

# Analysis of Postgraduate Thesis Studies on Stress Management: A Systematic Review

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**Abstract:** *This systematic review was made to examine the postgraduate theses (master and doctorate) on stress management in the field of nursing in higher education in Turkey. 51 postgraduate theses registered to the national thesis center of the Higher Education Institution were scanned between 1991-2020 using the Turkish word "stress management" and are accessible. Theses; year, sample group, research type, research method and department. When the sample group of stress management on the subject of the thesis in Turkey, mostly educators (academics, lecturers, teachers and school administrators etc.), the hospital staff (nurses, emergency service personnel, hospital staff, etc.). 90.2% of the theses are master's thesis, 9.8% are doctoral thesis. In 90.2% of the theses quantitative, 5.9% qualitative and 4% mixed models were used. Master's theses are mostly done in business and doctoral theses are mostly in the department of nursing. According to the results of the research, most of the postgraduate theses on stress management are master's theses and the department of business stands out. In postgraduate theses, quantitative model was mostly used and survey design was used, it is seen that the use of qualitative and experimental studies with higher levels of evidence is limited.*

**Keywords:** Stress; stress management; postgraduate thesis; systematic review

## 1. Introduction

Today, with the rapidly developing and changing technology, many developments such as social, economic and cultural differences are experienced in societies. Increasingly heavy living conditions, uncertainties caused by rapid change and the ever-increasing demands of individuals are factors that increase stress. Technology, urbanization, disasters or similar external factors disrupt their life balance and individuals who have difficulty in adapting to these changes experience stress more intensely.<sup>[1]</sup> These effects of stress, which is one of the serious problems of the age, in human life cause serious problems in human life.<sup>[2]</sup> Stress is expressed as a situation that can occur when the organism is pushed to its physical and mental limits.<sup>[3]</sup> According to many definitions, the term stress can be defined as "noxious stimulus", "reaction to noxious stimulus", "interaction between noxious stimulus and organism". Stress causes people to experience serious and deep problems. In summary, stress is a condition that negatively affects the health of the organism in general.<sup>[4,5]</sup>

Stress can change a person's way of thinking, perception, and perspective on events. It also creates problems that cannot be fixed and dangers that may hinder the development of societies. Stress can affect people physically, emotionally, mentally, behaviorally, economically and socially. Therefore, it is necessary to learn the skills of coping with stress.<sup>[6,7]</sup> If stress is not managed properly, it causes physical, mental and physiological problems. It also causes disruption of the peace of individuals, families and societies. Ignoring stress can make it impossible to manage stress properly. Therefore, it is very important to acknowledge the existence of stress.<sup>[7]</sup> Since stress can occur in any period of life, reducing the situations

that cause stress can make the individual healthy, happy and productive. It is important in terms of increasing the quality of life. For this reason, when individuals encounter stress, they should know stress well, take it under control and try to learn to live with stress. In order to manage stress effectively; They need to develop effective coping skills against the factors that cause stress.<sup>[8]</sup>

Coping with stress and adapting is an important requirement throughout our lives. Managing stress is essential for the balance of our lives. No other study has been found in the literature on the examination of postgraduate thesis studies on stress management in Turkey. This study is planned to contribute to the field writing.

## 2. Purpose

This systematic review was planned to create a background for a doctoral thesis to be made within the scope of stress management education in the field of nursing. It was conducted to systematically review all accessible (permitted) postgraduate theses on stress management in Turkey. Due to the limited number of studies in the field of nursing, all postgraduate thesis studies are included.

### Research questions addressed in determining the scope of the review.

- 1) In which years are postgraduate theses on stress management the most common in Turkey?
- 2) On which sample group were postgraduate theses on stress management made in Turkey?
- 3) Which type of research is most frequently used in postgraduate theses on stress management in Turkey?
- 4) Which research method was used most frequently in postgraduate theses on stress management in Turkey?

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5) In which department are master's theses on stress management done most frequently in Turkey?

