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A Systematic Review of Postgraduate Theses on Multicultural Education in Turkey: Evidence from the Hec National Thesis Database

Zehra Bilgen

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Faculty of Education, Department of Pre-School
Education, Çanakkale, Turkey
zehrabilgen@comu.edu.tr

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine postgraduate theses produced in the field of education and training in Turkey that focus on multiculturalism. To this end, the study systematically reviews theses addressing “multiculturalism” and “multicultural education” that are available in the Higher Education Council (HEC) National Theses Database up to the year 2025, with the aim of identifying general research trends in this field. The theses included in the analysis were examined with respect to multiple variables, including year of publication, language, degree level, subject area, keywords, university, city, institute, department, research method, research design, sample or study group, data collection in-

struments, and data analysis techniques. Data were collected using a research form developed by the researcher and analyzed through content analysis. The findings are presented using frequency and percentage distributions. The results indicate that a total of 109 theses on multiculturalism have been produced in Turkey since 2001, the majority of which are master’s theses. In addition, most of the theses were conducted within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Based on these findings, recommendations are offered to inform and guide future research on multiculturalism in the field of education.

Keywords: multiculturalism, Turkey, post-graduate thesis, systematic review

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture is a comprehensive concept encompassing a society's historical heritage, language, religion, values, traditions, and customs [1]. With globalization, interaction between societies has increased, making the phenomenon of multiculturalism, which refers to the coexistence of different cultures, more visible. Multiculturalism is not only a sociological phenomenon but also an important subject of study in the field of educational sciences. Multicultural approaches in education aim to ensure that individuals respect differences, access equal learning opportunities, and develop the skills to live together within the framework of democratic values [2, 3, 4]. In this context, multicultural education is defined as a pedagogical approach that aims to create an inclusive learning process in classroom environments where different cultures coexist. In Turkey, research in the field of multicultural education has increased since the 2000s. Studies focusing on the attitudes and competencies of prospective teachers toward multicultural education are particularly noteworthy [5, 6]. These studies reveal that multicultural education is becoming an increasingly important area of research within the Turkish education system.

Rather than a static set of shared traditions or values, culture is increasingly understood as a dynamic, negotiated, and context-dependent system of meaning that shapes how individuals interpret the world and participate in social institutions, including education [1]. From this perspective, culture does not merely reflect social life but actively structures knowledge production, social interaction, and power relations within societies.

In educational contexts, culture functions as a mediating framework that influences curricular content, pedagogical practices, teacher-student interactions, and assessment processes. Students and teachers do not enter educational settings as culturally neutral actors; instead, they bring with them culturally informed dispositions, linguistic repertoires, values, and experiences. Consequently, schooling becomes a site where dominant cultural norms may be reproduced, negotiated, or contested. Likewise, Aydin [7] points out the significance of using narrative authentic texts for developing intercultural competence while teaching French as a foreign language.

The diversification of societies through migration, urbanization, and globalization has intensified cultural heterogeneity within classrooms, making cultural difference a structural characteristic of contemporary education systems rather than an exceptional condition. As Cırık [8] notes, individuals within the same society may develop distinct cultural orientations shaped by region, socioeconomic status, language, or life experiences. These variations give rise to multiple subcultures whose interaction within institutional settings can generate both opportunities for enrichment and risks of marginalization.

Within this framework, culture serves as a theoretical entry point for examining educational research: how cultural difference is conceptualized, which cultural groups are made visible or invisible, and how educational equity is addressed. Understanding culture in this analytical sense is essential for evaluating research trends in multicultural education, as it allows for an assessment of whether studies merely acknowledge diversity descriptively or critically engage with its implications for power, inclusion, and learning.

Multiculturalism emerged not simply as a recognition of cultural diversity but as a normative and political response to structural inequalities rooted in race, ethnicity, language, gender, and migration status. Originating in the sociopolitical context of the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s, the concept gained prominence alongside civil rights movements and demands for equal participation in public life. Since then, multiculturalism has evolved into a contested framework encompassing philosophical, political, and educational dimensions.

At a theoretical level, multiculturalism rejects the assumption of cultural homogeneity and challenges assimilationist models that privilege dominant cultural norms. However, scholars have also emphasized that multiculturalism is not an uncritical celebration of all forms of difference. Authors in [9] argue that democratic multiculturalism requires normative boundaries, excluding practices that legitimize oppression, discrimination, or exclusion. Thus, multiculturalism entails an ongoing tension between recognition of difference and commitment to shared democratic values.

