only through political arrangements and technological solutions. One of the most critical steps in this regard was a transformation in consumption and production processes by creating a change in the ways of thinking and practice. For this transformation, the need for education and training at all levels in all societies was emphasized (UNESCO, 2011; Leicht et al., 2018).

The early childhood period (0-8 years) is a time of rapid development in the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language domains, and these effects are permanent. The attitudes and behaviours acquired by children during this period leave a permanent mark on their lives (Çağdaş and Şahin Seçer, 2007). For this reason, awareness of sustainability should also be instilled from an early age.

Children in early childhood are curious, inquisitive, and questioning (Güler, 2010). Children's innate curiosity and interest lead them to make observations and discoveries, and thus to find answers to the situations and events that interest them. Through these experiences, children acquire substantial knowledge and skills for perceiving and recognizing the world (Durbin et al., 2011; Yurt, 2015). During this period, children develop scientific thinking skills, such as asking questions, making observations, establishing cause-and-effect relationships, and predicting outcomes over time, through their personal discoveries and physical and social experiences with their environment (Eshach and Fried, 2005; Büyüктаşkapu, 2010). By developing these skills, they could cultivate positive attitudes and behaviors by increasing their awareness of the world in which we live.

According to the United Nations World Population Estimates, the global average child population rate in 2023 was 29.8% (TÜİK, 2023). This ratio showed that children were an essential group in achieving sustainability. In this context, children constitute a significant potential to support and promote dimensions of sustainable development, such as the wise use of resources, cultural diversity, gender equality, and democracy (Samuelson and Kaga, 2004). Therefore, to build a sustainable future, it is necessary to raise awareness of sustainability from an early age and equip children with the right attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills.

Because of perception predominates in early childhood, events, objects, or situations must be concretized. Therefore, by using appropriate methods, strategies, and techniques, abstract or difficult-to-understand concepts should be taught to children through hands-on activities such as games, drama, art, science, and language. Sustainability studies conducted in this way also positively affect children's long-term learning. For example, in a study conducted by Cengizoğlu (2013), an educational program comprising activities such as drama, art, and games was developed and implemented for preschool children. Following implementation, it was determined that children's perceptions changed across the dimensions of deforestation, biodiversity, and climate change, and that they were able to propose their own solutions for a sustainable future. In another study performed by Acar et al. (2019), it was reported that children and young people's capacity to address climate change and related challenges increased through various activities.

It was clear that educating children in early childhood about sustainability improves understanding and raises awareness of a sustainable future. In addition, studies in this field constitute an essential data source for understanding sustainability development and for interpreting its future orientations. Postgraduate theses reflect the prevailing view of the field of study in universities and they are among the most important studies

conducted within sustainability data source (Boyacı and Demirkol, 2018). For this reason, in this study, the distribution of the postgraduate theses, which were carried out between 2008 and 2024 in the postgraduate education carried out in different universities in Türkiye and containing the concepts of "sustainable", "early childhood" and "sustainable and early childhood" in the thesis titles, according to years, thesis types and fields were examined.

## Materials and Methods

### Research Design

In this study, it was aimed to examine postgraduate theses completed in Türkiye between 2008 and 2024 that included the concepts of early childhood and sustainability, separately or together, in their titles, by year, type, and field. For this purpose, a bibliometric analysis was employed to provide comprehensive information on the subject. Bibliometric analysis is a method that quantitatively analyzes publications, such as theses and articles, on a given concept, shows trends in studies on a subject, and provides comprehensive information about the field (Kurt, 2019; Erkan, 2020; Öztürk and Gürler, 2020). Using bibliometric analysis, trends in change and development in the relevant scientific field can be determined by quantifying publications in the subject area under study (Kasemodel et al., 2016). In this study, a bibliometric analysis was employed to provide a broad perspective on the interdisciplinary development of postgraduate theses completed in Türkiye on early childhood and sustainability, and to offer a roadmap for future researchers.