**3. Research Methods**

The data were obtained by evaluating the master and doctoral theses registered to the national thesis center between the years 1991-2020 as a result of the search made on the web with the keyword 'stress management'. In the study, the theses accessed from the website of the National Thesis Center of the Higher Education Council and the results of the data scans made between 25.12.2020 and 25.01.2021 were taken as basis. In order to analyze the thesis studies that can be reached, parameters such as "year", "sample group", "research type", "research method" and "department" were determined. 60 postgraduate theses related to the subject were reached in the database, but 9 theses were excluded from the research because they were not allowed to be published on the database. Within the scope of the study, a total of 51 of which open to access postgraduate theses, 46 of which are master's theses and 5 of which are doctoral theses, were examined.

**3.1. Data Collecting**

Within the scope of the Council of Higher Education, 51 registered theses registered in the National Thesis Center databases and meeting the inclusion criteria were reached. 46 of the theses are master's theses and 5 are doctoral theses. In theses, answers were sought on the basis of year, sample group, research type, research method and department. While defining the data, the number and percentage/frequency values were used in the evaluation of the data.

**4. Analyze and Result**

According to the data obtained from the databases of the National Thesis Center, 51 theses (master and doctoral) on stress management, which are open to access (on leave), were examined between 1991 and 2020.

**Table 1:** Distribution of accessible postgraduate theses on stress management by years (N=51)

Years	Master	Doktorate	Total
1991-2000	1	-	<b>1</b>
2001-2010	15	1	<b>16</b>
2011-2020	30	4	<b>34</b>
<b>Total</b>	46	5	<b>51</b>

In Table 1, the distribution of postgraduate theses on stress management registered in the databases of the National Thesis Center is given. Between 1991-2000 1 (2%) master's theses, between 2001-2010 15 (29%) master's theses, 1 (2%) doctorate and between 2011-2020 30 (58.8%) master's theses, 4 (7.8%) doctoral theses have been prepared.

Looking at the distribution of postgraduate thesis studies by years, 5 (10.9%) master's theses to 2020, 4 (8.7%) to 2019, 2 (4.4%) to 2018, 5 (10.9%) to 2017, 3 (6.5%) to 2016, 4 (8.7%) to 2015, 1 (2.2%) to 2014, 2 (4.4%) to 2013, 1 (2.2%) to 2012, 2 (4.4%) to 2011, 3 (6.5%) to 2010, 4 (8.7%) to 2009, 2 (4.4%) to 2008, 3 (6.5%) to 2007, 2 (4.4%) to 2006, 1 (2.2%) to 2005, 1 (2.2%) to 2004 and 1 (2.2%) belongs to the year 1991. 1 (20%) of the doctoral theses to 2020, 1 (20%) to 2018, 1 (20%) to 2017, 1 (20%) to 2014 and 1 (20%) belongs to the year 2005. It was determined that 90.2% of the postgraduate theses examined in our study consisted of master's theses and 9.8% were doctoral theses. This result shows parallelism with the literature. In many studies in the literature, it has been seen that the number of master's theses is higher than the number of doctoral theses.<sup>[15-19]</sup>

**Table 2:** Distribution of postgraduate theses on stress management by years and departments(N=51)

Years	Business	Farm plants	Educational Sciences	Security strategies and man.	Health institutions man.	Health management	Psychiatry nursing	Women's health & diseases nurs	Occupational health and safety	Psychology	Public administration	Labor economics and ind. rel.	Business administration	Human Resources Man.	Education Man.& Supervision	Public relations	Management and organization	Behavioral sciences	Tourism management
2020	4	1	1																
2019	3			1															
2018					1	1	1												
2017	3							1	1				1						
2016	1												2						
2015	1											1	2						
2014	1						1												
2013													1		1				
2012														1					
2011	1												1						
2010	1									1	1								
2009											1		2			1			
2008												1					1		