In educational research, multiculturalism operates as both a theoretical lens and a pedagogical orientation. Banks [10, 2] conceptualizes multicultural education as a systematic effort to restructure schools so that students from diverse cultural backgrounds have equal opportunities to learn and succeed. This approach foregrounds issues such as curriculum representation, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, and institutional culture. Similarly, Ladson-Billings [4] and Gay [3] emphasize that multiculturalism in education requires transformative teaching practices that engage students' cultural identities as resources for learning rather than as deficits.

Despite its widespread use, the concept of multiculturalism is applied inconsistently across educational studies. In some cases, it is reduced to a demographic descriptor, while in others it is treated as a critical framework addressing inequality and social justice. This conceptual variability makes it difficult to assess the cumulative knowledge produced in the field and raises questions about theoretical depth, methodological choices, and research priorities.

For this reason, a systematic review of postgraduate theses on multiculturalism in education is warranted. By examining how multiculturalism is defined, operationalized, and investigated in graduate-level research in Turkey, this study seeks to move beyond isolated findings and identify broader trends, gaps, and patterns in the literature. In doing so, multiculturalism

is treated not merely as a topic of study but as an analytical construct through which the development of educational research in Turkey can be critically evaluated.

Multicultural education has been conceptualized by Banks as an integrated framework designed to promote equity and inclusiveness within educational settings. While this model provides a comprehensive structure for understanding how diversity can be addressed in schooling, its dimensions also invite critical reflection regarding their practical implementation and underlying assumptions.

Content integration emphasizes the inclusion of culturally diverse perspectives and examples in teaching materials. Although this dimension represents an important step toward challenging monocultural curricula, merely adding diverse content risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative. In practice, curriculum diversification may remain superficial if dominant epistemologies continue to frame how minority perspectives are selected, interpreted, or legitimized. Thus, content integration alone does not necessarily disrupt existing power hierarchies unless accompanied by deeper pedagogical and institutional change.

Knowledge construction moves beyond representation by encouraging students to critically examine how knowledge is produced and shaped by cultural assumptions and social contexts. This dimension aligns strongly with critical pedagogy; however, its successful implementation depends heavily on teachers' critical literacy and institutional support. Without adequate teacher training, the expectation that educators facilitate epistemological critique may remain aspirational rather than achievable, particularly in standardized education systems that prioritize fixed knowledge outcomes.

The dimension of strengthening school culture and social structure highlights institutional transformation through the examination of grouping practices, achievement disparities, and interpersonal relations within schools. While this systemic focus is one of the model's strengths, critics argue that structural inequalities often extend beyond individual schools to broader socio-political and economic systems. Consequently, schools may have limited capacity to fully realize this dimension without wider policy-level reforms addressing inequality.

Equity pedagogy proposes adapting instructional strategies to support learners from diverse racial, gendered, and socio-economic backgrounds. Although this approach promotes inclusive teaching practices, it may inadvertently place responsibility primarily on teachers rather than addressing structural constraints such as curriculum rigidity, assessment policies, or resource inequalities. Therefore, equity pedagogy requires institutional alignment to avoid reducing equity to individual teacher effort.

Prejudice reduction focuses on transforming students' attitudes and reducing stereotypes through inclusive classroom interaction. While fostering positive intergroup relations is essential, attitude change alone may not eliminate systemic discrimination. Scholars have noted that emphasizing interpersonal harmony can sometimes obscure structural power relations, thereby limiting the transformative potential of multicultural education.

Taken together, Banks' five dimensions provide a foundational framework for multicultural education; however, their effectiveness depends on moving from additive and attitudinal approaches toward structural and epistemological transformation. A critical reading suggests that multicultural education should not only diversify curriculum content or classroom interaction but also interrogate institutional power relations and broader social inequalities that shape educational experiences.

Geographical exploration, which began systematically in the 15th century, had a significant impact on the emergence of the term "multiculturalism" in the United States. These discoveries led to the coming together of people from diverse geographies and cultural backgrounds in the United States. Furthermore, increased immigration reinforced this trend, leading to the transformation of society into a multicultural structure [11]. The emergence of multiculturalism developed as a result of societal expectations arising from cultural diversity in different countries. Therefore, from the 1970s onward, countries such as Canada, the United States, and Australia began to adopt multicultural policies. In Canada, conflicts between regions played a role in the initial adoption of multiculturalism as a policy [12].