### Dataset

The data source comprised postgraduate theses with titles containing keywords related to sustainability and early childhood, published between 2008 and 2024, in the National Thesis Data Centre of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). In line with the study's inclusion criteria, postgraduate theses published between 2008 and 2024 in the relevant database were included. As a result of the search with the keywords "Sustainable", "Early childhood", and "Sustainable and Early childhood" in the Higher Education Council of Turkey (YÖK) database, 2,415 postgraduate theses were found for "sustainable", 288 for "early childhood", and three including both concepts between the relevant years. All the theses that were reached constituted the dataset.

### Data Collection Process

Firstly, the inclusion criteria were determined by the researchers. In the process of determining the inclusion criteria, it was decided to consider the theses to be examined from 2008 onwards since the report titled 'Contributions of Early Childhood Education to Sustainable Development' published by UNESCO in 2008 was the first international report on the subject. The inclusion criteria were all postgraduate theses in the YÖK database, published between 2008 and 2024, and containing the keywords "sustainable", "early childhood", and "sustainable and early childhood" in the thesis titles. Before 2008, all publications outside the above-mentioned keywords were excluded from the study's scope. The postgraduate theses examined in the

scope of the study were obtained from the national thesis center database of YÖK through a detailed search. To ensure data reliability in the study, both researchers independently searched the relevant databases, and the data were selected for analysis after it was confirmed that the search results were identical by comparing the obtained postgraduate theses. In the national database of the Higher Education Council of Turkey (YÖK), 2,415 postgraduate theses were found with the term "sustainable," and 288 with the term "early childhood"; three doctoral theses included both concepts. All of the theses were used in the analyses.

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and the postgraduate theses were analyzed by "years of publication, types of postgraduate theses, and fields of science". In this analysis, frequency (F) and percentage (%) values were calculated, tabulated, and interpreted. In addition, to provide a more holistic understanding of the analysis results, graphs were prepared and presented in the findings section of the study.

### Results

In this study, the years, types, and fields of postgraduate theses with the concepts of "sustainable", "early childhood", and "sustainable and early childhood" in their titles, which were carried out between 2008 and 2024 in higher education institutions in Türkiye, were examined by the bibliometric analysis technique. In 2016, to determine whether the sustainable development goals published by the United Nations created an awareness about research, the grouping of the years in which the theses containing the concept of "sustainable" in the title were selected as 2008-2015 and 2016-2024. According to YÖK searches, there were 434 theses in total in 2008-2015: 303 master's (70%), 127 doctoral (30%), and 4 proficiency in art (1%). The distribution of the number of master's theses conducted between 2008 and 2015, by year and field, was presented in Table 1, Table 2, and Figure 1.

**Table 1**

*Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Conducted Between 2008 and 2015 According to Their Types*

	N (number)	% (frequency)
Master	303	69.8
Doctora	127	29.0
Proficiency in Arts	4	1.2

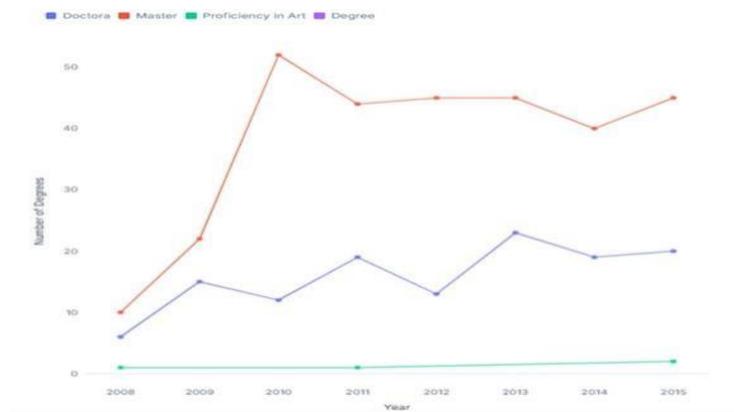
**Table 2**

*Distribution of Graduate Theses According to Years*

	Master		Doctora		Proficiency in Arts	
	N (number)	% (frequency)	N (number)	% (frequency)	N (number)	% (frequency)
2008	10	3.30	6	4.72	1	25
2009	22	7.26	15	11.81		
2010	52	17.16	12	9.44		
2011	44	14.52	19	14.96	1	25
2012	45	14.85	13	10.23		
2013	45	14.85	23	18.11		
2014	40	13.20	19	14.96		
2015	45	14.85	20	15.74	2	50

