



AN EXAMINATION OF THE STUDIES CONDUCTED ON THE FIELD OF READING SKILLS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine the studies conducted between 2014 and 2020 on the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities in terms of various variables. For this purpose, a total of 20 studies, 10 master's and 10 doctoral theses, were analyzed by the researchers in the database of the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education. The content analysis method was used to examine the studies conducted in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities. All of these studies were obtained by providing direct access to the database of the National Dissertation Center. The studies examined were analyzed in terms of variables such as the thesis advisor, the year of publication of the thesis, the thesis level, the department where the thesis was made, the institute and the university to which it was affiliated, the title of thesis advisor, the participant characteristics of the thesis, the number of participants in the thesis, the thesis data collection tools, the data analysis method of the thesis, the data analysis design of the thesis, number of domestic and foreign bibliography and number of keywords, and studies in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities were revealed.

Keywords: learning disability, reading skill, content analysis.

Introduction

Reading takes place in our lives as a compulsory element for education. People need to master reading skills so that they can interact with other people and live actively in society as individuals (Demirok and Akçam, 2019). It is extremely important that students learn to read when they start school. It is also important for an individual to acquire reading skills and be able to apply them in order to continue their daily life. Individuals need to have reading and comprehension skills in order to understand and comprehend when reading newspapers, watching television, reviewing magazines, or watching a subtitled film (Akyol, 2003). It is thought that every student who can acquire knowledge and use this knowledge will achieve success in school. However, there are many students who have some difficulties in terms of learning skills in school life even though there is no problem (Sarıpınar and Erden, 2010).

Special learning disability is defined as the individual's inability to read correctly, not being able to understand what he reads, encountering problems in reading and writing words,

having difficulties in generating ideas and calculating despite some studies for at least six months (American Psychiatric Association, 2015).

Although it is still not known what causes learning difficulties, there are several reasons for the failure observed in the lessons of students who have difficulties in learning. These reasons can be listed as heredity, consanguineous marriages, diseases experienced while the baby is in the mother's womb, during or after birth, food poisoning, and the mother's use of drugs and alcohol during pregnancy (Uçgun, 2003, Seçkin-Yılmaz and Yaşaroğlu, 2020).

A classification has been created in the field of special education for gifted individuals or for individuals who have many disabilities in the field of vision, hearing, mental, physical, or language and speech. It has been observed that the number of individuals with learning disabilities among this classification has increased recently (İlker and Melekoğlu, 2017). Since parents and teachers do not have enough information about learning disabilities, children with learning disabilities experience some difficulties at school, at home and in their environment (Salman, Özdemir, Salman and Özdemir, 2016). Among these difficulties, there are situations such as the inability of the student with learning disability to read correctly, not understanding what he reads, skipping words, and not being able to read fluently (Seçkin – Yılmaz and Büyükçakmak, 2020).

It has been observed that students with learning disabilities are unsuccessful in the academic field and leave the classroom environment due to the difficulties they experience with reading. Considering these reasons, it is necessary to support the reading skills of individuals with learning disabilities (Murray, Goldstein, Nourse and Edgar, 2000; Hakkarainen, Holopainen and Savolainen, 2015)

It is very important for students with learning disabilities to have reading skills in their lives. For this reason, the examination of master's and doctoral theses researched on this subject makes it important to contribute to future studies and researchers. As a result of the literature review, a limited number of studies were found on studies in the field of learning disability and reading skills.

The aim of this research is to examine and reveal the master's and doctoral studies in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities published in the COHE national thesis center database between 2014 and 2020. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

How is the distribution of postgraduate theses related to reading skills of students with learning disabilities according to the following criteria?

- Thesis Level,
- Publication Year,
- University,
- Institute,
- Department,
- Number of keywords,
- Title of thesis advisor
- The number of participants,
- Characteristics of the participants,

- Research method,
- Data collection tool,
- Data analysis method,
- Number of domestic bibliography and foreign bibliography.

Methodology

The model of the research, the study group, the collection of data and the analysis of the collected data are included in this section.

The Model of the Research

Document analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this research. Document analysis is provided by examining documents in line with the objectives of the study and in accessing data (Aydoğdu, Karamustafaoğlu and Bülbül, 2017). Document review includes the analysis of written or visual tools that provide information about a problem (Erçetin and Eriçok, 2016).

The Target Population and the Sample of the Research

The target population of this research consists of all students with learning disabilities in the national thesis center of the Higher Education Institution and researches in the field of reading skills. The sample of this research consists of 10 master's theses and 10 doctoral theses, which were made in Turkey between the years of 2014 and 2020 and are open to access.

