

# A Review of Leadership Research: A Comparative and Systematic Review

*Liderlik Araştırmalarına Bir Bakış: Karşılaştırmalı ve Sistematiik Bir İnceleme*

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## ÖZET

Bu araştırma liderlik konusu ile ilgili Türkiye’de eğitim yönetimi ve işletme yönetimi alanlarında yapılan doktora tezlerinin karşılaştırmalı ve sistematiik olarak incelendiği bir derleme çalışmasıdır. Doktora tezlerinin tercih edilmesinin amacı yüksek lisans tezlerine göre daha üst düzeyde bilgi, beceri ve akademik yetkinlik ile hazırlanarak ele aldıkları konuyu daha geniş ve ayrıntılı inceliyor olmalarıdır. Bu derlemenin asıl amacı her iki alanda da yapılmış liderlik çalışmalarının benzerlik ve farklılıklarını ortaya koymak, çeşitli başlıklar altında nasıl ele alındığını geniş bir bakış açısıyla görebilmek ve sunabilmektir. Bu temel amaç çerçevesinde doktora tezlerinin “eğitim yönetimi” ve “işletme yönetimi” alanlarında karşılaştırmalı olarak yıllara, bilim dallarına, araştırma yöntemine ve örneklem grubuna göre dağılımları, çalışma grubu olarak kimlerin liderlik özelliğinin incelendiği, hangi liderlik türlerinin ele alındığı ve liderlik konusunun başka hangi örgütsel değişkenler ile birlikte araştırıldığı incelenmiştir. Bilimsel olarak eğitim yönetimi ve işletme yönetimi alanları birbirlerinden farklı olsalar da özellikle liderlik konusu ile ilgili yapılan çalışmalar incelendiğinde birtakım farklılıklar tespit edilse de benzer amaçlar çerçevesinde benzer yöntemler ile konunun ele alındığı görülmektedir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler:

Liderlik,  
Eğitim Yönetimi,  
İşletme Yönetimi,  
Sistematiik Derleme,

## ABSTRACT

This research is a comparative and systematic review of doctoral dissertations on leadership in the fields of educational administration and business administration in Turkey. Doctoral theses are preferred because they are prepared with a higher level of knowledge, skills and academic competence than master's theses and examine the subject they deal with in a broader and more detailed manner. The main purpose of this review is to reveal the similarities and differences of leadership studies in both fields, to see and present how they are handled under various headings from a broad perspective. Within the framework of this main purpose, the comparative distribution of doctoral dissertations in the fields of "educational administration" and "business administration" according to years, disciplines, research method and sample group, whose leadership characteristics were examined as the study group, which types of leadership were addressed and which other organizational variables were investigated together with the subject of leadership were examined. Although the fields of educational administration and business administration differ from each other scientifically, when the studies about leadership are examined, it is seen that the subject is handled with similar methods within the framework of similar purposes, although some differences are detected.

### Keywords:

Leadership,  
Educational  
Management,  
Business Management,  
Systematic Review.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since there are and always will be power structures in organizations, that make a hierarchical distinction between the leader and the followers, leadership is a practice as old as the history of humanity, just like the management phenomenon (Hodgkinson, 2008). These hierarchical structures, both observed and unobservable but known to exist, draw the boundaries between employees and those who manage them. When considered individually, it is possible to say that employees need a guide, that is, a leader, for reasons such as increasing their motivation and commitment, knowing which path to follow, and experiencing a sense of unity. From an organizational point of view, the presence of leaders is of great importance in order to achieve the goals set, to compete, to exist and to maintain this existence. It can be said that the phenomenon of leadership continues to be dominant in the literature on professions, organizations and corporate life (Vance and Larson, 2002). Management research, on the other hand, attaches great importance to understanding leadership (Stewart et al., 2011). It is seen that there are more books, articles and theses on leadership than any other management topic (Clutterbuck and Hirst, 2002). The reason for this current explosion of knowledge about leadership can be explained by the fact that leadership is viewed as a possible solution to the many challenging problems faced by contemporary organizations, more generally, the growing interest in leadership in the corporate world is a response to challenging business conditions where change and restructuring are taking place at a high level (Holbeche, 2013).

There are many varying definitions of how leadership, which plays such an important role for the existence and development of organizations, is explained and what its characteristics are. It is possible to say that this concept is full of paradoxes, that it is an extremely complex and pressure-laden pursuit that cannot be addressed comprehensively (Luedi, 2022). It is claimed that there are as many definitions as the number of people who define it (Stogdill, 1974). Researchers with different perspectives have conceptualized leadership as a focal point of the group process, as characteristics of leaders, as behavior and actions, as a power relationship, as a transformation process, and as a skill perspective in various theoretical approaches (Wong, 2017). According to Bush and Glover (2003), leadership has three dimensions;

- Leadership is a process of influencing to structure and organize processes in the organization,
- Leadership is about organizational values and employees' commitment to these values,
- Vision is a fundamental characteristic of effective leadership.

