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Examination of Postgraduate Theses About Early Marriage

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ABSTRACT

Research Article

The aim of this study is to examine the master's and doctoral thesis written on early marriage according to the year of publication, type, university, department, institute, language in which it was written, title of consultant, research method used, distribution of keywords and themes. A total of 35 master's and doctoral thesis were examined in the research. The sample of the research consists of master's and doctoral thesis related to the subject in CHE (The Council of Higher Education) Thesis Center. Research data were collected by document analysis method. According to the data obtained in the research, the most thesis were published in 2018, and the most thesis studies were conducted at the master's level. Thesis were mostly written in Hacettepe University and in the department of sociology. Most thesis were written in social sciences institute. Most of the thesis were written in Turkish, and the faculty members with the title of professor were the advisors to the thesis. Most qualitative research methods were used in thesis. The most frequently used keyword in the thesis examined was "early marriage".

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Introduction

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the “Convention on the Rights of the Child” in 1989. Turkey ratified this convention in 1994. This contract aims to provide opportunities for children to develop themselves in society by giving them rights in many areas (Karakas and Çevik, 2016: 889). The first article of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines the child as follows: “*Every person up to the age of eighteen is considered a child, except for the earlier age of majority under the law applicable to the child*” (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). Therefore, marriages made by individuals or individuals under the age of eighteen can be defined as child marriage or early marriage (UNFPA, 2020).

In Article 124 of the Turkish Civil Code, it is stated that a man or woman cannot marry until they reach the age of seventeen, but the judge can allow men or women who have turned sixteen to marry, except in ordinary circumstances (Turkish Civil Code No. 4721, Official Gazette Number: 24607). Article 14 of the Marriage Regulation states that men and women who have reached the age of eighteen and have not been placed under guardianship by the court can marry without a permit. It is stated that men and women who are over the age of seventeen can marry with the permission of their parents, if they do not have parents, with the permission of the guardian or guardianship authority, and with the permission of a judge who has completed the age of sixteen (Marriage Regulation, Official Gazette Number: 18921). As can be seen, the age of marriage in Turkey is eighteen, with exceptions.

Today, many societies continue their habits from the past. Child marriage is also among them. Societies see child marriage as an ordinary act and continue child marriage (Gülada, 2019: 149). From this point of view, it can be said that child marriages are basically a social and cultural problem (Özcebe and Küçük Biçer, 2013: 90). Child marriage, which is especially common among girls, is a global problem seen in different parts of the world (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2020: 15). Early marriages take place during the adolescence period of children. Adolescence is a period in which mental and physical changes begin and the child begins to recognize himself. Experiencing child marriages in such a sensitive period prevents individuals from completing the adolescence period in a healthy way, causing individuals to encounter inequalities of opportunity throughout their lives (Çetin, 2020: 110). This situation also prevents the formation of resistance against poverty in societies where early marriage is experienced, and creates an obstacle to the development of that society (Kyari and Ayodele, 2014: 588).

Children are living in early marriage experience victimization because their childhood rights are taken away from them. Individuals who encounter adult responsibilities by experiencing a role change without experiencing their childhood are deprived of their right to education. This situation prevents individuals from working in skilled jobs. Therefore, the quality of life of individuals whose childhood rights are taken away also decreases (Yıldız and Poyraz, 2020: 161-162). The responsibilities brought by marriage create a heavy burden for the child, causing the individual to encounter different problems both personally and in marriage life (Aslan, 2019: 47). In addition, children who are married at a young age are also faced with the risk of marrying and encountering similar problems in the coming years (Zengin et al., 2018: 95).

Early marriages prevent situations such as reducing poverty, realizing gender equality, making education widespread and protecting child health in societies where it occurs (Boran et al., 2013: 61). Early marriages are generally associated with domestic violence, low educational and economic status of the family, gender inequality and customs etc. It is seen in situations where there are social pressure elements. In addition, the inadequacies in the laws also pave the way for early marriages (Gezer Tuğrul, 2018: 7).

Although child marriages are prohibited in national law and international agreements, especially girls cannot benefit from basic rights, are exposed to discriminatory practices and health problems due to gender inequality and marriage practices in many countries. (Ova, 2014: 243). Child marriages cause health risks not only for the mother but also for the babies to be born (Özpuat, 2016: 15). In addition, the fact that girls are married at an earlier age compared to boys and that marriages cause more serious problems for girls have caused the studies on this subject in the literature to focus on girls (Aydemir, 2011: 3).