**Figure 1**

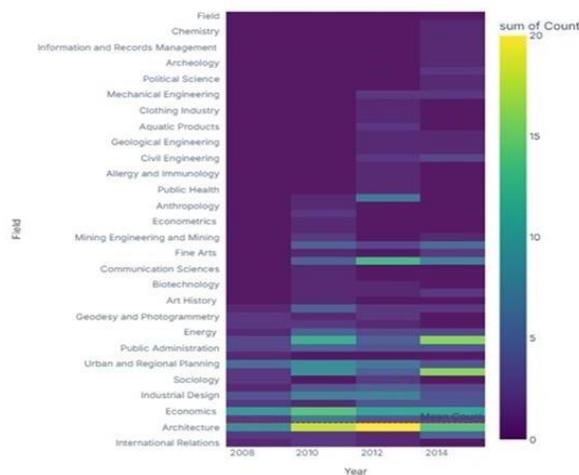
*The Thesis Count Over The Years (2008-2015) for Sustainability*



The heat map showed the distribution by field from 2008 to 2015. It was clear that the studies were mainly in architecture (77), business administration (36), economics (46), and public administration (16) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Heat Map of Fields by Year (2008-2015) for Sustainability*



It was seen that there were a total of 1,981 theses containing the concept of "sustainable" in the titles of postgraduate studies carried out in 2016-2024, 1,534 of these theses are master's (77.4%), 441 are doctoral (22.3%), 3 are proficiency in art (0.15%) and 3 were proficiency in medicine (0.15%). The distribution of the number of master's theses conducted between 2016 and 2024, by year and field, was presented in Tables 3 and 4 and Figure 3.

**Table 3**

*Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Conducted Between 2016 and 2024 According to Their Types*

	N (number)	% (frequency)
Master	1534	77.4
Doctora	441	22.3
Profancy in Arts	3	0.15
Specialisation in Medicine	3	0.15

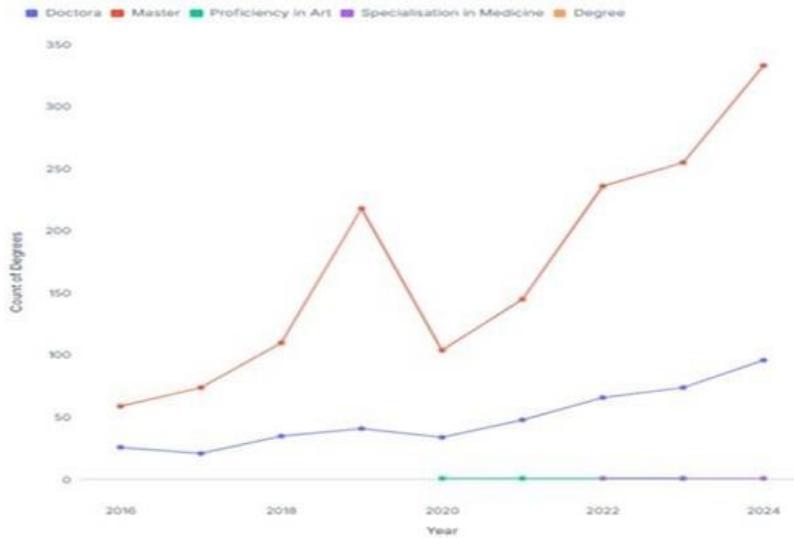
**Table 4**

*Distribution of Graduate Theses According to Years*

	Master		Doctora		Proficiency in Arts		Specialisation in Medicine	
	N (number)	% (frequency)	N (number)	% (frequency)	N (number)	% (frequency)	N (number)	% (frequency)
2016	59	3.8	26	5.9				
2017	74	4.8	21	4.8				
2018	110	7.2	35	7.9				
2019	218	14.2	41	9.3				
2020	104	6.8	34	7.7	1	33.3		
2021	145	9.4	48	10.9	1	33.3		
2022	236	15.4	66	14.96			1	33.3
2023	255	16.6	74	16.8	1	33.3	1	33.3
2024	333	21.7	96	21.8			1	33.3

