

IMPLICIT PROBLEMS IN GRADUATE THESES: AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF STAGNATION IN MASTER'S THESIS¹

Funda Belsu²

Sibel Cengizhan³

Received/Geliş Tarihi 03.01.2026

Online Published/Elektronik Yayın: 25.05.2026

DOI: 10.48166/ejaes.1855443

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the reasons behind the stagnations experienced by students during their master's thesis processes. Recognizing that graduate theses are not solely a product of individual effort but are also shaped by institutional, academic, and psychosocial factors, this study explores implicit problems in the thesis process through thematic analysis. The importance of the study lies in the difficulties experienced by students during the master's process and the critical role this process plays in graduation, academic career progression, and professional development. Using an interpretive phenomenological approach, which is one of the qualitative research methods, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students pursuing a master's degree in the field of Curriculum and Instruction. The data obtained were analyzed through content analysis, and the reasons for thesis stagnation were categorized under five themes: "personal reasons," "scientific research competencies," "thesis topic," "advisor," and "unexpected circumstances." The results revealed that the most common problems students faced were time management difficulties due to excessive workload, perfectionism, marriage, lack of knowledge about scientific research, insufficient knowledge of the thesis topic, and delayed feedback from advisors. Based on these findings, the study emphasizes that both advisors and institutions must take responsibility to ensure that the thesis process becomes more transparent, supportive, and sustainable.

Keywords: Graduate education, stagnation in thesis, student opinions, phenomenology.

¹ This article was presented at the 11th International Congress on Curriculum and Instruction (ICCI-EPOK 2023) in Aydın from October 26 to 28, 2023, as an oral presentation. Its summary was published in the abstract book.

² Teacher, Hisar Okulları, fkeles35@gmail.com, İstanbul, .0009-0009-6746-8883

³ Prof.Dr., Marmara University, Faculty of Education, sibel@marmara.edu.tr, İstanbul, 0000-0001-5862-2927

LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZLERDE ÖRTÜLÜ SORUNLAR: YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ DURAKSAMALARININ NEDENLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, öğrencilerin yüksek lisans tez süreçlerinde yaşadıkları duraksamanın nedenlerini incelemektir. Yüksek lisans tezlerinin yalnızca bireysel çabanın ürünü olmadığını, aynı zamanda kurumsal, akademik ve psikososyal faktörlerin de etkisiyle şekillendiğini kabul eden bu çalışma, tematik analiz yoluyla tez sürecindeki örtük sorunları ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmanın önemi, öğrencilerin yüksek lisans sürecinde yaşadıkları zorluklar ve bu sürecin mezuniyet, akademik kariyer gelişimi ve mesleki gelişimde oynadığı kritik rolde yatmaktadır. Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan yorumlayıcı fenomenolojik yaklaşım kullanılarak, Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim alanında yüksek lisans yapan öğrencilerle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler içerik analizi ile incelenmiş ve tezlerin durma nedenleri beş tema altında sınıflandırılmıştır: “kişisel nedenler”, “bilimsel araştırma yeterlilikleri”, “tez konusu”, ‘danışman’ ve “beklenmedik durumlar”. Sonuçlar, öğrencilerin karşılaştığı en yaygın sorunların aşırı iş yükü nedeniyle zaman yönetimi zorlukları, mükemmeliyetçilik, evlilik, bilimsel araştırma ile ilgili bilgi eksikliği, tez konusu hakkında yetersiz bilgi ve danışmanlardan gelen geri bildirim gecikmesi olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Bu bulgulara dayanarak, çalışma, tez sürecinin daha şeffaf, destekleyici ve sürdürülebilir hale gelmesini sağlamak için hem danışmanların hem de kurumların sorumluluk alması gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Lisansüstü eğitim, tez duraksaması, öğrenci görüşler, fenomenoloji

1. INTRODUCTION

Graduate education refers to academic programs that provide opportunities for further specialization beyond undergraduate studies and equip individuals with advanced academic and professional skills (Aitken, Currey, Marshall & Elliott, 2008). The primary aim of these programs is to train a qualified workforce capable of producing, utilizing, and critically evaluating knowledge, and of solving problems with a productive mindset. The contributions of graduate programs to national development, their role in establishing national science policy, the support they provide for professional advancement, the scientific research processes and skills they help to develop, and the opportunities they offer to learn new information have been demonstrated in various studies in the field (Alhas, 2006; Çıkrıkçı 2002; Gencel, 2001; Karaman & Bakırcı, 2010; Katılmış, Çelik & Kop, 2013; Seferoğlu, 2004; Yalçınkaya, Koşar & Altunay, 2014). Moreover, the increasing necessity for specialization in professional disciplines has gradually heightened the importance of graduate education (Karakütük, 2009). In addition, the increase in the number of undergraduate degree holders has made it necessary to equip individuals with different qualifications (Gömleksiz & Et, 2013).

Graduate education is structured into two main levels, which are the master’s and doctoral programs (Council of Higher Education, 2016). Master’s programs, which constitute the first stage of graduate education, are a significant process that not only enhance individuals’ research competencies but also support their professional development. In this process, thesis writing is both a fundamental step in an academic career and a tangible product that demonstrates an individual's ability to apply scientific methods, and as such, it is a crucial process that requires in-depth knowledge of the field and must be conducted with a research design appropriate to the chosen topic (Qasem & Zayid, 2019). The

research conducted in this process is expected to be original, designed and written with a critical and objective perspective, and grounded in a solid foundation (Matin & Khan, 2017). However, the graduate thesis process does not always progress as planned; it may slow down at a certain point or come to a complete standstill. Studies indicate that a significant portion of master's students experience stagnation during the thesis process, and that some even withdraw from their programs without graduating as a result (Akbulut, Çepni ve Şahin, 2013; Bocar, 2009; Deniz, 2020; Duze, 2010; Ekpoh, 2016; Huang, 2010; Jiranek, 2010; Lessing & Schulz, 2003; Safari, Navazeshkhah, Azizi, Ziaei & Sharafi, 2015; Yousefi, Bazrafkan, & Yamani, 2015). Thesis stagnation, which can be defined as the failure to complete a thesis within the legal deadline or a pause in the writing process, reduces students' academic motivation, prolongs the time to graduation, and, in some cases, can completely disrupt scientific productivity. Moreover, this situation can lead to feelings of failure and inadequacy in the individual and may result in psychological symptoms of burnout (Özmen & Aydın Güç, 2013). At the institutional level, problems such as declining graduation rates and reduced productivity in graduate programs may also arise. When the causes of thesis stagnation are examined, it becomes evident that, in addition to factors such as insufficient advisor support, the chosen topic, the quality of the higher education institution, the complexity of the research design, and the challenges of data collection (Lessing & Schulz, 2003; Safari et al., 2015), personal factors also play a significant role (Bocar, 2009; Huang, 2010; Wright, 2003). These situations may not only represent individual academic difficulties but also indicate certain structural problems within the higher education system. In this context, it is regarded as essential to conduct an in-depth examination of the reasons behind stagnation in the thesis process. Furthermore, direct consequences such as the prolongation of graduation times, the decline in student satisfaction, and the disruption of scientific productivity make further research into this issue even more important. In addition, understanding the causes of thesis stagnation will contribute to strengthening guidance services for students and improving the quality of supervision processes. This contribution is expected to enhance not only academic achievement at the individual level but also the institutional efficiency of higher education institutions. Research to be conducted in this context will both support students in experiencing more effective thesis processes and enable universities to review their graduate education policies. It is also considered that this research holds critical importance in terms of developing policies and practices that can intervene in the process of thesis stagnation, restructuring the academic advising system, enhancing student support services, and making the thesis writing process more sustainable.

