

## Bibliometric Analysis of Postgraduate Theses on Civil Aviation

Engin Kanbur <sup>1\*</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Kastamonu University, School of Civil Aviation, Aviation Management, Kastamonu, Türkiye. (ekanbur@kastamonu.edu.tr)

### Article Info

Received: 23 June 2023  
Revised: 21 August 2023  
Accepted: 08 September 2023  
Published Online: 06 October 2023

#### Keywords:

Civil Aviation  
Bibliometrics  
Bibliometric Analysis

Corresponding Author: *Engin Kanbur*

### RESEARCH ARTICLE

<https://doi.org/10.30518/jav.1318603>

### Abstract

This study aimed to conduct a bibliometric evaluation of 908 postgraduate theses in civil aviation that were approved, licensed, and published in the National Thesis Centre database. These theses were analysed based on specific parameters, including the year of publication, gender of the authors, universities where they were published, thesis topics, language of writing, number of pages, publication cities, supervisor titles, institutes, departmental affiliations, types of universities, and types of theses. The results revealed that most of these theses were published in 2019, and male researchers outnumbered female researchers. Moreover, many of the theses were written in Turkish and predominantly published at Anadolu University. The title of "assistant professor" was more commonly used in master's theses, while the title of "professor" was more frequently utilized in doctoral theses. Most of the theses were 101-200 pages long and were conducted in Istanbul. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that there were more master's theses than doctoral theses, with a predominant research focus on business management.

### 1. Introduction

Aviation is a highly competitive and complex global service sector that involves advanced technologies and substantial costs (Kanbur & Karakavuz, 2017). It encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from lightweight flying vehicles like balloons and airships to heavy aircraft such as aeroplanes and helicopters. In contrast to military aviation, civil aviation refers to all aviation activities involving transporting goods and passengers (Aktaş, 2011). The rapidly evolving civil aviation industry operates in a dynamic business environment that necessitates simultaneous monitoring and managing multiple issues. Aviation professionals have assumed significant responsibilities in various domains, including border security, tourism, international trade, health, and flight safety, which have become even more critical during pandemics (Canbek, Kanbur & Güngören, 2021). Globalization is a pivotal factor in advancing the civil aviation sector as it has facilitated unfettered trade in foreign markets, promoted product and service diversity, and boosted tourism. Additionally, it has stimulated capital and labour flows across nations, engendering significant transformations in the movement of goods and passengers (Var, 2021). This study examines the bibliometric characteristics of Master's and doctoral theses published in civil aviation between 1998 and 2022, accessible through the National Thesis Centre of the Council of Higher Education. The National Thesis Centre offers electronic access to these theses, subject to permission from the author for full-text access and archiving. Researchers can access these theses via the National Thesis Centre website while adhering to scientific ethics and citation guidelines

(Kanbur & Kanbur, 2018). Bibliometrics, a term first coined by Alan Pritchard in 1969, involves the application of mathematical and statistical techniques to analyse scientific works, including articles, books, and journals that disseminate scientific knowledge in written form (Yılmaz, 2017; Zeren & Kaya, 2020). This research field is concerned with the statistical analysis of various elements of scientific publications, such as authors, subjects, years of publication, page numbers, publication type, city, citations, and other relevant features. Bibliometric studies offer a comprehensive understanding of a specific discipline, enabling researchers to uncover its general structure and characteristics (Polat, Sağlam & Sarı, 2013). The bibliometric analysis involves examining specific characteristics of scientific works, including authorship, subjects, years of publication, page numbers, publication types, cities, and other relevant features (Ayaz & Türkmen, 2018).

Bibliometric studies are employed to quantify the content of written works and to interpret new topics, concepts, and events. This analysis encompasses numerical and non-numerical data on scientific publications, topics, journals, and authors. The data obtained from bibliometric analyses are intended to assess the outputs of researchers, research groups, organizations, and even countries (Erturgut & Altinkurt, 2021). Data from a comprehensive literature review of specific topics and subjects were utilized for bibliometric analysis. The primary advantage of bibliometric analysis is that it provides a valuable reference for original academic research and guides researchers towards their objectives (Yeşil & Akyüz, 2018).