**Figure 3**

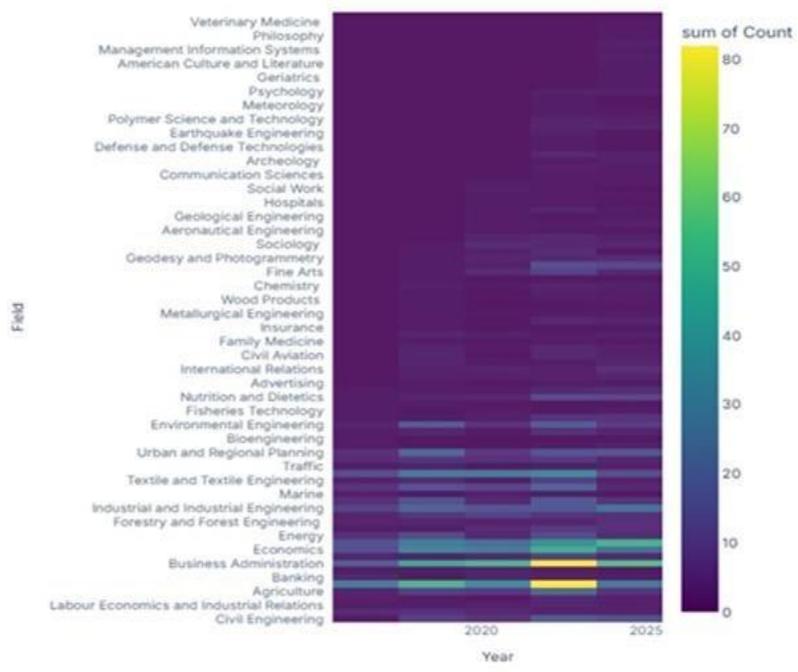
Thesis Count Over The Years (2016-2024) for Sustainability



The heat map showed the distribution of these covering the period between 2016 and 2024 according to the fields in the field of architecture (233), business administration (257), economics (156), education (162), tourism (127), and public administration (16) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4.**

Heat a Map of Fields by Year (2016-2024) for Sustainability



It was seen that there were a total of 288 theses containing the concept of "early childhood" in the titles of the postgraduate studies carried out in 2008-2024, 195 of these theses were master's (67.7%), 50 were doctoral

(17.4%), 18 were dental qualification (6.25%) and 25 were medical qualification (8,7%). The distribution of postgraduate studies conducted between 2008 and 2024, by year and field, was presented in Tables 5 and 6 and Figure 5.

**Table 5**

Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Conducted Between 2008 and 2024 According to Their Types

	N (number)	% (frequency)
Master	195	67.7
Doctora	50	17.4
Specialisation in Dentistry	18	6.2
Specialisation in Medicine	25	8.7