Child marriages cause individuals to be deprived of many rights and freedoms, hindering social development and causing gender inequalities. Therefore, the problem of early marriage is a set of problems that await solutions in many areas (Peltekoğlu and Akbayır, 2019: 829).

Child marriage, which is a global problem, is also an important problem in Turkey. According to TSI (Turkish Statistical Institute) data, the marriage rate of girls in the 16-17 age group in total official marriage was 8.1% in 2009, while this rate decreased to 3.1% in 2019. Adolescent fertility rate, on the other hand, was 49 per thousand in 2001, according to statistics for the 15-19 age group, while this rate decreased to 17 per thousand in 2019 (TSI, 2020a). According to statistics, although child marriages and the adolescent fertility rate seem to have decreased in Turkey, child marriages continue as an important social problem. In addition, the absence of data on children under the age of 15 in TSI data indicates that there is no definite information about child marriages and adolescent births.

Early marriages are an important social problem. Overcoming this problem and raising awareness on this issue can be achieved through academic studies. In this sense, master's and doctoral thesis studies in this field in Turkey are important. It is thought that determining the tendencies of these thesis studies and guiding the researchers who will carry out thesis studies in this field in the coming years will provide more original and qualified thesis studies. With this study, postgraduate thesis studies on early marriages in Turkey were examined and answers were sought for the following questions:

- What is the distribution of thesis by years?
- What are the types of thesis?
- What is the distribution of thesis according to universities?
- What is the distribution of thesis according to departments?
- What is the distribution of thesis according to institutes?
- What are the languages in which thesis are written?
- What are the titles of faculty members advising the thesis?
- What are the research methods used in thesis?
- What is the distribution of keywords used in thesis?
- What is the distribution of thesis according to their themes?

Methodology

In this study, data were collected by document analysis method. In document analysis, it is aimed to analyze written documents systematically and meticulously (Wach, 2013: 1). Document analysis makes significant contributions to researchers in studies conducted in the field of social science today (Ulutaş, 2015: 296). In this sense, researchers gain significant advantages in terms of saving time and money (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018: 190).

Collection of Data

The data of the research consists of master's and doctoral thesis, which were reached as a result of a search made on February 8, 2021, at the CHE (The Council of Higher

Education) Thesis Center with the keywords "child bride", "early marriage", "child marriage" and "early marriage". As a result of the search, the thesis that do not have permission to be published on the database and that are not directly related to the subject were excluded from the examination, and a total of 35 master's and doctoral thesis were examined.

Analysis of Data

Descriptive analysis method was used for the analysis of the data. In descriptive analysis, the data collected for research (interview, observation and document) are presented to the reader in a descriptive manner with direct quotations (Günbayı, 2019). Tables were used to analyze the data.

Findings

The findings obtained as a result of the research are shown and interpreted with the help of the tables below.

What is the distribution of the thesis, which are the subject of the research, according to years?

Table 1. Distribution of Thesis by Years

Year	Number of Thesis (f)	Percentage (%)
2011	1	2,86
2012	1	2,86
2013	1	2,86
2015	3	8,57
2016	1	2,86
2017	3	8,57
2018	10	28,57
2019	9	25,71
2020	6	17,14
Total	35	100

Table 1 shows the distribution of postgraduate thesis on early marriage by years. It can be said that the postgraduate thesis studies on this subject are still new. The year in which the most thesis were written was 2018 with 10 thesis. Although there has been a decrease in the number of thesis written in the two years after 2018, it is seen that the most thesis study has been done in the last three years.

What is the type of thesis that is the subject of the research?

Table 2. Distribution of Thesis by Type

Type of Thesis	Number of Thesis (f)	Percentage (%)
Master Degree	29	82,86
Doctorate (PhD)	6	17,14
Total	35	100

Table 2 shows the distribution of thesis studies by type. In total, 29 thesis and master's thesis were written out of 35 thesis. There were 6 doctorate thesis studies.

What is the distribution of thesis, which are the subject of the research, according to universities?