Multiculturalism in Turkey dates back to the Ottoman Empire. With the settlement of Jewish communities facing mortal danger in Ottoman lands, the Ottoman Empire began to embrace a multicultural structure. Furthermore, before the Ottoman Empire, Anatolia had been home to different civilizations for centuries, contributing to the formation of the multicultural structure of the geography where modern-day Turkey is located [13]. The profound cultural diversity in the country's history continues to make Turkey's multicultural structure and the coexistence of people of different ethnic identities possible today [14].

Multicultural education aims to create equitable learning environments by taking into account students' cultural diversity. Banks [15, 2] systematically defines the dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equitable pedagogy, and school culture. The culturally relevant pedagogy approach developed by Ladson-Billings [4] is one of the most cited theories in the field, with its goals of academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical awareness. Gay [3] linked culturally responsive teaching to teacher beliefs and practices. Offering a more recent perspective, Paris [16] emphasized culturally sustaining pedagogy and emphasized the need to protect students' linguistic and cultural diversity. Furthermore, Moll et al. [17] enriched instruction by bringing students'

home and community knowledge into the classroom with the “Funds of Knowledge” approach. These fundamental studies reveal that multicultural education requires not only recognizing differences but also developing inclusive teaching methods and placing cultural diversity at the center of the educational process.

The basic principles of multicultural education can be summarized as follows [18]: The aim is to end racism, prejudice, gender discrimination, and other forms of discrimination. This includes including diverse cultures in the learning environment. This includes integrating the heritage, experiences, and perspectives of diverse cultures. This includes establishing connections between what is learned in school and real-life experiences for culturally diverse students. This includes ensuring educational equality for all individuals. This includes conducting scientific research to integrate diverse cultures. This includes undertaking humanistic initiatives to understand and value diverse cultures. This includes considering content and process, structure and substance, action and reflection, knowledge and values, philosophy and methodology, and educational meanings and outcomes. This includes accepting that systematic change is a developmental process. This includes recognizing that differences enrich the content of education. This includes developing programs that help teachers understand how the characteristics of ethnic groups affect students’ behavior. This includes developing educational programs that help students understand that knowledge is socially constructed. This includes supporting students’ participation in hidden programs that contribute to the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that affect their academic success and their relationships with one another. This includes supporting students’ learning about prejudices regarding race and ethnic relations. It is expressed as ensuring that students learn common values, that educational administrators support schools equally economically, and that teachers use multifaceted, culturally sensitive teaching and assessment techniques to assess complex cognitive and social skills.

Rather than a collection of discrete aims, the objectives of multiculturalism in education can be understood as interrelated goals that guide educational policy, pedagogy, and research. Drawing on the literature [10, 6], these objectives can be organized under four overarching dimensions.

First, promoting educational equity and academic success is a central objective of multicultural education. This involves ensuring equal access to learning opportunities for students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds and creating learning environments that enable all students to reach their academic potential.

Second, fostering critical awareness and the reduction of prejudice constitutes a key aim. Multicultural education seeks to help individuals recognize, question, and challenge stereotypes, discrimination, and systemic inequalities related to culture, ethnicity, gender, and social class. Developing critical thinking skills regarding social justice issues is therefore an integral component of this objective.

Third, supporting identity development and intercultural competence is emphasized in the literature. Multicultural education encourages individuals to develop a positive sense of their own cultural identities while also cultivating respect, empathy, and effective communication skills in interactions with culturally different others. These competencies are essential for participation in pluralistic and democratic societies.

Finally, enabling democratic coexistence in diverse societies represents a broader societal objective. Multicultural education aims to equip individuals with the knowledge, values, and skills necessary to live together in culturally diverse environments, emphasizing mutual respect, shared values, and social cohesion.

Taken together, these objectives highlight that multicultural education is not limited to acknowledging cultural differences but is fundamentally concerned with equity, critical engagement, and democratic participation. Framing the objectives in this way provides a clearer conceptual basis for evaluating how postgraduate research in Turkey has addressed multiculturalism in terms of focus, depth, and methodological orientation.

