

Examination of Graduate Theses on Cultural Heritage Transmission to Children

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine master's and doctoral theses completed in Turkey between 2010-2024 in the field of education and teaching, which align with the keywords of children and cultural heritage transmission. In line with this purpose, full-text graduate theses registered in the Council of Higher Education National Thesis Center database that met the specified criteria were screened, and 53 master's and 12 doctoral theses were included in the research scope. The theses were analyzed using content analysis. During the examination of the theses, a "Thesis Review Form on Cultural Heritage Transmission to Children" developed by the researchers, containing 6 different themes such as thesis type, year, university, department, research method, and statistical techniques, was used. According to the research findings, it was determined that no graduate thesis studies within the scope of the research were conducted in 2013. It was concluded that doctoral theses were limited in number among the examined graduate theses. It was determined that graduate thesis studies on the subject have increased since 2018, with the highest number of thesis studies conducted in 2024. It was found that the theses were mostly conducted using qualitative research methods, and the most frequently used data analysis techniques were content and document analysis. It has been concluded that the highest number of thesis studies were conducted in the field of social studies education, while no thesis studies were carried out in the areas of child development. In light of these findings, it can be recommended to increase the number of postgraduate thesis studies on cultural heritage transmission to children and to conduct postgraduate thesis studies focusing on early childhood and preschool periods, which are critical years for the acquisition of values.

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Keywords:

Culture, cultural heritage transmission, child, postgraduate theses

INTRODUCTION

Human beings, who make their inhabited regions valuable, have created a unique culture (T.C. Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2024). This culture is inherited, lived as a legacy, and passed on to future generations as heritage (Aktan & Tutar, 2007: 2). While being the most important element that distinguishes a society from others, it also encompasses all the characteristic features of that society (Hebdige, 2004: 16). Cultural heritage can be defined as "all the knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, tangible and intangible elements that people have created, accumulated, developed, enriched, protected, contributed to its continuity, and transmitted to subsequent generations since their existence" (Negiz, 2017:164; Gümüşçü, 2018:108). Cultural heritage is a collection of non-renewable values that acts as a bridge between the past, present and future, provides intergenerational communication, solves the individual's identity problem and gives the individual a sense of belonging (Kiper, 2004: 14). Cultural heritage is also an indicator of a country's identity and historical background. In this respect, it has a universal understanding that is necessary to better build the future by connecting with the past. These features of its values make it necessary and important to protect, maintain and transfer cultural heritage to future generations (Karagöz & Çakmak, 2023).

Cultural heritage consists of historical cities and textures, cultural landscapes, monumental structures, archaeological sites, living but intangible values such as language, tradition, dance, music, rituals (Kurtar & Somuncu, 2013: 36; Köroğlu, Ulusoy & Avcıkurt, 2018: 99), folklore, literature, art, theater, crafts, and sacred places (Aird, 2005). Additionally, all elements such as fixed expressions (formulaic phrases, proverbs, and idioms), metaphors, figures of speech, folk songs, songs, lullabies, rhymes, customs and traditions, religious, moral, and social values are also among the main cultural heritage elements (Gökdayı 2003: 31-36; Karagöz, 2022: 167). All these cultural heritage elements establish a connection between the past and present, ensure social unity, support the achievement of successful outcomes for society and individuals (George & Jones,

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2008; Sidekli & Karaca, 2013), provide a foundation for the lived culture, and create a solid reference for the construction of the future (Ünal, 2014: 11).

If each generation had to create its own social capital and produce its own tools, there would be no social-technological accumulation, and our living standards would be condemned to remain at a much lower level (Tümertekin & Özgüç, 2015: 122). Therefore, these "witnesses" of the past need to be preserved for many reasons, such as learning from the past, benefiting from its experiences, taking it as an example for the future, and transferring it as a document to future generations (Madran & Özgönül, 2005: 57). However, these values specific to societies can be forgotten as a result of technological development, increased communication, and interactions. Cultural heritage elements are among the values that are on the verge of being forgotten today. The revitalization of these forgotten values will also contribute to the development of national identity (Selanik Ay & Kurtdele Fidan, 2013).

Cultural heritage education, which is one of the main elements that will contribute to the establishment of national identity, an important element that contributes to the establishment of national identity, is a teaching and learning approach that encourages the assimilation of history and lived culture, and includes a series of methodologies that use the field of education to instill a sense of shared culture. It ensures that continuity in our historical and cultural experiences and adherence to culture are easily understood and adopted, especially by children (Çulha Özbaş, 2021: Karagöz, 2018: 1119-1128). It helps children understand the history and value of the natural and artificial environment in which they live (Avcı & Memişoğlu, 2016), where they have come from and where they can go in the future (Hunter, 1992). It allows children to recognize not only national heritage elements but also universal heritage elements (Avcı & Memişoğlu, 2016). In short, cultural heritage education increases awareness towards raising tomorrow's active citizens and recognizing, understanding, and taking responsibility for protecting universal world heritage (Dönmez & Yeşilbursa, 2014). It enables children to intellectually adopt historical remains, museum objects, or customs, traditions, and practices, and to take responsibility by preserving and using them (Yeşilbursa, 2011).