2017 <sup>[32]</sup>	Teacher(primary and secondary education)	Master	Quantitative/survey
2017 <sup>[33]</sup>	Bank staff	Master	Quantitative/survey
2017 <sup>[34]</sup>	Staff working in the emergency department	Master	Quantitative/survey
2016 <sup>[35]</sup>	Lecturer	Master	Quantitative/survey
2016 <sup>[36]</sup>	Police	Master	Quantitative/survey
2016 <sup>[37]</sup>	-	Master	Qualitative/Historical research
2015 <sup>[38]</sup>	Court-house staff	Master	Quantitative/survey
2015 <sup>[39]</sup>	Union members	Master	Quantitative/survey
2015 <sup>[40]</sup>	Turkish airlines personnel	Master	Quantitative/survey
2015 <sup>[41]</sup>	Health personnel	Master	Quantitative/survey
2014 <sup>[13]</sup>	Person caring for a schizophrenic patient	Doctorate	Quantitative/experimental
2014 <sup>[2]</sup>	School administrators	Master	Quantitative/survey
2013 <sup>[42]</sup>	Nurse	Master	Quantitative/survey
2013 <sup>[11]</sup>	University preparatory students	Master	Quantitative/survey
2012 <sup>[43]</sup>	Municipality staff	Master	Quantitative/survey
2011 <sup>[44]</sup>	Distribution staff at post office	Master	Quantitative/survey
2011 <sup>[45]</sup>	Court-house staff	Master	Quantitative/survey
2010 <sup>[46]</sup>	Hospital staff	Master	Quantitative/survey
2010 <sup>[47]</sup>	Mother of mentally handicapped child	Master	Quantitative/experimental
2010 <sup>[48]</sup>	Textile staff	Master	Quantitative/survey
2009 <sup>[49]</sup>	Human resources staff of five-star hotels	Master	Quantitative/survey
2009 <sup>[50]</sup>	Human resources staff of five-star hotels	Master	Quantitative/survey
2009 <sup>[51]</sup>	Revenue office staff	Master	Quantitative/survey
2009 <sup>[5]</sup>	Staff in four and five star hotels	Master	Quantitative/survey
2008 <sup>[52]</sup>	Volunteer individuals	Master	Mixed
2008 <sup>[53]</sup>	Staff and administrators in the student dormitory	Master	Quantitative/survey
2007 <sup>[54]</sup>	-	Master	Qualitative/Historical research
2007 <sup>[55]</sup>	Air traffic controller personnel	Master	Quantitative/survey
2007 <sup>[56]</sup>	Bank staff	Master	Quantitative/survey
2006 <sup>[57]</sup>	Five star hotel staff	Master	Quantitative/survey
2006 <sup>[58]</sup>	Teacher (primary)	Master	Quantitative/survey
2005 <sup>[6]</sup>	Industry personnel	Master	Quantitative/semi-experimental
2005 <sup>[11]</sup>	University preparatory students	Doctorate	Quantitative/experimental
2004 <sup>[59]</sup>	Flight personnel	Master	Quantitative/survey
1991 <sup>[60]</sup>	Air force academy student	Master	Quantitative/survey

When the graduate theses were examined according to the sample group, the educators became the prominent sample group. 9 of the postgraduate theses (17.7%) were with educators (academics, lecturers, teachers and school administrators, etc.), 7 (13.7%) with hospital staff (nurse, emergency service personnel, hospital staff, etc.), 4 (7.8%) with aviation sector employees, 4 (7.8%) with hotel personnel, 3 (5.8%) with university students, 2 (4%) with bank personnel, 2 (4%) with courthouse personnel, 2 (4%) with police officers, each other 1 (2%) (engineering sector/municipality/PTT distribution department/revenue office/textile sector/industrial sector and personnel working in İzmir province, all inspectors and their assistants in the ministry of agriculture and forestry, union members, pregnant women, caregivers of schizophrenia patients, mothers of mentally disabled children, all personnel and managers, volunteers and cotton plant) sample group (Table 3).