Table 3. Distribution of Thesis by Universities

University	Number of Thesis (f)	Percentage (%)
Akdeniz	1	2,86
Anadolu	1	2,86
Ankara	1	2,86
Bingöl	1	2,86
Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal	1	2,86
Galatasaray	1	2,86
Gazi	2	5,71
Gaziantep	1	2,86
Giresun	1	2,86
Hacettepe	5	14,29
Harran	1	2,86
Hasan Kalyoncu	1	2,86
İstanbul	2	5,71
Kafkas	1	2,86
Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam	1	2,86
KTO Karatay	1	2,86
Manisa Celal Bayar	1	2,86
Marmara	1	2,86
Mersin	1	2,86
Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar	1	2,86
Nevşehir	1	2,86
ODTÜ	1	2,86
Ondokuz Mayıs	1	2,86
Sabancı	1	2,86
Sakarya	1	2,86
Selçuk	1	2,86
Süleyman Demirel	1	2,86
Üsküdar	2	5,71
Total	35	100

The distribution of postgraduate thesis studies on early marriage by universities is shown in Table 3. In total, thesis studies were carried out in 28 universities. It is seen that 24 of 28 universities are state universities and 4 of them are foundation universities. Hacettepe University was the university with the highest number of theses, with 5 theses. Two thesis

studies were carried out in Gazi, Istanbul and Üsküdar Universities. One dissertation was written at other universities.

How is the distribution of the thesis subject to the research according to the departments?

Table 4. Distribution of Theses by Departments

Department	Number of Thesis (f)	Percentage (%)
Sociology	11	31,43
Social Service	4	11,43
Cinema and Television Arts	2	5,71
Psychology	2	5,71
Nursing	2	5,71
Public Health	2	5,71
Public Relations	1	2,86
Philosophy and Science of Religion	1	2,86
Public Administration	1	2,86
Women Studies and Gender	1	2,86
Radio Television and Cinema Arts	1	2,86
Islamic History	1	2,86
Interdisciplinary Family Studies	1	2,86
Political Science and Public Adm.	1	2,86
Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design	1	2,86
Midwifery	1	2,86
Social Pediatrics	1	2,86
Clinical Psychology	1	2,86
Total	35	100

Table 4 shows the distribution of theses written according to the departments. The most thesis studies were found in the sociology department with 11 thesis studies. After the sociology department, the most thesis study has been done in the social work department with four theses. The fact that a thesis study has been conducted in eighteen different departments in total shows that this subject has been studied with different dimensions.

How is the distribution of the thesis subject to the research according to the institutes?

Table 5. Distribution of Theses by Institute

Institute	Number of Thesis (f)	Percentage (%)
Social Sciences	27	77,14
Health Sciences	8	22,86
Total	35	100

When the distribution of theses according to institutes is examined in Table 5, it is seen that 27 theses were written in Social Sciences and 8 theses were written in Health Sciences Institute.

What are the languages in which the thesis that are the subject of the research are written?

Table 6. Languages of Thesis

Language of Thesis	Number of Thesis (f)	Percentage (%)
Turkish	32	91,43
English	3	8,57
Total	35	100

Table 6 shows the languages in which thesis are written. While 32 thesis were written in Turkish, only 3 theses were written in English.

What are the titles of the faculty members who advise the thesis that are the subject of the research?

Table 7. Titles of Faculty Members Advising Thesis Studies

Title of Advisor	Number of Thesis (f)	Percentage (%)
Professor	16	45,71
Associate Professor	6	17,14
Assistant Professor	13	37,14
Total	35	100

In Table 7, it is seen that the faculty members who have the most professor titles among the faculty members advising the thesis studies are the advisors to the thesis. After the title of Professor, the highest advisor to the theses are Assistant Professor who they are faculty members with the title of member. The faculty members holding the title of Associate Professor with the rate of 17,14% were the least advisors to the thesis.

What are the research methods used in the thesis that are the subject of the research?

Table 8. Research Methods Used in Thesis Studies

Research Method	Number of Thesis (f)	Percentage (%)
Qualitative	21	60
Quantative	10	28,57
Literature Review	2	5,71
Mixed Method	2	5,71
Total	35	100

In Table 8, it is seen that qualitative research methods are used with a maximum rate of 21% in thesis studies. After qualitative research methods, the most used research method was quantitative research methods with a rate of 28.57%. The thesis studies conducted with mixed method and literature review were equally at 5.71%.

What is the distribution of the keywords used in the thesis that are the subject of the research?