Learning about the past enables them to recognise different cultures and take pride in their past, traditions, customs and traditions (Ulusoy, 2009: 3). As a matter of fact understanding the accumulated knowledge of past generations present in every achievement of humanity today nurtures creativity in children. Every novel carries traces from past myths, epics, legends, proverbs, and anecdotes. Every architectural work has the contribution of the architects of previous eras. Every engineering structure also bears the share of knowledge and experience from previous eras. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage children to understand the past and cultural heritage values (Öztürk, Güngör & Ogelman, 2021). Establishing educational policies based on the whole society together with the environment where the individual lives instead of prohibitive rules in the regulations for the protection of cultural heritage will ensure positive results in the promotion and protection of cultural heritage (Külcü, 2015: 30). Among the General Objectives of National Education is the goal of raising citizens who adopt, protect and develop the cultural values of the Turkish Nation. Awareness-raising activities to be carried out at all levels of education starting from kindergartens will also prevent the rapid disappearance of cultural and natural assets (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2013). As a matter of fact, research emphasizes the importance of providing cultural heritage education from an early age (Stone, 2004; Aktekin, 2010; Tuncel & Altuntaş, 2020; Öztürk et al., 2021). It will be beneficial both socially and individually for children to be educated about cultural heritage awareness from the moment they start to learn the lifestyle, values and thoughts of the society they live in (Çulha Özbaş, 2021: 746).

There are many studies and publications in the literature that emphasize the relationship between education and the creation of cultural heritage awareness and the protection of cultural heritage (Dönmez & Yeşilbursa, 2014; Külcü, 2015; Bülbül, 2016; Aral, 2018; Gültekin & Uysal, 2018). While the importance of education, especially early education, in assimilating cultural heritage is an undeniable fact, scientific studies are also considered to have a great contribution in this regard. As a matter of fact, the subject of cultural heritage elements in studies can support the preservation and transfer of these elements to the next generations and help to reveal their current situation (Kılıç, Ulusoy & Avcıkurt, 2021: 526). It is believed that this study will be important in terms of providing data to researchers working in this field by examining postgraduate theses on cultural heritage transmission. In this direction, the aim of the study is to examine

the theses on the theme of cultural heritage transmission to children that overlap with the keywords of children and cultural heritage transmission in the field of education and training, in terms of their distribution according to thesis type, year, university, department, research method, and data analysis techniques, and to identify trends. In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought.

- 1) What is the distribution of theses according to their types?
- 2) What is the distribution of theses by university?
- 3) What is the distribution of theses by year?
- 4) What is the distribution of theses according to departments/disciplines?
- 5) What is the distribution of theses according to the research methods used?
- 6) What is the distribution of theses according to data analysis techniques?

METHOD

Research Design

The study aimed to examine master's and doctoral theses on children and cultural heritage conducted in Turkey between 2000 and 2024. The document review method was used in the research. In line with the purpose of the study, the theses were analyzed using the content analysis technique. Content analysis is a scientific approach that allows for the objective and systematic examination of verbal, written, and other materials (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001). In the broadest sense, it is divided into three categories: meta-analysis, meta-synthesis (thematic content analysis), and descriptive content analysis (Çalık & Sözbilir, 2014). Among these approaches, descriptive content analysis involves systematic studies that evaluate the trends and research results of studies on a specific topic in a descriptive dimension (Sözbilir, Kutu & Yaşar, 2012). In this context, the descriptive content analysis method was used to determine the general trend in these subjects by examining theses conducted with the theme of cultural heritage transmission according to their years, types, universities, departments, methods and designs, participant groups, participant group sizes, data collection tools, data analysis techniques, and the themes they focused on.

