Journal of Art, Design and Architecture (JADA+Arch)
Vol: 1, Issue: 1, May 2025

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF GRADUATE THESES IN TURKEY: THE RISING ACADEMIC TRENDS AND FUTURE VISION

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ABSTRACT

Abstract— *This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of graduate theses on bibliometrics in Turkey. The research examines 216 theses archived in YÖKTEZ between 1992 and 2024, exploring academic trends and identifying evolving research patterns. The findings reveal a marked increase in bibliometric studies post-2019, with master's theses comprising 88% of total outputs. Predominantly emerging in fields such as education, business, tourism, and health sciences, bibliometric studies have demonstrated interdisciplinary application potential. Gender analysis indicated a higher proportion of female authors (61.6%), suggesting increasing female academic participation. The study underscores the significance of bibliometric analysis in evaluating academic productivity and guiding research directions while highlighting the growing importance of public universities in contributing to this field. These findings demonstrate bibliometric analysis as a critical tool for understanding and fostering academic research dynamics in Turkey.*

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, Graduate Theses, Academic Trends, Data Analysis, YÖK Thesis Database, Turkey

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

TÜRKİYE'DE LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZLERİN BİBLİYOMETRİK ANALİZİ: YÜKSELEN AKADEMİK EĞİLİMLER VE GELECEK VİZYONU

ÖZET

Özet— *Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki bibliyometrik konulu lisansüstü tezlerin kapsamlı bir analizini sunmaktadır. Araştırma, 1992 ile 2024 yılları arasında YÖKTEZ arşivinde yer alan 216 tezi inceleyerek akademik eğilimleri ve değişen araştırma modellerini ortaya koymaktadır. Bulgular, 2019 sonrası bibliyometrik çalışmalarda belirgin bir artış olduğunu göstermekte; çalışmaların %88'inin yüksek lisans tezi olduğu belirlenmiştir. Eğitim, işletme, turizm ve sağlık bilimleri gibi alanlarda yoğunlaşan bibliyometrik çalışmaların disiplinler arası uygulama potansiyeli dikkat çekmektedir. Cinsiyet analizinde, kadın yazar oranının (%61,6) erkeklerden fazla olduğu tespit edilmiş, bu durum kadınların akademik katılımındaki artışı göstermektedir. Çalışma, bibliyometrik analizlerin akademik verimliliği değerlendirme ve araştırma yönlerini belirlemede önemli bir araç olduğunu vurgulamakta ve kamu üniversitelerinin bu alana katkılarının giderek arttığını göstermektedir. Bu bulgular, Türkiye'de bibliyometrik analizlerin akademik araştırma dinamiklerini anlama ve desteklemede kritik bir araç olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bibliyometrik Analiz, Lisansüstü Tezler, Akademik Eğilimler, Veri Analizi, YÖKTEZ Veri Tabanı, Türkiye

I.INTRODUCTION

The term bibliometrics was first defined by Alan Pritchard in 1969. The word is a combination of the words “biblio” (book) and “metric” (measurement) and refers to the combination of bibliography and mathematics (Khiste & Paithankar, 2017). Raisig explained bibliometric analysis as a method of gathering and interpreting statistics on books and journals. Pritchard explained the purpose of bibliometrics as “understanding the structure and orientation of a discipline by analyzing written communication processes” (Pritchard, 1969). This approach involves the application of mathematical and statistical analysis using specific criteria and indicators to determine the quality of scientific data. Thus, bibliometrics has become a separate research field as a discipline that measures the development, orientation and growth of scientific literature (Khiste & Paithankar, 2017; Özmen Halis et al., 2025a; Tekin, Burkut, & Dal, 2024a). Based on these definitions, bibliometric analysis is seen as a type of analysis that provides a good evaluation of records.

