

# Review of Master's Theses in the Field of Social Studies Education between 2008 and 2014<sup>i</sup>

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**Abstract** The purpose of this study is to investigate the general trends of master dissertations written in Social Studies Education and performed in 2008-2014 years in terms of thematic and methodology. Document review was performed in study. The study group was included in all the master's thesis recorded at thesis database of Higher Education Council established in Turkey. Through this database, we obtained 423 theses to open access for the readers. For data analysis, descriptive analysis was used. Accordingly, firstly, 423 master thesis were classified into themes by study areas regarding social studies. Then, methodological processes such as the research method, the audience, the statistical and qualitative data analysis methods, and the studies of validity and reliability used in research were examined using frequency and percentile. The findings of this study indicate that the theme most studied is about Teaching Practices; the research method most used is survey method; as the audience, theses mostly rely on middle school students. It reveals also an evidence that expert opinion was employed for validation and Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated for reliability at most. Furthermore, findings display that researchers have used Parametric Difference Tests in their master thesis.

**Keywords** Social Studies, Master Thesis, Methodology, Document Analysis

## 1. Introduction

The importance of universities in knowledge production is incontrovertible. Universities are institutions that produce and disseminate the knowledge that people will take advantage of. Gasset [8] described university as a dynamic community. Scientific knowledge produced by universities are organized and transferred formally and informally in a way that people can take advantage through undergraduate and postgraduate education [7]. As higher education institutions, universities carry out their mission

formally through associates', undergraduate, master's and doctorate programs.

Rapid development and complicating nature of knowledge in its historical process are accompanied by increasing specialization in disciplines. In this mission of specialization, academics and researchers conduct postgraduate educational activities for the development of high-quality manpower. Moreover, rapid establishment of new universities has been increasing the specialization rates in higher education. For these reasons, postgraduate education plays an active role in the social, cultural, economic and intellectual development of a country. In this respect, establishing the postgraduate education system well, and solving the problems encountered in postgraduate education are considerably important [11].

We can state that postgraduate programs have 2 types of functions. According to postgraduate education and training regulation, the function of master's degree is to "provide the student with the skills of accessing information via scientific research, and evaluating and interpreting information". While the function of doctorate degree is to "provide the student with the skills of conducting independent research, reviewing and interpreting scientific events with a broad and thorough perspective, and determining the steps necessary to arrive at new syntheses". The number of master's theses written from 1959 to 2016 is 295,775, while the number of doctorate thesis for the same years is 49,252 [21]. The secondary function is to ensure students get to good positions or become academics [14]. As a matter of fact, it can be stated that the increasing need for academics together with new universities opened in our country in recent years also increased the interest in postgraduate education.

Social Studies Education constituting the focus of this research is in the field of Social Studies. Although the number of people who graduate from these disciplines has increased over the years, one of the primary questions is the direction of research trends of this field historically, because a new scientific method or perspective, or the

direction of data collection and analysis formats determine the direction of research trends in this field [6]. It is especially investigated which subjects the master's and/or doctorate graduates in the field of social studies teaching focus their studies on, which research methods they use, and how they handle the scientific processes and techniques used. It is seen that the number of studies on this subject have increased in recent years.

Producing and disseminating scientific information is among the basic functions of universities. Dissemination of the information produced is mainly through theses and scientific articles [5], which are generally correlated with preceding theses and articles [2]. Therefore, as stated by Tarman, Acun and Yüksel [16], this study is deemed significant in order to prevent accumulation of studies to be made in the field in terms of similarity, and to direct human resources effectively and efficiently.

Looking at research for the review of theses prepared in the field of social studies, Tarman, Güven and Aktaşlı [17] reached the finding that studies were conducted on 27 different subjects. More than half of the theses were turned into academic publications such as articles, books, declarations etc., and some studies contributed to the field by being used as references in their study "Evaluation of Doctorate Theses in the Field of Social Studies Education in Turkey and Their Contribution to the Field". Oruç and Ulusoy [13] reviewed the master's theses on social studies training in Turkey between 2000 and 2007 in their research with content analysis method. In consequence of their research, they found out that methods could not be determined completely and accurately, and problems were encountered in the determination of research subject. Şahin, Gögebakan Yıldız and Duman [15] reviewed the theses prepared between 1990 and 2011 in their study "An Evaluation on Social Studies Education Theses in Turkey". At the end of the research, they concluded that the training program was addressed the most in master's theses and teaching methods and techniques were addressed the most in doctorate theses.

