# An Examination of Graduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 about Academic Procrastination[1]

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**Abstract**

This study aims to analyze graduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 about academic procrastination. Qualitative survey method was used in the study. In the study, document analysis was used as the analysis method. After an initial search made using "academic procrastination" keyword in Council of Higher Education Thesis Center's Web Page (CoHE-thesis) 97 theses completed between 2010 and 2020 were found and analyzed. Primarily, graduate theses were analyzed according to their types, topics of study, methods, number of samples and sample group distribution. Afterwards, the methods, sample distributions and sample numbers of the theses according to their types were examined. Majority of these 97 completed theses are postgraduate theses (n=83), secondly doctoral theses (n=12), and thirdly specialty in medicine theses (n=2). As for the methods used, relational method (n=68) was seen to be the most used method after which comes descriptive method (n=15), thirdly interventional method (n=6), fourthly descriptive and relational method (n=3), and fifthly relational and interventional method (n=1). As for sample groups, the most researched sample group was university students (n=49). The most researched topics in theses on the subject of academic procrastination were educational and socio-demographic characteristics.

**Keywords:** Procrastination, academic procrastination, document analysis, postgraduate theses, cohe-thesis

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## Introduction

The needs and expectations of society change over time. Today educated people are expected to possess a variety of skills including reaching valid and reliable information, planning and doing research, having responsibility and awareness of their duties, and managing their time effectively. Improving these skills is vital for individuals to reach their goals. Academic duties of students increase and differ with each grade as they move to higher levels of education and eventually evolve to advanced tasks which require meticulous attention. It is necessary for students to learn managing their time effectively in order to carry out these tasks (Akbay and Gizir, 2010). Academic procrastination is defined as delaying academic based tasks (carrying out projects, preparing for exams) for various and illogical reasons. (Akbay and Gizir, 2010; Albayrak, Yazıcı and Reisoğlu, 2016; Bulut and Ocak, 2017; Kağan, 2009; Senecal, Julien and Guay, 2003). Individuals' preference to delay their academic duties to the last-minute despite being aware of their responsibilities is related to behavior of procrastination (Vural and Gündüz, 2019). Every individual can sometimes exhibit behavior of procrastination regardless of age, gender, or type of the work they are occupied with (Öztürk Başpınar, 2020). It is a well established fact that procrastination causes negative impacts on individuals (Johnson and Bloom, 1995). An increased number of social activities, occupational and academic duties (projects, presentations, assignments, exams) brought by university life as well as economic and occupational difficulties make academic procrastination a very common problem observed among university students. (Akbay and Gizir, 2010; Berber Çelik and Odacı, 2015; Kaya and Odacı, 2019; Odacı and Kaya, 2019). As a result, students tend to perform lower than their actual levels and have low academic satisfaction. Academic procrastination which causes academic failure is very often observed among university students (Berber Çelik and Odacı, 2015). Although academic procrastination is a common behavior among university students it can also be observed among students at other levels of education (Yaycı and Düşmez, 2016). Academic procrastination behavior affects students' academic life as well as their psychological state. Delaying duties caused by procrastination behavior results in being obliged to complete their responsibilities in a short time which in turn causes them to feel stressed. Despite feeling relieved for a short time, academic procrastination causes negative feelings such as anxiety and stress in the long term (Akbay ve Gizir, 2010). Academic procrastination behavior may originate from nature of assigned duty as well as personal characteristics (cognitive, affective) of individuals (Vural and Gündüz, 2019). Some of the variables causing academic procrastination behavior are low level of motivation and responsibility, lack of time management and self-regulation skills (Engin and Genç, 2020), setting unrealistic goals and perfectionism (Gürgan and Gündoğdu, 2019; Solomon and Rothblum, 1984; Odacı and Kaya, 2019), anxiety, difficulty in making decisions, and opposing control (Solomon and Rothblum, 1984).

Review of related literature indicates that studies address not only underlying causes of procrastination behavior but also they emphasize variables related to this behavior. Self-efficacy

(Akbay and Gizir, 2010; Aydoğan and Özbay, 2012; Berber Çelik and Odacı, 2015), perfectionism (Gürgan and Gündoğdu, 2019; Odacı and Kaya, 2019), responsibility (Çelikkaleli and Akbay, 2013; Özer and Altun, 2011), time management (Balkıs, Duru, Buluş and Duru, 2006; Bulut and Ocak, 2017; Kağan, 2009), fear of failure (Bulut and Ocak, 2017; Özer and Altun, 2011; Uzun Özer, 2009; Senecal, Koestner and Vallerand, 1995), motivation (Balkıs et al., 2006; Kağan, 2009; Senecal, Koestner and Vallerand, 1995), self-esteem (Beck, Koons and Milgrim, 2000), anxiety Senecal, Koestner and Vallerand, 1995; Solomon and Rothblum, 1984) are some of the variables studied in the related literature.