Bibliometric analysis is a method that allows the quantitative analysis of scientific literature and its roots date back to the early 20th century. The first study to conduct a literature review was published in 1917 by Cole and Eales. This study is considered to be the first to perform a quantitative analysis based on published research and is considered one

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

of the cornerstones of bibliometric analysis (Okubo, 1997). E.W. Hulme did further work on this method and called it "statistical bibliography" in 1923 (Okubo, 1997). Bibliometric analysis was also used by Lotka in 1926 as a method to examine the frequency of distribution of scientific production. James McKeen Cattell, editor of the journal Science between 1895 and 1944, is recognized as the founder of the systematic collection of science statistics that led to the birth of the field of bibliometrics (Godin, 2006). In 1963, with the establishment of the Science Citation Index (SCI) database, access to this method became easier for researchers who wanted to make scientific measurements and bibliometric studies gained great momentum with the definition of the term bibliometrics (Okubo, 1997).

Bibliometric analysis visualizes the bibliographic shaping of scientific literature and provides researchers with important information and models on the subject. With this method, the progress of a scientific field, the importance and dynamics of research topics in the field can be explored (Ay, 2024a; Burkut & Dal, 2023; Dal, Burkut, & Karataş, 2023; Demir & Erigüç, 2018). This method can also accelerate academic communications and reveal the reasons for these communications (Gürlen, Özdiyar, & Şen, 2019). Bibliometric analysis also offers the opportunity to examine the networks of authors, countries, institutions and collaborations between these institutions that have contributed the most to a particular topic. With the help of some special programs and techniques, productive researchers and resources related to a field can be identified, thus providing great convenience as a tool to guide documentation (Ye, Chen, & Kong, 2019). Bibliometrics is the study of academic publishing that identifies publication trends using statistics and emphasizes the relationships between published works. It is one of several subfields that deal with measuring the output side of science. This method, which is used to evaluate the scientific performance of researchers, institutions or countries, reveals areas where further research is needed (Durieux & Gevenois, 2010). It is the analysis of published information (e.g. books, journal articles, datasets, blogs) and related metadata (e.g. abstracts, keywords, citations) using statistics and is used to identify or show relationships between published studies (Ay & Dal, 2024a; Broadus, 1987; Ninkov, Frank, & Maggio, 2021; Tekin, Burkut, & Dal, 2024b). It is used to understand which topics are more popular and which topics have gaps, and enables the evaluation of scientific impact with concrete data through metrics such as the number of citations of publications or impact factors of journals (Ay & Dal, 2024b; Burkut & Dal, 2024; Joshi, 2014; La Torre, Sciarra, Chiappetta, & Monteduro, 2017; Özmen Halis et al., 2025b). Bibliometrics is based on the assumption that the academic output of a field is captured in the published literature. To frame this in a medical context, Lewison wrote as follows: "Epidemiology is to patients what bibliometrics is to scientific papers" (Lewison & Devey, 1999). Parallel to epidemiology, bibliometric researchers can trace the trajectory of a topic by tracking its diffusion in the literature, or identify the characteristics of journal articles that are downloaded voraciously to determine its impact. With this analysis, patterns of collaboration between authors, institutions or countries can be analyzed, shaping potential studies for future collaborations (Roussakis, Stamatelopoulos, & Balaka, 2007). Bibliometrics and epidemiology also share approaches in the use of rigorous statistics, the conduct of cross-sectional studies and attempts to

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

identify correlation (Ninkov et al., 2021).

The basic concepts of bibliometrics and types of bibliometrics can be diversified as evaluative bibliometrics, relational bibliometrics, metadata, impact factor and h-index. Evaluating the analyzed data is defined as evaluative bibliometrics, and making inferences about the relationships between data is defined as relational bibliometrics (Yılmaz, 2021). The linking and mapping between publications can be done in a way to include metadata related to keywords or specific data, the impact factor of publications or platforms related to the subject, or the h-index of the researcher who has worked in that field (Hassan & Duarte, 2024). Scientists such as Alfred Lotka, George Zipf and Samuel Bradford developed mathematical laws that laid the foundation for bibliometrics. These are Lotka's law, Bradford's law and Zipf's law.

Bradford's Law, introduced by Bradford in 1934, was developed to examine the distribution of papers published in a given field. This law is used to measure the article productivity of scientific journals. In particular, it analyzes how articles on a particular topic are distributed across journals and thus reveals the productivity patterns of scientific publications (Erar, 2002; Hjerppe, 1978).