Bibliometric analysis has been employed to examine studies conducted in civil aviation. Yalçınkaya (2013)

conducted a bibliometric analysis of 360 graduate theses related to civil aviation in the National Electronic Thesis Database of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) between 1984 and 2013. Şahin, Kocakaya, and Tektaş (2019) analysed theses in the same field using data from the National Thesis Centre, considering factors such as the university, institute, department, topic, and thesis year. Faura and Martinez (2021) investigated scientific studies on airport efficiency in the Web of Science (WOS) database between 2000 and 2019. They obtained productivity indicators based on authors, year, journal, and institutions and analysed visibility, impact, and scientific collaboration through co-citations.

In their research on air logistics, Ertugut and Altinkurt (2021) utilized a bibliometric analysis. The data for their research were collected from the Web of Science (WOS), Scopus, and EBSCO databases and analysed. Dixit and Jakhar (2021) conducted a detailed study on airport capacity management using bibliometric analysis. Gomes de Carvalho, de Souza Borges, and Machado Cardoso Junior (2021) conducted a bibliometric study measuring scientific production in fatigue in air traffic control. Oktaysoy, Topçuoğlu, and Kaygın (2022) analysed publications at the SSCI and SCI-Exp levels on risk management in the aviation industry using bibliometric analysis. Finally, Konyalılar (2022) examined bibliometric profiles of publications that jointly addressed sustainability and aviation concepts.

Türk (2022) utilized bibliometric analysis to study the mobility, development, quality, and quantity of aviation management. Kurnaz (2022) extensively employed bibliometric analysis on publications containing the term “aviation” in their titles in the Dergipark electronic database between 2016 and 2021. Bakır et al. (2022) analysed the existing literature on airport service quality in the Web of Science (WoS) database between 1975 and 2020 using bibliometric analysis. Finally, Da Rocha, Costa, and Da Silva (2022) conducted a bibliometric analysis to examine studies on the evaluation process of service quality in airport passenger terminals in the Scopus and ISI Web of Science databases.

The main objective of this study was to examine and evaluate multiple factors associated with graduate theses in the field of civil aviation, including publication year, author gender, university affiliations, thesis topics, language of composition, pagination, publication cities, supervisor titles, graduate schools, departments, universities, and thesis types. The resultant outcomes are anticipated to contribute to the existing body of literature by directing future researchers and postgraduate students to identify specific areas and topics for investigation and to select appropriate research methodologies for their civil aviation research.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Purpose

This research aims to perform a bibliometric analysis of master's and doctoral theses in civil aviation, which were authored between 1998 and 2022 and are currently available through open access on the National Thesis Centre of the Council of Higher Education.

### 2.2. Research Group

This study aims to examine the bibliometric properties of 908 master's and doctoral theses on civil aviation that have been published and are available through open access in the

National Thesis Centre of the Council of Higher Education between 1998 and 2022. The research group was selected based on the availability of the theses in the National Thesis Centre and permission for open access, using the “criterion sampling” method, which is appropriate when the observation units should have predetermined characteristics such as persons, events, objects, or situations. Theses without open access were excluded from the study. The findings of this research are expected to guide future research and graduate students in determining areas and topics of focus as well as research methods in the field of civil aviation (Büyüköztürk et al., 2011).

### 2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

This descriptive study utilized qualitative research methods and bibliometric analysis. The study collected data from postgraduate theses published on the National Thesis Centre of the Council of Higher Education website (<https://tez.yok.gov.tr/>) between November 10-30, 2022, with a focus on the subject of 'civil aviation,' selected from the 'detailed search' section and filtered using the 'approved master's and doctoral theses' option. The data collection process included naming, categorizing, ensuring validity and reliability, performing numerical calculations, and describing the data. The study transferred information about the theses to relevant Excel tables and performed necessary calculations. Content analysis was used in the stages of naming and category creation. Postgraduate theses were categorized by year of publication, author gender, publishing universities, thesis topics, the language of writing, number of pages, cities of publication, advisor titles, institutes, departments, universities, and thesis types. The researchers reviewed the data for validity and reliability, and frequency values for each category were determined and recorded in Excel tables. Finally, these results were documented in research tables.