Looking at the studies summarized above, it is seen that they cover the theses prepared between 1990 and 2010. It was seen that Tarman, Güven and Aktaşlı [17] reviewed only doctorate theses, Oruç and Ulusoy [13] reviewed only master's theses, and finally Şahin, Gögebakan Yıldız and Duman [15] reviewed master's theses and doctorate theses collectively. Although it is stated that theses prepared in and before 2010 were covered in previous studies, it was found out that analysis techniques, sample group, sample size, validity and reliability methods and data collection tools were not addressed.

Based on this fact, and considering that the number of theses with access permission in, the Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education have increased today. The years 2008, 2009 and 2010 were included in the scope of this study, and its purpose was set as the determination of thematic and methodological trends of master's theses

written in the field of social studies education between 2008 and 2014. Therefore, the problem statement of the research was set as "What are the thematic and methodological trends of master's theses written in the field of social studies education between 2008 and 2014?" The answers for the following sub-problems were sought in line with this problem statement.

1. How is the distribution of the master's theses prepared in the field of social studies teaching according to years?
2. What is the research pattern used in theses by years?
3. How is the distribution of sample group in theses by years?
4. How is the distribution of validity methods used in theses by years?
5. How is the distribution of reliability methods used in theses by years?
6. How is the distribution of analysis methods used in theses by years?

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. The Research Model

This study was designed with the method of document examination model in accordance with qualitative research methods. As a traditional method frequently used by anthropologists, historians and linguists; the document examination method covers the analysis of written material that contain information about the fact(s) intended for research [20].

### 2.2. Population and Sample

As the study aims to determine the thematic and methodological trends of master's theses in the field of social studies teaching, the population of the research is composed of master's theses in the field of social studies teaching. No sample was selected for the research, and it was aimed to reach the entire population. 423 theses written between 2008 and 2014 under the social studies division and discipline and having access permission in the Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) were reviewed within the scope of the research. Theses with no access permission were left outside the scope of the research.

### 2.3. Data Collection

Document survey method was used to collect data for the research. Totally, available 423 theses published between 2008 and 2014 were obtained. To collect them, we first entered keywords "Social Studies Teaching Division" and then "Social Studies Education Division" into the "Division" section of "Detailed Search" link in the Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), or the

database in which theses/ dissertations are published in Turkey. Similarly, searches were also conducted by entering keywords "Social Studies Teaching Discipline" and "Social Studies Education Discipline" into the "Discipline" section of "Detailed Search" link in the Thesis Center. In the data collection process of the research, it was assumed that the theses prepared in the field of Social Studies Education were delivered completely by related institutes, and indexed without any errors in the Department of Publication and Documentation under the Council of Higher Education. After completion of data collection phase, theses were recorded on the computer environment and the analysis phase started.

#### 2.4. Analysis of Data

The data obtained from the research were analyzed with descriptive analysis method. Accordingly, 423 theses in total that were previously recorded in computer environment were divided into themes according to their subjects. Then, findings were obtained by finding percentage frequencies according to methods used in theses, sample group, sample selection method, sample size, data collection tools, statistical and qualitative data analysis methods, and validity and reliability of the research.

#### 2.5. Validity and Reliability of the Research

In order to ensure credibility of the research, the data obtained were interpreted and presented in the findings section. Moreover, the excel file containing the theses and data was saved.

In order to ensure reliability of the research, the findings from theses reviewed were presented in the form of tables first. 3 experts (Prof. Dr. S. A., Social Studies Educator; Prof. Dr. D. E., Social Studies Educator; Dr. U. U., Education Programs and Teaching) participated in review process to determine themes created based on data were determined in accordance with the theoretical structure. In this way, triangulation was performed, and intercoder reliability of data analysis and findings were succeeded.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Findings Related to the First Sub-Problem

The first sub-problem of the research consists of the question, "How is the distribution of the master's theses prepared in the field of social studies teaching according to years?" For the solution of the problem, 423 theses were reviewed and classified according to their themes and year of writing. Some thesis were classified into two themes. In this way, they were congregated into 8 themes, and 481 numbers were counted. The findings were presented in Table 1.

