

PROCEEDINGS BOOK

MIDDLE EAST
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
CONTEMPORARY SCIENTIFIC STUDIES-VIII



January 7-8, 2023
Adana, Türkiye

Editors

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**QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
WRITTEN IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN TERMS OF
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Abstract

Public relations activities are an important management element in both institutions and organizations and governments. Governments and institutions must consider to their public relations activities to maintain a positive reputation among their target audiences. The aim of this study is to analyze the contribution of doctorate theses on public relations in universities established in Turkey. Content analysis technique is used in the analysis of the data in the study. The study is limited to the theses made in the field of public relations between the years 2018-2022. Theses published between 2008 and 2017 have been previously analyzed by other academics. However, theses between the years 2018-2022 are not analyzed. The study will contribute to the field in this respect. While the universe of the study is the doctorate theses written in the field of public relations, the sample is the doctorate theses written in the field of public relations between the years 2018-2022. The study is carried out in December 2022 by analyzing the theses in the YOK (Turkish High Education Board) thesis center online. In the study, 68 theses written in the mentioned period are analyzed. At the end of the study, the following information are obtained. The gender distribution of the doctorate theses writers is close to each other. Almost all these are written in Turkish. All these except one thesis have access permission. These are most written in 2022. Looking at the last five years, it has been seen that at least doctorate theses are written in 2019. It is thought that the curfews enacted during the pandemic period in 2019 caused this. Doctorate theses are published by institutes in 19 universities. One-fifth of the theses of 19 universities are published by Marmara University. Marmara University is followed by Istanbul University and Ege University, respectively. Most theses are published by Social Sciences Institutes, followed by Graduate Education Institute, Graduate Programs Institute and Educational Sciences Institute, respectively. When examined the theses categories, corporate public relations activities, public diplomacy, marketing public relations, internal public relations and public relations activities applied in digital environments come in the first four ranks. Considering the categories of theses, the importance of public diplomacy in recent years has been seen as positive in terms of internationalization in public relations. In addition, it has been seen that writing a few theses in the field of artificial intelligence and data mining has left the classical topics and the theses topics follow the agenda.

Key Words: Public relation, graduate public relations education, doctorate thesis, quantitative content analysis.

Introduction

Public relations include activities carried out by individuals, institutions, and states to create and maintain a positive image on their target audience. These activities have been going on since ancient times and are gradually expanding by including new channels such as social media with the developing technology. With globalization, public relations have evolved into international public relations for companies and public diplomacy for states. Every new subject that enters the field should also be considered in communication faculties that train public relations professionals. Each new subject should be considered and included in the curriculum by the public relations departments of high schools, communication faculties and educational institutions providing postgraduate education in the field of communication/public relations. Especially the problems in the field of public relations should be solved with master's and doctorate theses, and new applications in the field of public relations should be proposed. Thus, public relations will have professionals who can provide the expected support.

When the public relations literature is examined, it is seen that there is not enough work on the analysis of undergraduate and graduate education in the field. Studies on the analysis of postgraduate theses are almost non-existent. Although there are two studies examining the period between 1984-2007 (Okay & Okay, 2008) and 2007-2017 on the analysis of doctorate theses (Solmaz, Ergen, & Alkan, 2018), there is no study that analyzes the later period. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature. The study aims to analyze the contribution to the field of public relations by analyzing the doctorate theses written in the field of public relations between the years 2018-2022.

Literature Review

Public relations education in Turkey started in the mid-1960s in parallel with the involvement of public relations in the Turkish private sector. The first education started in 1966, when the third and fourth grade specialization departments of Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences, School of Journalism were changed to Journalism-Public Relations and Radio-Television. Later, public relations lessons were included in the curricula of Journalism Colleges in Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara. Then, these schools were transformed into Press and Broadcasting College and then Communication Faculties (Balta Peltekoğlu, 2016, p. 132; Okay & Okay, 2013, p. 32). Public Relations education in universities today is at three different levels: associate degree, undergraduate and graduate levels. Information on public relations doctoral education in Turkey is given in table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Public Relations Programs in Doctorate

Public Relation and Publicity			Public Relations			Public Relations and Advertising			Total		
State	Foundation	Total	State	Foundation	Total	State	Foundation	Total	State	Foundation	Total
11	2	13	3	2	5	-	2	2	14 % 70,0	6 % 30,0	20 % 100,0

Looking at Table 1, there are 20 doctorate programs in the field of public relations in Turkey. There are three doctorate science fields in these fields. These fields are "Public Relations and Publicity", "Public Relations" and "Public Relations and Advertising". 70% of these programs belong to state universities and 30% belong to foundation universities. While there were 11 doctorate programs in state universities in 2017 (Solmaz, Ergen, & Alkan, 2018), this number increased to 30 doctoral programs in 2022. This figure corresponds to an increase of 27.27% in

doctorate programs. While there were three doctorate programs in foundation universities in 2017 (Solmaz, Ergen, & Alkan, 2018), this number increased to six doctorate programs in 2022. This figure corresponded to an increase of 100.0%.