## 3. Findings

A total of 908 postgraduate theses with open access from the National Thesis Centre, covering the period of 1998-2022, were accessed for the study. Out of these, 696 were master's theses, and 212 were doctoral theses. Figure 1 presents the distribution of the examined postgraduate theses by year, showing the range of years covered by the study and any notable trends or patterns that emerge from the data, such as an increase in the number of theses published in recent years.

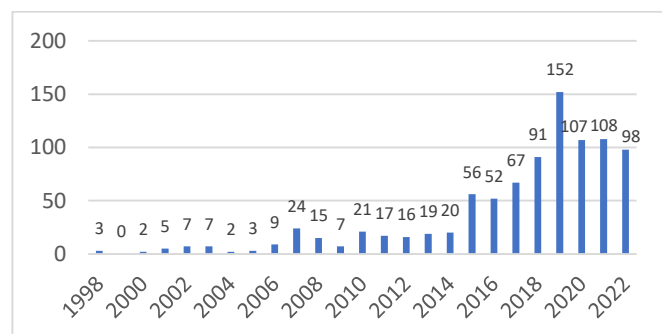


Figure 1. Distribution of Graduate Theses by Years

This section presents the distribution of 908 postgraduate theses by year. The first postgraduate theses in civil aviation comprised two doctoral and one master's thesis, published in 1998. Over the years, the number of theses steadily increased,

with five published in 2001 and seven in 2002 and 2003. The highest number of theses, 152, was reached in 2019.

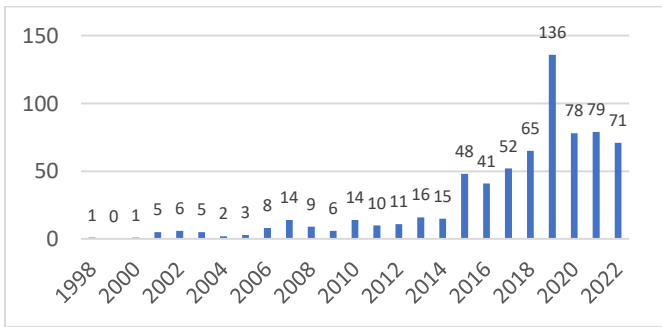


Figure 2. Distribution of Master's Theses by Years

The earliest study in civil aviation was conducted in 1998, and since then, the number of studies has steadily increased. The most studies, 136 master's theses, were published in 2019.

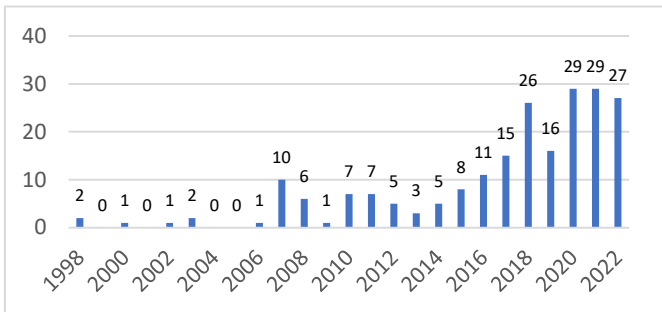


Figure 3. Distribution of Doctoral Theses by Years

This section describes the distribution of doctoral thesis publications in civil aviation. The first doctoral thesis was published in 1998, and the number of publications has steadily increased over the years. The most doctoral thesis publications, 29, were observed in 2020 and 2021. While the number of publications was low in the early years, averaging 1-2 per year, it increased to an average of 8 per year between 2007 and 2017. There has been a significant increase in doctoral thesis publications between 2018 and 2022, with an average of 25 theses published annually.

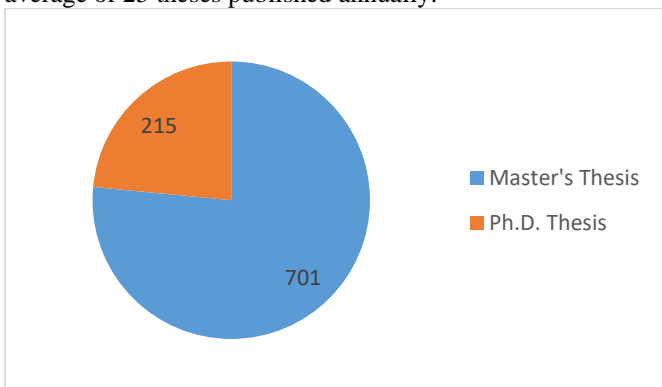


Figure 4. Distribution of Theses by Types

Upon examining Figure 4, which illustrates the distribution of master's and doctoral theses, it is evident that the overall number of doctoral theses published in civil aviation is 212. In contrast, the number of master's theses is 696.

