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## Investigation of Studies on Behavior Management in Special Education

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## Investigation of Studies on Behavior Management in Special Education

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### Abstract

Problem behaviors negatively affect the lives of special education students in different ways. Individuals with special needs may exhibit problem behaviors such as aggression, harming themselves or others, and excessive hyperactivity in general. It can be said that intervening, taking precautions, and changing these behaviors in a positive way before the emergence of problem behaviors are of critical importance in facilitating these children's lives. In this sense, the examination of postgraduate theses in the field of behavior management in special education is important in terms of describing the innovations, developments, current trends, and, if any, incomplete situations in the field of behavior management. Within the scope of the research, it is aimed to examine the studies on behavior management in the field of special education in Turkey between the years 2016-2022 in terms of various variables (type of publication, publication year, publishing university, research method, subject, study group). Document analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, was preferred in this study. According to the research findings, it was concluded that most master studies were done as postgraduate publications, the most publications were made in 2019, the university that made the most publications was Eskişehir Anadolu University and the most used research method in the studies carried out was the quantitative research method. It has been revealed that it is important for other universities to design behavior management studies in special education.

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### Introduction

The Ministry of National Education Special Education Services Regulation (2018) defines special education as "Education programs developed to meet the educational and social needs of individuals who differ significantly from their peers in terms of individual and developmental characteristics and educational qualifications and continue their education with specially trained personnel in appropriate environments. In addition, the education provided by specially trained personnel, developed training programs and training methods to meet the educational needs of individuals who differ significantly from their peers in terms of their individual characteristics and educational competencies, and therefore in need of special education, and in an environment suitable for their disability and characteristics is called special education" (MEB, 2006).

Special education is the whole of education services provided to students who differ significantly from their peers, it is individually planned and aims to maximize the individual's independent living situation (Uçuş, 2016). When

the definitions are examined in general, it can be said that special education students have various inadequacies and may exhibit problem behaviors, unlike their peers. Problem behaviors negatively affect the lives of special education students in different ways. Individuals with problem behaviors face difficulties in taking advantage of education and training opportunities due to these behaviors (Chandler & Dahlquist, 2002). For this reason, it can be said that it is necessary to reduce or eliminate these behaviors that negatively affect students' lives (Erbaş, 2008). Problem behaviors such as aggression, harming themselves or others, and excessive hyperactivity are observed in general. These problem behaviors exhibited may create negative situations not only for children with special needs, but also for their parents, siblings, and friends (Hastings & Brown, 2002). In this context, it can be said that intervening, taking precautions, and changing these behaviors before the emergence of problem behaviors have critical importance in facilitating these children's lives (Hanley et al., 2003).

Considering that students with special needs show behavioral problems due to their inadequacies, it is seen how important and necessary behavior management is in the field of special education (Erbaş, 2021). When the literature is examined, it has been determined that studies have been carried out in the fields of coping with problem behaviors, positive behavior support, and applied behavior analysis under the roof of behavior management in special education (Toper-Korkmaz, 2018; Omak, 2021; Alabay-Ersal, 2022; Güleç-Aslan, 2011; Erbaş, 2008; Sönmez-Diken, 2010). In this context, the examination of postgraduate theses in the field of behavior management in special education is important in terms of describing the innovations, developments, current trends, and, if any, incomplete situations in the field of behavior management (Kaya, et al., 2021).

### **Purpose of the research**

The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) decided to combine special education under one roof at a meeting held in 2015. With this decision, the Intellectual Disabilities, Hearing Impaired, Visually Impaired, and Gifted/Talented Teaching programs were combined as a new and single undergraduate program under the umbrella of "Special Education Teaching" (Büyükalan-Filiz et al., 2018). The aim of this research is to examine the studies on behavior management in the field of special education in Turkey between the years 2016-2022 in terms of various variables. The research questions determined within the scope of this purpose are presented below:

1. What is the distribution of the theses on behavior management in the field of special education according to the type of publication? (master -doctorate)
2. What is the distribution of the theses on behavior management in the field of special education according to the publication years?
3. What is the distribution of the theses on behavior management in the field of special education according to the universities in which they are published?
4. What is the distribution of the theses on behavior management in the field of special education according to research topics?
5. What is the distribution of the theses on behavior management in the field of special education according to research methods?
6. What is the distribution of the theses on behavior management in the field of special education according to the study groups?