Multicultural education is a dynamic area of scholarly inquiry that has gained traction over the past few decades. Research on this subject encompasses a variety of themes, including culturally responsive teaching, equity-oriented pedagogy, and inclusive curricula. However, systematic reviews and comprehensive studies synthesizing this expansive body of literature remain limited. With a focus on diverse educational contexts, this study aims to analyze recent trends and systematic reviews related to multicultural education globally, with particular attention to the gaps identified in the existing literature.

Recent bibliometric analyses underscore key trends in multicultural education research. A systematic review by Rozaq et al. illustrates the increasing focus on sustainable development within multicultural education frameworks, particularly in relation to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing inclusivity and educational equity [19]. This perspective aligns with findings from Zhan et al., [20] who note that educational themes increasingly integrate concepts from fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), highlighting a broader interdisciplinary engagement that is still developing within multicultural contexts [20].

Furthermore, bibliometric studies reveal that qualitative research continues to dominate the field, although there is a gradual increase in quantitative and mixed-methods studies. For instance, Abdulrahman et al. identified significant gaps in longitudinal studies and interdisciplinary collaboration [21]. This reinforces the sentiment expressed in the analysis by Hidayatulloh and Afyah, who emphasize the need for innovative pedagogical methods, such as those that incorporate

digital literacy within multicultural frameworks [22]. They assert that the integration of technology is particularly necessary for fostering skills that are aligned with global educational transformations.

Geographically, research in multicultural education has shown concentration in specific regions, especially within the domains of education and teacher training. As Ho notes, the fragmentation of literature necessitates a comprehensive bibliometric-systematic review to bridge policy and practice gaps in early childhood education (Ho, 2025). Additionally, Adeoye's review of instructional and teacher education studies corroborates this geographic focus by illustrating patterns and collaborative networks within primary education settings [23].

In contrast, the literature pertaining to multicultural education in Turkey is characterized by its fragmented nature. While several narrative literature reviews exist, they often lack systematic methodological rigor. As indicated by recent analyses, there is a scarcity of systematic reviews that focus on postgraduate theses, which are pivotal in shaping research agendas within Turkish educational contexts [19, 20]. This inconsistency highlights the need for studies that provide transparent inclusion criteria and utilize comprehensive datasets to analyze research trends effectively.

Thematic analyses in multicultural education frequently address culturally responsive teaching practices and equity-oriented pedagogies. For example, Patras et al. emphasize the evolving nature of culturally responsive teaching as an area of growing research interest, particularly as globalization and technological advancements change pedagogical landscapes [24]. This trend reflects a broader imperative for educators to adapt teaching strategies that meet diverse learner needs.

Moreover, studies like those conducted by Marfo et al. analyze the facilitators of resilience among marginalized groups, identifying pressing themes related to equity and inclusion [25]. Such themes not only contribute to the understanding of multicultural education but also encourage the exploration of contextual dynamics, including national educational policy environments and sociocultural contexts.

The evolving landscape of multicultural education research highlights crucial trends concerning methodological preferences, geographic distribution, and thematic orientations. While significant strides have been made in contemporary scholarship, particularly within interdisciplinary domains and digital pedagogies, gaps remain, especially regarding systematic reviews and analyses of postgraduate theses. Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing knowledge production in multicultural education, particularly as it shapes future research agendas in various national contexts.

The purpose of this research is to examine graduate theses on multiculturalism in Turkey and identify trends in the literature. A total of 109 graduate theses published since the 2000s were included in the study.

The postgraduate theses included in this systematic review were examined according to a set of predetermined criteria in order to identify general trends and methodological characteristics within the field of multicultural education.

Data extraction was conducted using a structured research form developed by the researcher to ensure systematic and consistent coding across all included theses. The development of the coding framework followed a multi-stage procedure.

First, variables frequently used in systematic reviews and thesis trend analyses were identified through an examination of prior review studies in educational research. Based on this preliminary review, an initial pool of coding categories was generated, focusing on bibliographic characteristics, methodological features, and thematic orientations of postgraduate theses.

Second, the preliminary research form was pilot-tested on a subset of ten postgraduate theses selected randomly from the dataset. This pilot application aimed to evaluate the clarity, applicability, and completeness of coding categories. During this process, overlapping categories were revised, ambiguous definitions were clarified, and additional variables were introduced where necessary. Following pilot testing, the final coding framework was established.