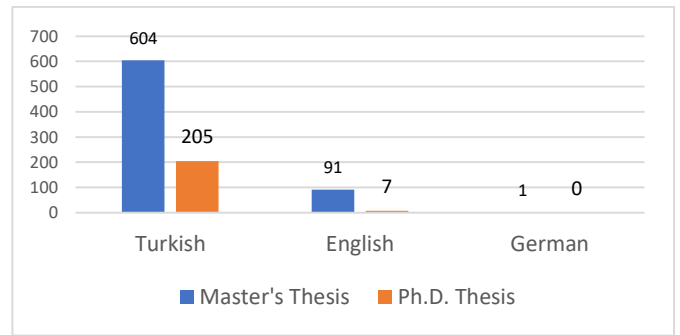


Figure 5. Distribution of Theses by Written Language

Language plays a crucial role in disseminating and impacting graduate theses in civil aviation. Our study's findings reveal that most graduate theses in Turkey are written in Turkish, with a negligible percentage written in English or other languages. Specifically, out of the 212 doctoral theses in civil aviation, 205 were written in Turkish, and only seven were in English. Similarly, out of the 696 published master's theses, 604 were written in Turkish, 91 in English, and one in German. Overall, 809 graduate theses were in Turkish, 98 in English, and one in German. While writing in Turkish may facilitate communication and dissemination among local researchers and practitioners, it may also hinder non-Turkish speakers seeking to access and utilize these theses. Conversely, publishing in English can enhance the international visibility and impact of Turkish research in civil aviation and enable broader dissemination and application of the findings.

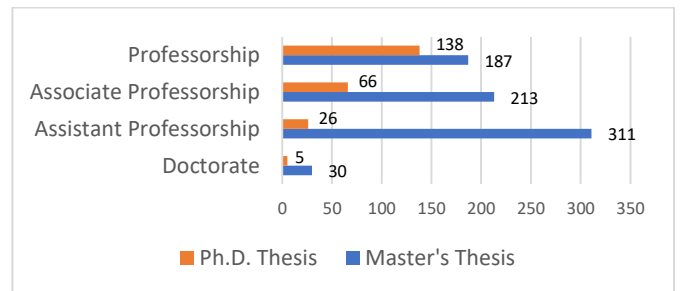


Figure 6. Distribution of Theses by Supervisor Titles

Research data reveal that, among the 696 published master's theses, 187 were advised by professors, 213 by associate professors, 311 by assistant professors, and 30 by doctors. For the 212 doctoral theses, 138 were advised by professors, 66 by associate professors, 26 by assistant professors, and five by doctors.

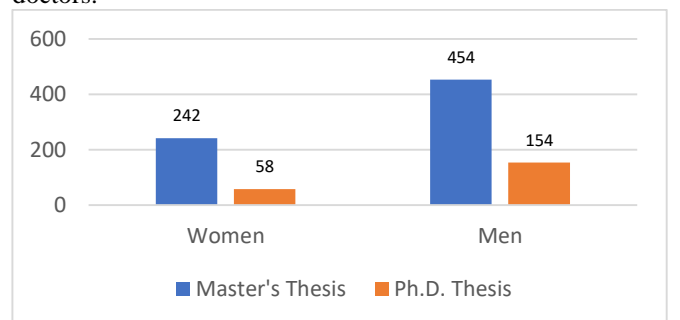


Figure 7. Distribution of Theses by Gender of Authors

Figure 7 displays the gender distribution of researchers who authored graduate theses in civil aviation, revealing a higher representation of male researchers. Of the 696 master's theses,

242 were prepared by female researchers, and male researchers prepared 454. Concerning the 212 doctoral theses, 58 were prepared by female researchers, and male researchers prepared 154. Female researchers prepared 300 out of the 908 graduate theses examined, while male researchers prepared 608.