Lotka's Law is a principle that explains scientific productivity and the regularity of distribution of resources according to a topic. This law aims to examine the distribution of scientific contribution on a topic by analyzing the productivity of authors. While examining the distribution of authors according to the number of articles they produce, the law expresses the relationship between productivity and the number of authors with a mathematical model. This law is an important tool for analyzing the irregularity of scientific productivity and the production trends of authors within a given discipline (Erar, 2002; Hertzel, 1987; Hjerppe, 1978).

Zipf's Law is a model describing the regularity of word occurrence and is used to analyze the frequency of use of words in a source. This law refers to the ranking of words in a text in a descending order of frequency of use. It suggests that there is an inverse relationship between frequency of use and ranking. Zipf's Law is used to study the distribution of word frequencies in texts and to understand productivity patterns in natural language (Erar, 2002; Hjerppe, 1978).

Between 1950 and 1980, Eugene Garfield developed the Science Citation Index (SCI) in 1955. During this period, which was a turning point for modern bibliometrics, citation analysis and the measurement of scientific impact gained importance. Robert K. Merton contributed to the theoretical foundations of bibliometric analysis with his work on the sociology of science, and in the post-1980 period, with the development of computer technologies, methods such as big data analysis and network analysis began to be applied. Digital databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, Proquest and Google Scholar have become the main sources for bibliometric studies. In recent years, techniques such as social network analysis and text mining have been integrated into bibliometrics. Scanning databases is one of the most important steps for bibliometric analysis. Web of Science (WoS), a database focusing on citation data and journal performance, Scopus, which is a broader database and preferred for analyzing the subject-based impact of publications and

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

citation networks, PubMed, a primary source for publications in health, medicine and biological sciences, and Google Scholar, which is used as an alternative source to see how studies are evaluated by a wider audience. Development studies on TR index databases based in Turkey are also ongoing (Hassan & Duarte, 2024). In Turkey, the first study on this subject is known as descriptive bibliometrics by Yıldız Çakan in 1980.

After the scans are made, these data are analyzed through a program. Programs such as VOSviewer, CiteSpace, Bibliometrix, igraph and Gephi are the most commonly used programs (Ay, Bekler, Bekler, & Dal, 2024; Ay, Tekin, & Dal, 2024; Bekler, Ay, Dal, & Bekler, 2024). With bibliometric analysis; publication trends (number of publications over time), the most cited studies and authors, the most active institutions and countries, common word and subject distribution, and findings from network analysis can be reached.

II. METHODOLOGY

The advantage of bibliometrics in quantitatively defining the relationship was recognized many years ago and has been used in all countries where academic studies are conducted. In Turkey, Google Scholar, ULAKBIM, YÖKTEZ, TR Index and Dergipark are frequently preferred as databases. YÖKTEZ, which was established in 1996 in Turkey and opened to electronic publication in 2006, is a platform where all master's, doctoral and specialization theses made in our country are located, archived and accessed (YÖKTEZ, 1996). In our country, although qualified studies are conducted using this analysis method, theses that are the product of completing a higher education degree are also encountered. The aims of this study on theses through the YÖKTEZ archive are; to reveal the general trends of bibliometric theses in Turkey, to determine which topics are focused on, which methods are preferred and in which disciplines they are mostly applied, to evaluate the contributions of bibliometric studies to academic research, science policies and knowledge management, and to determine the compatibility of bibliometric research in Turkey with international literature and its deficiencies.

The YÖKTEZ archive was searched with the keywords “bibliometrics or bibliometric or scientometric” using the advanced search tab between 01.12.2024-06.12.2024. Expertise, doctoral and master's theses were searched without selecting the year range, provided that it was included in the title of the thesis. The data obtained were transferred to Microsoft Excel and the listed theses were analyzed according to year, field, type, author gender, title of thesis advisor, number of pages of the thesis, type of university where the thesis was produced and the number of theses studied.

III. RESULTS

When the data are examined, it is seen that there are 216 studies in this field and the first study is a doctoral thesis in the field of education and training in 1992. Although it is known that bibliometric studies started at the end of the 1800s abroad, since there is no record of all theses before 1992 in the database in our country, it is possible that there are more theses made in previous years that are not included in the YÖKTEZ platform. The distribution of the number of theses by years is shown in Figure 1 and the distribution of thesis types by years is shown in Figure 2.