## Method

### Research Model

In his research, Erbaş (2021) stated that students with special needs show behavioral problems due to their inadequacies and how important behavior management is in the field of special education because of this situation. In this sense, the examination of postgraduate theses in the field of behavior management in special education is important in terms of describing the innovations, developments, current trends, and, if any, incomplete situations in the field of behavior management (Kaya, et al., 2021). For this reason, the studies carried out since 2016 were taken as a basis within the scope of the study.

Within the scope of this study, it is aimed to examine the postgraduate theses between the years 2016-2022. Since the data in this study is a document, the descriptive analysis method and document analysis technique, which are among the qualitative research methods, were used. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth study of the existing situation. It is necessary to try to understand the human and their behavior in its environment in a multi-faceted manner (Büyüköztürk et al., 2022; Hatch, 2002; Karasar, 2016; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). According to Patton (2002), documents collected in accordance with the purpose while working in a certain field are data sources (Bozkuş-Genç & Vuran, 2013).

Document analysis is a qualitative data analysis method used to carefully and systematically analyze the content of written and printed documents (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this study, the document review was analyzed within the framework of the following headings. The type of publication, year of publication, universities, subjects, methods, and study groups of the examined studies were analyzed.

### Participants

The universe of this study consists of postgraduate theses published between 2016-2022 in the field of special education. While determining the sample of the study, the sample was determined by the criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposive sampling methods. The main purpose of the criterion sampling method is to deal with all situations that meet the criteria and features determined beforehand by the researcher (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). While the theses reached within the scope of the research are included in the research; (i) *carried out in the special education department*, (ii) *published between 2016-2022*, (iii) One or more of the keywords such as '*behavior problems*', '*target behavior*' *applied behavior analysis*', '*problem behavior*', '*positive behavioral support*', '*behavioral disorders*', were determined as criteria. According to these determined criteria, a total of 26 theses reached from the Higher Education Council Thesis Documentation Center in the field of behavior management in special education within the scope of this research constituted the sample of this research.

### Data Collection Tools and Process

The postgraduate education theses reached within the scope of this study were evaluated with the 6-item thesis review form prepared by the researchers. The items in this form express the distribution of the postgraduate theses

reached according to ' the year of publication, the universities in which they were published, the types of publications, research topics, research methods, and study groups. Within the scope of the research, first of all, theses were scanned and downloaded according to the criteria determined on the national thesis center page on the website of YÖK. As a result of the screening, 26 theses published in the Thesis Screening Center of YÖK between the years 2016-2022, which are in accordance with the criteria determined within the scope of the research, were reached.

### **Data Analysis**

While analyzing these theses reached, the document analysis method was used. The studies were evaluated by using the thesis analysis form prepared by the researchers. While one of the experts in the research process works as a teacher at the Ministry of National Education, the other works as a faculty member at the university. Experts created the research categories independently. After the data determined for each category were tabulated, they were presented as findings with short analyzes. The researchers examined the postgraduate theses reached independently from each other. Consensus and disagreement rates were determined in comparisons between researchers, and the reliability of the study was calculated using the reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994 p. 64) ( $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{consensus}}{\text{consensus} + \text{disagreement}} \times 100$ ). The agreement between the evaluations of the experts in the study was determined as 0.89. The experts then came together within the scope of the research and shaped the data obtained in all sub-categories by discussing them until a consensus was formed among the experts.

### **Results**

Postgraduate studies on behavior management in the field of special education have been tabulated according to the sub-objectives of this research and presented below.

#### **Findings of the First Sub-problem of the Study**

The postgraduate studies on behavior management in the field of special education according to the types of publications are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Postgraduate Studies by Publication Types

Publication Type	<i>f</i>	%
Master's thesis	15	58
PhD thesis	11	42
Total	26	100

15(58%) of the 26 postgraduate studies examined were master's theses, while 11 (42%) were doctoral dissertations. According to these findings, it has been determined that master's theses (58%) are the most studied publication type.