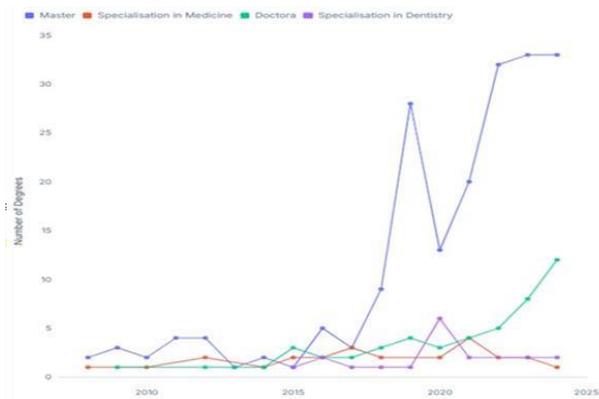
**Table 6**

Distribution of Graduate Theses According to Years

	Master		Doctora		Specialisation in Dentistry		Specialisation in Medicine	
	N (number)	% (frequency)	N (number)	% (frequency)	N (number)	% (frequency)	N (number)	% (frequency)
2008	2	1.0					1	4
2009	3	1.5	1	2				
2010	2	1.0					1	4
2011	4	2.0						
2012	4	2.0	1	2			2	8
2013	1	0.5	1	2				
2014	2	1.0	1	2			1	4
2015	1	0.5	3	6			2	8
2016	5	2.6	2	4	1	5.6	2	8
2017	3	1.5	2	4	2	11.1	3	12
2018	9	4.6	3	6	1	5.6	2	8
2019	28	14.3	4	8	1	5.6		
2020	13	6.7	3	6	1	5.6	2	8
2021	20	10.2	4	8	6	33.3	4	16
2022	2	1.0	5	10	2	11.1	2	8
2023	3	1.5	8	16			2	8
2024	2	1.0	12	24	2	11.1	1	4

**Figure 5**

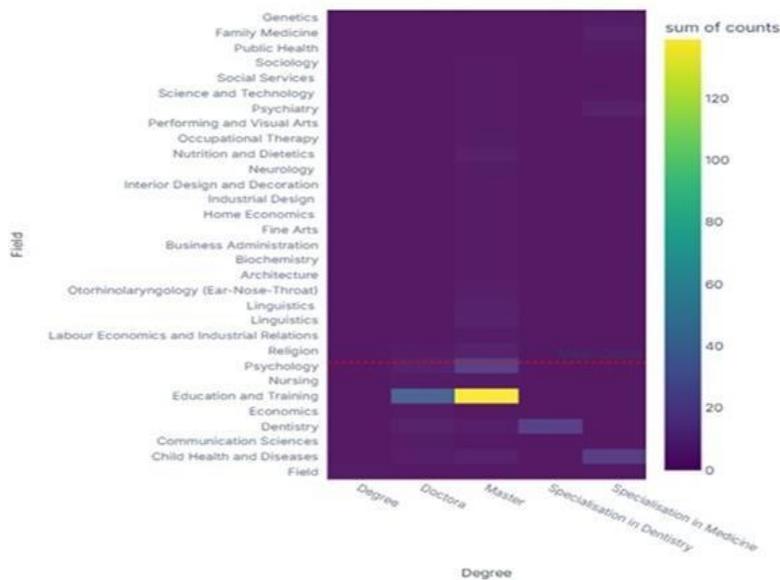
Thesis Count Over The Years (2008-2024) for Early Childhood



When the heat map showing the distribution of these covering the period between 2008 and 2024 according to the fields was examined, it was seen that the studies were mainly in the fields of child health (22), dental (24), education (175), and sociology (22) (Figure 6).

**Figure 6.**

Heat Map of Fields by Year (2008-2024) for Early Childhood



It was observed that 3 theses that include the concepts of "sustainable and early childhood" appear in the titles of postgraduate studies conducted between 2008 and 2024; 2 were master's theses (66.6%), and 1 was a doctoral thesis (33.3%). It was observed that the master's theses were in education and nutrition, and the doctoral dissertation was in education.

## Discussion

When the data were statistically evaluated, it was found that postgraduate studies in Türkiye that use the word "sustainable" in the thesis title were mainly master's theses. On the other hand, with the announcement of the sub-dimensions of sustainability by the United Nations in 2016, there was an increase in the number of theses that include this concept in their titles. It was observed that these concepts, when considered separately as "sustainable" and "early childhood," were applied across a wide range of fields, from archaeology to agriculture.

The attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of children, formed in early childhood by their education, lay the groundwork for the behaviors in adulthood. For this reason, it is possible to ensure sustainable generations by training and raising children's awareness of sustainability in early childhood. For this purpose, researching the effects of different dimensions of the concept of sustainability in early childhood, developing theses on this subject, and bringing these findings to the literature will help these trainings be carried out more systematically and will enable evaluation of the concepts of "sustainable and early childhood" using different approaches.