Table 9. Distribution of Keywords Used in Thesis

<i>Early Marriage: 12</i>	<i>Bingöl: 1</i>	<i>Culture: 1</i>
<i>Child Bride: 10</i>	<i>Days of Ignorance: 1</i>	<i>Privacy: 1</i>
<i>Marriage: 6</i>	<i>Sexuality: 1</i>	<i>Bridewealth: 1</i>
<i>Woman: 6</i>	<i>Gender Norms: 1</i>	<i>Neveşehir: 1</i>
<i>Gender: 6</i>	<i>Child Groom: 1</i>	<i>Scale: 1</i>
<i>Early Marriages: 5</i>	<i>Child Marriages: 1</i>	<i>Self-Efficacy: 1</i>
<i>Family: 4</i>	<i>Child Neglect and Abuse: 1</i>	<i>Psychological Signs: 1</i>
<i>Child Marriage: 4</i>	<i>Child: 1</i>	<i>Resilience: 1</i>
<i>Child Marriages: 3</i>	<i>Exchange: 1</i>	<i>Radical Feminism: 1</i>
<i>Child Brides: 3</i>	<i>Derinkuyu: 1</i>	<i>Role Transfer: 1</i>
<i>Marital Adjustment: 3</i>	<i>Religion Perception: 1</i>	<i>Novels: 1</i>
<i>Patriarchy Social Order: 2</i>	<i>Emotion Adjustment</i>	<i>Mental Health: 1</i>
<i>Child Rights: 2</i>	<i>Disability: 1</i>	<i>Averroes: 1</i>
<i>Child Abuse: 2</i>	<i>Adolescent Marriage: 1</i>	<i>Growing up Healthy Child: 1</i>
<i>Marriage at Child Age: 2</i>	<i>Adolescent Pregnancy: 1</i>	<i>Family Counseling with Refugees: 1</i>
<i>Marriage at Early Age: 2</i>	<i>Adult Marriage: 1</i>	<i>Cinema: 1</i>
<i>Feminism: 2</i>	<i>Men: 1</i>	<i>Child Brides in Cinema: 1</i>
<i>Marriage: 2</i>	<i>Early Marriage: 1</i>	<i>Social Service: 1</i>
<i>Adolescent Marriage: 1</i>	<i>Early Marriages: 1</i>	<i>Social Norms: 1</i>
<i>Spousal Role: 1</i>	<i>Couple Rejection: 1</i>	<i>Social Politics: 1</i>
<i>Spousal Problems: 1</i>	<i>Feminist Social Service: 1</i>	<i>Social Responsibility: 1</i>
<i>Spousal Abuse: 1</i>	<i>Traditionality: 1</i>	<i>Social-Economic Level: 1</i>
<i>Maternity and Child Care: 1</i>	<i>View: 1</i>	<i>Suriyeli Sığınmacı Kadınlar: 1</i>
<i>Patriarchy: 1</i>	<i>Nursing Students: 1</i>	<i>Social Memory: 1</i>
<i>Patriarchy Ideology: 1</i>	<i>İstanbul: 1</i>	<i>Gender Roles: 1</i>
<i>Patriarchal Structure: 1</i>	<i>İzmir: 1</i>	<i>Turkish Cinema: 1</i>
<i>Bride Wealth: 1</i>	<i>Woman Studies: 1</i>	<i>Turkey: 1</i>
<i>Documentary Cinema: 1</i>	<i>Woman Reinforcement: 1</i>	<i>Adjustment: 1</i>
<i>Self-Respect: 1</i>	<i>Women:1</i>	<i>Zarok: 1</i>
<i>Bride Exchange: 1</i>	<i>Mother-in-Law Rejection: 1</i>	
	<i>Seldom Perception: 1</i>	

Table 9 shows the distribution of keywords used in theses written about early marriage. The most used keyword was “early marriage”. After early marriage, "child bride", "marriage", "woman" and "gender" were the most frequently used keywords, respectively. The multiplicity of keywords used only once in theses is remarkable. This shows the diversity of studies.

How is the distribution of the thesis subject to the research according to their themes?