Looking at the data in Table 1, it is seen that the thematic distribution of theses in the field of social studies teaching was Teaching Practices (n=191, 39.7%), Field and Content Knowledge (n=129; 26.8%); Program, Course Resources and Evaluation of the Course (n= 62; 12.9%), Student Characteristics (n= 49; 10.2%), Learning Environments (n= 17, 3.5%), Vocational Qualifications (n=14, 2.9%), New Trends (n=9, 1.9%) and Other (n=10, 2.1%) respectively.

Looking at the distribution of thesis themes according to years, it is seen that the themes of Teaching Practices (n=102, 40.6%), Field and Content Knowledge (n=75, 29.9%) and Student Characteristics (n=29, 11.6%) are on the first three ranks in 2010 and before. In 2011, this was followed by teaching practices (n = 33, 42.3%), Field and Content Knowledge (n = 15, 19.2%), and Program, Course Resources and Course Evaluation (n = 14, 18%). It was found out that the ranking consists of teaching practices (n = 33, 42.3%), field and content knowledge (n = 20, 33.3%), Program, Course Resources and Evaluation of the Course (n = 10, 16.7%) and Student Characteristics (n = 4, 6.7%) in 2012; Teaching Practices (n=18, 39.1%), Field and Content Knowledge (n=11, 24%), Student Characteristics (n=7, 15.2%) in 2013. Finally, it was seen that this ranking consists of Teaching Practices (n=18, 39.1%), Program, Course Resources and Evaluation of the Course (n = 10, 21.7%) and Field and Content Knowledge (n=8, 17.3%) in 2014.

**Table 1.** Showing the distribution of themes according to years

Themes	2010 and before		2011		2012		2013		2014		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Teaching Practices	102	40,6	33	42,3	20	33,3	18	39,1	18	39,1	191	39,7
Field and Content Knowledge	75	29,9	15	19,2	20	33,3	11	24	8	17,3	129	26,8
Program, Course Resources and Evaluation of the Course	26	10,4	14	18	10	16,7	2	4,3	10	21,7	62	12,9
Student Characteristics	29	11,6	7	9	4	6,7	7	15,2	2	4,4	49	10,2
Learning Environments	6	2,4	4	5,2	3	5	0	0	4	8,7	17	3,5
Vocational Qualifications	3	1,2	4	5,1	1	1,7	4	8,7	2	4,3	14	2,9
New Trends	5	2,0	1	1,3	1	1,7	1	2,2	1	2,2	9	1,9
Other	5	2,0	0	0	1	1,7	3	6,5	1	2,2	10	2,1
Total	251	100	78	100	60	100	46	100	46	100	481	100

**3.2. Findings Related to the Second Sub- Problem**

The second sub-problem of the research consists of the question, "What is the research pattern used in theses by years?" For the solution of the problem, 423 theses were reviewed to determine the research patterns used, and percentage frequency table was created. According to this, it is seen that 9 different research designs were used in master's thesis in the field of social studies education. The findings were presented in Table 2.

According to the findings in Table 2, the most commonly used method in theses written in the field of Social Studies Teaching is the method of survey (n= 159, 37.6%). It is seen that Experimental Method (n= 75, 17.7%) ranks the second and Qualitative Method (n= 68, 16.1%) ranks the third. It is seen that other methods used are Mixed Method (n= 30, 7.1%), Historical Method (n= 9, 2.1%), Literature Review (n= 3, 0.7%), and Compilation and Oral History (n= 1, 0.2%) respectively. It was found out that no method was specified in 18.2% (n= 77) of theses written.

Looking according to years, the method distribution of the theses in social studies teaching was survey (n = 79, 36.2%), Unspecified (n = 52, 23.9%) and Qualitative

Method with Experimental Method (n = 36, 16.5%) in 2010 and before.