## Methods

Qualitative survey method was used in the study. In the study, document analysis was used as the analysis method. Document analysis is a method in which written documents related to subject of the study is analyzed (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018, p.187). In this method researchers must determine the steps they follow according to research problem, data they aim to reach, and depth of the study (Yenilmez and Sölpük, 2014). Data can easily be accessed from written documents. Some examples to these documents are novels, autobiographies, documents written by institutions, newspaper reports, and dairies (Merriam, 2013). In the current study, theses related to academic procrastination uploaded to Council of Higher Education Thesis Center's Web Page which has free access were used as documents.

## Research Questions

1. How is the distribution of graduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to types of theses?

2. How is the distribution of graduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to methods of theses?

3. How is the distribution of graduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to sample groups of theses?

4. How is the distribution of postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to sample groups of theses?

5. How is the distribution of postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to methods of theses?

6. How is the sample group distribution of postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to methods of theses?

7. How is the distribution of doctoral theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to sample groups of theses?

8. How is the distribution of doctoral theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to methods of theses?

9. How is the sample group distribution of doctoral theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to methods of theses?

10. How is the distribution of specialty in medicine theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to methods of theses?

11. How is the distribution of specialty in medicine theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to sample groups of theses?

12. How is the distribution of specialty in medicine theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to sample numbers of theses?

13. How is the distribution of graduate theses according to their topic of study?

## Population and Sampling

The population of the study consists of theses published in Council of Higher Education Thesis Center's Web Page (CoHE-thesis) which use the keyword "academic procrastination". The sample group of the study is 97 theses completed between 2010 and 2020 years which can be accessed via Council of Higher Education Thesis Center. The criterion selected for analysis of the data is categorization of theses according to their types, number of sample groups, type of sample groups and methods used for the study.

## Limitations

The study includes 97 theses completed between 2010 and 2020 which are accessed from Council of Higher Education Thesis Center's Web Page by using "academic procrastination" keyword. 83 of these theses are postgraduate, 12 are doctoral, and 2 are specialty in medicine theses. The study is limited to specified years and free access theses.

## Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis method is used to analyze the data. Descriptive analysis method includes four stages: Drawing a general framework according to themes, processing the data in accordance with this framework, explaining the findings, and commenting on the findings. (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). Primarily, a framework is specified for this study. The themes for the study are determined as types of theses, research methods, sample numbers of theses, sample types, and related variables. These themes were selected as they were among the titles which scientific studies should include.

## Results

In this part of the study findings of the study are presented under thirteen categories. These categories include: Distribution of graduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to their types, methods and sample groups, distribution of post graduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to their sample group distribution, research methods and sample groups distribution according to research method, distribution of doctoral theses according to their types,

sample groups and sample group distributions according to type of theses, distribution of specialty in medicine theses according to their methods, sample groups, and sample group numbers, and distribution of graduate theses according to their fields of study.
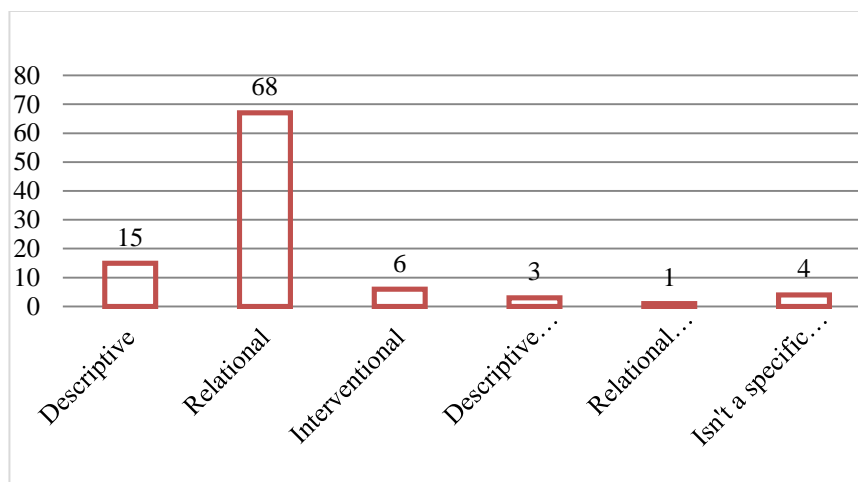
**Distribution of Graduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Types of Theses**

A total number of 97 graduate theses related to academic procrastination are completed between 2010 and 2020; 83 theses are post graduate, 12 of them are doctoral, and 2 of them are specialty in medicine.

**Distribution of Graduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

Information related to distribution of graduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to methods of theses is presented in the Table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Graduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses



As seen in table 1, there isn't a specific method stated for 4 of the theses completed between 2010 and 2020. 15 of the theses use descriptive method, 68 of the theses use relational method, 6 of the theses use interventional method, 3 of the theses use descriptive interventional method, and 1 of the theses uses relational interventional method.