### Findings of the Second Sub-problem of the Study

The results obtained by examining the postgraduate studies on behavior management in the field of special education according to the year of publication are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Postgraduate Studies by Publication Years

Release Year	<i>f</i>	%
2016	5	19
2017	2	8
2018	3	11
2019	6	24
2020	4	15
2021	5	19
2022	1	4
Total	26	100

When Table 2 is examined, 5 publications (19%) in 2016, 2 publications (8%) in 2017, 3 publications in 2018 (11%), 6 publications in 2019 (24%), 4 publications in 2020 (15%), 5 publications (19%) in 2021 and 1 (4%) thesis in 2022. In the table, it is seen that most publications were made in 2019.

### Findings of the Third Sub-problem of the Study

The postgraduate studies on behavior management in the field of special education according to the publishing universities are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Graduate Studies by Publishing Universities

Publishing University	<i>f</i>	%
Biruni University	1	4
Abant İzzet Baysal University	3	11
Anadolu University	10	38
Ankara University	1	4
Dokuz Eylül University	2	8
Gazi University	2	8
Hacettepe University	1	4
Istanbul Medeniyet University	1	4
Marmara University	2	8
Necmettin Erbakan University	3	11
Total	26	100

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the university with the highest number of publications is Anadolu

University with 10 theses (38%). In addition, Abant İzzet Baysal University and Necmettin Erbakan University have 3 (11%), Gazi University, Dokuz Eylül University and Marmara University have 2 each, Ankara University, Hacettepe University, and Istanbul Medeniyet University have 1 one (4%) theses.

#### **Findings of the Fourth Sub-problem of the Study**

The results obtained by examining the postgraduate studies on behavior management in the field of special education according to research methods are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of Postgraduate Studies by Research Methods

Research Method	<i>f</i>	%
Quantitative	13	50
Qualitative	6	23
Mixed	7	27
Total	26	100

It is seen that quantitative research methods are mostly used with 13 studies (50%) in the postgraduate studies analyzed within the scope of the research. In addition, it was determined that mixed research methods were used in 7 studies (27%) and qualitative research methods were used in 6 studies (14%).

#### **Findings of the Fifth Sub-problem of the Research**

The results obtained by examining the postgraduate theses on behavior management in the field of special education according to the research topics are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of Postgraduate Studies by Research Topics

Topics	<i>f</i>	%
Parental Attitude	1	4
Behavior Problems	2	8
Behavior Treatment	1	4
Emotional and Behavioral Disorders	1	4
Curriculum Implementation and Investigation of Its Efficiency	10	38
Positive Behavioral Support	4	15
Examining Student Skills	1	4
Teacher Opinions	2	8
Problem Behavior	3	11
Diagnostics-Evaluation	1	4
Total	26	100

It has been determined that the most studied subject is 10 (38%) studies on *the implementation of the education*

program and examining its effectiveness. The number of studies on positive behavioral support as a subject was 4 (15%), the number of studies on problem behavior was 3 (11%), the number of studies on behavior problems and teachers' opinions was 2 each (8%), It was determined that the number of studies on father's attitude, behavioral treatment, emotional and behavioral disorders, examination of student skills and diagnosis-evaluation was 1 (4%).

### Findings of the Sixth Sub-problem of the Study

The results obtained by examining the postgraduate theses on behavior management in the field of special education according to the study groups of the research are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Distribution of Studies by Study Groups

Working Groups	<i>f</i>	%
Families	1	4
Students	5	19
Teachers	6	24
student-teacher-families	1	4
Students and teachers	7	27
student-teacher-researcher-observer	1	4
Students-teachers-school management-caregiver-researcher	2	7
Students and families	3	11
Total	26	100

It has been determined that *students and teachers* are mostly studied with 7 studies (27%) as the study group in the postgraduate theses. In addition, it was determined that 6 studies (24%) were conducted *with teachers* and 5 studies (19%) *with students*. In addition, the number of studies involving *students and families* as a working group was 3 (11%) and the number of studies involving *students-teachers-school management-caregivers and researchers* was 2 (7%). It was determined that the number of studies *with families, student-teacher-families, and student-teacher-research-observer groups* as the study group was 1 (4%).