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

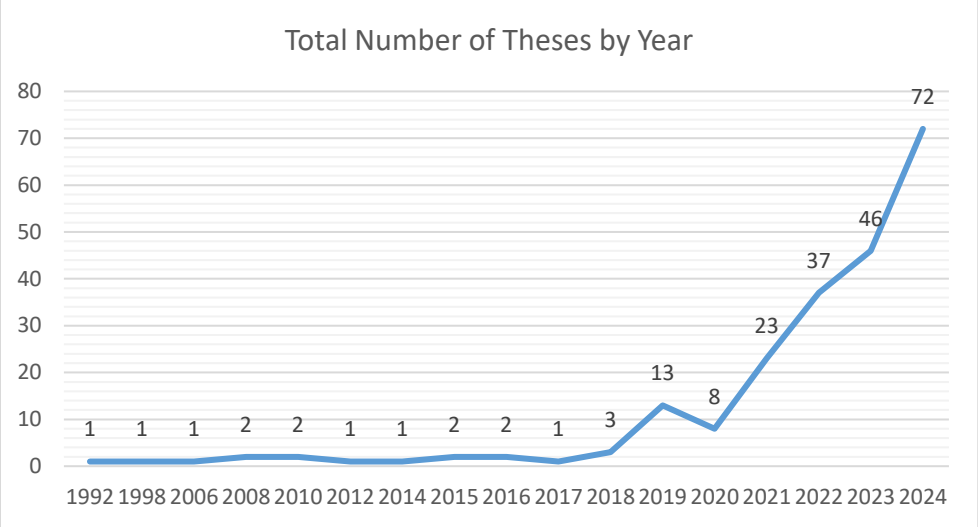


Figure 1. Distribution of Thesis Numbers by Year

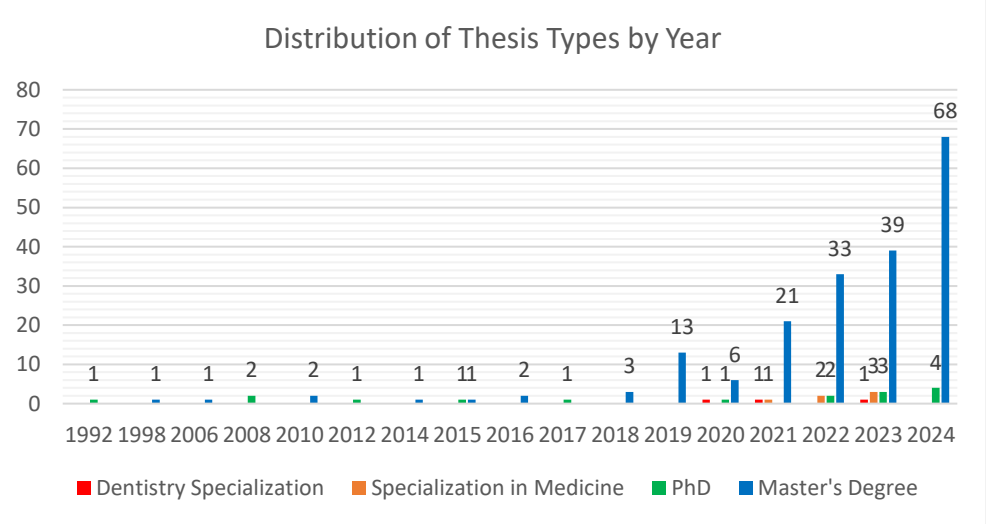
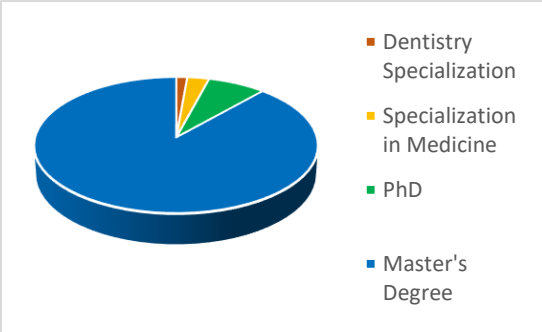