Data Collection

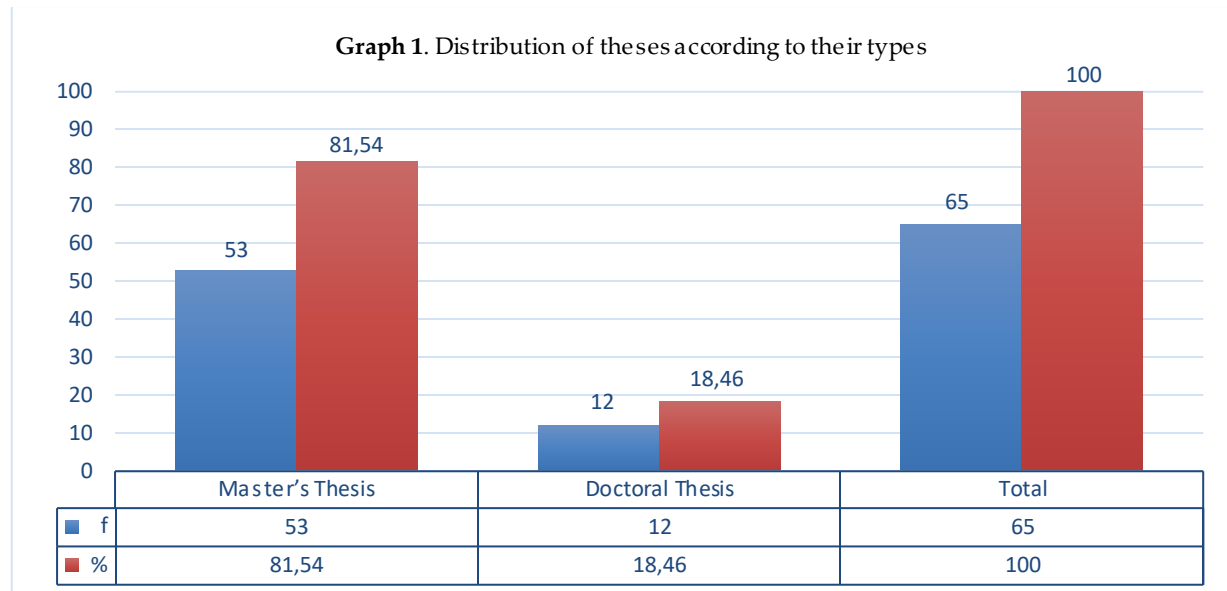
In line with the study's purpose, postgraduate theses with full-text access registered in the Council of Higher Education National Thesis Center system were examined based on the keywords "cultural heritage and children. Within the scope of this research, 53 master's theses and 12 doctoral dissertations that were completed between 2010 and 2024, match these keywords, and are publicly accessible have been included. The bibliographic information of the examined theses is provided in Appendix 1. While examining the theses, a "Thesis Review Form on Cultural Heritage Transfer to Children," developed by the researchers, was used. This form contained six different themes, including thesis type, year, university, department, research method, and statistical techniques. The collected data were transferred to Excel, tabulated, analyses were completed, and the percentage and frequency of the obtained categories were provided.

Analysis of Data

The postgraduate theses examined in this research were analyzed according to their years, types, universities, departments, research methods and designs, participant groups, size of participant groups, data collection tools, data analysis techniques, and themes they focused on, in line with the purpose of the research. The theses were first coded under the specified headings, and then the findings were converted into frequency and percentage tables. During the data analysis process, both researchers initially conducted the data analysis independently from each other, then worked together on the obtained results, and the data analysis was finalized by reaching common decisions and conclusions.