Postgraduate education should be known as the process of training qualified personnel and scientists for the public/private sector and universities. In addition, graduate education can sometimes be preferred for personal development. In postgraduate education, which is the first step of postgraduate education, training of qualified personnel comes to the fore for companies, while increasing the salary for employees and the concern of being preferred in appointments and assignments come to the fore. In doctorate education, which is the second step of postgraduate education, there is the idea of raising more scientists with the concern of raising qualified personnel. According to Özvar (2022), “both public and private sector graduates are expected to find solutions to complex problems encountered in fields that require advanced research or innovation, as well as expand existing knowledge or professional practice. As a result, these people are also asked to develop advanced new ideas and processes in their work or learning environment” (2022, p. 3).

The aim of doctorate is “to find an answer to a scientific question/problem in that field with the methods of a particular scientific field, to solve the problem, to bring a different perspective, to take a new approach” (istanbul.edu.tr, 2022). Likewise, doctorate gives the student the ability to conduct independent research and determine the necessary steps to reach new syntheses (Karatay University, 2021). Students who study for a doctorate also have some problems during their doctorate. Some doctorate students may be faced with the situation of not being able to handle the course load because they are also working in another job. This situation prevents doctorate or doctorate thesis from being qualified enough. However, the theoretical progress of the program or the opening of the program in line with the expertise of the faculty members can be seen as different problems (Özmen & Aydın Power, 2013, p. 219; Karadağ & Özdemir, 2017). Especially in the doctorate, the opening of programs in line with the expertise of the faculty members may cause the same subjects to be given over and over under different programs. This situation does not create a suitable environment for the development of doctorate students who receive counseling or programs from faculty members who are away from the developing technology and environment. Reasons such as residing in a different city, the postgraduate education given in some universities are not sufficient for the readiness required for the doctorate can be added to the problems listed above. Academic meetings are held from time to time both at universities and within the Council of Higher Education (YOK) for the improvement of the doctorate. In 2022, a workshop on the Improvement of Doctorate Education was held by YOK. At the end of this workshop, some suggestions were made about the development of doctorate in the fields of social sciences, natural sciences, health sciences and fine arts. These suggestions were gathered under the titles of opening a program, student admission, teaching processes, consultancy, administrative processes, and research thesis process. According to this Workshop Report, it is recommended to choose thesis topics that will increase the cooperation of universities with stakeholders such as society and industry in determining the thesis topic in social sciences, which is one of the biggest problems in the field (YOK, 2022, pp. 9-25). Thus, from this point of view, in an environment where technology is developing rapidly and communication tools are increasing, a doctorate in every new subject from artificial intelligence to data mining must follow the field closely. Likewise, choosing a doctorate thesis topic is equally important.

The thesis topic, which is the most important stage of the doctorate, can be selected in two ways. First, the thesis advisor proposes the subject to the researcher. The second is the determination of the subject by the researcher (Islamoğlu & Alnıçık, 2014, p. 53). In addition,

the thesis topic should have certain characteristics. These features include topics such as the thesis topic attracts the attention of the student, the thesis topic is new and has not been examined by others, it is a contemporary topic that is not outdated, the research results yield useful results and can be completed within the doctorate period (Dinler, 2014, pp. 30-31).

Method

The aim of this study is to analyze the doctorate theses written on public relations and evaluate their contribution to the field. Since there are not enough studies in this field, it is thought that this study is important in terms of contribution to the field. This study is a qualitative study and is based on the single scanning model. In the study, document analysis technique is used as a data collection technique. In the study, a search is made with the word "public relations" in the thesis titles, and all doctorate theses in public relations disciplines and departments are scanned. Research on doctorate theses on public relations before 2018 has been done before. Therefore, the period of the study is the doctorate theses written on public relations between the years 2018-2022. The study is carried out by analyzing the web pages of all universities in Turkey between 1-31 December 2022. The data obtained in the study are analyzed with the SPSS 22 program and percentage values are obtained. The study is limited to only web pages of universities, only doctoral programs and only document analysis technique. The population of the study is universities in Turkey, and the sample is only universities that provide doctorate in public relations. In the future, similar studies can be carried out by different researchers on master's theses.