Figure 2. Distribution of Thesis Types by Year

This figure titled “Distribution of Theses by Years” shows the distribution of theses on bibliometric analysis by years at the levels of specialization in medicine, specialization in dentistry, doctorate and master's degree. As a result of the examinations made through YÖKTEZ; it is seen that the number of theses in the field of bibliometrics has increased since 1992. Until 2018, there were few studies with this type of analysis, but as of 2019, it is seen that the analysis is used more frequently. In 2021, the number of bibliometric analyzes exceeded 20, and was studied in 72 theses, including 37 in 2022, 46 in 2023 and 3 three doctoral dissertations in 2024. After 2021, this increase is thought to be related to the ease of scanning data electronically and accessing all studies in the literature. It is estimated that

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

the increasing interest in bibliometric analysis in recent years is due to the fact that quantitative output analysis and mapping provide valuable data and are reliable (Ay, 2024b; Burkut, Tekin, & Dal, 2025).



Thesis Type	Count	Rate (%)
Dentistry Specialization	3	1,4
Specialization in Medicine	6	2,8
PhD	16	7,4
Master's Degree	191	88,4
Total	216	100,0

Figure 3. Distribution by Thesis Types

As seen in Figure 3, it was determined that there were a total of 216 theses, including 3 dentistry specialization, 6 medical specialization, 16 doctoral and 191 master's theses. It was observed that analysis was used in many different fields in the theses. Theses in fields such as tourism, architecture, education and training, information-operating systems, health fields and business administration provide reliable data such as evaluating the data related to that field, analyzing the relationship between the data and revealing qualified publications and publishers.

When the fields of the studied theses were examined, it was found that the most important fields were education-education, business administration, tourism and economy. It is seen that there are 47 theses (4 doctoral and 43 master's theses) in the field of education and training, 44 theses (4 doctoral and 40 master's theses) in the field of business administration, 16 master's theses (4 doctoral and 40 master's theses) in the field of tourism and 15 theses (1 doctoral thesis) in the field of economy. There are 2 theses in family medicine, 7 in science and technology, 12 in information and document management, 4 in statistics, 8 in architecture, 8 in engineering, 4 in sociology, 5 in management information systems and 44 theses in total. The fields of the thesis are shown in Figure 4.

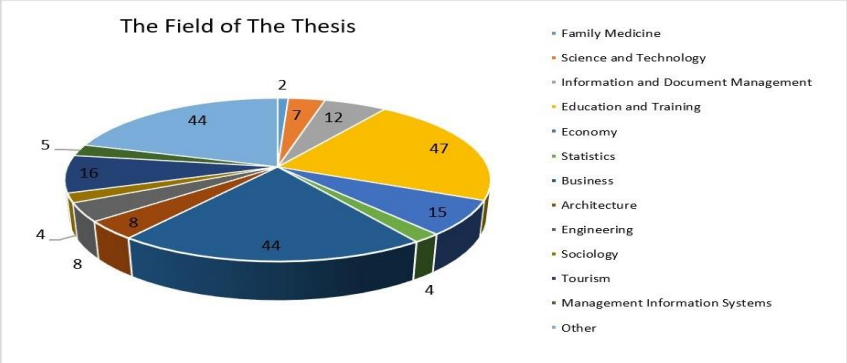


Figure 4. The Field of the Thesis

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

Other information on 216 theses obtained according to YÖKTEZ data (language of writing, author gender, advisor title, number of pages of the thesis and university types) are shown in Table 1.

Tablo 1. Information on thesises

		Number (n)	Rate (%)
Writing Language of Theses	Turkish	193	89,4
	English	23	10,6
	Total	216	100,0
Author Gender	Woman	133	61,6
	Man	83	38,4
	Total	216	100,0
Consultant Title	Professor	69	32,0
	Associate Professor	96	44,4
	Assistant Professor	51	23,6
	Total	216	100,0
Type of University	Public	188	87,0
	Foundation	27	12,5
	Acceptance of Foreign Equivalency	1	0,5
	Total	216	100,0
Number of Pages	0-100	90	41,7
	101-200	107	49,5
	201-300	17	7,9
	301-400	1	0,5
	401 and above	1	0,5
	Total	216	100,0

According to the data obtained in Table 1, it is seen that 10.6% (23 theses) of these theses are in English, while the remaining 89.4% (193 theses) are in Turkish. Although English is the universal scientific language, this situation is thought to have developed because the theses were conducted in Turkey.