**Distribution of Graduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Sample Groups of Theses**

Information related to distribution of graduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to sample groups of theses are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Graduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Sample Groups of Theses
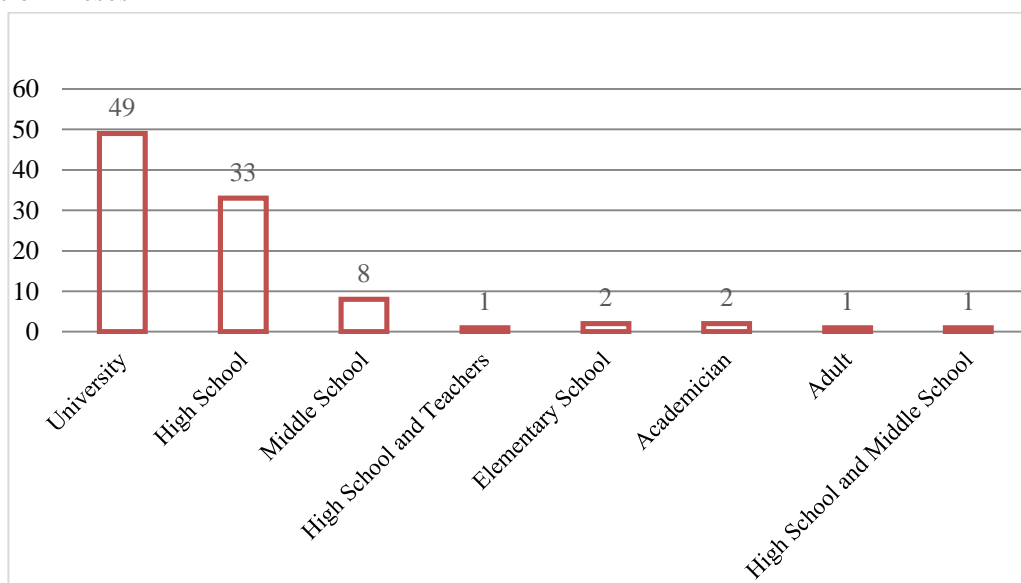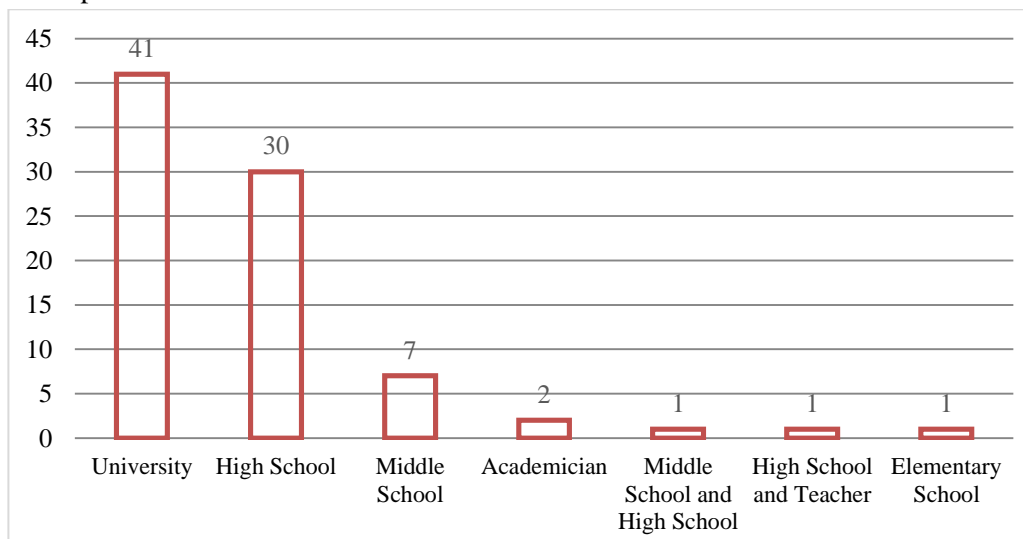


As seen in table 2, of all 97 theses completed between 2010 and 2020 there are 49 theses working with university groups, 33 theses working with high school groups, 8 theses working with middle school groups, 1 thesis working with high school and teacher groups, 2 theses working with elementary school groups, 2 theses working with academician groups, 1 thesis working with adult groups, and 1 thesis working with high school and middle school groups.

**Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Sample Groups of Theses**

Information related to distribution of postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to sample groups of theses is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Sample Groups of Theses
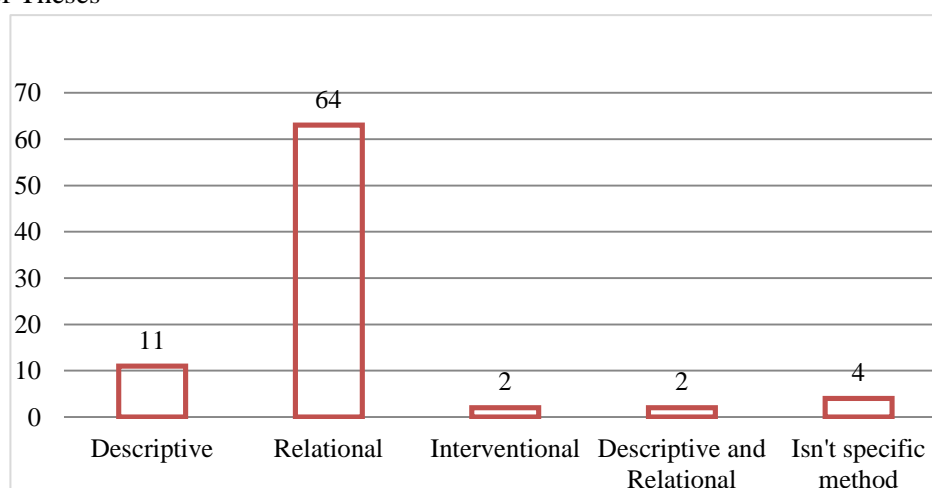
As seen in table 3, of all 83 postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 there are 41 theses working with university students, 30 theses working with high school students, 7 theses working with middle school students, 2 theses working with academicians, 1 thesis working with high school and middle school students, 1 thesis working with high school students and teachers, and 1 thesis working with elementary school students.

### Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses

Information related to distribution of postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to methods of theses is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses
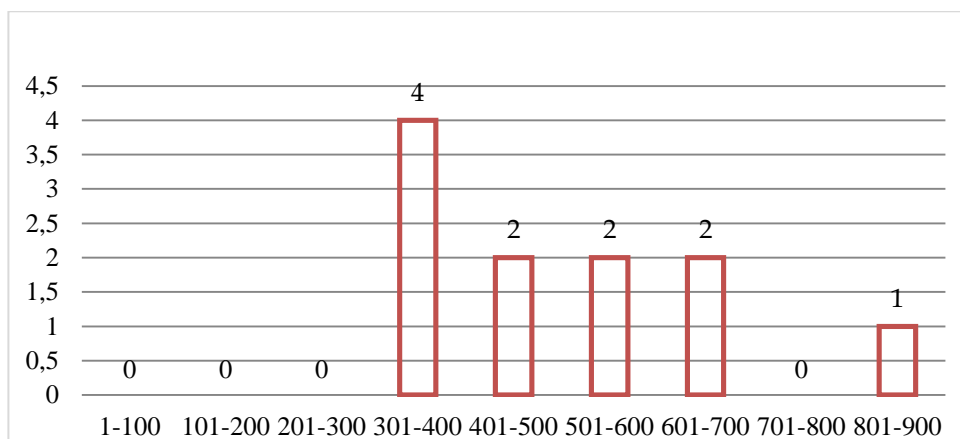


As seen in table 4, of all 83 postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020, 11 of the theses use descriptive method, 64 of the theses use relational method, 2 of the theses use interventional method, 2 of the theses use descriptive and relational method. There is no specific method stated for 4 of the theses.

### Sample Group Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses

Sample group distribution of postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 using descriptive method are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Sample Group Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 Using Descriptive Method
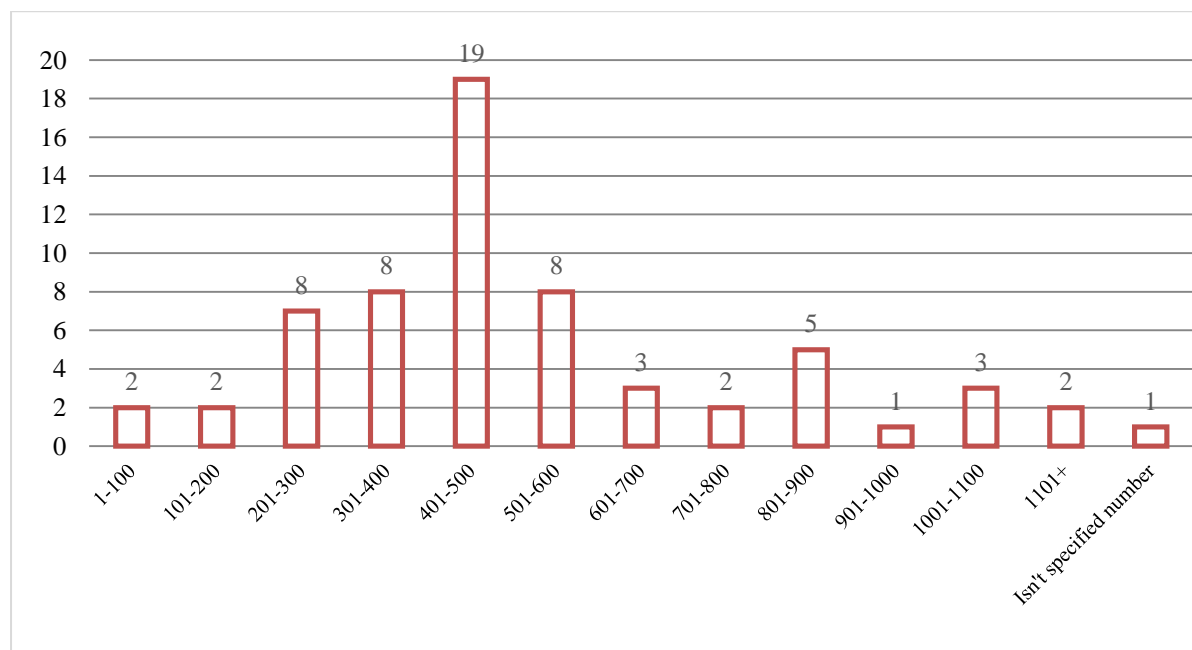