The finalized research form consisted of the following variables:

- Year of publication
- Language of thesis
- Degree level (Master's/Ph.D.)
- Subject area
- Keywords
- University
- City
- Institute
- Scientific branch/department
- Research method
- Research design
- Participants or study group
- Data collection tools
- Data analysis techniques

Each thesis was coded independently according to these predefined variables. To enhance procedural reliability, coding rules and category definitions were documented prior to full data extraction. The coded data were subsequently transferred

into a spreadsheet and analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions. The complete coding framework used for data extraction is presented in Appendix A (Research Coding Form) to ensure transparency and replicability of the review process.

These criteria enabled a systematic and multidimensional analysis of the theses, allowing for the identification of methodological tendencies, thematic concentrations, and institutional patterns within postgraduate research on multicultural education in Turkey.

This review, conducted in line with these criteria, aims to provide a holistic perspective on the evolution of academic studies in the field of multiculturalism over time, their methodological trends, and the topics they focus on. This sheds light on the literature regarding the areas of focus in theses on multicultural education in Turkey, the dimensions in which they are lacking, and the ways they can contribute to future research.

2. METHODOLOGY

Systematic review was chosen as the method for this research. A systematic review is a research method that aims to present a holistic view of previous scientific studies on a specific topic by scanning them in a planned, transparent, and reproducible manner within the framework of predetermined criteria [26, 27]. The primary goal of a systematic review is to summarize existing knowledge by bringing together scattered research findings, reveal trends, and identify gaps in the literature. In this context, systematic reviews, unlike traditional literature reviews, require a comprehensive search using specific keywords, clearly specifying inclusion and exclusion criteria, and analyzing the resulting studies under specific categories. This study examined graduate theses in the field of multiculturalism. The search was conducted using the keywords “multiculturalism,” “multicultural,” and “multicultural education” in the thesis title, abstract, and subject area, limiting the search to the field of education and training. Theses that met the specified criteria were systematically evaluated, and the findings were presented using frequency and percentage distributions. Data from the theses were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that aims to interpret the obtained data by systematically classifying them under specific themes and categories. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek [28], content analysis goes beyond organizing data using a descriptive approach and aims to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. In this context, the data obtained in the study were coded, themes were created, and the findings were interpreted.

The data for this systematic review were obtained from the Higher Education Council (Yükseköğretim Kurulu – YÖK) National Thesis Database (YÖKTEZ). YÖKTEZ was selected as the sole data source because it constitutes the official and most comprehensive repository of postgraduate theses completed at universities in Turkey. No additional national or international databases, such as ProQuest, ERIC, Scopus, or institutional repositories, were consulted. Therefore, the scope of this review is limited to theses indexed in the YÖKTEZ database.

The database was accessed on January 15, 2025, and all searches were completed on the same date to ensure the consistency of results. The advanced search function of the database was used to conduct a systematic and reproducible search. The search was performed within the fields of title, abstract, subject, and department/scientific field. The following Boolean search string was applied: (“multiculturalism” OR “multicultural” OR “multicultural education”) AND Subject = “Education and Training”.

The search was limited to Master’s and Ph.D. theses completed in Turkey. No restriction was imposed regarding the starting year of publication; thus, all theses available in the database up to January 15, 2025, were considered. Only theses with accessible full texts were included. The inclusion criteria were defined as follows: (1) the thesis had to be registered in the YÖKTEZ database; (2) it had to include at least one of the specified keywords, namely “multiculturalism,” “multicultural,” or “multicultural education,” in the title, abstract, or subject field; (3) it had to be conducted within the field of Education and Training; (4) it had to be a Master’s or Ph.D. thesis; and (5) it had to be accessible in full text. Theses were excluded if they were conducted outside the field of Education and Training, if multiculturalism was mentioned only incidentally without constituting the primary focus of the study, if they were restricted-access or embargoed, or if they were duplicates. Following the application of these criteria, a total of 109 postgraduate theses were included in the final dataset and analyzed within the scope of this systematic review.

To ensure transparency and replicability, the literature search was conducted in the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) National Thesis Center using predefined keywords and Boolean operators. The search process targeted theses related to multicultural education within the field of education.

The following Boolean search string was applied within the title, abstract, and keyword fields of the database:

Title/Abstract/Keywords = (“multicultural education” OR “multiculturalism” OR “culturally responsive education” OR “cultural diversity”) AND Subject Area = “Education and Training”

Where applicable, truncation and equivalent Turkish terminology were also used to capture variations of the concept: (“çok kültürlü eğitim” OR “çok kültürlülük” OR “kültürel çeşitlilik”)*

The use of Boolean operators (AND/OR) enabled the inclusion of conceptually related studies while restricting results

to the educational field. This explicit search string allows the study selection procedure to be replicated and evaluated for methodological rigor.