As is well known, there are numerous master's programs in the field of educational sciences in Türkiye. One of these programs is Curriculum and Instruction (EPÖ), which is run under the auspices of the institutes of social sciences or educational sciences at universities. EPÖ first began operating as an undergraduate department at the Faculty of Educational Sciences at Ankara University. Since 1969, following the establishment of the "Graduate Education Commission", graduate programs in this field have been implemented. In 1997, as a result of a regulation developed in cooperation between the

Ministry of National Education and the Council of Higher Education under the National Education Development Project, it was decided that the EPÖ field would offer education only at the graduate level. The EPÖ field aims to equip students at the graduate level with knowledge, skills, and understanding in the field of educational sciences, enabling them to develop programs, conduct evaluations, and carry out scientific research. In line with this goal, students are provided with competencies that allow them to gain expertise in the EPÖ field (Atik Kara, Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu & Sever, 2020). In order for education to progress in a planned and systematic way, there is a need for experts who design such programs. Graduate education is the first step in training such experts, and the EPÖ field plays a particularly significant role in this regard (Alhas, 2006). Therefore, it is an undeniable fact that identifying the causes of thesis stagnation in the EPÖ field in advance and taking precautions accordingly is of great importance. Based on this significance, the aim of this study is to identify the reasons for thesis stagnation experienced by graduate students in the EPÖ field.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

The study employed an interpretative phenomenological approach, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Interpretative phenomenology is defined as an approach that explores how individuals make sense of their lived experiences related to a specific event or concept (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Accordingly, a phenomenological approach was adopted to uncover how participants made sense of their experiences related to thesis stagnation, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with them. All students who participated in the study shared the common experience of thesis stagnation.

2.2. Participants

This study used criterion sampling, a purposive sampling method. Criterion sampling allows for the selection of individuals who have experienced a particular situation and can provide in-depth information about it (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Accordingly, the participants of the study consisted of graduate students in the field of Curriculum and Instruction (EPÖ) who had experienced thesis stagnation during their thesis process. The criteria for selecting participants included being enrolled in a thesis-based master's program, preparing a thesis in the EPÖ field, having made no progress in the thesis process for at least three years, and agreeing to participate voluntarily. During the research process, only master's students were interviewed, as all doctoral students were in the coursework stage. According to official records of the Institute of Educational Sciences at Marmara University, there were 12 students in the EPÖ master's program—launched in the fall semester of the 2013–2014 academic year—who either failed to complete their theses within the legal time frame or had frozen their registration but had not been formally dismissed from the program. Since the program is related to educational sciences, applicants are required to be graduates of faculties of education. For this reason, all participants had undergraduate degrees in teaching-related fields. These students were contacted, and

two declined to participate in the study. As a result, the research was carried out with ten students. All 10 participants were teachers, although only 7 of them were actively working as teachers. Creswell (2013) states that a phenomenological study may include between 2 and 25 participants and that they should share a similar lived experience. Information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Information Regarding the Participants

Interview Codes and Participants	Sex	Age	Year of Entry	Grade Point Average
P1	Female	35	2019	3,55
P2	Female	37	2019	3,90
P3	Female	23	2020	3,75
P4	Female	33	2019	4,00
P5	Female	23	2021	4,00
P6	Female	23	2020	3,95
P7	Female	24	2020	3,50
P8	Female	25	2020	3,85
P9	Female	24	2019	3,75
P10	Female	26	2019	3,85

When Table 1 is examined, it is observed that all participants were female, their ages ranged from 23 to 37, and their enrolment years in the program varied between 2019 and 2021. Their graduate GPA ranged between 3,50 and 4,00. The fact that all participants were female is due to the higher number of female students enrolled in the program.

2.3. Data Collection Tool and Data Collection Process

In this study, a semi-structured interview form which is one of the commonly used data collection tools in qualitative research and based on asking questions within a pre-determined thematic framework (George, 2023) was employed. While preparing the interview form, the relevant literature was reviewed, previous studies were examined and the draft interview form, which consisted of a single open-ended question, was reviewed by two faculty members: one expert in Curriculum and Instruction and another in Turkish language education. Turkish language expert assessed the clarity of the question, while the Curriculum and Instruction expert evaluated its relevance to the EPÖ field. No revisions were suggested as a result of these reviews. In this context, the one-question interview form was piloted with three graduates from the EPÖ program who had previously experienced thesis stagnation, and a decision was made whether to add probing questions. As no such need was identified after the pilot study, the final version of the form consisted of a single question: “What do you think are the factors that affected your thesis stagnation?”

The semi-structured interview form was administered over four days via online face-to-face interviews, with participants’ permission, and audio recordings were taken. Each interview lasted an average of 20 minutes. The interview dates were determined by the participants. Information about the duration and dates of the interviews is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Interview Durations and Dates

Interview Codes and Participants	Duration	Date
P1	26 minutes 09 sec.	07.10.2024
P2	19 minutes 14 sec.	07.10.2024
P3	21 minutes 0 sec.	05.10.2024
P4	20 minutes 39 sec.	07.10.2024
P5	23 minutes 23 sec.	05.10.2024
P6	17 minutes 11 sec.	05.10.2024
P7	18 minutes 35 sec.	06.10.2024
P8	25 minutes 58 sec.	06.10.2024
P9	14 minutes 24 sec.	06.10.2024
P10	20 minutes 52 sec.	07.10.2024

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the interviews lasted an average of 20 minutes. The longest interview lasted 26 minutes and 9 seconds, while the shortest lasted 14 minutes and 24 seconds. The interviews were completed over the course of four days.

2.4. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is a data analysis technique that enables making valid and replicable inferences from interview texts within their context of use (Krippendorff, 2018). In this technique, similar data are coded to create categories, and the resulting categories are grouped under themes (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Maxwell, 2008; Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2006).

For the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews, participants were first coded as P1, P2, P3, etc., in the order of the interviews, and the audio recordings were transcribed using an artificial intelligence application. To prevent data loss, the transcriptions were rechecked and corrected by the researchers by listening to the audio recordings again. Next, the participants' responses were examined, and codes were generated by identifying similarities and differences. Themes were determined by combining similar codes. No qualitative data analysis software or artificial intelligence was used during the analysis process; the data from 10 participants were analysed manually by the researchers. The themes and codes derived from the analysis are presented in the findings section.