Data Collection

Considering the accessible theses of the students with learning disabilities in the database of the National Thesis Center of the Higher Education Institution regarding the field of reading skills, a search was made for the keywords "learning disability", "reading difficulty" and "reading" and the study data were reached. Theses were created up to date by continuing to scan until January 2021. In order to ensure the up-to-dateness of theses, studies conducted between the years of 2014 and 2020 are included.

Data Analysis

The content analysis method was used to examine the studies on the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities in this study. The purpose of content analysis is to create close concepts and themes, and also to interpret the works by formatting them for the understanding of the readers (Akaydın and Çeçen, 2015). In the content analysis method, data is coded, themes are formed, themes are formed, and finally, the findings are transferred to tables and interpreted.

Findings

The studies in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities were transferred to tables and interpreted, including master's thesis and doctoral thesis in this section.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities According to Thesis Levels

Information on the thesis levels of the studies on reading skills of students with

learning disabilities is given in Table 1.

Table 1.

Distribution by Thesis Levels

Thesis Level	<i>f</i>	%
Master Thesis	10	50
PhD Thesis	10	50
Total	20	100

When the thesis levels are examined, it is seen that 10 of the 20 studies in the field of reading skills of individuals with learning disabilities consist of master's thesis and 10 of them are doctoral thesis.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities According to Publication Years

Information about the publication year of studies on reading skills of individuals with learning disabilities is given in Table 2.

Table 2.

Distribution of Studies by Publication Years

Publication Year	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
2014	-	1	1	5
2016	1	-	1	5
2017	3	3	6	30
2018	-	1	1	5
2019	3	2	5	25
2020	3	3	6	30
Total	10	10	20	100

When the publication year of the studies is examined, it is seen that most of the master's theses in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities were prepared between 2017, 2019 and 2020. When the doctoral theses are examined, it is seen that the most doctorate thesis on this subject was prepared between 2017 and 2020. Looking at the total of theses, it is seen that most of the studies on this subject were conducted between 2017 and 2020.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities by Universities

The distribution of studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities by universities is given in Table 3.

Table 3.

Distribution of Studies by Universities

Name of the University	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		

Ankara University	4	2	6	30
Gazi University	1	4	5	25
Dokuz Eylül University	2	-	2	10
Eskişehir Osmangazi University	-	2	2	10
Hacettepe University	-	1	1	5
Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University	-	1	1	5
Necmettin Erbakan University	1	-	1	5
Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University	1	-	1	5
Biruni University	1	-	1	5
Total	10	10	20	100

Out of 20 theses, 9 different themes related to the universities of the studies in the field of reading skills of students with learning difficulties were created. When the universities in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities are examined, it is seen that most of the master's and doctoral theses were prepared in Ankara University.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities by Institute

The information on the institutes of the studies on the reading skills of students with learning disabilities is given in Table 4.

Table 4.
Distribution of Studies by Universities

Name of the Institute	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
Institute of Education Sciences	8	10	18	90
Graduate School of Education	1	-	1	5
Social Sciences Institute	1	-	1	5
Total	10	10	20	100

Out of 20 theses, 3 different themes were created regarding the institutes where studies in the field of reading skills of students with learning difficulties were carried out. When the institutes where studies are carried out in the field of reading skills of students with learning

disabilities are examined, it is seen that most of the master's and doctoral theses were prepared in the institute of educational sciences.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities According to Departments

The distribution of the studies on the reading skills of students with learning disabilities by departments is given in Table 5.

Table 5.
Distribution of Studies by Departments

Department	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
Special Education Department	8	6	14	70
Classroom Teaching Department	1	1	2	10
Department of Basic Education	-	2	2	10
Department of Turkish Education	1	-	1	5
Department of Educational Sciences	-	1	1	5
Total	10	10	20	100

Out of 20 theses, 5 different themes related to the main branches of studies in the field of reading skills of students with learning difficulties were created. When the departments of the studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities are examined, it is seen that most of the master's and doctoral theses are conducted in the special education department.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities by Keywords

Information on the number of keywords of the studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities is given in Table 6.

Table 6.
Distribution of Studies by Number of Keywords

Number of Key Words	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
Not mentioned	1	-	1	5
3	2	1	3	15

4	2	2	4	20
5	3	4	7	35
6	2	1	3	15
7	-	1	1	5
9	-	1	1	5
Total	10	10	20	100

Looking at Table 6, 6 different themes were created regarding the number of keywords in the studies conducted in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities. When the number of keywords in the studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities is examined, it is seen that 5 keywords were used in most of the master's and doctoral theses.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities by Advisor Titles

The distribution of the advisor titles of the studies on the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities are given in Table 7.