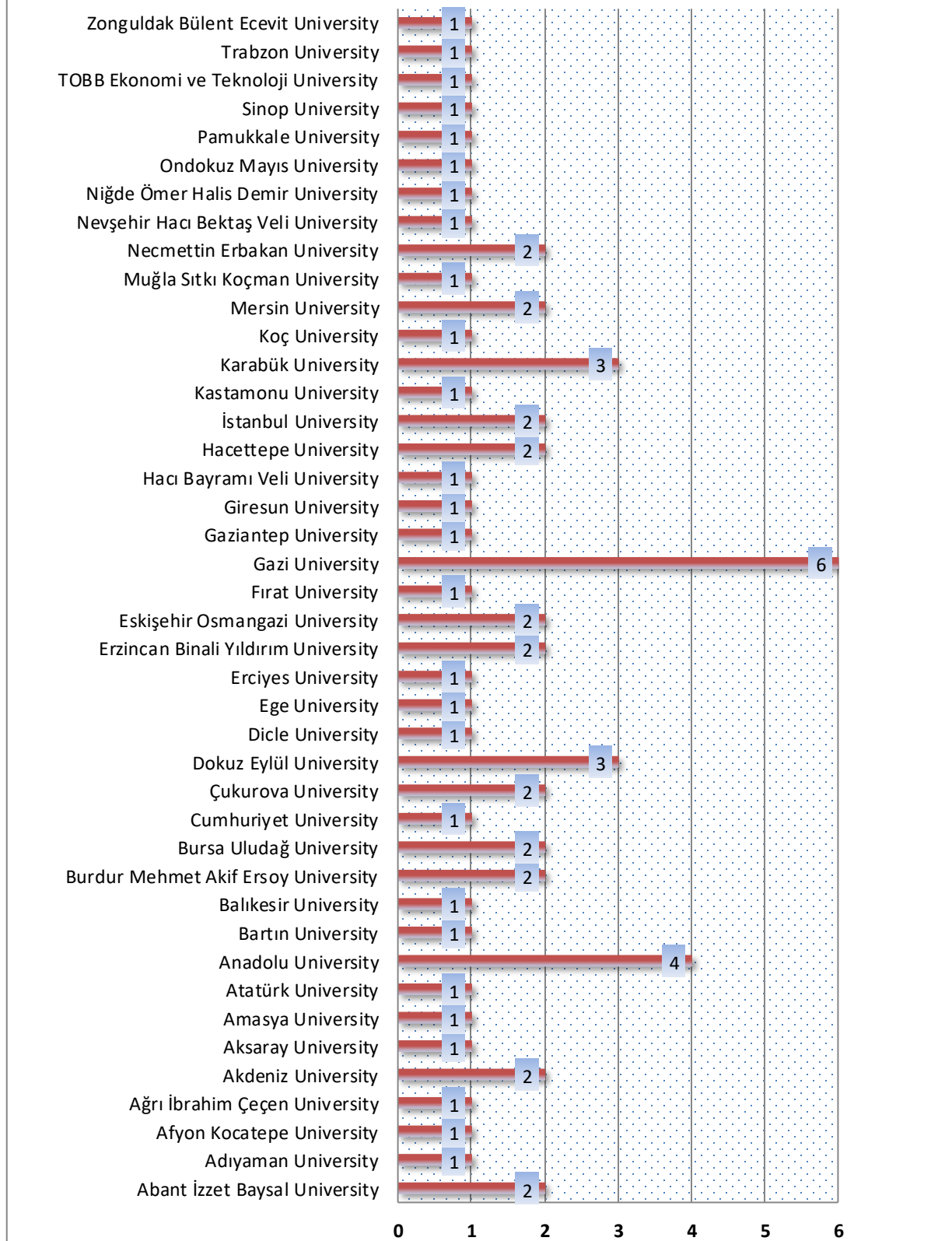
FINDINGS

The examined theses were coded according to the thesis evaluation criteria determined within the scope of the research, and the findings obtained were converted into frequency and percentage and presented in accordance with the order of the research sub-problems. In line with the first sub-problem of the research, theses written in relation to cultural heritage were examined according to their types. The distribution of theses on cultural heritage research according to their types is presented in Graph 1.



According to Graph 1, it is observed that the majority of postgraduate theses prepared on the theme of cultural heritage transmission in children consist of master's theses (81.54%), while the number of doctoral theses prepared (18.46%) is found to be quite low. In line with the second sub-problem of the research, theses written in relation to cultural heritage were examined according to their universities. The distribution of the examined theses by universities is presented in Graph 2.

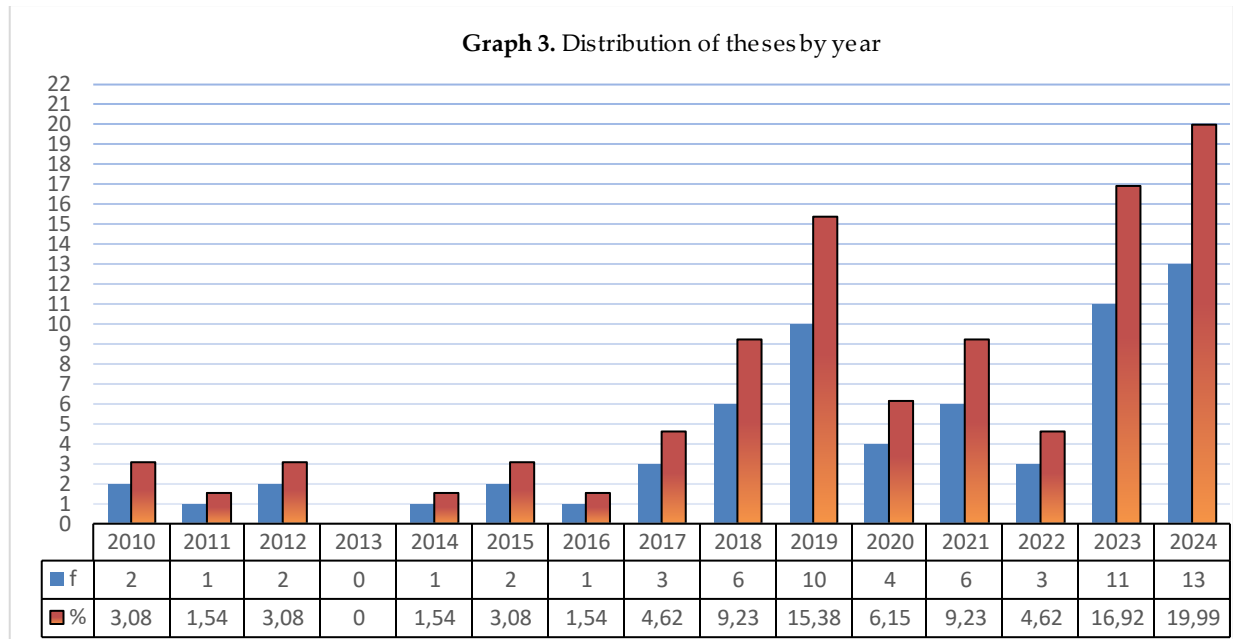
Graph 2. Distribution of theses according to universities