2.5. Validity and Reliability of Data

In qualitative research, the concepts of validity and reliability are used to evaluate how accurate, consistent, and credible the content, process, and results of a study are (Krefting, 1991). Although these concepts are interrelated, they represent different meanings. Accordingly, validity, which shows how accurately the research findings reflect the phenomenon under investigation and how meaningful their interpretation is, is divided into internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to how accurately the research findings are explained, and it involves analyzing the consistency and accuracy between the researcher's interpretations and those of the participants (Daymon & Holloway, 2003). It is crucial for the researcher to avoid reflecting their own biases and preconceptions in the analysis in order to ensure internal validity (Creswell, 2013). To enhance internal validity, the researcher can engage in prolonged and in-depth interaction with participants to better understand their perspectives and experiences; seek

expert feedback before analyzing the data to ensure consistency in the interpretation of findings; confirm the accuracy of findings by sharing them with participants and obtaining their feedback; and increase the credibility of the findings by presenting different viewpoints through direct quotations (Creswell, 2014). In this context, to ensure internal validity in this study, expert feedback and participant confirmation were obtained, and participants' statements were presented in the findings section through direct quotations. In addition to ensuring internal validity, it is also important to ensure external validity. External validity, which refers to the generalizability of the research results to other contexts or populations (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), can be achieved by detailing how the sample was selected, providing information on participant characteristics, describing the data collection tool and process, and thoroughly explaining the data analysis procedure (Sharts-Hopko, 2002). Accordingly, to ensure the external validity of this study, purposive sampling was used, and detailed information was provided regarding the research method, data collection tool, data collection process, data analysis procedure, and participant characteristics.

Reliability, which indicates how consistent and replicable the research findings are, is divided into internal and external reliability. Internal reliability, which aims to ensure the consistency of the internal processes and outcomes of the research and to determine whether other researchers can reach the same results using the same data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), can be enhanced through systematic coding of the data, having multiple researchers code the data to reach a consensus, and detailing each step of the research process to allow for replication by other researchers (Creswell, 2014). In this study, to align with these principles, audio recordings were made to prevent data loss, the recordings were re-listened to by the researchers, the codes generated were compared, common codes were established, and the research process was presented in detail within the study.

In external reliability, also referred to as confirmability, the codes developed by the researchers from the interview forms were also generated by an independent researcher and compared. Whether the codes created by different evaluators were consistent was calculated using the reliability formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). As a result of this calculation, the external reliability of the study was determined to be 0.79. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a value of 0.75 or above is considered sufficient. Therefore, the coding process was deemed reliable. In addition, to further support the external reliability of the study, the conceptual framework related to the topic was presented in detail, the obtained data were discussed in line with both theoretical and practical literature, multiple researchers were involved in the process, and the data collection and analysis methods were described thoroughly.

3. RESULTS

In the interview, participants were asked the question: "What do you think are the factors that caused stagnation in your thesis?" Based on their responses, five themes were identified: personal reasons, scientific research competencies, thesis topic, advisor, and unexpected factors. The codes

related to these themes are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Findings Regarding Codes and Themes

Themes	Codes	Frequency
Personal Reasons	Perfectionism	3
	Change in living space	2
	Excessive workload	4
	Being disorganized	2
	Marriage	3
	Unmet expectations regarding an academic position	1
	Experiencing loss	2
	Having children	2
	Health problems	2
Scientific research competencies	Lack of knowledge about scientific research	2
	Inadequacy in literature review	1
	Difficulty in accessing resources	1
Thesis Topic	lack of sufficient knowledge about the topic	2
	The topic losing its relevance	1
	The thesis topic causing anxiety	1
Advisor	Lack of follow-up on student work	2
	Inability to communicate with the advisor	1
	Advisor assigned without student's preference	1
	Delayed feedback from the advisor	1
	Mismatch between the advisor's guidance and the student's area of interest	1
Unexpected Circumstances	Difficulties in collecting data remotely	1
	Receiving extensions	1

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the highest number of codes (9) fall under the theme of *Personal Reasons*. Among these codes, the most frequently cited personal reason for stagnation was the excessive workload stemming from academic, professional, and personal life (f=3). Participant P5 described this situation as follows: “And I still have some responsibilities related to school because I’m a mathematics teacher. At the same time, I also teach mathematics Olympiad courses. So, I’m basically trying to juggle many things at once, even though they are spread out over time.” while participant P4 stated, “Frankly, it is my life after getting married. Of course, my responsibilities increased. I transitioned into a life I was completely unfamiliar with.” Participant P6 also expressed the reason for her thesis stagnation as follows: “Apart from that, I have a child. I also work. So, it’s mostly due to me. For example, there were times when my advisor was waiting for a response from me. I would say, ‘Okay, I’ll get back to you in a week,’ but then my child would get sick, or things would pile up at school, and that one week would turn into a month.” Another prominent code under the theme of personal reasons was perfectionism (3) and marriage (3). These codes revealed that the participants’ internal expectations and changes in marital status played a role in thesis stagnation. Regarding this finding, participant P1 stated that the expectation of being a perfectionist contributed to her delay in thesis progress: “If I’m going to do it, I want it to be perfect—it’s all or nothing. Yes, I don’t like doing anything halfway or just touching the surface of something. Exactly, when I do something, I want to do it thoroughly. I want to research it in depth and produce something meaningful—whatever form this effort may take. So, if it’s going to happen, it’s either perfect or nothing. Yes, I don’t like doing anything halfway.” Participant P10 expressed her detailed thoughts on this issue as follows:

“Mine was a scale study, I had to collect data. There were times when I didn’t feel confident about my data. I was supposed to collect it from public school teachers, but we just shared the scale links in some teacher groups. I think some private school teachers also filled them out—I got that feeling. Like I said, I couldn’t really trust some parts of it. I wasn’t very

satisfied with the quality of the resulting product. It looked like it would turn out kind of below average. I guess I started out wanting to create something really good. But as I kept writing, I realized the quality was kind of low, and that demotivated me. I might have even sabotaged myself a little. I mean, if I had pushed, I probably could have finished it as an average or even a below-average thesis. But like I said, I think my expectations were a bit high. I kept putting things off, trying to make it better. I knew what I had to do, but I guess I just couldn't do it. That thing they call perfectionism makes you delay everything, and in the end, you end up producing nothing." When the other codes under the theme of personal reasons are examined, it is seen that change of the living space (2), being disorganized (2), having children (2), experiencing loss (2), and health problems are among the additional factors contributing to thesis stagnation. Regarding these findings, participant P1 described her struggle with organization by saying, "I'm terrible at time management. I'm not good at staying organized." Similarly, participant P4 expressed her experience as follows: "The thesis period is all about managing yourself. I mean, you're on your own. There's no deadline or anything, I don't know how to manage time, or how to get organized." Apart from these findings, it was also identified that experiencing loss and dealing with health problems contributed to thesis stagnation. One participant mentioned that she experienced a delay due to the loss of her grandmother, who had raised her during the thesis period. Participant P9 similarly described how losing her closest friend led to stagnation, stating: "I recently lost a friend—she passed away. It felt like everything just stopped for a long time because she was a very close friend. We were also working together at school. That period completely took over my life, unfortunately. It disrupted many things. I mean, even simple things like folding laundry at home—those got delayed too. For me, it was kind of like a transition into a depression." Among the two participants who stated that they experienced thesis stagnation due to health problems, participant P7 identified her health problems as the main reason for the delay: "I wanted to finish it this year. But I started Ramadan feeling unwell. I went to the doctor. I already have rheumatism, so I got scared. The doctor said it needed surgery—maybe it didn't, but I panicked and dropped everything. Then I thought about going back to my family. I needed to leave here. Health was the biggest reason." Similarly, participant P8, who attributed her stagnation to mental health problems, shared the following: "The reason I started therapy was that I went through a severe depression. I mean really severe. My school environment... I live in the middle of nowhere, literally between mountains. Besides that, the environment at school was awful. I didn't even realize I was being subjected to mobbing. It took me a long time to understand it. I was really being mistreated at school, along with two new colleagues. I used to come home crying every day, and it was a terrible time for me. I felt stuck between two vices: my life and my thesis. I couldn't write the thesis, and my life was a mess." In addition to these findings, one participant expressed that a major reason for her thesis stagnation was the decline in her motivation due to unmet expectations regarding an academic position in her career plans: "One of the main reasons I kept postponing the thesis was realizing that I wouldn't be able to become a research assistant once I finished it. I kept thinking, 'I still have time—maybe a position will open up.' And it did, but it was for someone very specific. I also applied to a few positions. So, I often told myself, 'Good thing I didn't finish—see?' For a while, I actually chose not to finish because of that. I thought that once I complete the thesis, I wouldn't be eligible for any more postings until after completing a PhD, which would take at least another four or five years. I always used to say, 'If I could just land a position—just get in somewhere—this would be my job, and then I could write more easily.' That was really the biggest reason—getting a position (P2)."