When the gender of the authors of 216 bibliometric theses in YÖKTEZ is analyzed, it is found that 133 thesis authors are female and 83 thesis authors are male. Considering the fact that the number of women continuing their education in developing countries is less than the number of men, the high number of women in theses suggests that the number of women attending higher education is increasing and is seen as an important result for social development.

When an analysis was made regarding the supervisor faculty member independent of

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

the authors of the theses related to bibliometrics, it was determined that 96 theses were supervised by academics with the title of "Associate Professor", 69 theses were supervised by academics with the title of "Professor" and 51 theses were supervised by academics with the title of "Assistant Professor".

A more detailed examination of the theses in the database reveals that 186 theses were produced in public universities, the remaining 27 theses were produced in foundation universities and 1 thesis was produced in a university in the USA.

Bibliometric analyses, which provide comprehensive research opportunities, reveal all studies, citations, co-researchers, keywords used, and the journals with the highest number of publications in the relevant field from past to present. Depending on the selected topic, the number of pages of the theses studied varies between 50 and 652. When all theses were scanned, it was observed that 90 theses (41.7%) were between 0-100 pages and 107 theses (49.7%) were between 101-200 pages. Apart from the two highest rates, 17 theses were between 201-300 pages and 1 thesis was between 301-400 pages. The only remaining thesis was found to be 652 pages.

Of the theses since 1992, 43.98% (95) were produced in the institute of social sciences, 25.46% (55) in the institute of postgraduate education, 12.5% (27) in the institute of educational sciences and 7.8% (17) in the institute of natural sciences. Five medical specialization theses from the faculty of medicine, four theses from the institute of health sciences and three specialization theses from the faculty of dentistry are included in the database. There are 2 theses each from the institutes of informatics and security sciences and 1 thesis each from other institutes in the YÖKTEZ database, and 1 thesis from a university abroad whose equivalence is recognized by our country. The distribution of the faculties and institutes where the theses were published is shown in Figure 5.