As seen in table 5, sample group distribution of 11 postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 using descriptive method is as follows: 4 theses working with 301-400 people, 2 theses working with 401-500, 2 theses working with 501-600, 2 theses working with 601-700, and 1 thesis working with 801-900.

**Sample Group Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

Sample group distribution of postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 using relational method are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Sample Group Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 Using Relational Method
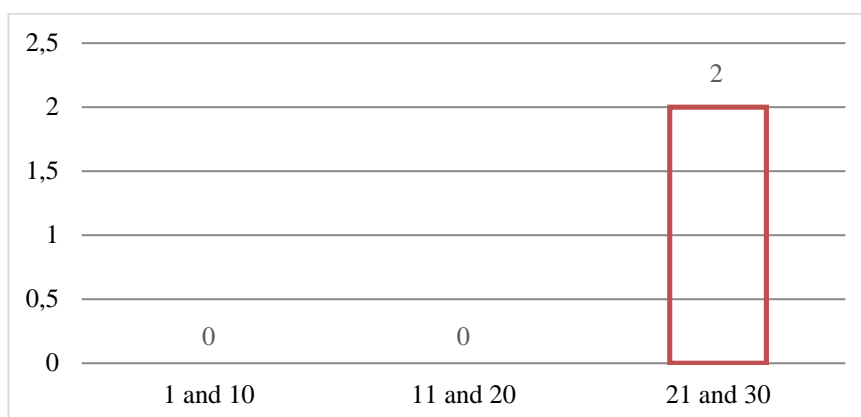
As seen in table 6, sample group distribution of 64 postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 using relational method is as follows: 2 theses working with 1-100 people, 2 theses working with 2,101-200, 8 theses working with 201-300 people,  8 theses working with 301-400 people, 19 theses working with 401-500 people, 8 thesis working with 501-600 people, 3 theses working with 601-700 people, 2 thesis working with 701-800 people,5 theses working with 801-900 people, 1 thesis working with 901-1000 people, 3 theses working with 1001-1100 people, 2 theses working with 1101 and a higher number of people. There is no specified number for sample group in 1 thesis.

**Sample Group Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

Sample group distribution of postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 using interventional method are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Sample Group Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 Using Interventional Method
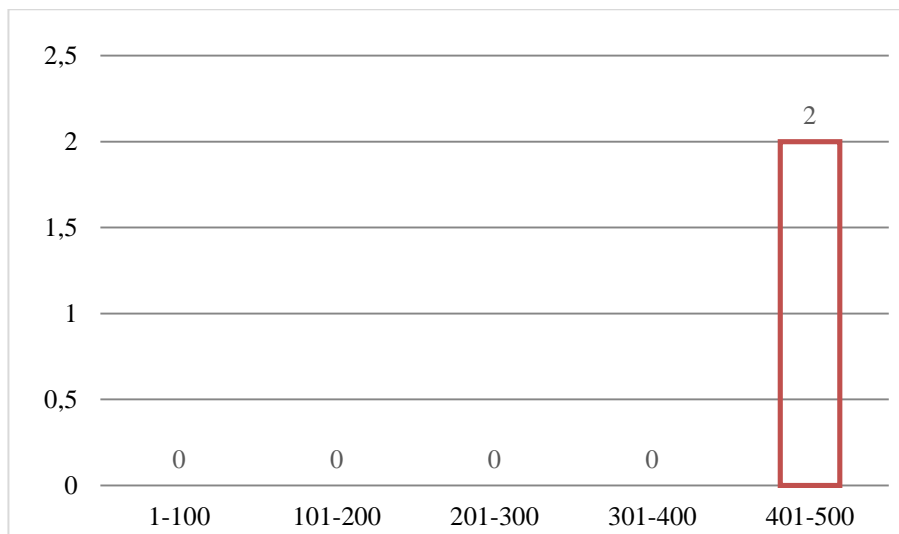


As seen in table 7, there are 2 theses using interventional method completed between 2010 and 2020 and both theses work on 21-30 people.