Scientific Research Competencies was another theme identified in the analysis. Within this theme, three codes were found: lack of knowledge about scientific research (2), inadequacy in literature review (1), and difficulty in accessing resources (1). The participants' statements under this theme revealed that

they did not know how to structure a scientific text, how to begin writing, or how to use academic language. In particular, participant P7 explained that the difficulties she experienced in using academic language and written expression not only prolonged the process but also negatively affected her motivation: “Writing in Turkish is a bit difficult for me. I mean, I understand everything, but figuring out how to write it or how to express it takes a lot of time. I tried watching videos, but they were too advanced, so I gave up. I taught myself. I watch videos, I learn. Sometimes I ask my friends or professors. I don’t know how to write the introduction.” Participant P1 also mentioned that technical or system-related obstacles encountered during the process of accessing academic resources created difficulties, stating: “...And also the literature part. I struggled to access the literature.” Participant P10, on the other hand, expressed that her lack of mastery in scientific research—particularly her limited knowledge of data analysis software—contributed to the stagnation in her thesis process, explaining: “Since it was my first time writing a thesis, I kept thinking, where do I start, how do I go about it. I searched on YouTube, how to do this, how to do that. There was quite a gap between when I took the SPSS course and when I actually needed to use SPSS for my thesis during grad school. I had forgotten most of it. Because I wasn’t confident in conducting scientific research, I found it difficult and kept putting it off.”

Thesis Topic theme included three codes: lack of sufficient knowledge about the topic (2), the topic losing its relevance (1), and the thesis topic causing anxiety (1). The views of participants P1 and P5 indicated that insufficient academic knowledge about the selected thesis topic led to indecision, anxiety, and stagnation. Participant P1 described this as follows: “We decided to compare the program for teaching English as a second language here with the program for teaching Turkish as a second language in Türkiye. I can say I wasn’t very familiar with the concepts in the Turkish field. I had to explore that area mostly during the research proposal process. With the arrival of Syrians in our country, the program was developed and so on, but then I shifted to a different area. When the issue of sending migrants back was brought up, I started worrying that the program would no longer be needed. I wondered if I had chosen the wrong topic. When something like that came up, I thought, ‘What if the migrants leave and the topic loses its relevance?’ So, I experienced stagnation for a while due to that anxiety.” Participant P5 similarly noted: “My topic is in the field of vocational education. But I conducted the study in the field of mathematics. There was no data in the mathematics education field. Nothing. I felt a lot of anxiety. There were no sources to support my study. No research had been done on basic courses like this. Yes, I’ll probably get citations—if I finish it, of course. But like I said, I stagnated.”

Under the theme of *Advisor*, five codes were identified: lack of follow-up on student work (2), inability to communicate with the advisor (1), advisor assigned without student’s preference (1), delayed feedback from the advisor (1), and a mismatch between the advisor’s guidance and the student’s area of interest (1). Participant P3 described the stagnation she experienced due to delayed feedback from her advisor, a difference in their areas of expertise, a lack of follow-up on her work, and being assigned an advisor not of her choosing: “My motivation really dropped. During my undergraduate years, I had done a project on teaching mathematics in museums. During the interview for the master’s program, when I mentioned this to the faculty members, they responded like, ‘you might continue in that direction for your thesis,’ and that’s what I had in mind, too. Because it was my area of interest, an area I’d worked on before, and I thought I could contribute something more. But later, during the thesis proposal phase, the topics I brought to my advisor didn’t seem suitable to them. They gave me a different topic. I couldn’t devote time to the thesis, but when I did, I wrote my proposal. Only the proposal got approved, but then I was left wondering: what now? I’d rather have some guidance on how to proceed than just approval. I would have liked someone to map out the next steps clearly. I tried to contact my advisor, kept asking what I should be doing. At first, we focused on a different topic,

then I sent what I'd written, but my advisor responded late. I mean, two weeks felt late to me, since the section to review wasn't that long." Participant P6 also reported experiencing delays due to postponed feedback: "When the responses were delayed, it disrupted my timeline. The longer it took get back to me, the more I stagnated—especially when I was working on specific questions or had sent an email and was waiting for a reply, I couldn't move forward without that. As the waiting period got longer, I lost focus. I think there was a breakdown in communication on both sides. Besides, my advisor wasn't one of the advisors I chose anyway. Maybe that was the reason for everything." Similarly, participant P2 stated that the lack of sufficient guidance from her advisor caused her to stall: "I wasn't guided enough. I didn't receive proper supervision. We both had difficulty grasping the field. We couldn't agree on the topic. I couldn't get into it, and my advisor couldn't open it up for me either—if that makes sense."

Under the theme of *Unexpected Circumstances*, two codes were identified: difficulties in collecting data remotely (1) and receiving extensions (1). Participant P2 noted that receiving multiple extensions contributed to her stagnation, stating: "I was granted too many extensions... I got two semesters because of the pandemic. Then I also received the extension given after the earthquake for another semester. The prolongation of this period, and the additional six months, definitely made me both feel more relaxed and also just stop altogether." Participant P9 described the challenges she faced during data collection: "In my thesis, I worked with both teachers and school administrators. Sometimes, they can be temperamental. Unfortunately, they are not always open to interviews. Maybe it's due to the heavy workload they carry. They prefer to focus on something else rather than spend that half hour with you. I had a very hard time collecting data. My motivation decreased because of the interviewees. So, in that sense, there may have been a bit of a setback." Participant P6 also shared the emotional difficulty she experienced during data collection: "In the interviews, I asked people to recall a difficult period—to remember the pandemic, actually. We transitioned very quickly from the imagined pandemic reality back to normal life, and people struggled to recall the past. That part was a bit challenging because we had already returned to our daily routines. It was hard because, while collecting data, they had to remember bad times."

4. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to identify the reasons for thesis stagnation among graduate students in the field of Curriculum and Instruction, and the data obtained from the interviews revealed five themes: personal reasons, scientific research competencies, thesis topic, advisor, and unexpected circumstances.

