

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Exploring Academic Trends in Gaming Disorder Research in Türkiye: A Bibliometric and Descriptive Content Analysis of Graduate Theses (2010 – 2024)

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Main Points

- Graduate theses on gaming disorder in Türkiye surged after International Classification of Diseases for Mortality and Morbidity Statistics 11th edition (ICD-11) recognition in 2019, peaking in 2024.
- Quantitative, cross-sectional designs dominate graduate theses with limited longitudinal, qualitative, or interventional approaches.
- Local game addiction scales were used more frequently than Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition or ICD-11-based tools.
- Türkiye's research landscape shows unique emphases on preschool populations and is shaped by national institutions and academic events.
- Future studies should prioritize standardized diagnostic frameworks, methodological diversity, and policy-relevant interventions.

Abstract

This study aimed to systematically examine graduate-level scholarship on gaming disorder in Türkiye, mapping academic production and thematic orientations. A bibliometric and descriptive content analysis was conducted on theses archived in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education. Using the keywords “gaming disorder” and “game addiction,” 337 eligible master’s, doctoral, and medical specialization theses published between 2010 – 2024 were identified and coded for publication year, degree, institution, methodology, sample characteristics, diagnostic frameworks, and measurement tools. Results revealed $n = 337$ studies, which increased notably after Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition introduced Internet Gaming Disorder (2013) and surged following International Classification of Diseases for Mortality and Morbidity Statistics 11th edition’s recognition of Gaming Disorder (2019), peaking in 2024. Most graduate theses were master’s level (84.0%, $n = 283$), quantitative (93.4%, $n = 315$), and cross-sectional (94.0%, $n = 317$), with adolescents as the predominant study population (54.6%, $n = 184$). Local “digital game addiction” scales were more frequently used than Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition or International Classification of Diseases for Mortality and Morbidity Statistics 11th edition-based measures. Few studies employed qualitative, longitudinal, or interventional designs. Distinctive trends included research on preschool populations. Possible influences of national academic and institutional initiatives are discussed. In conclusion, graduate research on gaming disorder in Türkiye reflects both international patterns and unique local emphases. Recommendations are made for future work.

Keywords: Addictions to technology, behavioral addiction, bibliometric study, content analysis, game addiction, gaming disorder, graduate thesis, internet gaming disorder, Türkiye

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Received: September 7, 2025**Revision Requested:**

October 2, 2025

Last Revision Received:

October 3, 2025

Accepted: October 10, 2025**Publication Date:**

December 26, 2025



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Cite this article as: İçen, S. (2025). Exploring academic trends in gaming disorder research in Türkiye: A bibliometric and descriptive content analysis of graduate theses (2010 – 2024). *Addicta: The Turkish Journal on Addictions*, 12(4), 374-381.

Introduction

Gaming has become one of the most common leisure activities worldwide. For most, it is a recreational and social activity with potential benefits reported for some game types (Liang et al., 2023). However, for some individuals, excessive gaming behaviors lead to significant difficulties and impairment in daily functioning (Gao et al., 2022; Stevens et al., 2021). The clinical recognition of problematic and disordered gaming patterns has evolved significantly over the past two decades. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) included Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) as a condition warranting further study, while the World Health Organization (WHO) formally classified Gaming Disorder (GD) in the International Classification of Diseases for Mortality and Morbidity Statistics 11th edition (ICD-11; World Health Organization, 2019) under “disorders due to addictive behaviors.” The inclusions by APA and WHO underscored the concerns about the addictive potential of digital games and sparked extensive research (Zhou et al., 2024).