Survey Method (n=28, 40%), Experimental Method (n=16, 22.9%) and Unspecified (n=9, 12.9%) in 2011; Survey Method (n=21, 36.8%), Experimental Method (n=11, 19.3%), Qualitative Method and Unspecified (n=8, 14%) in 2012; Survey Method (n=15, 41.7%), Qualitative Method (n=7, 19.4%), Experimental Method (n=6, 16.7%) in 2013, and finally Survey Method (n=16, 38.1%), Qualitative Method (n=8, 19%) and Experimental Method (n=6, 14.3%) in 2014.

**3.3. Findings Related to the Third Sub-Problem**

The third sub-problem of the research consists of the question, "How is the distribution of sample group in theses according to years?" For the solution of the problem, 423 theses were reviewed to determine the sample groups, and percentage frequency table was created. Various samples in this thesis were employed. As such, it has been performed 460 times on 6 different samples. The findings were presented in Table 3.

**Table 2.** Showing the distribution of research patterns used in theses according to years

	2010 and before		2011		2012		2013		2014		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Survey	79	36,2	28	40,0	21	36,8	15	41,7	16	38,1	159	37,6
Experimental	36	16,5	16	22,9	11	19,3	6	16,7	6	14,3	75	17,7
Qualitative	36	16,5	9	12,9	8	14	7	19,4	8	19	68	16,1
Mixed	10	4,6	6	8,6	5	8,8	4	11,1	5	11,9	30	7,1
Historical Method	3	1,4	1	1,4	3	5,3	1	2,8	1	2,4	9	2,1
Literature Review	1	0,5	0	0,0	1	1,8	0	0	1	2,4	3	0,7
Compilation	0	0,0	1	1,4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,2
Oral History	1	0,5	0	0,0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,2
Unspecified	52	23,9	9	12,9	8	14	3	8,3	5	11,9	77	18,2
Total	218	100	70	100	57	100	36	100	42	100	423	100

**Table 3.** Showing the distribution of sample group according to years

	2010 and before		2011		2012		2013		2014		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Teacher Candidate	12	5,1	7	9	4	6,7	6	15	4	8,3	33	7,2
Document	12	5,1	5	6,4	2	3,3	2	5	3	6,3	24	5,2
Student	83	35,5	29	37,2	21	35	14	35	21	43,8	168	36,5
Teacher	47	20,1	23	29,5	12	20	11	27,5	13	27,1	106	23
Family	4	1,7	1	1,3	1	1,7	2	5	0	0	8	1,7
Other	6	2,6	0	0	2	3,3	0	0	0	0	8	1,7
Unspecified	70	29,9	13	16,7	18	30	5	12,5	7	14,6	113	24,6
Total	234	100	78	100	60	100	40	100	48	100	460	100

Looking at Table 3, the most commonly focused sample group in theses written in the field of Social Studies Teaching was Secondary School Students (n=168, 36.5%). Theses with Unspecified sample groups (n=113, 24.6%) rank the second, while Teachers (n=106, 23%) rank the third. The ranking consists of the sample groups of Prospective Social Studies Teachers (n=33, 7.2%), Document Review (n=24, 5.2%) and finally Family and Other (n=8, 1.7%) respectively.

Looking at the distribution of sample groups on the first three ranks according to years, it was found out that sample group was specified as Secondary School Students (n=83, 35.5%) in 83 of the theses in 2010 and before. Sample group was Unspecified in 70 of the theses written (n=70, 29.9%). 47 of the theses were sample group teachers (n=47, 20.1%). It was seen that the least focused sampling group was Family (n=4, 1.7%).

Secondary School Students (n=29, 37.2%), Teachers (n=23, 29.5%), Unspecified (n=13, 16.7%) in 2011; Secondary School Students (n=21, 35%), Unspecified (n=18, 30%), Teachers (n=12, 20%) in 2012; Secondary School Students (n=14, 35%), Teachers (n=11, 27.5%), Prospective Teachers (n=6, 15%) in 2013; and Secondary School Students (n=21, 43.8%), Teachers (n=13, 27.1%), Unspecified (n=7, 14.6%) in 2014.

### 3.4. Findings Related to the Fourth Sub-Problem

The Fourth sub-problem of the research consists of the question, "How is the distribution of validity methods used in theses according to years?" For the solution of the problem, 423 theses were reviewed to determine the validity methods used, and percentage frequency table was created. Many methods of validation in thesis were used. As such, 7 different methods have been used 448 times in these thesis with those of unstated methods. The findings were presented in Table 4.