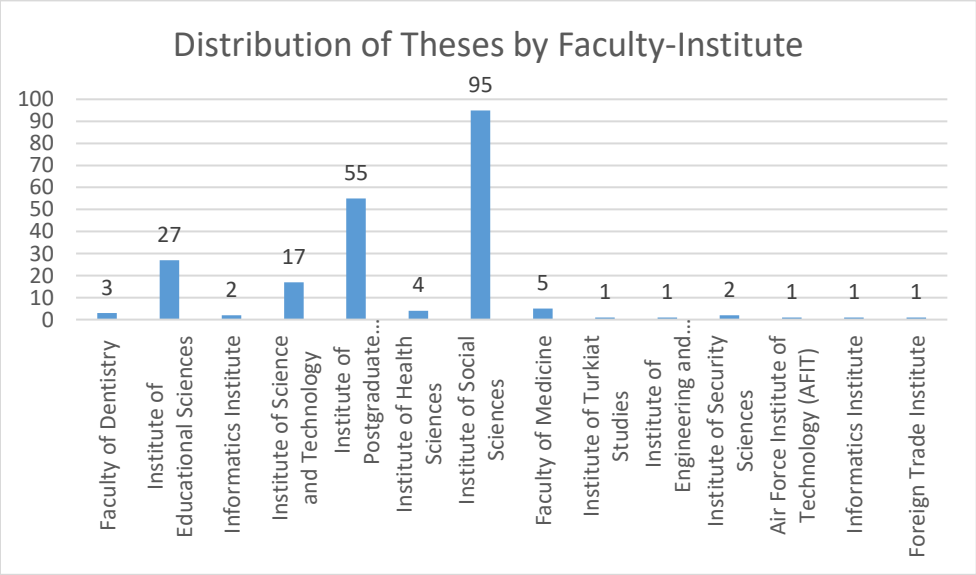


Figure 5. Distribution of Theses by Faculty-Institute

When the theses in the YÖKTEZ database are evaluated according to the fields of

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

education, science, health and social sciences, it is seen that there are 5 doctoral dissertations in the field of education, 2 in the field of science and 9 in the field of social sciences, while there are 10 studies in the field of health, including 1 doctorate, 6 specialization in medicine and 3 specialization in dentistry. In addition, it was determined that 45 theses were produced in the field of science, 18 in the field of science, 6 in the field of health and 121 in the field of social sciences, which was the highest number. The distribution of thesises according to their fields is shown in Figure 6.

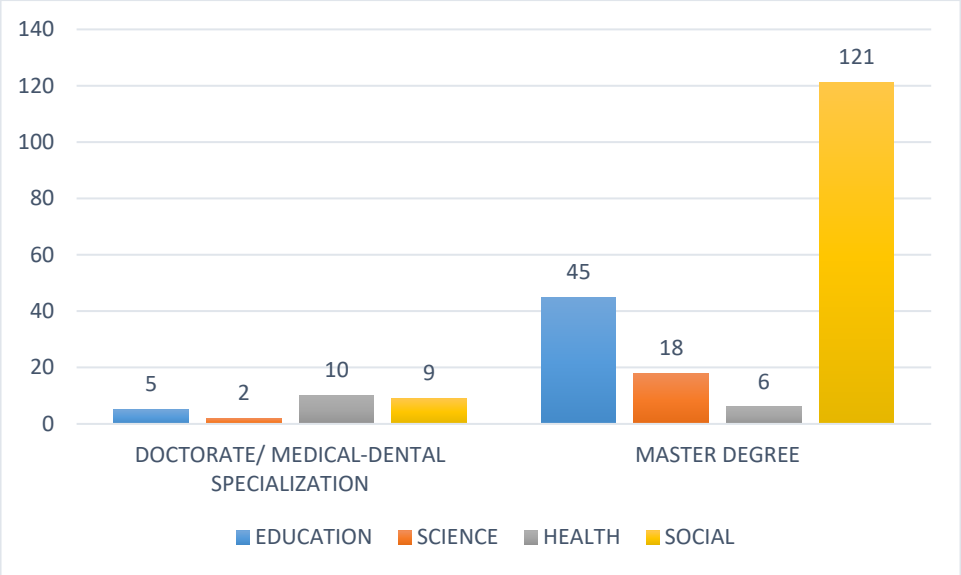


Figure 6. Distribution of Theses According to Their Fields

The universities that produced the highest number of bibliometric theses are shown in Figure 7. Accordingly, when state universities are examined, it is observed that a total of 186 (87.4%) theses are related to bibliometric analysis, the highest number of theses (10) are produced at Hacettepe University in various departments, 2nd place is Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University and Bursa Uludağ University with 8 theses, and 3rd place is Istanbul University and Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University with equal number of theses in this field (7). Among the theses of 27 foundation universities, which corresponds to 12.6% of all theses in the field of bibliometrics, the highest number of theses (4 theses) was studied at Bahçeşehir University, followed by Istanbul Gelişim University and Istanbul Kültür University with equal numbers of theses (3 theses).