Based on progress in the field, a variety of measurement tools have been developed to assess problematic gaming in adolescents and young people (King et al., 2020). Most commonly used tools have been reported as the Young Internet Addiction Scale by Young (1998), the Game Addiction Scale 7-item and 21-item forms by Lemmens et al. (2009), and the IGD Scale 9-item Short Form (IGDS-9-SF) by Pontes et al. (2015). Research has linked problematic gaming to a wide range of issues, including cognitive changes, academic decline, mental disorders, sleep problems, obesity, interpersonal difficulties, and (Che Mokhtar & McGee, 2025; Choi et al., 2021; Kristensen et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023; Richard et al., 2020). These are especially crucial for adolescents, who reportedly have a higher risk of addiction to gaming (Stevens et al., 2021). In addition, a wide variety of psychiatric symptoms and diagnoses have been reported comorbid with problematic gaming, which may require additional treatment (Coutelle et al., 2024; İçen et al., 2025).

In Türkiye, interest in GD began in the late 2000s and has grown in parallel with global developments (Arıcak et al., 2019; Ayas et al., 2011; Cakiroglu & Gormez, 2020; Evren et al., 2017; Evren et al., 2018; Horzum et al., 2008). Recent systematic reviews indicate that digital game use is widespread, with young males being particularly at risk (Boz & Dinç, 2023). Researchers from different scientific backgrounds, including psychology, education, and medicine, are working towards adopting the most current global trends in GD research (Başdaş et al., 2024; Palanbek Yavaş et al., 2023; Tunçturk et al., 2023). Institutions and scientific organizations working against addictive disorders aim to increase awareness and provide support for the dissemination of knowledge (Yeşilay, 2016; Yeşilay, 2018).

An earlier review article of graduate theses conducted in 2019 reported a notable increase in studies following the introduction of IGD in the DSM-5, with a concentration of studies emerging after 2018 (Taş, 2019). Since that review, no bibliometric study has systematically mapped the evolution, methodological orientations, and thematic patterns of graduate-level research in this

domain. Bibliometric analyses offer a valuable understanding of research trends, methodological gaps, and thematic emphases within a scientific field (Passas, 2024). By focusing on graduate theses, which represent the training ground for future scholars and the seeds of academic production, insights can be gained into evolving conceptualizations of GD. Such an approach can also highlight how local cultural, social, and institutional factors shape the trajectory of research compared to global trends.

The present study aims to explore the academic trends in GD research in Türkiye by conducting a bibliometric and content analysis of graduate theses. Specifically, this study examines (i) the temporal distribution of the studies, (ii) methodological characteristics and measurement tools, (iii) thematic domains studied, and (iv) potential gaps and future directions. By mapping the landscape of graduate-level scholarship, this study contributes to a clearer understanding of how GD has been conceptualized and investigated within the Turkish academic context, and how this aligns with or diverges from international literature.

Material and Methods

This study employed a mixed bibliometric and descriptive content analysis approach to examine graduate theses focusing on GD in Türkiye.

Data Source and Search Strategy

Data were obtained from the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education of Türkiye (Ulusal Tez Merkezi; <https://tez.yok.gov.tr>), which archives all master’s and doctoral theses, as well as medical specialization theses, submitted to Turkish universities. The search was conducted in August 2025 using the database’s keyword search function. Two terms were applied: (1) “*gaming disorder*” (English), yielding 54 results, and (2) “*oyun bağımlılığı*” (Turkish equivalent of “game addiction”), yielding 285 results.

Eligibility Criteria

All publicly available master’s, doctoral, and medical specialization theses related to GD or problematic gaming were eligible for inclusion. Embargoed theses, duplicates, and records unrelated to GD (e.g., studies focusing exclusively on social media or substance addictions) were excluded. Remaining thesis studies ($n = 337$) were analyzed. Screening was performed in two stages: first by titles and abstracts, and then by keywords and methodology to ensure thematic relevance.