According to the findings of the study, the theme with the highest number of codes was "personal reasons." Under this theme, it was found that the workload stemming from academic, professional, and personal life—as well as responsibilities such as simultaneously managing multiple roles, parenting, and marriage—directly affected the thesis writing process. Additionally, a tendency toward perfectionism, poor time management skills, health problems, personal losses, and changes in living space also emerged as significant factors contributing to stagnation in the thesis process. These results highlight the influence of individual awareness and psychological factors on thesis progress (Lovitts, 2001; Pyhältö, Stubb & Lonka, 2012). In a study by Lessing and Schulz (2003), personal reasons were identified as common challenges during the thesis writing phase. Similarly, several other studies have also demonstrated the adverse effects of personal factors on thesis stagnation (Din, Abbas & Abdullah, 2023; Ebadi & Pourahmadi, 2019; Ekpoh, 2016). In a study conducted by Furqoni,

Muhayyang & Muhalim (2025), under the theme of fear of making mistakes, one participant stated that perfectionism, as a personal reason, posed a barrier to thesis writing and also made time management more difficult. Many studies that address problems such as poor time management and lack of organization, both considered personal reasons, have also shown that inadequate time management contributes to thesis stagnation (Amelia & Kurniawan, 2025; Diocos, 2022; Ebadi & Pourahmadi, 2019; Schramm-Possinger & Powers, 2015), and that this issue is particularly experienced by full-time working students, with thesis completion rates being significantly lower among those who juggle both work and academic responsibilities (Dzikunu, Agyekum, Pajibo & Yelkpiერი 2025). It is clearly evident in the research that balancing work and academic research is not an easy process for students. For many students, responsibilities such as work, marriage, and parenting pose a major obstacle to dedicating time to the research process (Arthur & Arkoh Fenyi, 2023). Furthermore, studies conducted by Akparep, Jengre ve Abaamah. (2017) and Rauf (2016) also concluded that students' efforts to manage both work and education limit the time they can allocate to their theses, which in turn prevents them from completing their theses on time and causes delays in graduation. Another code under the theme of personal reasons that causes thesis stagnation is health problems. A study by Lature et al. (2025) identified health problems as an internal variable influencing the completion of theses. In parallel, research conducted by Levecque, Anseel, Beuckelaer, Heyden & Gisle (2017); Peluso, Carleton & Asmundson (2011) and Stubb, Pyhältö & Lonka (2011) indicated that both psychological and physical health problems slow down the thesis process. Another personal factor contributing to thesis stagnation identified in the study is loss and changes in living space. The findings of this study are consistent with those of numerous others (Aksu & Demirtaş, 2016; Evans, Amaro, Herbert, Blossom & Roberts, 2018; Herie & Martin, 2002; Lovitts, 2001; Konokman & Yelken, 2014), which have shown that events such as the loss of a loved one, relocation, moving to a different city or country, and changes in one's living space can lead to stagnation in the thesis writing process. These studies have concluded that emotional trauma caused by the death of a loved one, as well as relocating to a new city during the course of a master's or doctoral program, are among the most common factors that hinder sustainable progress in thesis writing. In summary, the findings related to personal reasons revealed in this study are supported by the results of many previous studies in the literature and demonstrate that personal factors are among the primary causes of delays in the thesis process. For full-time working students in particular, the difficulty of balancing work and study—along with responsibilities such as relocation, personal loss, marriage, and parenthood—has been found to limit the time that can be dedicated to thesis writing, ultimately leading to delays in graduation. All these findings indicate that stagnation in the thesis process is a multidimensional and multivariate phenomenon arising from interconnected individual, academic, and social factors.

Another theme that emerged in the study is “Scientific Research Competencies.” An examination of the participants' statements related to the codes under this theme shows that they felt inadequate in terms of accessing resources, using academic language, and working with data analysis

software. Similar results were also reported in studies conducted by Ebadi and Pourahmadi (2019) and Ekpoh (2016). In a study conducted by Ismail, Abiddin ve Hassan (2011) examining the factors leading to thesis stagnation among graduate students, it was found that unfamiliarity with the research process, difficulties in selecting a topic, and a lack of knowledge about research methodology were identified as key factors. When considered in terms of the critical role that comprehensive scientific research knowledge and skills play in thesis writing, this situation is regarded as a significant cause of stagnation (Chanel Rodríguez, Griffith & Juarez, 2017). Likewise, the result of a study conducted by Diocos (2022), which found that thesis stagnation occurred due to difficulties in analyzing the collected data, aligns with the finding of this study indicating that challenges in using statistical software during data analysis contributed to stagnation. In summary, the findings related to scientific research competencies reveal that participants experienced difficulties in areas such as accessing resources, using academic language, and working with data analysis programs. This finding is also consistent with previous studies, which have shown that factors such as an insufficient grasp of the research process, difficulties in selecting a topic, and limited knowledge of methodology can lead to stagnation in the thesis process. In particular, difficulties experienced during the data analysis stage are regarded as one of the main obstacles hindering progress in thesis writing.

Under the theme of thesis topic-related reasons, three codes were identified: insufficient knowledge about the topic, the topic losing its relevance, and anxiety caused by the topic. Specifically, it was found that unfamiliarity with the concepts in the field, choosing a topic outside one's area of expertise, concern about the topic losing its relevance, a lack of interest in the topic, and lack of resources related to the topic all contributed to students' anxiety, which in turn led to stagnation in their thesis process. The findings related to this theme are also supported by the existing literature. Green (2005) and Wanasinghe (2020) pointed out students' lack of interest in the topic, while Chidi and Slyvia (2020) highlighted concerns about the topic losing its relevance as key factors contributing to thesis stagnation. In addition, previous studies have also found that when graduate students feel unfamiliar with the topic (Shobari, Sutrisna, & Fitrawati, 2023), have concerns about its relevance (Alostath, 2021), or do not like the topic (Pratiwi & Hapsari, 2023), they experience anxiety, which contributes to stagnation in the thesis process. In summary, students experience anxiety when they lack sufficient knowledge about their thesis topic, are concerned about its relevance, or do not like the topic; this anxiety leads to a slowdown in their thesis progress.

The advisor theme was the second most frequently coded theme in the study. Under this theme, five codes were identified: lack of follow-up on student work, failure to establish communication with the advisor, assignment of an advisor without the student's consent, a mismatch between the student's interests and the advisor's guidance and receiving delayed feedback from the advisor. An examination of the views related to these codes reveals that problems experienced with the advisor during the thesis topic selection process directly affect students' engagement with the process, emotional commitment, and level of progress. The overall findings indicate that problems with the advisor during the thesis topic

selection process directly affect students' engagement, emotional commitment, and level of progress. Studies have shown that inadequate communication with the advisor, the inability to establish a collaborative and mutually committed relationship between the student and the advisor, insufficient feedback, and the rejection of proposed thesis ideas all contribute to stagnation in the thesis writing process (Dzikunu et al., 2025; Siddiqui, Zulfiqar & Khalid, 2020; Spear, 2000). In this context, Koskenoja (2006) and Nouri, Larsson, & Saqr (2019) highlight that an effective advisor–student relationship plays a determining role in thesis success. Given that a thesis is a long-term project, collaborating with the advisor, holding regular meetings, and progressing through mutual understanding throughout the process are of central importance for its success. Indeed, a study by De Kleijn, Mainhard, Meijer & Pilot (2012) also found that when the advisor exercised moderate control over the process and effective communication was present, more successful outcomes were achieved.