Findings and Discussion

When the theses on public relations between the years 2018-2022 are examined, it is seen that the theses are written depending on 11 main disciplines. 63.2% of the theses are public relations and publicity program, 17.6% are public relations, 5.9% are communication sciences, 2.9% are communication, public relations, and advertising, 1.5% are respectively political science and public administration, educational sciences, distance education, basic communication sciences, radio, TV, and cinema programs. Most theses are published from the programs of public relations/public relations and publicity. It has been observed that theses on public relations have been written from three programs outside the field of communication, although in a small number. During this period, it is observed that 68 doctorate theses were written. The basic data of the theses are given in table2.

Table 2. Demographic Distribution of Doctoral Theses

Variables	Sub variable	Number	%
Gender	Male	35	51,5
	Female	33	48,5
	Total	68	100,0
Language of Theses	Turkish	67	98,5
	English	1	1,5
	Total	70	100,0
Access Permission	Yes	67	98,5
	No	1	1,5
	Total	68	100,0

According to table 2, 51.5% of 68 theses are written by men, while 48.5% are written by women. There is a balanced distribution in terms of gender variable. While 98.5% of the theses are written in Turkish, 98.5% of them have access permission. While the rate of women as doctorate students is higher in the 2008-2017 period (Solmaz, Ergen, & Alkan, 2018), this rate

is close to each other in the last five years. The distribution of the years in which the theses were written is given in table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Theses by Years

Year	Number	%
2018	15	22,1
2019	6	8,8
2020	16	23,5
2021	20	29,4
2022	11	16,2
Total	68	100,0

When the distribution of theses by years is examined, 16.2% of theses are in 2022, 29.4% in 2021, 23.5% in 2020, 8.8% in 2019 and 22.1% in 2018. Except for 2019, a distribution between 16% and 29% is observed in other years, while a rate of 8.8% is observed in 2019. This low rate is thought to be due to the Covid-19 epidemic, which started in February 2019 and caused schools to switch to distance education in March of the same year. Solmaz et al. In the studies of (Solmaz, Ergen, & Alkan, 2018), the annual number of theses written between 2008-2017 varies between 15-30. According to findings of study, doctorate theses have been published by 19 university institutes, including Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University, excluding Cyprus Universities. Rates of theses published by universities are examined, respectively, with 19.1%, Marmara University is the first, followed by Istanbul University with 10.3%, Ege University with 7.4%, and Istanbul Aydın University, and Erciyes University, Selçuk University with 5.9%, and Atatürk University, with 4.4% Maltepe University, Hacı Bayram Veli University, Ankara University, Gazi University, 2.9% Kocaeli University, Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University, Istanbul Trade University, Süleyman Demirel University, Bahçeşehir University, with 1.5%, Istanbul Bilgi University, Hacettepe University. And Anadolu University is following. While Marmara University is in the first place with 13 doctorate theses with 19.1%, Istanbul Bilgi, Hacettepe and Anadolu Universities are in the last place with one doctorate thesis and 1.5%. The types of universities where theses are written, 82.4% of theses belong to state universities and 17.6% to foundation universities. This rate exactly coincides with the rate of doctorate programs opened in state and foundation universities. The ratios above show that state universities contribute to the field more than foundation universities. This result is in line with the findings of (Solmaz, Ergen, & Alkan, 2018). The distribution of theses according to the institutes where they are approved is in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of Theses by Approving Institutes

Institute	Number	%
Institute of Social Sciences	57	83,8
Institute of Graduate Education	9	13,2
Institute of Graduate Programs	1	1,5
Institute of Education Sciences	1	1,5
Total	68	100,0

The distribution of theses according to the institutes where they were approved, it was seen that 83.8% were written within the Institute of Social Sciences, 13.2% at the Institute of Graduate Education, 1.5% at the Institute of Graduate Programs and 1.5% at the Institute of Educational Sciences. Most theses were published within the Institute of Social Sciences. The programs which the theses are written, 63.2% of them are Public Relations and Publicity, 17.6% are Public Relations, 5.9% are Communication Sciences, 2.9% are Communication, %2.9% are Public Relations and Advertising, %1.5 are Political Science and Public Administration, %1.5

are Educational Sciences, %1.5 are Distance Education, %1.5 are Basic Communication Sciences, and %1.5 are Radio TV and Cinema. Here, most theses are published in Public Relations and Publicity and Public Relations programs. The topics of the theses are discussed under two categories. The first category is traditional public relations activities. These are activities such as corporate reputation, corporate image, social responsibility, and event management. The second category is modern public relations activities. These are activities such as social media, data mining, artificial intelligence, public diplomacy, and crisis management. Table 5 shows the distribution of theses by categories.