Data Extraction and Coding Variables

A bibliometric coding sheet was developed in Google Sheets to collect metadata for each thesis. All theses were coded by the first author. To ensure consistency, coding rules were pre-defined, and ambiguous cases were revisited until stable categorization was achieved. Extracted variables included: Year of publication, type of degree (master’s, doctoral, or medical specialization), institution and department, thesis advisor(s), methodology (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed), study design (cross-sectional, longitudinal, interventional, or other), sample type (clinical vs. community), target age group (children, adolescents, young adults, adults, preschoolers, mixed), diagnostic framework used (DSM-5 or ICD-11, if any), and measurement tools employed (e.g., IGDS, CIUS, PIUQ, Game Addiction Scales). The data were

İçen. Trends of Gaming Disorder Research in Turkish Graduate Theses

analyzed using frequency counts, cross-tabulations, and simple visualizations (e.g., trend graphs and word clouds) to explore the development of academic interest and methodological patterns in GD research within Turkish higher education.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using frequency counts, descriptive cross-tabulations, and simple visualizations to identify temporal and methodological patterns. Trend graphs were generated in Microsoft Office Word, and a word cloud was created using a free web tool to illustrate the most frequent thematic terms in thesis titles. No inferential statistics were performed, as the primary aim was descriptive mapping of academic trends.

Results

Bibliometric Findings

The total number of graduate thesis studies on GD/game addiction between 2010 and 2024 is 337 in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education of Türkiye. A trend graph is presented in Figure 1, showing the distribution of frequency each year. The earliest graduate thesis study on GD/game addiction was conducted in 2010 ($n = 1$). A notable increase in frequency is observed beginning in 2018 ($n = 22$) and 2019 ($n = 42$), reaching the peak in 2024 ($n = 80$).

Bibliometric findings revealed that most of the graduate thesis studies on GD/game addiction were master's theses (84.0%, $n = 283$) with specializations in medicine ($n = 34$) and doctorate ($n = 20$) theses being relatively fewer in number (see Table 1). In terms of institutions, Üsküdar University produced the most graduate theses ($n = 28$), followed by Health Sciences University ($n = 14$), İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University ($n = 14$), Bahçeşehir University ($n = 13$), and İstanbul Gelişim University ($n = 12$). Graduate thesis studies on GD/game addiction were conducted mainly by the Departments of Clinical Psychology ($n = 67$), Psychological Counseling and Guidance ($n = 51$), Physical Education and Sport Sciences ($n = 32$), Child and Adolescent Psychiatry ($n = 24$), and Psychology ($n = 22$). The advisors who focused most frequently on GD/game addiction were Gül

Karaçetin ($n = 9$), Yavuz Samur ($n = 6$), İbrahim Taş ($n = 5$), Hüseyin Ünübol ($n = 4$), and Metehan Irak ($n = 4$).

Content Analysis Findings

Table 2 shows findings related to descriptive content analysis of graduate thesis studies on GD/game addiction. Most studies were conducted in community samples ($n = 304$), with fewer studies in clinical samples ($n = 29$). In terms of sample, more than half of the graduate thesis studies targeted adolescents (54.6%, $n = 184$), followed by young adults ($n = 47$), adults ($n = 42$), children and adolescents ($n = 15$), all ages ($n = 13$), and preschool children ($n = 13$). In terms of methodology, the studies were mainly quantitative (93.4%, $n = 315$), with mixed methods ($n = 10$) and qualitative ($n = 5$) studies less frequent. Five methodological studies adapted measurement tools to the Turkish language and culture. Cross-sectional study designs (94.0%, $n = 317$) were the most common, followed by interventional studies ($n = 12$). Intervention programs adopted by the interventional studies ($n = 12$) were named as “bibliotherapy for adolescents,” “bullying intervention program,” “CBT vs counselling on gaming disorder,” “exergaming intervention or aerobic exercise intervention,” “game addiction intervention program,” “internet-based education for parents,” “intervention program for parents,” “motivational interviewing based psychoeducation program,” “physically active play program,” “positive psychology based psychoeducation program,” “psychoeducation program based on cognitive-behavioral play therapy,” “self-control focused psychoeducation program,” and “solution-focused group intervention for adolescents.”