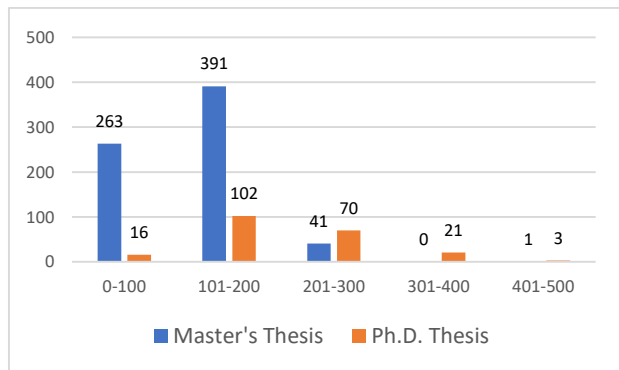


Figure 8. Distribution of Theses by Number of Pages

After examining the distribution of master's and doctoral theses, it becomes apparent that most postgraduate theses, comprising 391 master's and 102 doctoral theses, are within the 101-200 page range. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that 263 master's theses have a page count of 0-100 pages, while only 16 doctoral theses are included in this category.

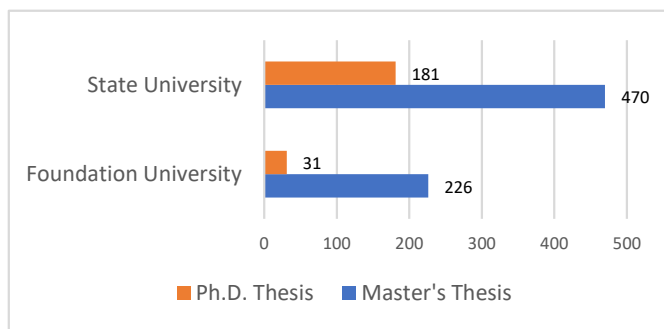


Figure 9. Distribution of Theses by University Type

Upon scrutinizing the types of universities where postgraduate theses were authored, it is found that 470 master's theses and 181 doctoral theses were completed in state universities, whereas 226 master's theses and 31 doctoral theses were produced in foundation universities. As a whole, state universities accounted for 651 postgraduate theses, while foundation universities contributed 257. The observed discrepancy between the two categories can be ascribed to the more significant number and long-established history of state universities.

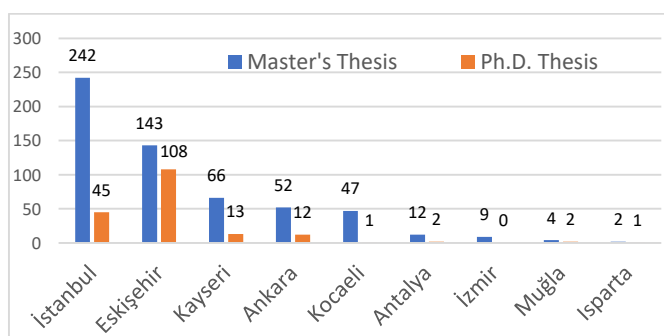


Figure 10. Distribution of Theses by Publication Places

An examination of the distribution of graduate theses across different cities reveals that Istanbul has the highest number of theses, followed by Eskişehir, Kayseri, Ankara, Kocaeli, Antalya, İzmir, Muğla, and Isparta, in that order. Of the 287 theses in Istanbul, 242 are master's theses, and 45 are doctoral theses. In Eskişehir, there are 251 theses, with 143 being master's theses and 108 being doctoral theses. Similarly, Kayseri has 79 theses, consisting of 66 master's theses and 13 doctoral theses. The high concentration of universities and researchers in Istanbul accounts for the more significant number of graduate theses. At the same time, the historical focus on aviation education in Kayseri and Eskişehir explains the relatively higher number of graduate theses in these cities compared to other institutions.

Table 1. Distribution of Theses by Subject

No	Distribution by Subject	Master's Thesis	Ph.D. Thesis
1	Business Administration	288	86
2	Transportation	73	19
3	Aircraft Engineering	35	13
4	Aeronautical Engineering	32	26
5	Electrical and Electronics Engineering	13	2
6	Economics	13	6
7	Mechanical Engineering	13	8
8	Law	11	2
9	Tourism	11	2

When examining the distribution of graduate theses by topic, it can be observed that business management is the most popular choice for both master's and doctoral theses, comprising a total of 374 theses, out of which 288 are master's theses and 86 are doctoral theses. The field of transportation ranks second with a total of 92 theses, out of which 73 are master's theses, and 19 are doctoral theses. In third place, we find aviation engineering with 58 theses, of which 32 are master's and 26 are doctoral theses.