Table 7.
Distribution of the Studies by the Titles of the Advisors

Title of the Advisor	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
Professor Doctor	2	5	7	35
Associate Professor	4	4	8	40
Assistant Professor	1	-	1	5
Doctor Faculty Member	3	1	4	20
Total	10	10	20	100

When Table 7 is examined, 4 different themes were created regarding the titles of advisors of the studies conducted in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities. When the titles of the supervisors of the studies on the reading skills of students with learning disabilities are examined, it is seen that most of the supervisors of the master's and doctoral theses have the title of Associate Professor.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities by Number of Participants

The distribution of the number of participants in the studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities is given in Table 8.

Table 8.
Distribution of Studies by Number of Participants

Number of Participants	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
1-20	6	7	13	65
21-50	-	1	2	5
51-100	3	1	4	20
101-250	1	1	2	10
Total	10	10	20	100

Looking at Table 8, it is seen that the number of participants in master's and doctoral theses is between 1-20 at most. The minimum number of participants was 21-50 and 201-250.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities According to the Characteristics of the Participants

The information about the publication year of the studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities is given in Table 9. Some studies have more than one participant.

Table 9.
Distribution of Studies by Participant Characteristics

Characteristics of Participants	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
Student	9	10	19	73.08
Teacher	1	3	4	15.38
Family	-	3	3	11.54
Total	10	16	26	100

A total of 19 of the master's and doctoral theses are composed of students and 4 of the teachers when the characteristics of the participants are examined from among the 20 theses. When the master's theses are examined, it is seen that families are not included among the participants.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities According to Research Methods

The distribution of research methods of studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities is given in Table 10

Table 10.
Distribution of Studies by Research Methods

Research Method	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
Qualitative	3	3	6	30
Quantitative	4	4	8	40
Mixed	3	3	6	30
Total	10	10	20	100

It is seen that the quantitative research method is used the most among the 20 theses on the research methods of the studies in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities. It was determined that the mixed method was used the least in master's and doctoral theses.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities By Data Collection Tools

The distribution of the data collection tool of the studies on the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities is given in Table 11. In some studies, more than one data collection tool was used.

Table 11.
Distribution of Studies by Data Collection Tools

Data Collection Tool	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
Form	5	9	14	29.17
Scale	1	6	7	14.89
Test	3	6	9	19.15
Inventory	3	3	6	12.77
Check List	-	1	1	2.13

Text	2	2	4	8.51
Question	-	2	2	4.26
Protocol	-	1	1	2.13
Questionnaire	-	1	1	2.13
Video	-	1	1	2.13
Rubric	1	-	1	2.13
Total	15	32	48	100

Out of 20 theses, 12 different themes were created regarding the data collection tools of the studies in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities. When the data collection tools of the studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities are examined, it is seen that form data collection tools were used the most in master's and doctoral theses.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities According to Data Analysis Methods

The distribution of data analysis methods of studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities is given in Table 12. More than one data analysis method was used in some studies.

Table 12.
Distribution of Studies by Data Analysis Methods

Data Analysis Method	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
Descriptive Techniques (% , <i>f</i> , <i>MM vb.</i>)	5	7	9	25.71
Anova	2	1	3	8.57
Wilcoxon	1	3	4	11.43
Mann Whitney U	3	1	4	11.43
Factor Analysis	-	1	1	2.86
Correlation	2	-	2	5.71
Tau – U	-	1	1	2.86
t- test	1	1	2	5.71
Visual Analysis	1	1	2	5.71

Phonotic Analysis	-	1	1	2.86
Path Analysis	-	1	1	2.86
SPM	-	1	1	2.86
FSL	-	1	1	2.86
Total	15	20	35	100

When Table 12 is examined, it is seen that the most used data analysis method in studies were descriptive techniques. Then, it is determined that Wilcoxon and Mann Whitney data analyzes were used, respectively.

The Distribution of Studies in the Field of Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities According to the Number of Domestic References

Table 13 shows the distribution of the local reference of the studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities.

Table 13.
Distribution of Studies by Number of Domestic References

Number of Domestic References	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
1-50	4	5	9	45
51-100	3	4	7	35
101-150	2	1	3	15
151-300	1	-	1	5
Total	10	10	20	100

According to Table 13, it is seen that between 1 and 50 local references were used at most for studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities. It was determined that the domestic bibliography was used at least in the range of 151-300 numbers.