Table 10. Themes of Thesis

Theme	Number of Numbers (f)	Percentage (%)
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Early marriage process and experience	9	25,71
Socio-cultural and economic reasons for early marriage	5	14,29
Comparison of child and adult marriages	4	11,43
Child marriages and rights violations	2	5,71
Attitudes and perceptions of men on child marriages	2	5,71
Early marriage and marital adjustment	2	5,71
Child bride phenomenon in cinema	2	5,71
Early marriage in Arab-Islamic custom	1	2,86
Visual representation of child marriages	1	2,86
Child brides and mental health	1	2,86
Religious perception and early marriage	1	2,86
Adolescent pregnancy	1	2,86
Approaches to reduce the effects of early marriages	1	2,86
University students' views on early marriage	1	2,86
Social responsibility projects and child bride problem	1	2,86
Early marriage in printed and social media	1	2,86
Total	35	100

Table 10 shows the distribution of thesis according to their themes. Early marriage process and experience and socio-cultural and economic reasons for early marriage are the most used themes in theses. Considering those with a high percentage of themes used in the theses, it can be said that the social dimension of early marriage is studied the most. The part of early marriage that concerns mental and physical health is among the less studied subjects.

Conclusion and Discussion

Considering the distribution of the thesis studies on early marriage by years, the years in which the most thesis studies were conducted were the period that included the years 2018-2020. Among these years, the most thesis study was carried out in 2018. The fact that the thesis studies carried out in the last three years are more than the other years is an important development in terms of studies in this field. Most of the thesis studies on early marriage were carried out in the master's degree. The doctoral thesis studies have been six in total. The doctoral thesis studies were carried out at most Hacettepe University with two theses. The other four doctoral dissertations were conducted at Gazi, Istanbul, Ankara and Galatasaray Universities. It is thought that it will be beneficial to carry out more thesis studies at the doctoral level in this field in the coming years.

The most thesis studies on early marriage were conducted at Hacettepe University. According to TSİ (2016) data, Kilis was the province with the highest number of girl child marriages. It is seen that this province is followed by Kars and Ağrı. In TSİ (2020b) data, the province with the highest number of girls' marriages was Ağrı. This province is followed by Muş and Kars. As can be seen, although the most female child marriages are made in the cities located in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia regions, it is seen in the distribution of the thesis according to the universities that the postgraduate studies on early marriage in the universities in these regions are limited to a few universities. It is thought that the postgraduate thesis studies to be carried out in the universities in this region in the coming years will make important contributions to the solution of the child marriage problem in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia region.

Considering the distribution of theses according to the departments, it is seen that the most thesis study is done in the department of sociology. The fact that all thesis studies in the sociology department are at the master's level will make it important to carry out doctoral thesis studies in this department in the coming years. In addition, when the distribution of thesis according to the departments is examined, it is seen that there are many studies on this subject in different disciplines.

When the distribution of theses according to the institutes is examined, it has been determined that the most thesis studies are carried out in the social sciences institute. The reason for this is that the social problem dimension of this subject comes to the fore and these studies are generally within the scope of the departments of this institute. All of the thirty-five theses, except three, were written in Turkish. Only three dissertations were written in English at three different universities. Two of the theses written in English are master's thesis and the other one is a doctoral thesis. In addition, the universities where theses are written in English are Middle East Technical, Sabancı and Galatasaray Universities.

Looking at the titles of faculty members advising the theses, he has the most professor titles, it has been observed that the most are professor titles who have the title of faculty member have been advising the thesis and followed by Associate Professor. Theses were mostly made using qualitative research methods. After qualitative research methods, it was seen that quantitative research methods were used the most. It has been determined that quantitative research methods have been used in all of the theses made in the Institute of Health Sciences.

When the distribution of the keywords used in the theses is examined, it is seen that the keywords "early marriage" and "child bride" are used the most, respectively. The excessive use of the keyword "child bride" shows that the thesis studies on early marriage mostly focus on "child bride". It can be said that the reason for this is the fact that girls' marriage at an early age is an important social problem in Turkey and the increasing sensitivity in the academic community on this issue. Looking at the themes of the thesis, "early marriage process and experience" and "socio-cultural and economic reasons for early marriage" were the most used themes. As can be understood from the distribution of the themes, it is seen that the reasons of early marriage are investigated in the theses and focused on early marriage experiences. From this point of view, it can be said that the socio-cultural background of early marriages is examined in theses. Considering the distribution of themes, important subjects such as mental problems that occur with early marriage and problems caused by pregnancy have been the least studied subjects in the thesis. When the distribution of themes is considered from a holistic perspective, it can be said that the thesis focus on the social dimension of this subject.

As a result, it can be said that master's and doctoral thesis written on early marriage have increased in the last three years compared to other years. This increase is an important development in terms of studying such an important social problem in the academic field. However, the small number of doctoral thesis on early marriage will make the doctoral thesis studies to be conducted meaningfully in the coming years.

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