When analyzed according to the sample group, it was seen that educators and health workers were the most dominant sample group. More than one factor plays a role in the formation of stress and creates a stressful environment. Today, it is seen that these working groups undertake the task of education and improvement. In addition, situations such as increasing and uncertain workloads, human-oriented practices and changing work environments cause stress. For this reason, it is estimated that those working in these

environments experience adaptation problems and difficulties in coping with stress.

**Table 4.** Distribution of postgraduate theses by research methods (N=51)

Research Method	Master	Doctorate	Total
Quantitative			
• Survey	39	1	<b>40</b>
• Experimental	2	2	<b>4</b>
• Semi- experimental	1	1	<b>2</b>
Qualitative			
• Historical research	3	-	<b>3</b>
Mixed	1	1	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>51</b>

When the theses are analyzed according to the type of research, 46 (90.2%) of the theses are master's and 5 (9.8%) are doctoral theses. When the theses are analyzed according to the research method, 46 (90.2%) are Quantitative, 3 (5.9%) Qualitative, and 2 (4%) mixed models. Of the quantitative models, 40 (78%) survey designs, 4 (7.8%) experimental and 2 (4%) semi-experimental designs were used.

Master's theses are mostly of quantitative (screening) (84.8%), quantitative (experimental) (4.4%), quantitative (quasi-experimental) (2.1%), qualitative (historical research) (6.5%) and mixed (2.1%) types. It was observed that the majority of doctoral theses were quantitative (experimental)

(40%), quantitative (semi-experimental) (20%), quantitative (screening) (20%) and mixed (20%) type (Table 4). It has been observed that the quantitative research method is mostly used in the survey design in the theses. It is seen that the use of the experimental design, which is qualitative and has a higher level of evidence, is limited in use. When we look at the literature, similar results are found in line with our findings.<sup>[17,19]</sup>

In this research, postgraduate thesis studies on stress management, which can be accessed on the website of the National Thesis Center of the Higher Education Institution, are included. Postgraduate theses open to access; year, sample group, type of research, method of the research and the department in which it was conducted. As a result of the research, it was determined that the majority of the postgraduate theses on stress management were master's theses and the thesis studies at the doctoral level were more limited.

When we look at the studies at the doctorate theses, it is seen that there are qualitative-experimental studies on stress management education for intensive care nurses<sup>[10]</sup> university students<sup>[11]</sup>, pregnant women<sup>[12]</sup>, caregivers of schizophrenic patients<sup>[13]</sup> and it is seen that there is a quantitative-survey study for faculty members.<sup>[14]</sup> When we look at the working groups of these doctoral studies; the effects of perceived stress, self-sufficiency and coping styles of university students, compassion fatigue of nurses, the effects of yoga in pregnant women on stress perception, and the effects of caregivers on schizophrenia patients' mental states, stress coping behaviors and care burden were investigated. In our study, it is planned to determine the effects of nursing students on perceived stress levels, coping styles, self-esteem, happiness and general health. Our study will be the first doctoral study in the mixed model to be conducted on nursing students in our country. It is thought that our study, which will be carried out on nursing students, will be of great benefit to our students in both academic and professional fields.

## 5. Conclusion

In the research, it is seen that the years in which the most postgraduate theses are published are '2020 and 2017'. When the sections of the theses are examined, it is seen that 'business' is at the forefront and educators and health workers are the most common sample group. The quantitative model was used in 90.2% of the master's theses. It is seen that the use of more descriptive designs in the theses, and the use of qualitative and high-evidence experimental studies is limited. Stress is one of the biggest problems that can affect every part of society. It is suggested that priority should be given to studies on stress management in nurses and nursing students, who are the health leaders of the society. It is thought that identifying and eliminating the deficiencies in this area will contribute to the society. Because recognizing and managing stress, which is an inevitable part of our lives, is another way to add meaning to our lives. In addition, it is recommended that stress management training should be given to all undergraduate and associate degree programs, and that it

should be integrated into institutions through in-service training for working professional groups.

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