Most of the studies (87.2%, $n = 294$) did not use any of the diagnostic frameworks for defining game addiction (see Table 2). The DSM-5 IGD definition ($n = 57$) was used more commonly than the ICD-11 GD definition ($n = 2$). The Game Addiction Scale by Lemmens et al. (2009) came to the fore among the measurement tools used in graduate thesis studies, followed by the Digital Game Addiction Scale for Children by Hazar & Hazar (2017), the IGD Scale 9 – Short form by Pontes & Griffiths (2015), the Computer Game Addiction Scale for Children by Horzum et al., (2008), the Online Game Addiction Scale by Kaya (2013), the Digital

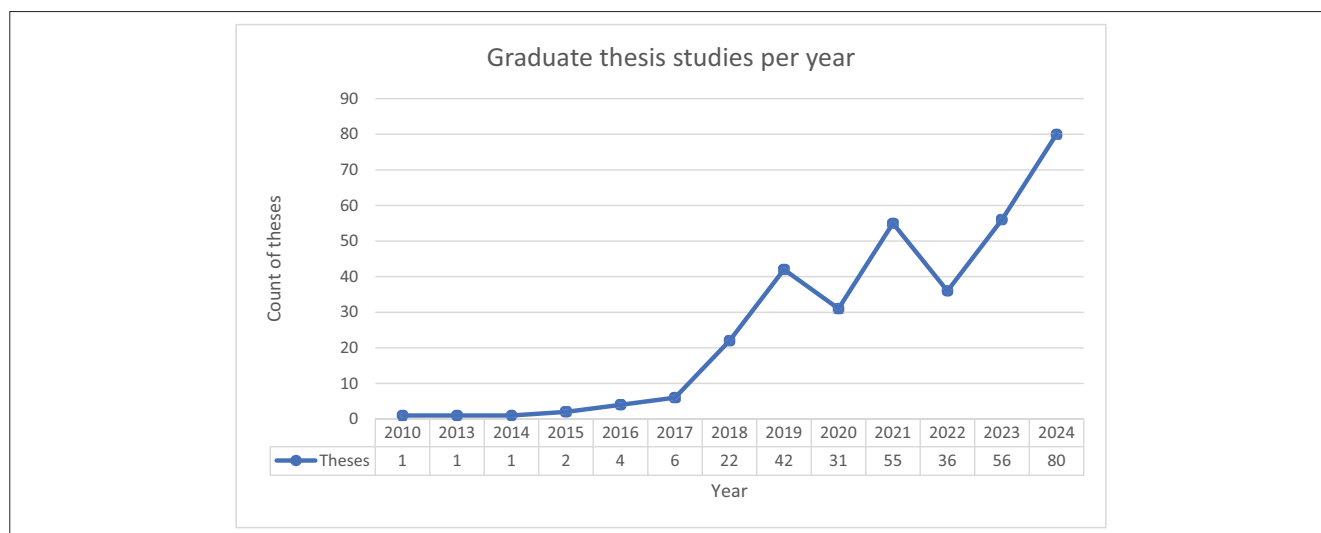


Figure 1. Trend Graph Showing the Distribution of Graduate Thesis Studies Per Year. Data Source: Ulusal Tez Merkezi (accessed August 2025).

Table 1.
Bibliometric Findings (n = 337)

Degree	n (%)
Master's thesis	283 (84.0)
Specialization in Medicine	34 (10.1)
Doctorate	20 (5.9)
Institution	n (%)
Üsküdar University	28 (8.3)
Health Sciences University	14 (4.2)
İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University	14 (4.2)
Bahçeşehir University	13 (3.9)
İstanbul Gelişim University	12 (3.6)
Sakarya University	11 (3.3)
Gazi University	10 (3.0)
Haliç University	10 (3.0)
Necmettin Erbakan University	9 (2.7)
Hasan Kalyoncu University	8 (2.4)
Akdeniz University	6 (1.8)
Ankara University	6 (1.8)
Çağ University	6 (1.8)
İnönü University	6 (1.8)
İstanbul University	6 (1.8)
Kırıkkale University	6 (1.8)
Others	172 (51.0)
Department	n (%)
Clinical Psychology	67 (19.9)
Psychological Counselling and Guidance	51 (15.1)
Physical Education and Sport Sciences	32 (9.5)
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	24 (7.1)
Psychology	22 (6.5)
Child Development	13 (3.9)
Computer Education and Instructional Technologies	9 (2.7)
Education Sciences	7 (2.1)
Nursing	6 (1.8)
Preschool Education	6 (1.8)
Public Health Nursing	6 (1.8)
Educational Technologies	5 (1.5)
Addiction Psychology	4 (1.2)
Family Medicine	4 (1.2)
Psychiatry	4 (1.2)
Public Health	4 (1.2)
Social Services	4 (1.2)
Others	69 (20.5)