**Sample Group Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

Sample group distribution of postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 using descriptive and relational method are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Sample Group Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 Using Descriptive and Relational Method



As seen in table 8, there are 2 theses using descriptive and relational method completed between 2010 and 2020 and both theses work with 401-500 people.

**Sample Group Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

Sample group distribution of postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 in which there isn't a specified method is presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Sample Group Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 in Which There isn't a Specified Method
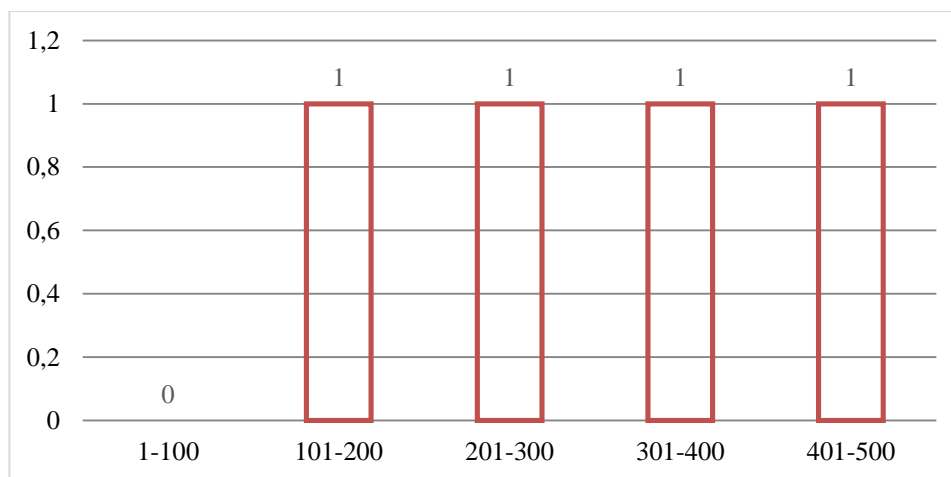


As seen in table 9, there are 4 theses in which there isn't a specified method and 1 thesis works with 101-200 people, 1 thesis works with 201-300 people, 1 thesis works with 301-400 people, and 1 thesis works with 401-500 people.

**Sample Group Distribution of Doctoral Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020**

Information related to sample group distribution of doctoral theses completed between 2010 and 2020 is presented in Table 10.

**Table 10.** Sample Group Distribution of Doctoral Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020
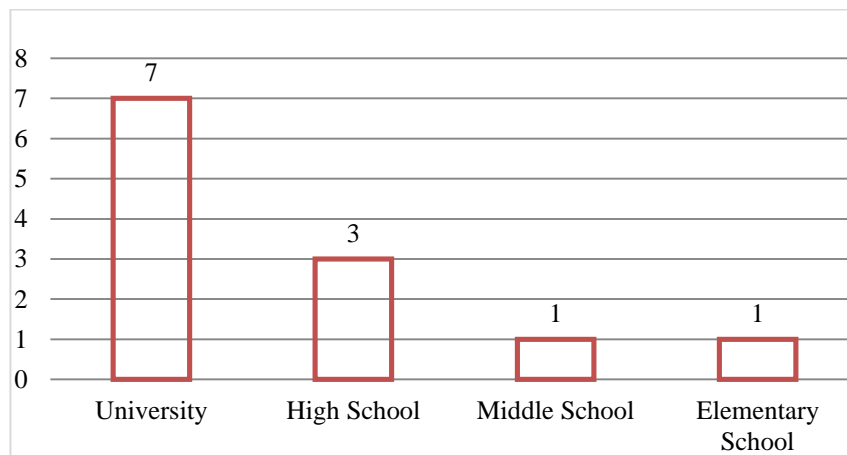


As seen in table 10, there are 12 doctoral theses completed between 2010 and 2020. 7 theses work with university students, 3 theses work with high school students, 1 thesis works with middle school students, and 1 thesis works with elementary school students.

**Distribution of Doctoral Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

Information related to distribution of doctoral theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to methods of theses is presented in Table 11.

**Table 11.** Distribution of Doctoral Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Their Methods
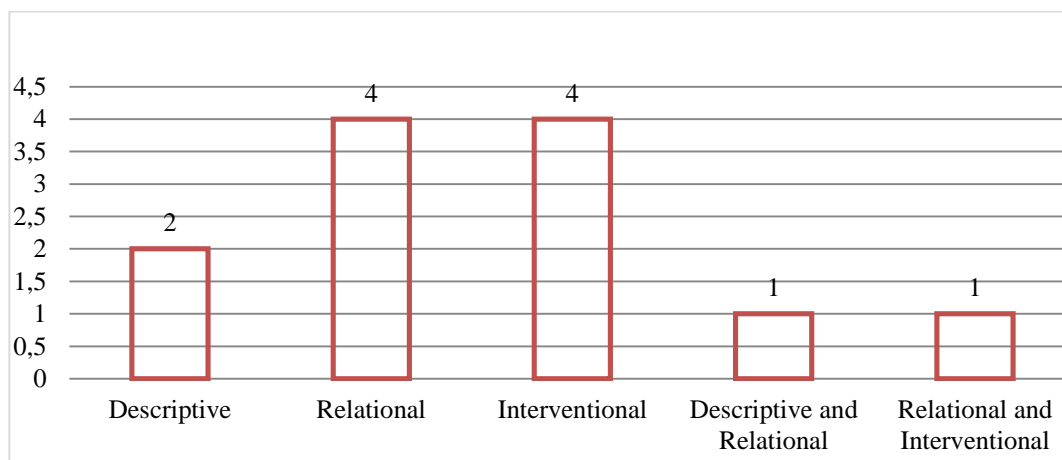
As seen in table 11, there are 12 doctoral theses completed between 2010 and 2020. 2 theses use descriptive method, 4 theses use relational method, 4 theses use interventional method, 1 thesis uses descriptive and relational method, and 1 thesis uses relational and interventional method.