In a doctoral thesis conducted by Kahriman (2016), a comparison of early childhood educators teaching in eco- and non-eco educational institutions was performed in the context of sustainable development education practices. In the study, teachers working in both eco-certified and non-eco-certified educational institutions recognized the importance of early childhood education on sustainable development.

In a master's thesis completed by Akyıldız (2024), a scale to measure sustainable justice in early childhood management was developed. The studies emphasized that school principals could play a key role in ensuring sustainable social justice in early childhood education and that legal bases could be established to support this. In Tekin's (2024) master's thesis, a sustainable nutrition and active life good-practice model was developed for early childhood. Food and basic hygiene, sustainability, and physical activity training were provided to children in early childhood, and then questionnaires were administered. It was determined that the training increased children's nutritional behavior.

Although there were three (3) theses registered in the National Thesis Data Centre (YÖK) between 2008 and 2024 that include the concepts of "sustainable and early childhood" in their titles at the same time, it was seen that the number of publications by Turkish authors was relatively high in WOS and Scholar scans. This was because the postgraduate period was relatively long; the thesis was submitted to the repository after the relevant jury and boards approved it. That is, the procedures in the postgraduate education process constrain research in this field. On the other hand, after the study was completed, the researchers preferred that it could be prepared for publication in a journal appropriate to the field and included in the literature, rather than submitted as a postgraduate thesis.

For example, in a study by Aysu and Aral (2024), the potential of early childhood agricultural education to lay the foundations for a sustainable future was investigated. It was stated that implementing outdoor environmental education from an early age was effective in both supporting children's development and fostering environmental awareness, and that agricultural education in school gardens was crucial in developing ecological awareness (Aysu and Aral, 2024).

In a study conducted by Sincar and Işık (2023), it was stated that food packaging, which constitutes a large portion of waste, should be eco-designed and that food product packaging designed with sustainable sensitivity for children would have a positive impact on children's health, personality development, and their perspective on the environment (Sincar and Işık, 2023). In a study conducted by Toran (2017), it was stated that early childhood was considered the most critical years of life in terms of rapid development. The acquisition of many competencies in this period, the permanence of these competencies, and that the programmes and practices developed for education offered in these years had an impact on children. As a result of this, studies on sustainability and early childhood have increased in recent years (Toran, 2017).

Through sustainability training, individuals and, therefore, communities could develop the knowledge and skills to participate in decisions about activities that can improve their current quality of life without harming the future of our world (Department for Environment, Transport, and the Regions Citation, 1998). For example, in a study conducted by Gezer (2010), in-service training on educational goals for sustainable development was provided to teachers, and, as a result, positive changes in their understanding of the world and views on sustainability were observed. Nousheen et al. (2020) also investigated the effect of a course on sustainable development education on pre-service teachers' attitudes towards sustainable development. It was determined that pre-service teachers' attitudes towards sustainable development improved. In addition, Bulut and Çakmak (2018), who surveyed 178 experts teaching across various branches, found that the teachers in the study group recognized the necessity and importance of sustainable development education.

In another study, pre-service teachers' attitudes toward education for sustainable development was determined by Gökmen et al. (2017). It was determined that their attitudes towards education for sustainable development were high. Still, the achievement scores of the same study group on sustainable development were not at the desired level. This result indicates that further studies were needed to improve the success of the implementation process.

### **Conclusion**

Children play an essential role in the realization and sustainability of sustainable development. Considering that significant progress is made in many developmental aspects of children in the first years of life, with permanent effects, male childhood years should be evaluated to build a sustainable future. As a result of this, it is essential to develop more theses and projects for sustainable development and to involve a much broader mass in these studies. In addition, it is necessary to determine educational objectives at all levels

for sustainable development such as developing and evaluating educational programmes, and supporting teachers, prospective teachers, administrators, and all stakeholders in education on this subject. For this reason, it is essential to diversify the thesis studies conducted in Higher Education Institutions, increase the number of postgraduate theses that include the concepts of "sustainable and early childhood," and guide academic research.