(Continued)

Table 1.
Bibliometric Findings (n = 337) (Continued)

Degree	n (%)
Advisor	n (%)
Gül Karaçetin	9 (2.7)
Yavuz Samur	6 (1.8)
İbrahim Taş	5 (1.5)
Hüseyin Ünübol	4 (1.2)
Metehan Irak	4 (1.2)
Zekihan Hazar	3 (0.9)
Semiha Füsün Akdağ Aycibin	3 (0.9)
Cemal Onur Noyan	3 (0.9)
Others	300 (89.0)

Game Addiction Scale for University Students by Hazar & Hazar (2019), the Game Addiction Scale for Adolescents – Short form by Anlı & Taş (2018), and the Digital Game Addiction Tendency Scale for Preschool Children by Budak & Işıkoğlu (2022).

Finally, Table 3 shows findings of the content analysis focusing on the titles of graduate thesis studies. Accordingly, parent(s) ($n = 30$), physical activity/exercise ($n = 19$), sport(s) ($n = 19$), anxiety ($n = 17$), attachment ($n = 16$), motivation ($n = 16$), and school ($n = 16$) were the most common words in titles. A word cloud image reflecting the content analysis of graduate theses based on their titles is presented in Figure 2.

Discussion

This study presents the first comprehensive bibliometric and content analysis of graduate theses on GD in Türkiye, highlighting how both international milestones and national dynamics have influenced local academic work. The findings suggest that Turkish research reflects many global patterns, while also carrying distinctive features tied to its academic and cultural setting.

The timeline of graduate theses demonstrates how closely academic attention follows changes in diagnostic systems. A modest increase was seen after DSM-5 listed IGD as a condition warranting study in 2013 (APA, 2013), but the real surge came after the ICD-11's formal recognition of GD in 2019 (WHO, 2019). The peak in 2024 suggests that nosological milestones not only affect clinical practice but also act as signals of legitimacy, guiding graduate research agendas. National factors have also played a clear role. Behavioral addiction congresses and symposia organized by The Green Crescent Society (Yeşilay) since 2016 created opportunities for visibility and networking, which likely encouraged students and supervisors to choose this subject (Yeşilay, 2016), and the clustering of graduate theses in Istanbul universities underscores this metropolitan effect. Scholarships and grants offered by Yeşilay for graduate thesis studies on addictive disorders, including behavioral addictions, have also been influential (Yeşilay, 2018). This combination of academic events and institutional support seems to have directly fostered the growth of thesis work on GD.

Methodological patterns in Turkish theses align with global trends, with quantitative cross-sectional designs emerging as the

Table 2.
Descriptive Content Analysis Findings (n = 337)