Under the theme of unexpected circumstances, two codes emerged: difficulties in collecting data remotely, and receiving extensions due to events such as earthquakes and the pandemic. Students' reflections on these codes suggest that, particularly during the data collection phase, factors such as the unwillingness of participants, the emotional strain of recalling sensitive content, and the fading impact of the pandemic negatively affected their motivation. It was also observed that extensions granted due to events such as earthquakes and the pandemic have produced two-sided effects on students, leading to both relief and stagnation. This situation reveals that the research process is influenced not only by academic factors but also by psychological and social dynamics. In a study conducted by Uçar (2023), it was noted that during the thesis writing process, the most significant challenges caused by COVID-19 were difficulties in data collection and finding participants. Changes in communication channels caused by COVID-19 have been reported in the literature as one of the reasons for thesis stagnation, particularly due to the difficulties they created in data collection (Duze, 2010; Helm, 1989). On the other hand, the impact of unexpected circumstances on thesis delays—specifically the granting of extensions—can be explained through the Temporal Motivation Theory, which suggests that delays directly reduce motivation (Turgeman & Pollak, 2023), and that the longer the delay, the lower the motivation becomes (Steel & Konig, 2006). Moreover, the reduced interaction between instructors and students due to the pandemic and earthquake also demonstrates that the process carries dual psychological effects on participants—producing both a sense of relief and moments of stagnation. Based on all the findings obtained, the following recommendations have been proposed to prevent thesis stagnation:

- The study revealed that participants' experience of thesis stagnation was particularly related to time management. To address this issue, a course titled "Preparation for Graduate Education" can be integrated into academic programs. This course could help students develop skills such as time management, self-regulation, self-monitoring, psychological first aid, and coping with stress.

- Another problem identified during the thesis writing process was the uncertainty surrounding meeting times with advisors. To address this issue, it is recommended that a workflow calendar be created and monitored in collaboration between the advisor and the student.
- To support student motivation during the thesis writing process, it is important that the thesis topic be determined through advisor-student collaboration. Otherwise, if the student does not embrace the thesis topic, it may lead to stagnation, as observed in the research.
- Some participants stated that they experienced thesis stagnation due to a lack of competence in scientific research. To prevent this, it is recommended that institutes regularly organize practical training sessions on topics such as scientific writing techniques, literature review strategies, and research methods, ensuring student participation. In addition, establishing support systems that facilitate access to resources-such as library support and digital resource guidance-could be beneficial.
- The process of determining the thesis topic should be structured in alignment with the student's interests, knowledge level, and career goals.
- Advisor guidance should support the student's academic development and be responsive to their interests and abilities.
- Regarding the finding that extension requests may contribute to thesis stagnation, structured monitoring and support mechanisms could be developed. For instance, students could be required to prepare a thesis progress plan and attend mandatory periodic meetings with their advisors. Psychological counseling could also be offered.

REFERENCES

- Aitken, L., Currey, J., Marshall, A. & Elliott, D. (2008). Discrimination of educational outcomes between differing levels of critical care programmes by selected stakeholders in Australia: a mixed method approach. *Intensive & Critical Care Nursing* 24 (2), 68-77.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iccn.2007.09.001>
- Akbulut, H.İ., Çepni, S. ve Şahin, Ç. (2013). Doktora sürecinde karşılaşılan problemlerin belirlenmesi: Eğitim fakültesi örneği [Determination of Faced Problems in Doctorate Thesis Process: Education Faculty Sample]. *Dicle University Ziya Gökalp Faculty of Education Journal*, 20, 50-69. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/786933>
- Akparep, Y. J., Jengre, E., & Abaamah, D. (2017). Demystifying the blame game in the delays of graduation of research students in universities in ghana: The case of university for development students. *European Journal of Business and Innovation Research*, 5, 34-50.
- Alhas, A. (2006), *Lisansüstü eğitim yapmakta olan Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı öğretmenlerinin lisansüstü eğitime bakış açıları (Ankara İli Örneği)* [The interpretation on post-graduate education of the state employed teachers studying at Gazi University Institute of educational science]. [Unpublished Master's Thesis]. Gazi University, Türkiye.

- Alostath, K. (2021). *Graduate students' challenges in academic writing* [Unpublished Master's Thesis] İstanbul Aydın University, Türkiye.
- Amelia, D.N. & Kurniawan, F. (2025). Analysis of the factors causing procrastination in the preparation of thesis for education students state university society medan. *Empowerment Journal* 14 (1), 48-59. <https://doi.org/10.22460/empowerment.v14i1.4193>
- Arthur, R. & Arkoh Fenyi, D. (2023). Towards minimizing the delay/non-completion rate of research master's degree in Ghana: ESL students' perspective of the challenges of thesis work. *Linguistics Initiative* (3) 2, 125-139. <https://doi.org/10.53696/27753719.3284>
- Atik Kara, D., Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu D. & Sever, D. (2020). Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim Lisansüstü Eğitim Programlarının İncelenmesi [Examination of Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Education Programs]. *Anadolu University Journal of Education Faculty*, 4 (2), 163- 190. <https://doi.org/10.34056/aujef.712801>
- Bocar, A. C. (2009). Difficulties encountered by the student-researchers and the effects on their research output [Conference Paper]. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1612050>
- Chanel Rodriguez, R., Griffith, B. & Juarez, L.M. (2017). Engaging graduate students throughout the research writing process. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 31(3), 55-66. <https://doi.org/10.63997/jct.v31i3.580>
- Chidi, N., & Sylvia, O. A. (2020). Determination of factors that contribute to postgraduate students' delay in their thesis/dissertation completion. *The Universal Academic Research Journal*, 2(2), 78-86. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1562782>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and research design choosing among five approaches* (3rd Ed). Sage Publications
- Çıkrıkçı, N. (2002). Lisansüstü eğitim programlarına girişte lisansüstü eğitimi giriş sınavı (ALES) sonucunun ve diğer ölçütlerin kullanımına ilişkin bir tarama [A survey on the use of the graduate education entrance exam (LES) results and other criteria in admission to graduate education programs]. *Ankara University Journal of Faculty of Educational Sciences (JFES)*, 35(1), 61-70. https://doi.org/10.1501/Egifak_0000000064
- De Kleijn, R.A., Mainhard, T., C. Meijer, P. & Pilot, A. (2012). Master's thesis supervision: relations between perceptions of the supervisor-student relationship, final grade, perceived supervisor contribution to learning and student satisfaction. *Studies Higher Education*, 37(8), 925-939. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.556717>
- Deniz, Ü. (2020). Lisansüstü eğitimde gizli kriz: Öğrenciler neden okulu terk ediyor? [The Hidden Crisis in Graduate Education: Why do Students Drop out of School?]. *Pamukkale University Journal of Education*, 48, 61-83. <https://doi.org/10.9779/pauefd.528019>
- Din, K., Abbas, M., & Abdullah, N. A. (2023). Factors affecting university students' motivation in conducting research thesis: a case study of Karakorum International University, Gilgit-Baltistan,