According to the data in Table 4, it was seen that 7

different validity methods were used in theses reviewed. These methods are Expert Opinion (n=185, 41.3%), Item Analysis (n=26, 5.8%), Factor Analysis (n=17, 3.8%), Researcher Variation, Pearson Correlation Coefficient, Participant's Confirmation and Criterion Validity (n=1, 0.2%) respectively. It was detected that no validity method was specified (n=216, 48.2%) in 216 of the theses reviewed.

Looking according to years, theses with no validity method specified rank the first in all years. On the other hand, the most commonly used validity methods according to years are Expert Opinion (n=87, 38.7%), Item Analysis (n=10, 4.4%) and Factor Analysis (n=7, 3.1%) in 2010 and before, while the validity methods of Criterion Validity, Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Participant's Confirmation were not used in that year. In 2011, the ranking consisted of Expert Opinion (n=29, 39.7%), Item Analysis (n=9, 12.3%) and Factor Analysis (n=4, 5.5%), while confirmatory factor analysis was used in one thesis. The unused methods in that year were Criterion Validity, Pearson Correlation Coefficient, Participant's Confirmation and Researcher Variation. In 2012, the ranking consisted of Expert Opinion (n=26, 41.9%), Item Analysis (n=4, 6.5%), Factor Analysis and Criterion Validity (n=1, 1.6%). The unused methods in that year were Researcher Variation, Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Participant's Confirmation. In 2013, the ranking consisted of Expert Opinion (n=22, 52.4%), Item Analysis (n=2, 4.8%), Factor Analysis (n=3, 7.1) and Pearson Correlation Coefficient (n=1, 2.4%). The unused methods in that year were Criterion Validity, Researcher Variation and Participant's Confirmation. In 2014, the ranking consisted of Expert Opinion (n=21, 45.7%), Factor Analysis (n=2, 4.3%) and Item Analysis (n=1, 2.2%). The validity methods of Criterion Validity, Pearson Correlation Coefficient, Participant's Confirmation and Researcher Variation were not used in that year.

**Table 4.** Showing the distribution of validity methods used in theses according to years

	2010 and before		2011*		2012		2013		2014		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Expert Opinion	87	38,7	29	39,7	26	41,9	22	52,4	21	45,7	185	41,3
Item Analysis	10	4,4	9	12,3	4	6,5	2	4,8	1	2,2	26	5,8
Factor Analysis	7	3,1	4	5,5	1	1,6	3	7,1	2	4,3	17	3,8
Criterion Validity	0	0,0	0	0	1	1,6	0	0	0	0	1	0,2
Researcher Variation	1	0,4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,2
Pearson Correlation	0	0,0	0	0	0	0	1	2,4	0	0	1	0,2
Participant Confirmation	0	0,0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2,2	1	0,2
Unspecified	120	53,3	31	42,5	30	48,4	14	33,3	21	45,7	216	48,2
Total	225	100	73	100	62	100	42	100	46	100	448	100

\* One of the factor analyzes performed this year is confirmation.

**3.5. Findings Related to the Fifth Sub-Problem**

The fifth sub-problem of the research consists of the question, "How is the distribution of reliability methods used in theses according to years?" For the solution of the problem, 423 theses were reviewed to determine the reliability methods used, and percentage frequency table was created. Many methods of reliability were utilized in some thesis. As such, 7 different methods were used 429 times in these thesis with those of unstated methods. The findings were presented in Table 5.

Looking at the data in the table, it is seen that 13 different reliability methods were used. These methods were Cronbach's Alpha (n=118, 27.5%), KR-20 (n=32, 7.5%), Recording Device (n=25, 5.8%), Consensus Percentage, Miles and Huberman Formula (n=5, 1.2%), Test-Retest and KR-21 (n=3, 0.7%), Participant's Confirmation, Spearman-Brown Split-half Correlation, Coding Reliability, Item Analysis, Positioning, Definition

and Correlation Analysis (n=1, 0.2%) respectively.