Table 2. Distribution of Theses by Published Universities

No	University	Master's Thesis	Ph.D. Thesis
1	Anadolu University	121	85
2	Erciyes University	66	13
3	Kocaeli University	47	1
4	Beykent University	30	3
5	İstanbul Technical University	27	6
6	İstanbul Gelisim University	25	3
7	İbn Haldun University	24	0
8	Eskisehir Technical University	22	23
9	University of Turkish Aeronautical Association	22	4
10	Bahcesehir University	22	0

Anadolu University has the highest number of published graduate theses, totaling 206 theses, with 121 master's theses and 85 doctoral theses. Following Anadolu University, Erciyes University has 79 published theses, consisting of 66 master's theses and 13 doctoral theses. Kocaeli University has published a total of 48 theses, with 47 master's theses and 1



doctoral thesis. Among private universities, Beykent University ranks the highest with 33 published graduate theses, consisting of 30 master's theses and 3 doctoral theses.

**Table 3.** Distribution of Theses by Institutes

Institute	Master's Thesis	Ph.D. Thesis
Social Sciences Institute	376	117
Institute of Science	200	58
Institute of Education Sciences	3	0
Graduate Education Institute	99	32
Institute of Aeronautics and Space Technologies	4	0

After examining the distribution of graduate theses by the institutes where they were completed, it becomes apparent that the Social Sciences Institute has published the most significant number of theses, with 493 theses, comprising 376 master's theses and 117 doctoral theses. The Science and Technology Institute ranks second with 258 theses, consisting of 200 master's and 58 doctoral theses. The Institute of Education Sciences ranks third with 131 theses, comprising 99 masters and 32 doctoral theses. Finally, the Institute of Aviation and Space Sciences has published four master's theses and is listed last.

**Table 4.** Distribution of Theses by Departments

Department	Master's Thesis	Ph.D. Thesis
Department of Business Administration	184	54
Department of Civil Aviation Management	113	46
Department of Civil Aviation Logistics Management Department	101	37
Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations	28	0
Department of Management and Organization	3	1
Department of Private Law	4	0
Department of Environmental and Technical Investigation of Accidents	3	0
Department of Metallurgical and Materials Engineering	1	0
European Union Department	1	0

Upon examining graduate theses by department, it is found that the Department of Business Administration has the highest number of theses, with a total of 238 theses, consisting of 184 master's theses and 54 doctoral theses. The Department of Civil Aviation Management is ranked second with 159 theses, including 113 master's theses and 46 doctoral theses. The Department of Civil Aviation ranks third with a total of 136 theses, consisting of 101 master's theses and 37 doctoral theses.

**4. Conclusion**

The primary objective of this study is to conduct bibliometric analysis on 908 postgraduate theses in the field of civil aviation published and accessible in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education between 1998 and 2022, evaluating their findings to unveil the changes and

developments during this period. In a rapidly evolving aviation industry, this study also aims to provide insights into the prominent facets and priorities of the sector, thereby offering a crucial understanding for the potential focus of future research endeavors. Furthermore, this study intends to present a comprehensive overview of the current state of research in the field of civil aviation, identify emerging trends, contribute to the existing literature, and guide future research directions, underscoring the significance of augmenting the number of postgraduate theses written in foreign languages with an international perspective. This practice allows us to evaluate viewpoints and experiences of researchers from diverse cultures on a broader spectrum, facilitating a better comprehension of the global impact of the industry. Consequently, it can contribute to a more comprehensive and multifaceted pool of aviation knowledge, fostering the emergence of sustainable and innovative solutions.

After examining the period between 1998 and 2022, it becomes apparent that there has been a numerical increase in studies conducted in civil aviation. The first postgraduate thesis in this field was published in 1998, and since then, the number of published theses has steadily increased. The increase in graduate theses published in civil aviation in 2019, totalling 152, is likely due to the growing significance and need for civil aviation worldwide and in Turkey. Moreover, the increase in the number of universities and departments offering programs in the field of civil aviation in recent years is believed to have contributed to the rise in the number of theses as well.