- Pakistan. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 27(3), 105–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2022.2121780>
- Diocos, C. (2002). Graduate students' skills and challenges in research writing. *International Journal of Research*, 9(6), 395-417. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7505303>
- Duze, C. O. (2010). An analysis of problems encountered by postgraduate students in Nigerian Universities. *Journal of Social Science*, 22(2), 129-137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2010.11892793>
- Dzikunu C.K., Agyekum M.W., Pajibo E.D., Yelkperi D. (2025) Factors accounting for delayed completion of theses among postgraduate students of the university of education, Winneba, *British Journal of Education*, 13 (2), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bje.2013/vol13n2118>
- Ebadi, S., & Pourahmadi, F. (2019). Exploring challenges in writing EFL master theses: students and supervisors' perspectives. *Journal on English Language Teaching*, 9(2), 42-51. <https://doi.org/10.26634/jelt.9.2.15431>
- Ekpoh, U. I. (2016). Postgraduate studies: the challenges of research and thesis writing. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 6(3), 67-74. <https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2016.v6n3p67>
- Evans, S. C., Amaro, C. M., Herbert, R., Blossom, J. B., & Roberts, M. C. (2018). "Are you gonna publish that?" *Peer-reviewed publication outcomes of doctoral dissertations in psychology*. PLoS ONE, 13(2), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0192219>
- Furqoni, I., Muhayyang, M., & Muhalim, M. (2025). Exploring academic procrastination in thesis writing of English education students. *Performance: Journal of English Education and Literature*, 4(1), 117–135. <https://doi.org/10.26858/performance.v4i1.70898>
- Gencel, U. (2001). Yükseköğretim hizmetlerinde toplam kalite yönetimi ve akreditasyon [Total quality management and accreditation in higher education services]. *Dokuz Eylül University The Journal of Graduate School of Social Sciences*, 3(3), 164-218. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323295429_Yuksekk_Ogretim_Hizmetlerinde_Toplamm_Kalite_Yonetimi_ve_Akreditasyon_Total_Quality_Management_and_Accreditation_in_Higher_Education_Services
- George, T. (2023). *Semi-structured interview/definition, guide & examples*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/semi-structured-interview>
- Gömlüksiz, M. N. ve Et. S. Z. (2013, 10-11 Mayıs). Öğretmen adaylarının lisansüstü eğitime ilişkin metaforik algıları. *VI. Ulusal Lisansüstü Eğitim Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı*. Sakarya Üniversitesi. VI. Ulusal Lisansüstü Eğitim Sempozyumu, Türkiye, Sakarya (s.145-151). https://egitim.sakarya.edu.tr/sites/egitim.sakarya.edu.tr/file/ULES-Lisansustu_egitim_cilt11.pdf
- Green, B. (2005). Becoming a scholar: Socialization and development in doctoral education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30(6), 689–699. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070500340136>

- Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). Sage Publications.
- Herie, M., & Martin, G. W. (2002). Knowledge diffusion in social work: A new approach to bridging the gap. *Social Work, 47*(1), 85-95. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/47.1.85>
- Huang, L. S. (2010). Seeing eye to eye? The academic writing needs of graduate and undergraduate students from students' and instructors' perspectives. *Language Teaching Research, 14*(4), 517-539. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168810375372>
- Ismail, A., Abiddin, N. Z. & Hassan, A. (2011). Improving the development of postgraduate research and supervision. *International Education Studies, 4* (1) 78-89.
- Jiranek, V. (2010). Potential predictors of timely completion among dissertation research students at an Australian faculty of sciences. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 5*(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.28945/709>
- Karakütük, K. (2009). Lisansüstü öğretimde öncü bir kuruluş: Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim (Bilimleri) Fakültesi (1969-1982), M. Ünal, V. Başpınar, H.S., Ozanoğlu & S. Yılmaz (Eds.), *Prof. Dr. Ali Naim İnan'a Armağan*. (pp. 1381-1385). Seçkin Yayıncılık.
- Karaman, S. & Bakırcı, F. (2010). Türkiye'de lisansüstü eğitim: Sorunlar ve çözüm önerileri [Postgraduate study in Türkiye: Problems and proposed solutions]. *The Journal of Social Sciences Research, 5*(2), 94-114. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/802124>
- Katılmış, A., Çelik, H. & Kop, Y. (2013). Türkiye'de yüksek lisans öğreniminde yaşanan sorunlar: Sosyal bilgiler öğretmenliği örneği [Problems in master degree programs in Turkey: Social Studies Education Case]. *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences, 12*(1), 108-122. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/223306>
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis an introduction to its methodology*. (4th. ed). Sage.
- Lature, P. Y., Marta, R., Mursyida, L., & Samala, A. D. (2025). An analysis of inhibiting factors affecting thesis completion among students in the Informatics Engineering Education Program. *Jurnal Vokasi Informatika (JAVIT), 5*(2), 190–206. <https://doi.org/10.24036/javit.v5i2.252>,
- Lessing, A., & Schulz, S. (2003). Postgraduate supervision: students' and supervisors' perceptions. *Acta Academica, 35*(3), 161-184. <https://doi.org/10.10520/AJA0031370>
- Levecque, K., Anseel, F., Beuckelaer, A. D., Van der Heyden, J., & Gisle, L. (2017). Work organization and mental health problems in PhD students. *Research Policy, 46*(4), 868-879. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2017.02.008>
- Lovitts, B. E. (2001). *Leaving the ivory tower: The causes and consequences of departure from doctoral study*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Matin, M. A. & Khan, M. (2017). Common Problems Faced by Postgraduate Students during Their Thesis Works in Bangladesh. *Bangladesh Journal of Medical Education, 8*(1), 22-27. <https://doi.org/10.3329/bjme.v8i1.32245>

- Maxwell, J. A. (2008). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods* (2 nd ed, pp. 214-253). Sage Publications.
- Nouri, J., Larsson, K., & Saqr, M. (2019). Identifying Factors for Master Thesis Completion and Non-completion Through Learning Analytics and Machine Learning. In M. Scheffel, J. Broisin, V. Pammer-Schindler, A. Ioannou, & J. Schneider (Eds.), *Transforming learning with meaningful technologies (EC-TEL 2019, Lecture notes in Computer Science, Vol. 11722)*, (pp. 26-39). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29736-7_3
- Özmen, Z.M. & Aydın Güç, F. (2013). Doktora eğitimi ile ilgili yaşanan zorluklar ve baş etme stratejileri: Durum çalışması [Challenges in doctoral education and coping strategies: A case study]. *Journal of Higher Education and Science*, (3), 214-219. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1711524>
- Peluso, D. L., Carleton, R. N., & Asmundson, G. J. G. (2011). Depression symptoms in Canadian psychology graduate students: Do research productivity, funding, and the academic advisory relationship play a role? *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science / Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement*, 43(2), 119–127. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022624>
- Pope, C., Ziebland, S. & Mays, N. (2006). Analysing qualitative data. In C. Pope & N. Mays (Eds.), *Qualitative research in health care* (3rd ed., pp. 63–81). Blackwell Publishing.
- Pratiwi, K. D., & Hapsari, R. A. (2023). Thesis writing anxiety among Indonesian pre-service teachers of English: A survey study. *Research and Innovation in Language Learning*, 6(1), 19-33. <https://doi.org/10.21070/rill.v6i1.1694>
- Pyhältö, K., Stubb, J., & Lonka, K. (2012). Challenges of becoming a scholar: A study of doctoral students' problems and well-being. *International Scholarly Research Notices*, 2012(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/934941>
- Qasem, F. A., & Zayid, E. (2019). The challenges and problems faced by students in the early stage of writing research projects in L2, University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. *European Journal of Special Education Research*, 4, 32-47. <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejse.v0i0.2271>
- Rauf, M. (2016). Classroom incivility behaviours among medical students: A comparative study in Pakistan. *International Journal of Health and Medical Engineering*, 10(11), 3710–3714.
- Republic of Turkiye Official Gazette. (2016, April 20). (No. 29690). <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/04/20160420-16.htm>.
- Safari, Y., Navazeshkhan, F., Azizi, M., Ziaei, M. & Sharafi, K. (2015). The effective factors on the postgraduate students' interest and participation in performing research activities-case study: Kermanshah University of Medical Science. *Future of Medical Education Journal*, 5(2), 3-9. <https://doi.org/10.22038/fmej.2015.4454>
- Schramm-Possinger, M.E., & Powers, D.E. (2015). *The first year of graduate study: documenting challenges and informing ways to reduce attrition* (ETS Research Report). Educational Testing Service. <http://search.ets.org/researcher>