Looking according to years, it was seen that methods on the first three ranks were similar in all years. The most commonly used method was Cronbach Alpha (n=118, 27.5%), followed by KR-20 (n=32, 7.5%), on the second rank and use of Recording Device (n=25, 5.8%) on the third rank. Moreover, in addition to the mentioned methods, it was seen that no information on reliability was given in 235 theses (n=235, 54.8%).

**3.6. Findings Related to the Sixth Sub-Problem**

The sixth sub-problem of the research consists of the question, "How is the distribution of analysis methods used in theses according to years?" For the solution of the problem, 423 theses were reviewed to determine the analysis methods used, and percentage frequency table was created. The findings were presented in Table 6.

**Table 5.** Showing the distribution of reliability methods used in theses according to years

	2010 and before		2011		2012		2013		2014		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Cronbach Alpha	50	22,8	22	31	22	38,6	14	38,9	10	21,7	118	27,5
KR-20	13	5,9	9	12,7	2	3,5	3	8,3	5	10,9	32	7,5
Recording Device	11	5,0	3	4,2	2	3,5	4	11,1	5	10,9	25	5,8
Consensus Percentage, Miles and Huberman Formula	1	0,5	0	0	2	3,5	0	0	2	4,3	5	1,2
KR-21	0	0,0	0	0	1	1,8	0	0	2	4,3	3	0,7
Test-Retest	0	0,0	1	1,4	1	1,8	1	2,8	0	0	3	0,7
Correlation Analysis	2	0,9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0,5
Participant Confirmation	0	0,0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2,2	1	0,2
Spearman-Brown Split-half Correlation	0	0,0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2,2	1	0,2
Coding Reliability	0	0,0	0	0	0	0	1	2,8	0	0	1	0,2
Item Analysis	1	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,2
Location Description	1	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,2
Definition	0	0,0	1	1,4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,2
Unspecified	140	63,9	35	49,3	27	47,4	13	36,1	20	43,5	235	54,8
Total	219	100	71	100	57	100	36	100	46	100	429	100

**Table 6.** Showing the distribution of data collection tools in theses according to years

	2010 and before		2011		2012		2013		2014		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Parametric Difference Tests	114	31,0	46	38	41	39	31	39	30	41	262	35,1
Descriptive analysis	118	32,1	44	36	28	27	28	37	19	26	237	31,7
Unspecified	70	19,0	14	11	17	16	4	5	6	8	111	14,9
Non-Parametric Difference Tests	20	5,4	11	8	9	9	4	6	7	9	51	6,8
Content Analysis	15	4,1	4	3	3	3	5	6	8	11	35	4,7
Chi-Square	16	4,3	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	19	2,5
Correlation	9	2,4	1	1	1	1	4	5	0	0	15	2,0
Document Analysis	1	0,3	0	0	2	2	2	3	2	3	7	0,9
Factor Analysis	0	0,0	1	1	2	2	1	1	0	0	4	0,5
Cross Table	2	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0,3
Multiple Regression	1	0,3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,1
Kolmogrov - Simirnov	1	0,3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,1
Discourse Analysis	0	0,0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0,1
Levene Test	1	0,3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,1
Total	368	100	122	100	105	100	79	100	73	100	747	100

Table 6 shows that analysis techniques were used 747 times in 423 dissertations. By usage frequency, first three ranks: parametric tests (n=262), descriptive tests (n=237, 31,7%), and nonparametric statistics (n=51, 6,8%). It can be said that quantitative data mostly were used in master's thesis.

This ranking of years is in 2010, and afore, descriptive statistics (n=118, 32.1%), second, parametric tests (n=114, 31%), and third, nonparametric tests (n=20, 5.4). First is parametric tests; second is descriptive statistics, and third is nonparametric tests in ranking of another years (2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014).