**Sample Group Distribution of Doctoral Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

There are two doctoral theses using descriptive method completed between 2010 and 2020 and both theses work with a sample group of 1001-1500 people.

**Sample Group Distribution of Doctoral Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

There are 4 doctoral theses using relational method completed between 2010 and 2020. 3 of the theses works with a sample group of 601-900 people and 1 thesis works with a sample group of 901 and higher number of people.

**Sample Group Distribution of Doctoral Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

There are 4 doctoral theses using relational method completed between 2010 and 2020. 3 of the theses work with a sample group of 31-40 people, and 1 thesis works with a sample group of 21-30 people.

**Sample Group Distribution of Doctoral Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

There is 1 doctoral thesis using relational and interventional method completed between 2010 and 2020 and it works with a sample group of 1001-1500 people.

**Sample Group Distribution of Doctoral Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

There is 1 doctoral thesis using descriptive and relational method completed between 2010 and 2020 and it works with a sample group of 2001-3000 people.

**Distribution of Specialty in Medicine Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Methods of Theses**

There are 2 specialties in medicine theses completed between 2010 and 2020 use descriptive method.

**Distribution of Specialty in Medicine Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Sample Groups of Theses**

There are 2 specialties in medicine theses completed between 2010 and 2020. 1 thesis works with university students and 1 thesis works with adults.

**Distribution of Specialty in Medicine Theses Completed Between 2010 and 2020 According to Sample Group Numbers of Theses**

There are 2 specialties in medicine theses completed between 2010 and 2020. 1 thesis works with a sample group of 1-100 people and 1 thesis works with a sample group of 401-500 people.

**Distribution of Graduate Theses According to Topics Studied**

Information related to distribution of graduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 according to their field of study is presented in Table 12.

**Table 12.** Distribution of Graduate Theses According to Their Field of Study
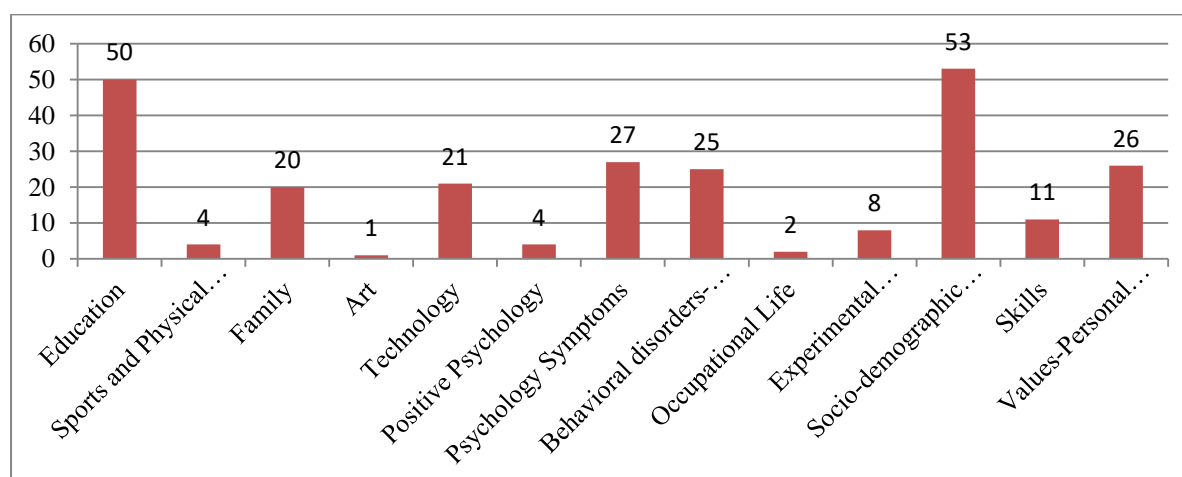


Topics of study are specified after a review of related literature with the help of specialists. The topics of study researched in theses related to academic procrastination are specified as: Education, sports and physical education, family, art, technology, positive psychology, psychological symptoms and behavioral disorders, behavioral problems, occupational life, experimental practices and trainings, socio-demographic factors, skills and values, personal characteristics. Analysis of theses completed between 2010 and 2020 revealed that topics studied are as follows: 50 topics related to education, 4 topics related to sports and physical education, 20 topics related to family, 1 topic related to art, 21 topics related to technology, 4 topics related to positive psychology, 27 topics related to psychological symptoms and behavioral disorders, 25 topics related to behavioral problems, 2 topics related to occupational life, 8 topics related to experimental practices and training, 53 topics related to socio-demographic factors, 11 topics related to skills, 26 topics related to values and personal characteristics.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