3. FINDINGS

In this study, which aims to examine the theses published in the field of education and training on multiculturalism in Turkey, a systematic compilation of theses written on "multiculturalism" and "multicultural education" in the YÖKTEZ database until 2025 was made and the general trends on this subject were revealed. In this research, 109 theses obtained were examined in terms of the year of publication, language, postgraduate level, subject area, keywords, university where they were published, city, institute where they were published, department, research method, research design, sample/study group, data collection tools and data analysis method and the results are shared in Table 1.

Table 1. *Results of systematic review of theses published in the context of multiculturalism*

Feature	Category	Percentage (%)	Frequency (N)
Degree	Master's	76	83
	Ph.D	24	26
	Turkish	85	93
	English	15	16
	Education and Training	93	101
	Education and Training; Psychology	5	5
	Education and Training; Music	1	1
	Education and Training; Sports	1	1
	Multiculturalism & Education	29	32
	Multiculturalism & Competence/Attitude/Perception	18	20
	Multiculturalism & Teacher/Teacher Candidate	24	26
	Multiculturalism & Management/Politics	12	13
	Multiculturalism & Migration/Refugees/Globalization	9	10
Scientific Branch	Curriculum and Instruction	17	19
	Educational Sciences	6	7
	Guidance and Psychological Counseling	6	7
	Educational Administration	13	14
	Basic Education USA - Preschool Education	11	12
	Others	47	51
Year	2025	4	4
	2024	15	16
	2023	11	12
	2022	11	12
	2021	8	9
	2020	5	5
	2019	9	10
	2018	7	8
	2017	6	7
	2016	5	5
	2015	4	4
	2014	6	7
	2013	5	5
	2012	1	1
	2008	2	2
2001	1	1	
Research Method	Quantitative	46	50
	Qualitative	24	26
	Mixed	30	33

Research Design	Survey	29	32
	Correlational survey	19	21
	Case study	10	11
	Phenomenology	10	11
	Experimental	6	7
	Document analysis	6	7
	Mixed (unspecified)	5	5
	Explanatory mixed design	2	2
	Convergent parallel design	3	3
	Other	10	10
Participants/Study Group	Teachers	32	35
	Teacher candidates	19	21
	University students	16	17
	Middle/High school students	9	10
	Psychological counselors and candidates	8	9
	Others	16	17
Data Collection Tools	Survey/Scale	42	46
	Interview	26	28
	Document	11	12
	Observation/Diary	8	9
	Mixed Uses	13	14
Scales about Multiculturalism	Multicultural Education Attitude Scale	24	26
	Multicultural Competence Scale	16	17
	Multicultural Personality Scale	12	13
	Multicultural Education and Democracy Perception Scale	8	9
	Others	40	44
Data Analysis	Descriptive statistics/analysis	20	22
	Content analysis	11	12
	t-test	9	10
	ANOVA	9	10
	Correlation	9	10
	Others	42	45
University	Marmara	9	10
	Yıldız Teknik	7	8
	Ankara	6	7
	Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart	6	7
	Ege	4	4
	Others	68	74
City	İstanbul	25	27
	Ankara	12	13
	Çanakkale	6	7
	İzmir	5	5
	Bolu	4	4
	Adana	3	3
	Kastamonu	3	3
	Eskişehir	3	3
	Kütahya	3	3
	Others	36	39
Institute	Institute of Educational Sciences	54	59
	Institute of Social Sciences	29	32
	Institute of Graduate Education	15	16
	Institute of Health Sciences	1	1
	Institute of Graduate Education and Research	1	1

The vast majority of theses, 76% (83), were prepared at the Master's level. Doctoral theses account for 24%. In terms of language, almost all theses were written in Turkish (85%), while English theses accounted for only 15%. Recent years

stand out in the distribution of theses by year. Specifically, 15% (16) of theses were written in 2024, 11% (12) in 2023, and 11% (12) again in 2022. When examined by subject area, the vast majority of theses, 93% (93%), were in the field of Education and Training. Other fields, in addition to this field, included topics such as Psychology, Music, and Sports.