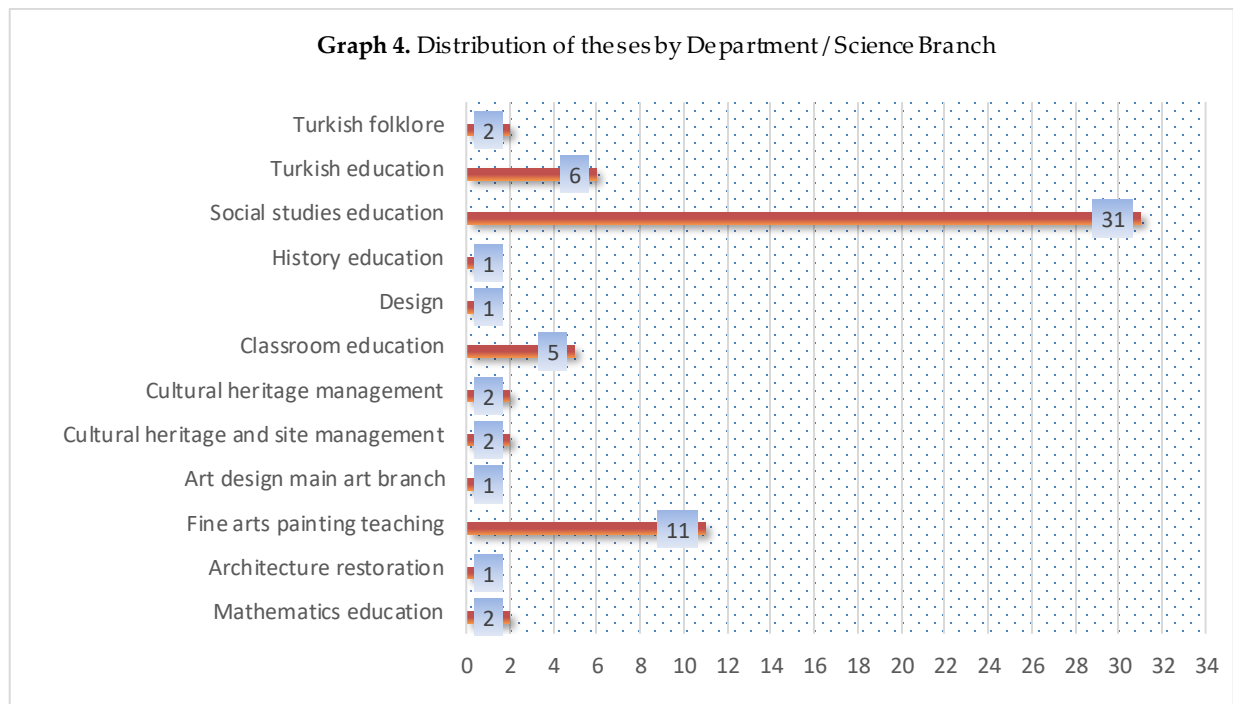
According to Graph 2, when examining the distribution of graduate theses prepared with the themes of children and cultural heritage across universities, it is observed that studies on these themes were conducted at a total of 42 universities. The highest number of studies ($f=6$) was conducted at Gazi University, while 27 universities completed one study each. It was determined that 1 university conducted 4 studies, 2 universities conducted 3 studies, and 11 universities conducted 2 studies each. Gazi University ($f=6$),

Anadolu University (f=4), Dokuz Eylül University (f=3), and Karabük University (f=3) are the universities with the highest number of theses on cultural heritage.

In line with the third sub-problem of the research, theses written in relation to cultural heritage were examined according to their years. The distribution of theses on cultural heritage research by years is presented in Graph 3.