This study aims to analyze graduate theses completed between 2010 and 2020 on the subject of academic procrastination. 97 theses completed between 2010 and 2020 were analyzed according to their distribution of topics they studied, distribution of types of theses, distribution of sample numbers, distribution of sample groups, methods: sample number distributions, sample numbers according to methods of theses. Analysis revealed that majority of these 97 completed theses are postgraduate theses (n=83), secondly doctoral theses (n=12), and thirdly specialty in medicine theses (n=2). As for the methods used, relational method (n=68) was seen to be the most used method after which comes descriptive method (n=15), thirdly interventional method (n=6), fourthly descriptive and relational method (n=3), and fifthly relational and interventional method (n=1). Such a low usage of interventional method is predicted to be a result of difficulties experienced in using interventional method.

Review of related literature showed that various studies analyzing graduate theses also express those quantitative studies are favored over qualitative studies (Balta and Kanbolat, 2020; Kütükcü, 2017; Özenç and Özenç, 2018). Studies also state that there is a tendency to believe using quantitative methods gives more reliable and valid outcomes (Balta and Kanbolat, 2020; Kütükcü, 2017). Analysis of sample groups showed that university students (n=49) are the most studied group. 49 of 97 completed theses studied university students which indicates that social, occupational and academic responsibilities (projects, assignments, presentations, exams) of university students are higher than high school students as well as occupational and economic difficulties they experience which in turn make academic procrastination a very common and important problem (Akbay and Gizir, 2010; Berber Çelik and Odacı, 2015; Kaya and Odacı, 2019; Odacı and Kaya, 2019). This situation is believed to be the main consideration for researchers to prefer university students as sample groups. The most preferred sample group for postgraduate theses is also university students (n=41). Among 83 postgraduate theses, the most used research method is relational method (n=64) and the least used method is interventional method (n=2). The reason for post graduate degree researchers to prefer interventional method less than the other methods is believed to be the necessity of following all processes during all academic processes and focusing attention on academic writing and interventional method can require more time than other methods. Among 64 post graduate theses using relational method, the most studied sample group number is 401-500 (n=19). 2 post graduate theses using interventional method worked with 21-30 people. The most researched sample group among 12 doctoral theses is university students (n=7), and the least researched groups are middle school (n=1) and elementary school (n=1). The most used methods are interventional (n=4) and relational (n=4) methods. The most preferred sample group number is 31-40 people for doctoral theses using interventional method (n=3). The most preferred sample group number for doctoral theses using relational method is 601-900 people. Also, 2 specialties in medicine theses use

descriptive method. Academic procrastination is related to a wide range of variables such as self-efficacy (Akbay and Gizir, 2010; Aydoğan and Özbay, 2012; Berber Çelik and Odacı, 2015), perfectionism (Gürgan and Gündoğdu, 2019; Odacı and Kaya, 2019), responsibility (Çelikkaleli and Akbay, 2013; Özer and Altun, 2011), time management (Balkıs et.al. 2006; Bulut and Ocak, 2017; Kağan, 2009). As a result, it is possible for researchers to explore these relations by using relational method. All these considerations can be underlying cause for a higher usage of quantitative methods.

Another finding of the study shows that the most researched topics in completed graduate theses are educational topics and socio-demographic characteristics. Second most researched topic is psychological symptoms and behavioral disorders which is followed by topics related to values and personal characteristics. And the least studied topic is behavioral problems. Topics related to education include academic achievement, attitudes towards school and lessons. Analysis of topics studied in graduate theses revealed that topics related to socio-demographic characteristics include age, gender, level of income; psychological symptoms/behavioral disorders include anxiety, depression, and indecisiveness; values and personal characteristics include self-esteem and character traits; behavioral problems include perfectionism, and common procrastination behavior. The most studied sample group in graduate theses is university students which can be as a result of convenience sampling. Analysis of completed theses revealed that 49 of 97 theses studied university students which indicates that academic procrastination is a serious problem among university students.

## Recommendations

Following recommendations are presented for future research based on findings of this study:

- Increasing number of theses using qualitative and mixed methods.
- Developing models to explain the concept of academic procrastination.
- Increasing the number of studies using interventional method to develop programs and models which aims to decrease academic procrastination behavior.
- Increasing sample numbers of studies.

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