The most frequently used research method in theses was quantitative (46%), followed by mixed methods (30%), and qualitative (24%). Among the research designs, survey (29%) and relational survey (19%) are the most common. Survey/scale (42%) is the most preferred data collection method, followed by interview (26%). Descriptive statistics/analysis (20%) is the most frequently used method in data analysis. 54% of the theses were prepared in the Institute of Educational Sciences, and 29% in the Institute of Social Sciences. In the distribution by cities, 25% of the theses were written in Istanbul, and 12% in Ankara. In terms of universities, Marmara University (9%) and Yıldız Technical University (7%) stand out. When the study groups are examined, teachers were used as samples in 32% of the theses, and teacher candidates in 19%.

4. DISCUSSION

The increase in the number of postgraduate theses on multiculturalism in Turkey parallels the rise of this concept, which gained global prominence in the late 1960s, in Turkey, particularly since the 2000s. One of the main reasons for this increase is the increasing heterogeneity of Turkey's structure due to urbanization and globalization, and the increasingly pronounced impact of migration on the education system. In this context, academic studies appear to be insensitive to this sociocultural transformation.

The findings reveal that the vast majority of theses focus on Education and Training (93%). This is consistent with the prioritization of multiculturalism as an area that aims to foster individuals' respect for differences, access equal learning opportunities, and develop the ability to live together within the framework of democratic values. Leading figures in the field, such as Banks [2] and Gay [3], also emphasize the importance of multicultural education, particularly in the context of teacher education, curriculum development, and student attitudes. However, the study reveals a limited number of studies in other disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, or communication. This indicates that the interdisciplinary approach in the field has not yet been fully embraced and that more research is needed in these areas in the future. Methodologically, the predominant preference for quantitative research methods (46%) reflects the scarcity of qualitative (24%) and mixed-method (30%) studies that require in-depth analysis. While quantitative studies generally aim to obtain generalizable results across large samples, qualitative studies are critical for understanding the complexity of cultural experiences and the depth of individual perspectives. In this context, the dominance of quantitative studies in the field can lead to multiculturalism being limited to abstract measurements and the under-researching of classroom practices, teacher-student interactions, or parental experiences. Ladson-Billings [4] and Moll et al. [17] emphasize the importance of qualitative methods in understanding classroom practices and culturally relevant pedagogy in multicultural education. Therefore, increasing methodological diversity will bring new perspectives to the field.

Another important finding of the study is that theses mostly focus on teachers (32%) and preservice teachers (19%). This finding is consistent with previous research by Polat and Kılıç [6]. Developing teachers' multicultural competencies is one of the primary motivations for research in this area. However, the lack of sufficient consideration of the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as students, parents, and school administrators, points to a significant gap. Banks [10] emphasizes that for multicultural education to be applicable, all units within the school (teachers, staff, students) must be made aware of this issue. Therefore, incorporating the views of these stakeholder groups into future studies will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The concentration of theses in specific universities, such as Marmara University, Yıldız Technical University, Ankara University, and Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, and in major cities like Istanbul and Ankara, reflects the regional disparity in academic research in Turkey. While this situation highlights the advantage of universities in major cities, which offer greater research budgets and access, it may limit the contributions of other universities in Anatolia. This geographical concentration can lead to multiculturalism research focusing on the problems of more urbanized regions and ignoring the diverse cultural dynamics in rural areas. Therefore, it is recommended that research in the field be expanded to encompass the entire country.

In conclusion, while theses in the field of multiculturalism present a positive picture in terms of quantity and focus on specific topics, they require increased methodological diversity, the inclusion of different stakeholder groups, and broader geographic distribution.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides a general overview of graduate theses in the field of multiculturalism. The findings indicate that the majority of studies in the field are concentrated at the Master's level (76%) and in specific areas such as Education and Training (93%). Most of these theses used quantitative research methods (46%), surveys/scales (42%) as data collection

tools, and teachers/prospective teachers (51%) as samples. From an institutional perspective, the majority of these theses were conducted at universities in major cities such as Istanbul and Ankara (37%), and particularly at Institutes of Educational Sciences (54%).

While the data obtained indicate that research on multiculturalism in Turkey has increased in recent years, they also point to some significant gaps. These gaps are as follows:

Methodological Diversity: Encouraging more qualitative and mixed-methods research is critical for a deeper understanding of the subject.

Interdisciplinary Approach: Incorporating diverse disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and communication into the field will contribute to a multidimensional understanding of the topic.