Table 5. Distribution of Thesis Topics

Variables	Sub Variables	Number	%
Traditional Public Relations	Public Relations Practices in Institutions	13	19,1
	Marketing Public Relations	5	7,4
	Internal Public Relations	5	7,4
	Public Relations Campaign	3	4,4
	Political Communication Campaign	3	4,4
	Public Relation Education	3	4,4
	Social Event Management	2	2,9
	Corporate Social Responsibility	2	2,9
	Corporate Reputation Management	1	1,5
	Corporate Image Management	1	1,5
	Total	38	55,88
Modern Public Relations	Digital Public Relations Practices in Institutions	10	14,7
	Public Diplomacy	7	10,3
	International Public Relations	5	7,4
	Strategic Public Relations	2	2,9
	The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations	2	2,9
	Crisis Management	1	1,5
	Public Relations Ethics	1	1,5
	Public Relations in Data Mining	1	1,5
	Public Relations in Social Integration	1	1,5
		Total	30

Traditional public relations practices are as follows. The practices of public relations in different institutions such as local governments and non-governmental organizations with 19.1%, marketing public relations with %7.4, internal communication with 7.4%, public relations campaigns %4.4, political communication campaigns with 4.4%, public relations training with %4.4, social event management with %2.9, corporate social responsibility with %2.9, corporate reputation with %1.5, and image management with 1.5%. Public Relations practices overlap with the previous similar work (Okay & Okay, 2008, p. 11).

Modern public relations practices are as follows. These are digital public relations practices in institutions with 14.7%, public diplomacy with 10.3%, international public relations with 7.4%, strategic public relations with 2.9%, the use of artificial intelligence in public relations applications with %2.9, crisis management with %1.5, ethics in public relations practices with %1.5, public relations in data mining with %1.5, and public relations in social integration with %1.5.

The fact that a little more than half of the theses are chosen from traditional public relations subjects shows that doctorate students or their advisors cannot move away from traditional subjects. However, in doctorate, it would be a more scientific approach to seek solutions to new problems and to stop solving previously solved problems repeatedly. In the table above, 19.1% of the theses reveal the public relations practices in different institutions, revealing that the same subject has been repeated 13 times. Although doctorate theses should be written to find

solutions to problems, it is considered that the studies are studies aimed at determining the situation rather than finding solutions.

In recent years, topics such as public diplomacy, international public relations, artificial intelligence, and data mining can be counted as modern public relations topics. The fact that nearly half of the analyzed theses are among modern public relations subjects, shows that public relations follow the needs of the age. As a matter of fact, in the analysis of Solmaz et. All. Study (2018), it was emphasized that there are moves towards digitalization in doctorate theses. The same result was determined in the study of Cilingir (2017, p. 155), and the topic of new media became the second most preferred topic in the theses written in the field of communication. However, as stated by Polat (2020, p. 304), this number is not considered sufficient and is expected to increase further.

It is a pleasing development that the studies in the fields of public diplomacy and international public relations reached 25.0% in the study. These are studies that will contribute to the future of public relations. Such an approach will cause both governments and companies to show more respect to the field of public relations and international public relations firms that perform this work. A total of three studies on artificial intelligence and data mining is not considered sufficient. Artificial intelligence shows itself in almost every field, it can be the subject of many fields from engineering to sociology, but it is thought-provoking that it entered the field of public relations with so little work. These studies need to be increased even more. In addition, while the issue of immigrants has been a problem of Türkiye for about 10 years, only one study on this issue shows that Türkiye's problems are not approached in real terms. In addition, studies in the field of ethics and crisis management were deemed insufficient, and it is considered that more studies should be done on this subject.

CONCLUSION

Public relations education started in the mid-1960s and develops in parallel with the needs of the age. Again, new subjects and tools are entering the field of public relations with the effect of technology. There are many works that contribute to the field with public relations education. Even Yasin et al. (2017, p. 480), it was determined that the theses on public relations in Turkey have more up-to-date sources than the theses in the USA.

In this study, which aims to evaluate the contribution of doctorate theses on public relations to the field, it was seen that most of theses are written in state universities. This shows that state universities contribute to the field more than foundation universities. The fact that almost all theses are in Turkish shows that they contribute to Turkish literature rather than international literature. A little more than half of the theses are written on traditional public relations issues, while nearly half are written on modern public relations. Especially the analysis of different public relations practices in connection with social media shows that new concepts have entered the field. It is thought that the increase in the number of topics related to social media will contribute significantly to the field and will support companies to carry their public relations practices to social media.

It will be useful to select the theses to be written in the field of public relations, first, by scanning the literature in recent years, especially from topics that are also relevant to our country and that have not been studied. Likewise, even if a small number of studies have been carried out in our country, studies of the same type should be carried out, if they are made from a different perspective. It is thought that it will be useful to analyze public relations and sub-activities made especially through social media and websites. Again, the Result Report of the

Workshop on the Improvement of Doctoral Education made by YOK in 2022 should be well analyzed and necessary arrangements should be made in doctorate.

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