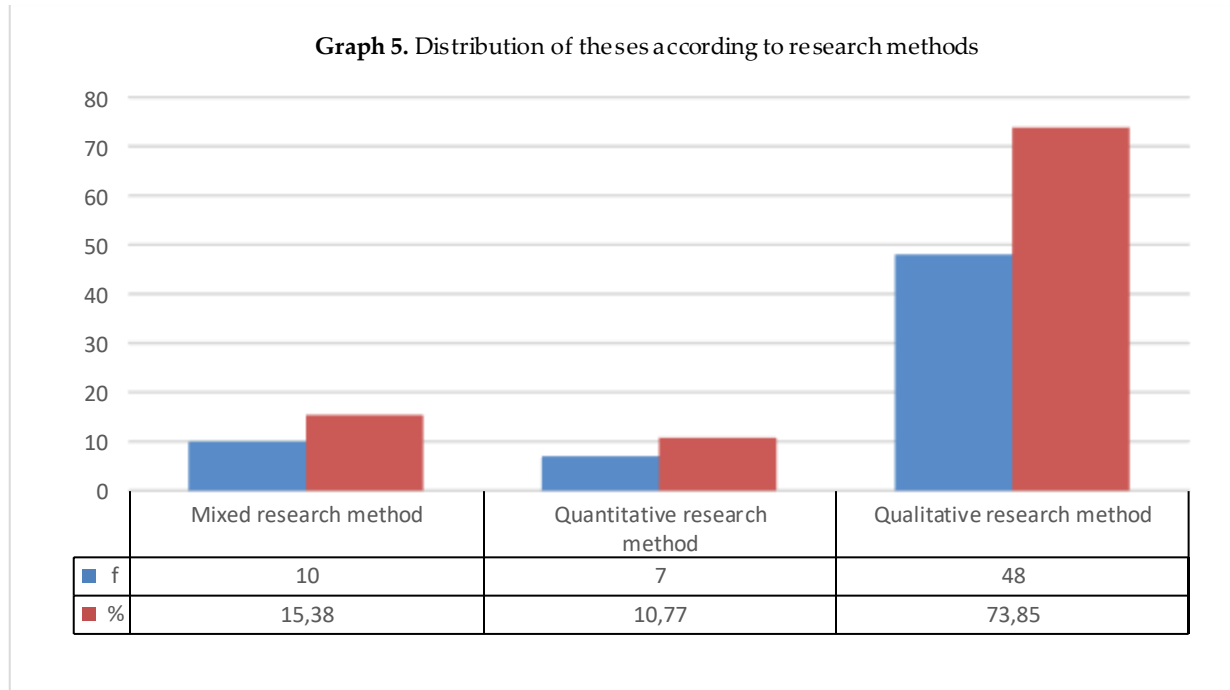


When examining Graph 3, it can be seen that there were no thesis studies with a cultural heritage theme in 2013. The highest number of theses in the field of cultural heritage (19.99%) was completed in 2024. In 2011, 2014, and 2016, one thesis study on the subject was found for each year. Additionally, it is observed that the vast majority of thesis studies on this topic (81.52%) were conducted in 2018 and afterwards. In line with the fourth sub-problem of the research, theses written in relation to the theme of cultural heritage were examined according to their main scientific disciplines. The distribution of the examined theses according to their main scientific disciplines is presented in Graph 4.