However, a significant decrease in published theses has been observed in subsequent years. This decline is believed to result from the Covid-19 pandemic, which impacted academic research in 2020 and 2021. The implementation of restrictions during the pandemic made it challenging for researchers to collect data, which led to the postponement of thesis defences.

It is evident from postgraduate theses on civil aviation that male researchers outnumber female researchers. Specifically, out of the 696 master's theses published on this topic, 454 were authored by male researchers, and out of the 212 doctoral theses, 154 were also authored by males. Consequently, male researchers dominate postgraduate studies in civil aviation. During the analysed period, most master's thesis advisors held the rank of assistant professor. In contrast, most doctoral thesis advisors were professors with extensive knowledge and experience in their respective fields. This trend is consistent with other academic disciplines, where professors oversee doctoral thesis advising.

Aviation management was the most commonly researched topic in master's theses, followed by transportation issues. Other frequently explored research areas included aviation engineering and mechatronics engineering within civil aviation. Considering that civil aviation is a relatively new and continuously developing field, it is not unexpected that many postgraduate thesis topics published within this field are related to business management and transportation services, which are more closely associated with this domain. As the field of civil aviation continues to evolve, postgraduate theses may increasingly focus on topics specific to this field.

Out of the 696 total theses analysed, 604 master's theses were published in Turkish, 91 in English, and one in German. Similarly, 208 doctoral theses were published in Turkish, while seven were published in English. The prevalence of Turkish theses over English theses in both master's and doctoral thesis studies may be attributed to researchers' preference for their native language when conducting research and writing theses. It seems that most published master's theses are within the range of 101-200 pages, with the shortest thesis

containing 401-500 pages. Interestingly, the data also suggests that an increase in thesis page count is associated with a decrease in the number of master's theses and an increase in the number of doctoral theses.

This finding highlights the distinctions between master's and doctoral programs. Master's programs are typically more concise, with shorter duration and limited research on a specific topic. Consequently, the thesis may be shorter, making it easier for students to complete. Conversely, doctoral programs offer an opportunity to conduct more comprehensive research, which involves a lengthier process enabling students to undertake their research and make an original contribution. This discovery also suggests that doctoral programs provide a more intensive research experience than master's programs and allow students to work on more extensive projects. Nevertheless, the length of the thesis may not always correspond to the quality of the research or the student's success.

Between 1998 and 2022, 651 postgraduate theses were conducted in state universities, whereas 257 were conducted in private universities. Notably, Anadolu University has produced the highest number of studies in the field of civil aviation, with 121 master's theses and 85 doctoral theses, summing up to a total of 206 theses. This observation can be attributed to the university's early establishment of a dedicated aviation studies department and its sustained academic research activities since 1998. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Istanbul exhibits the highest number of postgraduate theses in civil aviation. This finding may be explained by the more significant number of universities in Istanbul compared to other cities, reflected in the number of studies conducted.

It can be argued that the Social Sciences Institute has published the most significant number of graduate theses in civil aviation, with a total of 493 theses, comprising 376 master's theses and 117 doctoral theses. These theses mainly address social topics such as management, transportation, and aviation management and are therefore published under the Social Sciences Institute. With the continuous growth of the civil aviation field, more graduate theses are expected to be published under the Institute of Science and Technology and the Institute of Aviation and Space Sciences. Lastly, an evaluation based on the main disciplines has been conducted, which revealed that the Department of Business Administration has the highest number of publications in civil aviation. The civil aviation sector is a multidisciplinary field, which necessitates research in various areas. In addition to studies in management, researchers from the aviation industry, engineering, law, and other disciplines also engage in research in this field. Due to its focus on critical issues such as safety, cost, efficiency, competition, environmental protection, sustainability, ethics, and corporate social responsibility, the civil aviation industry has also gained researchers' attention in business administration.

#### Ethical approval

Not applicable.

#### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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**Cite this article:** Kanbur, E. (2023). Bibliometric Analysis of Postgraduate Theses on Civil Aviation. *Journal of Aviation*, 7(3), 346-352.



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