- Seferođlu, S. S. (2004). Öğretmen yeterlilikleri ve mesleki gelişim. *Bilim ve Aklın Aydınluđında Eğitim*, 58, 40-45. https://yunus.hacettepe.edu.tr/~sadi/yayin/Seferoglu_Ogretmen_Yeterlikleri_BAAE_2004-58.pdf
- Shobari, R., Sutrisna, D., & Fitrawati, D. (2023). Students' anxiety in writing academic texts: Causes and strategies to overcome it. *Project (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 6(2), 364-371. <https://doi.org/10.22460/project.v6i2.p364-371>
- Siddiqui, G. K., Zulfiqar, M. S., & Khalid, M. (2020). Difficulties while conducting research in academia: taking M. Phil students' perspectives in public and private universities. *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 89. <https://doi.org/10.47067/real.v3i2.48>
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. SAGE.
- Spear, R. H. (2000). *Supervision of research students: Responding to student expectations*. The Australian National University. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/156615676.pdf>
- Steel, P., & Konig, C. J. (2006). Integrating Theories of Motivation. *Academy of Management Review*, 31 (4), 889–913. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2006.22527385>
- Stubb, J., Pyh lt , K., & Lonka, K. (2011). Balancing between inspiration and exhaustion: PhD students' experienced socio-psychological well-being. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 33(1), 33–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2010.515572>
- Turgeman, R.T., & Pollak, Y. (2023). Using the temporal motivation theory to explain the relation between ADHD and procrastination. *Australian Psychologist*, 58(6), 448-456. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00050067.2023.2218540>
- Uçar, A. S. (2023). Writing a thesis in a pandemic: The case of special education. *Journal of Advanced Education Studies*, 5, 104-123. <https://doi.org/10.48166/ejaes.1353438>
- Wright, T. (2003). Postgraduate research students: People in context?. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 31(2), 209-227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0306988031000102379>
- Yalçınkaya, M., Koşar, D., & Altunay, E. (2014). Araştırma görevlilerinin bilim insanı yetiştirme sürecine ilişkin görüşleri [Research assistants' views on the training process of scholars]. *Kastamonu Education Journal*, 22(3), 1009-1034. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/209896>
- Konokman, G. Y., & Yelken, T. Y. (2014). Eğitim fak ltesi  ğretim elemanlarının yaşıam boyu  ğrenme yeterliklerine iliřkin algıları. *Hacettepe  niversitesi Eğitim Fak ltesi Dergisi*, 29 (29-2), 267-281.
- Yousefi, A., Bazrafkan, L. & Yamani, N. (2015). A qualitative inquiry into the challenges and complexities of research supervision: viewpoints of postgraduate students and faculty members. *Journal of Advances in Medical Education & Professionalism*, 3(3), 91-98. <https://doi.org/10.30476/jamp.2015.1671>

Yükseköğretim Kurulu (YÖK). (2016). *Lisansüstü eğitim ve öğretim yönetmeliği*. Resmi Gazete (No. 29690).<https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=21510&MevzuatTur=7&MevzuatTertip>

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ TÜRKÇE ÖZET
LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZLERDE ÖRTÜLÜ SORUNLAR: YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ
DURAKSAMALARININ NEDENLERİ
ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME

Kuramsal Çerçeve

Lisansüstü eğitimin ilk basamağı olan yüksek lisans programları, bireyin araştırma yetkinliklerini geliştirmesinin yanı sıra mesleki gelişimini destekleyen önemli bir süreçtir. Bu süreçte tez yazımının hem akademik kariyerin temel adımlarından biri olması, hem de bireyin bilimsel yöntemleri uygulama becerisini somut olarak ortaya koyduğu bir ürün niteliği taşıması nedeniyle çalışılan alanda derinlemesine bilgi gerektiren ve seçilen konuya uygun bir araştırma deseniyle yürütülmesi gereken önemli bir süreçtir (Qasem ve Zayid, 2019). Ancak lisansüstü tez süreci, her zaman planlandığı gibi ilerlemeyebilir, belirli bir noktada yavaşlayabilir veya tamamen duraksayabilir. Araştırmalar, yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin önemli bir bölümünün tez sürecinde duraksama yaşadığını, hatta bazı öğrencilerin bu nedenle programdan mezun olamadan ayrıldığını göstermektedir (Akbulut, Çepni ve Şahin, 2013; Bocar, 2009; Duze, 2010; Ekpoh, 2016; Huang, 2010; Jiranek, 2010; Lessing ve Schulz, 2003; Mutlu ve Doğan, 2021; Safari vd., 2015; Sevinç ve Eren, 2019; Yousefi, Bazrafkan ve Yamani, 2015). Yasal süre içinde tezin tamamlanamaması veya yazım sürecinde ara verilmesi olarak tanımlanabilecek tez duraksamaları; öğrencinin akademik motivasyonunu azaltmakta, mezuniyet süresini uzatmakta ve bazı durumlarda bilimsel üretkenliği tamamen kesintiye uğratabilmektedir. Ayrıca bu durum, bireyde başarısızlık ve yetersizlik duygularına neden olmakta, psikolojik olarak tükenmişlik belirtileriyle sonuçlanabilmektedir (Köse, 2020). Bu duraksamaların nedenleri arasında danışman desteği, konu seçimi, yöntemsel zorluklar ve kişisel faktörler yer almakta olup, durum aynı zamanda yükseköğretim sistemindeki yapısal sorunlara da işaret etmektedir (Lessing ve Schulz, 2003; Safari vd., 2015; Wright, 2003). Bu bağlamda, tez sürecinde yaşanan duraksamaların nedenlerinin derinlemesine incelenmesinin önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Bilindiği üzere Türkiye’de eğitim bilimleri alanında birçok yüksek lisans programı bulunmaktadır. Bu programlardan biri de üniversitelerin sosyal bilimler ya da eğitim bilimleri enstitülerine bağlı olarak yürütülen Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim (EPÖ) alanıdır. Uzman yetiştirilmesinde yüksek lisans eğitimi ilk basamak olup, özellikle EPÖ bilim alanının önemi büyüktür (Alhas, 2006). Bu nedenle EPÖ alanında tez duraksama nedenlerinin önceden belirlenerek önlem alınmasının daha da önemli olduğu yadsınamaz bir gerçektir. Bu çalışmada da bu önemden yola çıkılarak EPÖ bilim dalında yüksek lisans yapan öğrencilerin yaşadıkları tez duraksama nedenlerinin ortaya çıkarılması amaçlanmıştır.

Yöntem

Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden olan yorumlayıcı fenomenolojik yaklaşım kullanılmıştır. Bu doğrultuda, araştırmada katılımcıların tez duraksamasına ilişkin yaşamış oldukları deneyimlerini nasıl anlamlandırdıklarını ortaya koymak amacıyla fenomenolojik yaklaşım tercih edilmiştir.