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

8 different themes were reached upon review of theses. The most commonly focused theme was the teaching practices used in Social Studies course. This result is similar to the results obtained by Oruç and Ulusoy [13], Geçit and Kartal [9] and Tarman, Acun and Yüksel [16] in their research aiming to review theses written between different years. This shows that the thematic tendency of theses written in previous years has been continuing. Similarly, Akaydın and Kaya [1] reviewed 137 articles and expressed that teaching methods comprised the most common subjects. İlhan [10], who reviewed studies in the field of mathematics in Turkey, indicated that they most commonly focused on teaching strategies, methods and techniques. Besides, the fact that Yücedağ [22] also obtained a similar result upon review of studies in the field of mathematics shows that there is a trend towards teaching methods and techniques in the field of education in Turkey. Şahin, Gögebakan Yıldız and Duman [15] state that the reason for the increase in the number of theses written with the theme of teaching strategies, methods and techniques is the increase in the studies carried out in the fields of educational programs and teaching methods after 1998. The theme of success was also the most commonly focused themes in doctorate theses written in the field of social studies between 1994 and 2010 [16].

Looking at the research designs used in theses, it was concluded that survey method ranked the first in all years, and experimental method was also among the commonly used methods. These two results are compatible with the study results of Balcı and Apaydın [3] and Akaydın and Kaya [1]. It is also important that similar results were obtained in the study by Varışoğlu, Şahin and Göktaş [19] for the review of Turkish teaching research. In addition, the small number of theses written with mixed method is similar to the findings of Konan and Kış [12], which reviewed theses written in the field of educational management in the United States of America. However, the increase in the number of theses written with mixed method in recent years is notable. Although this issue is not included in the scope of this research, it is thought that the

increase in the number of new academics in the field of Social Studies Education may be among the reasons. Considering the accepted completion period of 2 years for master's programs, this thought is supported by the facts that 70 doctoral theses were published in the Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education between 2008 and 2012, and the number of theses with unspecified research pattern decreased. Moreover, another result noted during the review is that the majority of theses with unspecified research pattern focused on history, history of education and geography. Considering the years within the scope of the research, the differentiation in research methods towards recent years may be associated with the increase in the number of new academics that adopt training methodology.

Another reason of the research is that students and teachers generally comprise the sample group in theses written. The change of theses with no sample group specified through time appears as another interesting result. A significant increase in the number of these theses has been found out towards recent years.

Looking at the validity methods of theses written, it is seen that 7 different validity methods were used, most commonly the method of obtaining expert opinions. It is found out that theses using item analysis, factor analysis and Pearson correlation coefficient -which require statistical information-, are limited in number. This result may be interpreted as the lack of statistical information. On the other hand, the limited usage of validity methods such as researcher variation and participant's confirmation for theses written with qualitative pattern may be considered an indicator of lack of competence on qualitative research methods. Looking at the reliability methods of theses, it is seen that 13 different methods were used, most commonly Cronbach Alpha and KR-20 (Kuder, Richardson). The limited usage of other methods in quantitative researches may also be interpreted with insufficient statistical information. Among researches with qualitative pattern, the use of recording device is expressed as the most common tool for ensuring reliability, while it was seen that reliability methods such as participant's confirmation, coding reliability, researcher positioning and definition were used in a small number of theses. This result may also be interpreted with insufficient information on reliability. It was seen that almost half of the theses do not mention validity and more than half of the theses do not mention reliability, which is thought to stem from lack of information.

Looking at data analysis methods, it was concluded that 13 different methods were used, and it was seen that especially theses with qualitative research pattern benefit from descriptive statistics and difference tests to a large extent. Most of these tests consist of parametric tests. A similar finding is seen in the study of Üstündağ [18]. This may be interpreted that researchers in Turkey generally use parametric tests. Moreover, the finding by Bektaş and

Karadağ [4] that descriptive statistics were used excessively are also compatible with the results of this study. Limited usage of multivariate data analysis methods is also an indicator of insufficient statistical information. Looking at researches using qualitative pattern, it was seen that the most commonly used methods are descriptive analysis and content analysis.

In consequence of this research aiming to determine the thematic, methodological and statistical trends of theses written in the field of social studies education between 2008 and 2014, it was concluded that master's students do not have sufficient level of information on researching methods, data analysis and reporting. On the other hand, it was revealed that inclusion of constructivist education paradigm since 2005 has led to a frequent focus on Teaching Strategies, Methods and Techniques thematically.

Within the scope of results obtained, it is recommended that studies on themes other than currently accumulated ones should be increased, considering the increase of research methods course hours, qualitative and quantitative data analysis courses, compulsory seminars throughout course periods to ensure students' learning through practice and experience, and contribution to field.

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