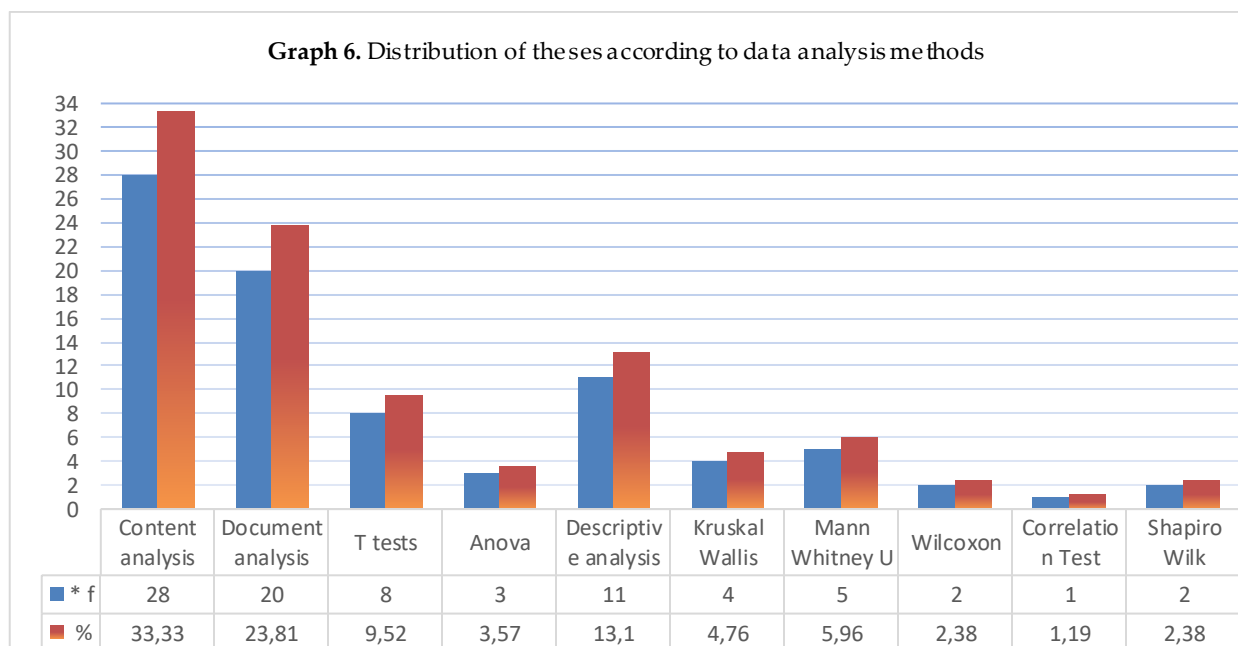


According to Graph 4, it has been determined that postgraduate theses prepared with the theme of cultural heritage and children were produced in a total of 12 scientific disciplines. It is observed that the

highest number of theses were prepared in the field of Social Studies Education ($f=31$). The number of theses prepared in the Department of Fine Arts, Painting Education discipline ($f=11$) ranks second. The number of theses prepared in the Turkish Education discipline ($f=6$) ranks third, while the number of theses prepared in the Primary Education Department ($f=5$) ranks fourth. In line with the fifth sub-problem of the research, theses written in relation to the theme of cultural heritage were examined according to their research methods. The distribution of the examined theses according to their research methods is presented in Graph 5.



According to Graph 5, when examining the distribution of postgraduate theses prepared on the theme of children and cultural heritage based on research methods, it is observed that the most frequently used method is the qualitative method ($f=48$, 73.85%). It can be stated that the qualitative method is followed by the mixed method ($f=10$, 15.38%), while in a small number of studies ($f=7$, 10.77%), the quantitative method was used. In line with the seventh sub-problem of the research, theses written in relation to cultural heritage were examined according to data analysis techniques. The distribution of the examined theses according to data analysis techniques is presented in Graph 6.



*There are studies that utilize multiple analysis techniques.

In the analysis of postgraduate theses on the theme of cultural heritage transmission, qualitative data analysis methods were used most frequently (70.24%). It was determined that theses using quantitative data analysis methods were used at a rate of 29.76%. Among the theses utilizing qualitative data analysis methods, content analysis was the most commonly used (33.33%). Document analysis (23.81%) and descriptive analysis (13.1%) were also types of analysis used in the theses. In theses using quantitative data analysis, t-test was used most frequently (9.52%), followed by Mann-Whitney U test (5.96%). Additionally, there are theses that utilized different quantitative data analysis methods such as Kruskal-Wallis test, Wilcoxon test, Shapiro-Wilk test, and correlation.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, and SUGGESTIONS

In this research, postgraduate theses conducted in Turkey between 2010-2024 on the transfer of cultural heritage to children were examined according to their types, years, universities, departments, research methods, and data analysis techniques. When the distribution of studies by years was examined, it was determined that no postgraduate thesis study was conducted in 2013, and there was a general increase in research in this field starting from 2018, with the highest number of theses being completed in 2024. Due to the scarcity of studies conducted in previous years, the tendency of postgraduate students towards this field as an original area of study can be considered as a factor in the increase in the number of studies in recent years. Indeed, as a result of the study conducted by Çağlayan, Kutlu and Çekinmez (2022), it is stated that the number of postgraduate thesis studies on cultural heritage transfer is insufficient and that studies on this subject should be increased.

According to the obtained data, it has been concluded that there are more master's theses than doctoral dissertations on the subject of cultural heritage transmission to children. It is thought that the higher number of students enrolled in master's programs compared to doctoral programs may have contributed to this outcome. Indeed, when examining higher education statistics, it is observed that the number of master's students is greater than the number of doctoral students (Council of Higher Education [YÖK], 2024). Additionally, various studies have also concluded that the vast majority of theses in the field of cultural heritage are master's theses (Çelebi, Çiftsüren & Dilek, 2020; Demiral & Saatçı, 2019; Halaç & Bademci, 2021).

When examining the distribution of theses across universities, it is observed that more theses on the subject are conducted in public universities. Among public universities, it was concluded that Gazi University had the highest number of studies with 6 thesis works. This result indicates that postgraduate studies on cultural heritage transmission to children are limited in universities. Similarly, in their study, Çağlayan, Kutlu and Çekinmez (2022) found that theses on cultural heritage transmission were completed in 39 different universities, with an average of 2.59 theses per university, and the highest number of theses were completed at Gazi University.

It has been determined that postgraduate theses on the transfer of cultural heritage to children were prepared in 12 different scientific disciplines. However, it was concluded that the highest number of theses were completed in the field of social studies education ($f=31$), while no thesis studies on the subject were conducted in the fields of child development and education. The fact that the majority of studies on the transfer of cultural heritage to children were conducted in the field of social studies education can be explained by the interdisciplinary nature of social studies courses. Indeed, Gürel and Çetin (2018) point out in their study that social studies education is closely related to culture by its nature and that social studies courses play an important role in cultural transmission at the primary education level.