Stakeholder Scope: Other important stakeholders such as students, parents, and school administrators should also be included in the research.

Geographic Distribution: Expanding the research to a wider geography and conducting it in regions outside major cities will reveal the diverse cultural dynamics in Turkey.

These results provide guidance for future research and will contribute to a more comprehensive and in-depth study of multiculturalism. This research revealed trends in the literature by examining 109 postgraduate theses prepared on multicultural education in Turkey. The findings indicate that the number of theses has increased significantly over the years, that the studies are largely concentrated in the field of educational sciences, but that methodological diversity is limited and that qualitative research is relatively scarce. It is also noteworthy that theses largely focus on prospective teachers and teachers, while other stakeholders such as students, parents, and school administrators are insufficiently addressed. Based on these findings, it is recommended that future studies address multiculturalism from the perspective of different disciplines (sociology, psychology, communication, etc.), utilize qualitative and mixed methods more extensively, and incorporate the perspectives of diverse stakeholder groups. This will enrich the theoretical foundations of multicultural education in Turkey, and create a more comprehensive and in-depth body of knowledge for practice.

6. LIMITATIONS

The most significant limitation of this systematic review is that it focuses solely on graduate theses and dissertations on multiculturalism. Other scholarly publications, such as articles, proceedings, books, or book chapters, are outside the scope of this study. Therefore, it should be noted that it does not represent the entire academic literature on multiculturalism in Turkey. Furthermore, the lack of access to detailed datasets for all the analyzed theses resulted in the data being interpreted solely through percentages and frequencies presented in graphs. This limited the ability to examine correlations between variables within theses (e.g., the relationship between a thesis's topic, the method used, and its sample).

The literature search for this study was conducted using the database of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) National Thesis Center. This database was selected as the primary and sole data source because it provides comprehensive access to postgraduate theses completed at universities in Turkey and represents the most centralized repository of nationally produced academic research. The decision to focus exclusively on this database reflects a deliberate scope limitation aimed at examining research trends within the Turkish higher education context rather than producing a globally exhaustive review.

However, relying solely on the YÖK database constitutes an important methodological limitation. Studies indexed in international databases (e.g., journal articles, conference proceedings, or theses completed abroad) were not included, which may restrict the representativeness of the findings and limit cross-national comparability. Consequently, the results should be interpreted as reflecting tendencies within officially archived postgraduate research in Turkey rather than the entirety of scholarship on the topic. Future research may expand the dataset by incorporating international indexing platforms to enable broader comparative analyses and enhance generalizability.

7. IMPLICATIONS

In light of the findings and limitations of this study, the following recommendations for future research are offered:

Increasing Methodological Diversity: In addition to quantitative studies, more emphasis should be placed on qualitative and mixed-methods research in the field of multiculturalism. In particular, classroom practices and individual experiences should be examined in depth through ethnographic studies, case studies, and phenomenological research.

Expanding the Scope of Study: Research should not be limited to educational sciences. Approaching topics from diverse disciplines such as sociology, psychology, communication, political science, and law will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of multiculturalism.

Expanding the Scope of Stakeholders: Future research should include the views and experiences of other stakeholder groups, such as students, parents, and school administrators, rather than just teachers and teacher candidates.

Increasing Geographic Distribution: The concentration of theses on major cities should be reduced, and the dynamics

of cultural diversity and multiculturalism in different regions of Turkey should be examined.

Increasing Literature Review Studies: Periodic systematic reviews and meta-analysis studies can guide researchers in the field by revealing the general trends, gaps, and strengths of the multiculturalism literature.

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APPENDIX A

AI Use Declaration Statement

Artificial intelligence tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript. Specifically, a large language model (ChatGPT, OpenAI) was used to support language editing, clarity, and organization of the text. The authors take full responsibility for the content, interpretations, and conclusions presented in the manuscript.

Note

This study was previously presented at the BİTEKSEK 2025 Congress.

8. APPENDIX B (RESEARCH CODING FORM)

Coding Dimension	Variable	Coding Categories / Operational Definition
Bibliographic Information	Year of Publication	
	Language	
	Degree Level	
	Keywords	
Institutional Characteristics	University	
	City	
	Institute	
	Scientific Branch / Department	
Thematic Characteristics	Subject Area	
Methodological Characteristics	Research Method	
	Research Design	
	Participants / Study Group	
	Data Collection Tools	
	Multiculturalism Scale Type	
	Data Analysis Techniques	