Methodology	n (%)
Quantitative	315 (93.5)
Mixed methods	10 (3.0)
Qualitative	5 (1.5)
Methodological	5 (1.5)
Simulation	2 (0.6)
Study design	n (%)
Cross-sectional study	317 (94.1)
Interventional study	12 (3.6)
Simulation study	2 (0.6)
Experimental study	2 (0.6)
Document analysis	2 (0.6)
Phenomenological analysis	1 (0.3)
Narrative analysis	1 (0.3)
Sample	n (%)
Community sample	304 (90.2)
Clinical sample	29 (8.6)
Secondary data used	4 (1.2)
Target age group	n (%)
Adolescents	184 (54.6)
Young adults	47 (13.9)
Adults	42 (12.5)
Children and adolescents	15 (4.5)
All ages	13 (3.9)
Preschool children	13 (3.6)
Children	12 (3.6)
Transition age youth	4 (1.2)
Not applicable	4 (1.2)
Not specified	3 (0.9)
Diagnostic framework	n (%)
DSM-5 internet gaming disorder	55 (16.3)
ICD-11 gaming disorder	3 (0.9)
None	279 (82.8)
Measurement tool	n (%)
Game Addiction Scale (Lemmens et al., 2009)	98 (29.1)
Digital Game Addiction Scale for Children (Hazar & Hazar, 2017)	45 (13.4)
Internet Gaming Disorder Scale 9 - Short form (Pontes & Griffiths, 2015)	40 (11.9)
Computer Game Addiction Scale for Children (Horzum et al., 2008)	28 (8.3)
Online Game Addiction Scale (Kaya, 2013)	21 (6.2)
Digital Game Addiction Scale for University Students (Hazar & Hazar, 2017)	17 (5.0)

(Continued)

Table 2.
Descriptive Content Analysis Findings (n = 337) (Continued)

Methodology	n (%)
Game Addiction Scale for Adolescents - Short form (Anlı & Taş, 2018)	14 (4.2)
Digital Game Addiction Tendency Scale for Preschool Children (Budak & Işıkoğlu, 2022)	11 (3.3)
Internet Gaming Disorder-20 Test (Pontes et al., 2014)	9 (2.7)
Young Internet Addiction Scale (Young, 1998)	8 (2.4)
Game Addiction Inventory for Adults (Wong & Hodgins, 2014)	5 (1.5)
Computer Game Addiction Scale for Adolescents (Ayas et al., 2011)	5 (1.5)
Others	36 (10.7)

predominant approach (Paulus et al, 2018; Stevens et al., 2021). While these designs are useful for mapping prevalence and correlates, they do little to explain how gaming problems develop over time or to test potential interventions. Qualitative and longitudinal work remains rare. As in international studies, adolescents are the most frequently examined group (Stevens et al., 2021). What sets Türkiye apart is the presence of several graduate theses on preschool children (n = 13), a population rarely studied elsewhere. While the validity of diagnosing GD in very young children may be debated, these early efforts highlight growing societal concern about digital exposure in early childhood (Budak & Işıkoğlu, 2022).

Another distinctive aspect of Turkish theses is the heavy reliance on locally developed “digital game addiction” scales, rather than DSM-5 or ICD-11 criteria (Ayas et al., 2011; Hazar & Hazar, 2017; Horzum et al., 2008; Kaya, 2013). While this reflects national research traditions, it also contributes to the broader problem of measurement heterogeneity, which continues to limit comparability and weaken the field’s credibility. One potential explanation for this can be that measurement tools based on ICD-11 GD classification were not adapted and used in Turkish until recently, although there is a growing recognition and interest in addictive gaming behaviors following the ICD-11 GD inclusion (Başdaş et al., 2024; Palanbek Yavaş et al, 2023; Tuncturk et al., 2023).

Recurring themes across Turkish graduate theses included emotion regulation, loneliness, parental attitudes, peer relationships, and social anxiety, topics consistent with international findings linking GD to psychosocial vulnerabilities (Chang et al., 2023). Turkish research also frequently explored topics such as bullying, resilience, and sports participation, highlighting the impact of educational and developmental psychology perspectives. In contrast, areas more common internationally, such as neurocognitive processes, neuroimaging, or cross-cultural comparisons, were seldom addressed. This likely reflects the disciplinary focus of most programs (psychology, counseling, education) where these theses were produced.