When examining the distribution of postgraduate theses on cultural heritage transmission to children according to research methods, it was determined that the most frequently used method was qualitative ($f=48$, 73.85%). It was concluded that content analysis was the most commonly used technique in studies conducted using qualitative research methods. The study conducted by Çağlayan, Kutlu, and Çekinmez (2022) concluded that 91% of thesis studies on cultural heritage transmission were carried out using qualitative research methods. Çelebi, Çiftsüren and Dilek (2020) found in their study that theses on cultural heritage were predominantly conducted using qualitative research methods. This result highlights the need for using different research methods in future postgraduate thesis studies on cultural heritage transmission to children.

In conclusion, it can be said that the number of graduate thesis studies on cultural heritage transmission in children is insufficient. The studies were conducted at 42 different universities. However, it is considered important that a greater number of universities and faculty members contribute to the topic with different perspectives and approaches. Given the importance of the preschool period in terms of value acquisition, it can be said that studies related to the preschool period should be increased. Indeed, it has been determined that no thesis study has been conducted on this subject in the field of child development and education. Additionally, it has been concluded that qualitative research methods are mostly used in graduate thesis studies on the transmission of cultural heritage to children. Therefore, it can be recommended to use different research methods in future graduate thesis studies.

This research is limited to the examination of graduate theses with full-text access in the Council of Higher Education National Thesis Center database. It is thought that the study can provide a general perspective to researchers who are considering conducting scientific studies on the same subject in terms of the examined criteria. However, similar studies can be conducted by searching other databases, and the reflection of the topic on academic studies can be examined comprehensively.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed by the author(s) with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Ethics Approval

This study is based on the examination of full-text theses available in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education related to the research topic. Therefore, it is not one of the studies that require ethics committee approval.

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Research and Publication Ethics Statement

Hereby, we as the authors consciously assure that for the manuscript “Examination of Graduate Theses on Cultural Heritage Transmission to Children” the following is fulfilled:

- This material is the authors' own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.
- The paper reflects the authors' own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
- The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.
- All sources used are properly disclosed.

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

The authors provide equal contribution to this work.

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Appendix 1. Bibliographic information of the examined theses

	University	Frequency (f)	Thesis number	Thesis year
1	Abant İzzet Baysal University	2	370218	2014
			871269	2024
2	Adıyaman University	1	302811	2012
3	Afyon Kocatepe University	1	835139	2023
4	Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University	1	323605	2012
5	Akdeniz University	2	532586	2018
			454874	2017
6	Aksaray University	1	569446	2019
7	Amasya University	1	721404	2022
8	Anadolu University	4	415881	2015
			647075	2020
			806778	2023
			780254	2023
9	Atatürk University	1	887903	2024
10	Balıkesir University	1	274348	2010
11	Bartın University	1	523985	2018
12	Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University	2	600897	2019
			703830	2021
13	Bursa Uludağ University	2	827966	2023
			792197	2023
14	Cumhuriyet University	1	848344	2024
15	Çukurova University	2	398240	2015
			516833	2018
16	Dicle University	1	866755	2024
17	Dokuz Eylül University	3	593559	2019
			827871	2023
			884451	2024
18	Ege University	1	436660	2016
19	Erciyes University	1	809259	2023
20	Erzincan Binali University	2	756441	2022
			793289	2023
21	Eskişehir Osman Gazi University	2	506344	2018
			686123	2021
22	Fırat University	1	883503	2024
23	Gazi University	6	298403	2011
			527658	2018
			551293	2019
			551404	2019
			696536	2021
			793134	2023
24	Gaziantep University	1	806997	2023
25	Giresun University	1	557982	2019
26	Hacettepe University	2	464513	2017
			567515	2019
27	Hacı Bayramı Veli University	1	632719	2020
28	İstanbul University	2	579676	2019
			774748	2023
29	Karabük University	3	697468	2021
			879641	2024
			897521	2024
30	Kastamonu University	1	859158	2024
31	Koç University	1	264870	2010
32	Mersin University	2	680989	2021
			896973	2024
33	Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University	1	599808	2019

34	Necmettin Erbakan University	2	541710	2018
			551814	2019
35	Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş University	1	777684	2022
36	Niğde Ömer Halis Demir University	1	461283	2017
37	Ondokuz Mayıs University	1	892007	2024
38	Pamukkale University	1	661081	2021
39	Sinop University	1	850357	2024
40	TOBB Ekonomi Ve Teknoloji University	1	894062	2024
41	Trabzon University	1	628163	2020
42	Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University	1	624080	2020
Total		65		