### Discussion

This study was carried out in order to make due diligence in order to see the current trends in behavior management in the field of special education in Turkey. The studies on behavior management in the field of special education in Turkey were within the scope of this research. The studies between the years 2016-2022 were examined in terms of various variables, and the following results were reached.

When the studies on behavior management in the field of special education, which is the first sub-problem of the research, are examined according to publication types. It has been determined that the majority of the studies are studied as master's thesis, and doctoral theses have a lower rate. Sezer (2022) also stated that among the studies



he examined in his own research, master's studies were more than doctoral studies. In this sense, it can be said that the research result is consistent with the literature.

It was concluded that the year with the most publications was 2019 (6 studies) when the studies on behavior management in the field of special education, which is the second sub-problem of the research, are examined according to the publication years. Afterward, according to the number of studies, 5 studies each in 2016 and 2021, 4 studies in 2020, 3 studies in 2018, 2 studies in 2017, and 1 study in 2022 were found. The fact that at least the study was carried out in 2022 is thought to be due to the time period of the research. Since the research was conducted in the first half of 2022, studies to be carried out in other months could not be included in the research.

The university with the highest number of publications is Anadolu University, followed by Abant İzzet Baysal University and Necmettin Erbakan University. It has been determined that Ankara University, Biruni University, Dokuz Eylül University, Gazi University, Hacettepe University, Istanbul Medeniyet University, and Marmara University are other universities that work in the field of behavior management. It is thought that designing studies on behavior management in special education in other universities with special education departments will contribute to the progress in this field.

The fourth sub-problem of the research is examined according to research methods and it was determined that the most used method in these studies was the quantitative method. Then, it was determined that the mixed method was used most and the least used method was the qualitative research method. It is thought that the mixed method is less preferred in research due to the difficulty of application, the length of time, and the data collection processes. Similar results were obtained in the studies conducted by Ahi and Kıldan (2013) and Öncül (2014).

When the studies on behavior management in the field of special education, which is the fifth sub-problem of the research, are examined according to the subjects of the research; It has been concluded that the most researched topic is the study of *the implementation of the curriculum and the examination of its effectiveness*. It has been observed that the number of studies on *positive behavioral support is high*. It was concluded that the least studied subjects in the studies examined were *parental attitude, behavior treatment, emotional and behavioral disorders, examination of student skills, and diagnostic evaluation*. has been reached. In general, it was determined that 10 topics were studied on behavior management. It is thought that it would be beneficial to increase the number of subject headings and to design studies on less studied subjects.

When the studies on behavior management in the field of special education, which is the sixth sub-problem of the research, are examined according to the study groups of the research. It has been determined that the most studied group is *students and teachers*. In addition, *teachers, students, and student-families* groups were determined as the most preferred study group in the research. When choosing *students and teachers* as the study group, it can be considered that it is easy to reach these groups and collect data. Ahi and Kıldan (2013) and Sazak et al. (2020) reached the conclusion that students were mostly preferred as the sample group in the studies they examined within the scope of their research. In this context, the results of the research are similar to the literature.

## Conclusion

According to the results of this research, when the theses on behavior management in the field of special education are examined, it is seen that master thesis are done most. In this context, it can be said that designing studies on behavior management in doctoral programs that require more expertise and knowledge will contribute to the field. According to the results of the research, 10 universities have carried out postgraduate studies on behavior management in the field of special education. According to this result, it can be interpreted that designing studies on behavior management in all universities where there is a special education department will contribute to the development and progress of special education and behavior management throughout the country. It was determined that the most quantitative method was used in the studies examined. In this context, it is important to encourage mixed-method research in order to obtain more valid and acceptable results in studies to be conducted.

It has been stated that the theses examined within the scope of this research are those published between 2016-2022. In order to get more holistic and generalizable results, this research can be developed and new research can be designed, especially by keeping the year intervals wider. In addition, research can be done by adding sub-problems such as research designs, the province where the research was conducted, and the number of bibliographies for the theses to be examined in the studies to be conducted. Within the scope of the research, postgraduate theses have been examined and examining the articles published in national and international journals for further research will contribute to the field as well.

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