Distribution of Studies on Reading Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities According to Foreign References

Table 14 shows the distribution of the number of foreign references of the studies on reading skills of students with learning disabilities.

Table 14.
Distribution of Studies by Number of Foreign References

Number of Foreign References	<i>f</i>		Total	%
	Master's thesis	PhD Thesis		
1-10	2	-	2	10
11-50	1	1	2	10
51-100	3	1	4	20
101-150	4	2	6	30
151-200	-	2	2	10
250-300	-	3	3	15
301- 350	-	1	1	5
Total	10	10	20	100

When the data in Table 14 are examined, it has been determined that the maximum number of foreign resources used in master's and doctoral theses was 101-150. In these studies, it is seen that foreign resources is used at least in the range of 301-350 numbers

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

The master's and doctoral theses on reading skills of students with learning difficulties prepared in private and public universities between 2014-2020, which were scanned from the COHE thesis database, were examined by content analysis method and studies in this field were revealed in this study. As a result of the research, the thesis levels of the studies in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities are equal.

Based on the publication year, it was seen that the master's theses were written mostly between 2017, 2019, 2020, and the doctoral theses were mostly written between 2017 and 2020. Görgün and Melekoğlu (2019) stated that the most research on learning disability was conducted in 2016. In the study of Karaer and Melekoğlu (2020) in which they examined the studies on teaching science to students with special learning difficulties, they found that it occurred mostly in 2014. In the study conducted by İlker and Melekoğlu on students with learning disabilities in 2017, they found that the most studies were conducted in 2006.

Most of the studies scanned in the COHE thesis database on the reading skills of students with learning disabilities consist of master's and doctoral theses held at public universities. It was determined that the most postgraduate thesis in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities was made at Ankara University. The highest number of doctoral

dissertations was prepared at Gazi University. It was determined that most of the master's and doctoral theses were made in the Special Education Department of the Educational Sciences Institutes.

It is seen that a maximum of 5 keywords are used in theses. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the title and content of the researchers' work are related to the density of words used in the studies. It is seen that the master's thesis advisors have the most Associate Professor titles, while they have the most Professor Doctor titles in the doctoral thesis.

In the study, it is seen that the number of participants in master's and doctoral theses is between 1-20 people at most. According to this finding, it can be concluded that forming a study group with a small number of participants is easier in terms of accessibility.

When the participant characteristics were examined, it was determined that most of the participants of the master's and doctoral theses were students. According to this finding, it can be concluded that the inclusion of students as a study group can be completed more easily and quickly.

Güngörmüş and Özkardeş stated in their study (2013) on students with special learning disabilities that most of the participants were children. In the study conducted by Yıldız and Melekoğlu (2020) on the reading skills of individuals with special learning disabilities, they found that the participants were mostly middle school students. In the study conducted by Görgün and Melekoğlu in 2019 on the field of special learning disabilities in Turkey, they stated that the participants consisted of primary school students.

In this study, it was determined that the most commonly used research method in theses is quantitative research. This situation shows that students with learning disabilities are interested in the quantitative research method in the field of reading skills. According to this finding, it can be said that since quantitative research does not require as much in-depth study as qualitative research, the researchers tended towards more quantitative research. In addition, considering that it constitutes the majority of qualitative research, the number of participants can be expected to be low. In the study conducted by Görgün and Melekoğlu (2019) on learning disability, it was determined that most of the research methods were conducted using the scanning method. In their review of the Writing Skills of Students with Special Learning Disabilities in 2017, İlker and Melekoğlu found that most of the studies were experimental studies.

When the data collection tools were examined in the study, it was determined that the forms were used the most. Accordingly, it can be concluded that forms are more accessible and

easier than data collection tools. It is seen that descriptive techniques are used mostly in master's and doctoral theses as data analysis method.

This result shows that the researchers experience lack of knowledge in other data analyzes when compared to descriptive techniques. It is seen that the number of foreign bibliography is used more than the number of domestic bibliography in the studies. According to this finding, it can be concluded that the studies carried out in the world are followed in the studies.

Considering the increase in the number of individuals with learning disabilities day by day, it has been concluded that the number of master's and doctoral theses on reading skills of students with learning disabilities is inadequate. While reading skills have an extremely important place in the lives of students with learning disabilities, the fact that the number of studies related to this subject is small can be seen as a deficiency.

In light of this finding, further studies can be carried out in the field of reading skills of students with learning disabilities in their master's and doctoral theses. A comprehensive course on reading skills of students with learning disabilities can be offered in master's and doctoral programs of universities. Theses can be created not only with a focus on students, but also by including teachers and families in the studies.

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