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### **Etik Beyan**

Çalışmamız etik kurul gerektiren araştırmalar kapsamında olmadığı için etik kurul izni alınmamıştır

### **Çıkar Çatışması**

Yazar(lar) çıkar çatışması bildirmemektedir.

### **Genişletilmiş Özet**

Sürdürülebilir bir gelecek inşa etmek için, sürdürülebilirlik kavramı hakkında erken yaşlardan itibaren farkındalık yaratmak ve çocukları doğru tutum, değer, bilgi ve gerekli becerilerle donatmak gerekmektedir. Sürdürülebilirlik hakkında var olan durumu ortaya koymak, erken yaşlardan itibaren uygulamalarda bulunmak ve bunların etkisini ortaya koyabilmek için akademik çalışmalara ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Ayrıca, alanda yapılan akademik çalışmalar, belirli bir alanda yürütülen çalışmaların gelişim süreçlerini ortaya koymak ve gelecek yönelimlerini anlamlandırmak için önemli bir veri kaynağı oluşturmaktadır. Lisansüstü tezler; bu veri kaynağı içerisinde araştırmacılar tarafından yürütülen en önemli çalışmalardan birini oluşturmaktadır. Bu nedenle bu çalışmada, Türkiye'deki farklı üniversitelerin lisansüstü eğitim sürecinde yapılmış, 2008-2024 yılları arasında Yükseköğretim Kurulu (YÖK) Ulusal Tez Veri Merkezi'nde kayıtlı ve tez başlıklarında "sürdürülebilir", "erken çocukluk" ve "sürdürülebilir ve erken çocukluk" kavramlarını içeren lisansüstü tezlerin yıllara, tez türlerine ve alanlarına göre dağılımı incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmada, Türkiye'de erken çocukluk ve sürdürülebilirlik alanında tamamlanmış lisansüstü tezlerin disiplinlerarası gelişimine geniş bir bakış açısı sağlamak ve araştırmacılara gelecekteki çalışmalar için bir yol haritası sunmak amacıyla bibliyometrik analiz yöntemi tercih edilmiştir.

Araştırmanın veri toplama sürecinde öncelikle araştırmacılar tarafından dâhil etme ölçütleri belirlenmiştir. Dâhil etme ölçütlerinin belirlenmesi sürecinde, UNESCO tarafından 2008 yılında yayınlanan "Erken Çocukluk Eğitiminin Sürdürülebilir Kalkınmaya Katkıları" başlıklı raporun konuyla ilgili ilk uluslararası rapor olması nedeniyle, 2008 yılından itibaren incelenecek tezlerin dikkate alınmasına karar verilmiştir. Bu doğrultuda

belirlenen dâhil etme ölçütleri, YÖK veri tabanında yer alan, 2008-2024 yılları arasında yayınlanmış ve tez başlıklarında "sürdürülebilir", "erken çocukluk" ve "sürdürülebilir ve erken çocukluk" anahtar kelimelerini içeren tüm lisansüstü tezlerdir. Araştırmanın dışlama kriterleri ise 2008 yılından önce ve 2024 yılından sonra yayınlanmış tezler olarak belirlenmiştir. 2025 yılında yayınlanan tezlerin araştırma kapsamına alınmama sebebi ise yılın tam olarak bitmemesi nedeniyle o yıldaki yayınlanmış olan tüm tezlerin değerlendirilemeyecek olmasıdır. Çalışmada veri güvenilirliğini sağlamak amacıyla, her iki araştırmacı da ilgili veri tabanını ayrı ayrı taramış ve elde edilen lisansüstü tezler karşılaştırılarak tarama sonuçlarının birebir aynı olduğu anlaşıldıktan sonra verilerin analiz edilmesine karar verilmiştir. Analiz sürecinde frekans (F) ve yüzde (%) değerleri hesaplanmış, tablolaştırılmış ve yorumlanmıştır. Ayrıca 2016 yılında, Birleşmiş Milletler tarafından yayınlanan sürdürülebilir kalkınma hedeflerinin araştırmaya yönelik farkındalık yaratıp yaratmadığını belirlemek amacıyla, başlığında "sürdürülebilir" kavramını içeren tezlerin yapıldığı yıllar gruplaması 2008-2015 ve 2016-2024 olarak seçilmiştir.