Overall, graduate research in Türkiye both parallels and diverges from the international field. The similarities lie in the emphasis

Table 3.
Content Analysis Focusing on the Titles of Graduate Thesis Studies ($n = 337$)

Content	n (%)
Parent(s)	30 (8.9)
Physical activity/exercise	19 (5.6)
Sport(s)	19 (5.6)
Anxiety	17 (5.0)
Attachment	16 (4.7)
Motivation	16 (4.7)
School	16 (4.7)
Cognitive/cognition	15 (4.5)
Emotion regulation	15 (4.5)
Family/familial	14 (4.2)
Academic success/achievement	13 (3.9)
Aggression	13 (3.9)
Social anxiety/social appearance anxiety	13 (3.9)
Social media	12 (3.6)
Bullying	11 (3.3)
Loneliness	11 (3.3)
Peer(s)	11 (3.3)
Violence/violent	11 (3.3)
Impulsivity	10 (3.0)
Attention	9 (2.7)
Procrastination	9 (2.7)
Resilience	9 (2.7)
Social skills	9 (2.7)
Well-being	9 (2.7)
Demographics	8 (2.4)
Personality	8 (2.4)
Social support	8 (2.4)
Alexithymia	7 (2.1)
Sleep	7 (2.1)
Coping	6 (1.8)
Hyperactivity	6 (1.8)
Obesity	6 (1.8)
Self-esteem	6 (1.8)
Anger	5 (1.5)
Development	5 (1.5)
Self-control	5 (1.5)
Self-efficacy	5 (1.5)
Stress	5 (1.5)
Depression	4 (1.2)
Intelligence	4 (1.2)
Life satisfaction	4 (1.2)

(Continued)

Table 3.
Content Analysis Focusing on the Titles of Graduate Thesis Studies ($n = 337$) (Continued)

Content	n (%)
Memory	4 (1.2)
Mindfulness/mindful awareness	4 (1.2)
Nutrition	4 (1.2)
Psychological needs	4 (1.2)

on adolescents and psychosocial risks, while differences include reliance on local scales, the extension to preschool populations, and the strong influence of national institutions. Several implications can be derived. Greater use of internationally recognized tools would improve comparability with global studies. More diverse designs, especially longitudinal, interventional, and qualitative work, are needed to move beyond descriptive snapshots. Stronger interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly with technological sciences, could also enrich the field. Finally, the influence of policy initiatives and institutional actors highlights how research trajectories are shaped not only by scientific curiosity but also by structural and cultural forces.

The current study has some limitations. First, it relied on graduate theses archived in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education of Türkiye. While extensive, this database may exclude embargoed or unavailable theses. Second, bibliometric indicators were descriptive and did not include citation analysis, since theses are rarely indexed internationally, making their broader impact difficult to gauge. Finally, because the analysis was limited to Türkiye, findings cannot be generalized to other countries. Nonetheless, the study provides a valuable case example of how academic, institutional, and policy environments shape the emergence of research on newly defined conditions. This study set out to map how graduate-level research in Türkiye has approached GD over the past decade and a half. By systematically analyzing all graduate theses on GD between 2010 and 2024, this study provides the first comprehensive overview of how a global mental health issue has been conceptualized in Turkish academia. Its strengths lie in bringing visibility to a large body of otherwise inaccessible work, highlighting distinctive national emphases such as the attention to preschool populations, and situating these trends in relation to international diagnostic milestones and policy initiatives. In doing so, the study contributes both to local academic development and to cross-national discussions about the evolution of GD research.

The results paint a picture of a field that has grown rapidly, often in step with international developments, but also shaped by its own cultural and institutional dynamics. The introduction of IGD into the DSM-5 provided an early spark, but the decisive turning point came in 2019 with the ICD-11's recognition of GD. From that moment, the number of theses began to rise sharply, culminating in a peak in 2024. This pattern suggests that changes in diagnostic systems do not only guide clinical practice; they also shape the academic agenda by signaling legitimacy and urgency to researchers in training. National initiatives, such as addiction congresses and thesis grants, appear to have further amplified this trend, especially in metropolitan universities.

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