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

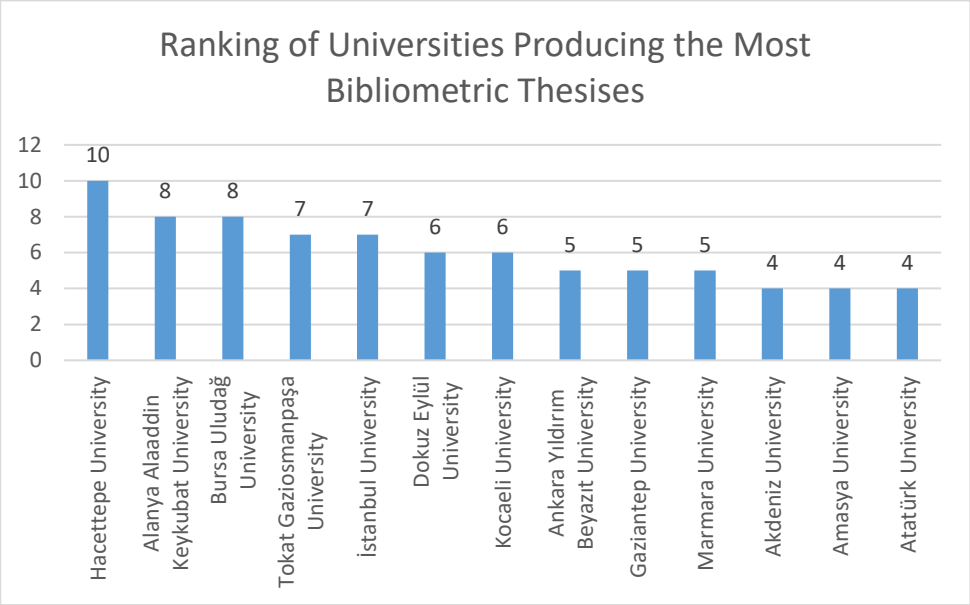


Figure 7. Universities with the highest number of theses on bibliometrics

IV. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the YÖKTEZ data archive reveals that the number of theses prepared in the field of bibliometrics in Turkey has increased over the years and the interest in this method has increased significantly since 2019. This increase, which is especially noticeable after 2021, is associated with the development of electronic data search facilities, easier access to the literature, and the reliable results and valuable outputs provided by bibliometric analyses. It is seen that bibliometric analyses are an effective method to reveal quantitative data on research trends in related fields and to evaluate academic performance. It was found that most of the studies were at the master's level (88.0%), while there were fewer doctoral and specialization theses. Similar to this analysis study, which is the first study covering all theses on “bibliometrics” through the YÖKTEZ database, it is known that smaller bibliometric analyses were conducted in different disciplines using the same database between 2018 and 2024. Sample studies conducted and published from the bibliometric analysis of theses conducted in the past years; (Çıkrık & Yılmaz, 2018) on the effects of tourism, (Aksaray, 2019) on the field of music, (Kurt, 2019) on urbanization and environmental problems, (Arslan, 2023) on Turkish teaching programs. Social sciences-oriented fields such as education and training, business administration, tourism and economy stand out as the disciplines where bibliometrics method is used most intensively. However, the fact that a significant number of thesis studies have been carried out in various fields such as science and technology, information and document management, statistics, engineering and health sciences reveals the interdisciplinary application potential of the method. The data obtained from the analysis of bibliometrics theses in terms of

JOURNAL OF
ART DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Dergisi

author gender shows that female thesis authors outnumbered male thesis authors (61.6% female). This shows the increasing representation of women in higher education and indicates an important trend in terms of social development. When the titles of the advisor academics are examined, it is determined that the highest number of theses were completed by academics with the title of "Associate Professor", followed by academics with the titles of "Professor" and "Assistant Professor", respectively. This shows the effect of academic titles on thesis advising and the weight of especially mid-level academic titles in this process. An analysis on the basis of universities revealed that public universities were significantly ahead in bibliometric thesis studies (87.4%), with the highest number of theses produced at Hacettepe University. Among foundation universities, Bahçeşehir University stood out as the institution with the highest number of bibliometric theses. In the distribution of the number of pages of theses, it is seen that the largest volume of theses are in the range of 51-150 pages (76.8%), while the thesis with the highest number of pages, 652 pages, completed in the field of social studies was published as an article (Tuna, 2017).

These findings show that bibliometric analysis is increasingly accepted in Turkey and that the detailed analysis opportunities provided by this method add value to academic studies. Moreover, the concentration in the field of social sciences emphasizes the importance of establishing interdisciplinary connections and providing qualified academic contributions with this method. However, since the field-based institutes in universities are gathered under a single roof as "Graduate Institutes", it is predicted that the number of theses produced in these institutes will increase in the coming years instead of fields such as social sciences, science and education.

Bibliometrics continues to be a powerful tool for monitoring trends in the literature, analyzing collaboration networks and evaluating publication quality. The data obtained through this method is expected to play an effective role in both developing academic strategies and guiding research policies.

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