2008-2015 yılları arasında yapılan lisansüstü çalışmaların başlıklarında "sürdürülebilir" kavramını içeren toplam 434 tez olduğu görülmüş ve bu tezlerin 303'ünün yüksek lisans (%70), 127'sinin doktora (%30) ve 4'ünün sanatta yeterlik (%1) olduğu belirlenmiştir. 2008-2015 yılları arasındaki tezlerin alanlara göre dağılımı incelendiğinde çalışmaların ağırlıklı olarak mimarlık (77), işletme (36), ekonomi (46) ve kamu yönetimi (16) alanlarında olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

2016-2024 yılları arasında yapılan lisansüstü çalışmalarda ise başlıklarında "sürdürülebilir" kavramını içeren toplam 1981 tez olduğu görülmüştür. Bu tezlerin 1534'ü yüksek lisans (77,4%), 441'i doktora (22,3%), 3'ü sanat yeterlilik (0,15%) ve 3'ü tıp yeterlilik (0,15%) tezleridir. 2016-2024 dönemini kapsayan tezlerin alanlara göre dağılımı incelendiğinde çalışmaların ağırlıklı olarak mimarlık (233), işletme (257), ekonomi (156), eğitim (162), turizm (127) ve kamu yönetimi (16) alanlarında olduğu belirlenmiştir.

2008-2024 yılları arasında yürütülen lisansüstü çalışmaların başlıklarında "erken çocukluk" kavramını içeren toplam 288 tez bulunduğu, bu tezlerin 195'inin yüksek lisans (%67,7), 50'sinin doktora (%17,4), 18'inin diş hekimliği (%6,25) ve 25'inin tıp hekimliği (%8,7) alanında olduğu belirlenmiştir. 2008-2024 dönemini kapsayan tezlerin alanlara göre dağılımı incelendiğinde, çalışmaların ağırlıklı olarak çocuk sağlığı (22), diş hekimliği (24), eğitim (175) ve sosyoloji (22) alanlarında olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

2008-2024 yılları arasında yürütülen lisansüstü çalışmaların başlıklarında "sürdürülebilirlik ve erken çocukluk" kavramlarını bir arada içeren 3 tezin yer aldığı, bu tezlerden 2'sinin yüksek lisans tezi (%66,6), 1'inin ise doktora tezi (%33,3) olduğu görülmüştür. Yüksek lisans tezlerinin eğitim ve beslenme, doktora tezinin ise eğitim alanında olduğu belirlenmiştir.

Sonuç olarak; Türkiye'de tez başlığında "sürdürülebilir" kelimesini kullanan lisansüstü çalışmalar ağırlıklı olarak yüksek lisans tezlerinden oluşmaktadır. Birleşmiş Milletler tarafından 2016 yılında yayınlanan

sürdürülebilir kalkınma hedeflerinin açıklanmasından sonraki süreçte bu kavramı başlıklarında içeren tez sayısında artış olduğu görülmektedir. "Sürdürülebilir" ve "erken çocukluk" kavramlarını ayrı ayrı içeren tezlerin arkeolojiden tarıma kadar geniş bir alanda yürütüldüğü anlaşılmaktadır.

Sürdürülebilir kalkınma için her düzeyde eğitim hedeflerinin belirlenmesi, eğitim programlarının geliştirilmesi, bu eğitimlerin değerlendirilmesi, öğretmenlere, öğretmen adaylarına, yöneticilere ve eğitimle ilgili tüm paydaşlara konuyla ilgili destek sağlanması gerekmektedir. Bu nedenle, Yükseköğretim Kurumlarında yürütülen tez çalışmalarının çeşitlendirilmesi ve "sürdürülebilirlik ve erken çocukluk" kavramlarını içeren lisansüstü tezlerin sayısının artırılması ve akademik çalışmalara rehberlik etmesi önem taşımaktadır.