These dimensions emphasize that the concept of leadership is not only a definition of individual characteristics, but also the process of interaction of the leader with the organization and employees. Bass (1990)'s classification showing that leadership can be seen as both a perceptual and behavioral phenomenon; focus on group processes, personality and its effects, art of adaptation, exercise of influence, actions or behaviors, some form of persuasion, power relations, means of achieving a goal, emergent effect of interaction, a differentiated role, initiation of structure, and a combination of elements (Vance and Larson, 2002).

It is possible to derive different meanings about leadership from different definitions in the literature. Variables such as the social environment in which the leader is located, the political environment, the cultural structure, the time period in which it is handled and researched as a subject, and the philosophical structure that the researcher is based on affect the definitions of leadership. When we read about the subject, we can only find answers to the questions "*What is a leader? Who is a leader?*", it is possible to make predictions about all these variables.

The search for a single definition of leadership seems fruitless and perhaps irrelevant because the choice of an appropriate definition depends on the theoretical, methodological, and substantive aspects of leadership being addressed (Vance and Larson, 2002). Leadership, which is a very complex concept; efforts to define it, such as health, law, beauty, perfection, and countless other equally complex concepts, are more likely to trivialize than clarify their meaning (Leithwood, 2005).

Leadership as a concept has turned into small and different meanings, according to a study, 130 different definitions of the concept were revealed (Burns, 1979). These differences may be cultural, social, political, scientific, etc. In addition, there may be different definitions and explanations according to changing and developing conditions. For example, when the subject of leadership was first discussed, this concept emphasized the characteristics of the people who were seen as leaders, while in the 21st century, with the technology and the virtual world surrounding us, a concept called digital leadership is being discussed.

The subject of leadership is examined in different fields, in different organizational structures and is addressed in scientific research. One of these organizational structures is schools, which are the institutions where education and training activities are carried out. Leadership in the education sector started to attract attention at the beginning of the 20th century, when scientific management theory was introduced in order to improve the quality and quantity of results in the business sector (Gümüş et al., 2016). Various studies have been conducted on leadership in schools, which are educational institutions. In these studies, the phenomenon of leadership is either handled alone (Hallinger et al., 2020; Leithwood, 2005) or its relationship with various organizational variables is examined (Chen, 2020) and it is investigated how it will contribute to the better realization of educational activities in line with the desired goals. The scientific field in which these research are carried out is referred to as "*educational administration*" or "*educational administration and supervision*" at the graduate level. Another field of study is the field of "*business administration*" in which leadership research is examined in business organizations, both public and private companies. The general purpose of research in both fields is to examine how organizations can better sustain their existence within the framework of expectations, needs and goals in today's world. Although these two fields are different from each other in terms of scientific classification, when we look at the studies on leadership, I think that the phenomenon of leadership is investigated within the framework of similar objectives. I can say that the reason that motivated me to conduct this research is to reveal the similarities and differences of leadership studies in both fields, to see how they are handled under various headings from a broad perspective and to present them in a comparative way. I foresee that the results of the research will shed light for those who study leadership, to see all the previous studies in graduate education in a single article and what can be studied in the future.

The aim of this study is to examine comparatively how the subject of leadership is handled in the studies conducted in the fields of "*educational management (EM)*" and "*business administration (BA)*". In this context, instead of synthesizing the findings of a limited number of studies on the subject, this research aimed to act with a broad perspective and systematically examine all the studies conducted in the fields of "*educational management*" and "*business administration*" and published in the database determined within the scope of the research.

The research questions guiding this systematic review are as follows;

- What is the distribution of doctoral dissertations on leadership according to years, disciplines, research method and sample group in the fields of "*educational management*" and "*business administration*"?
- When the doctoral dissertations on leadership are analyzed comparatively, whose leadership characteristics have been investigated in the fields of "*educational management*" and "*business administration*"?
- When the fields of "*educational management*" and "*business administration*" are analyzed comparatively, which types of leadership are discussed in doctoral dissertations on leadership?
- When the fields of "*educational management*" and "*business administration*" are analyzed comparatively, with which other variables has the subject of leadership been examined?

## 2. METHOD OF RESEARCH

### 2.1. Research Model

This research was designed as a systematic review since it aims to examine the studies that have been conducted before. The systematic review method enables to make some inferences by making use of the studies on a subject determined within the scope of the research and to obtain conceptual information about the subject as a result of these inferences (Hanley and Cutts, 2013). When review studies are carried out systematically, they are very useful in terms of understanding the level of knowledge about the determined subject and its change over time (Gough et al., 2012:13).

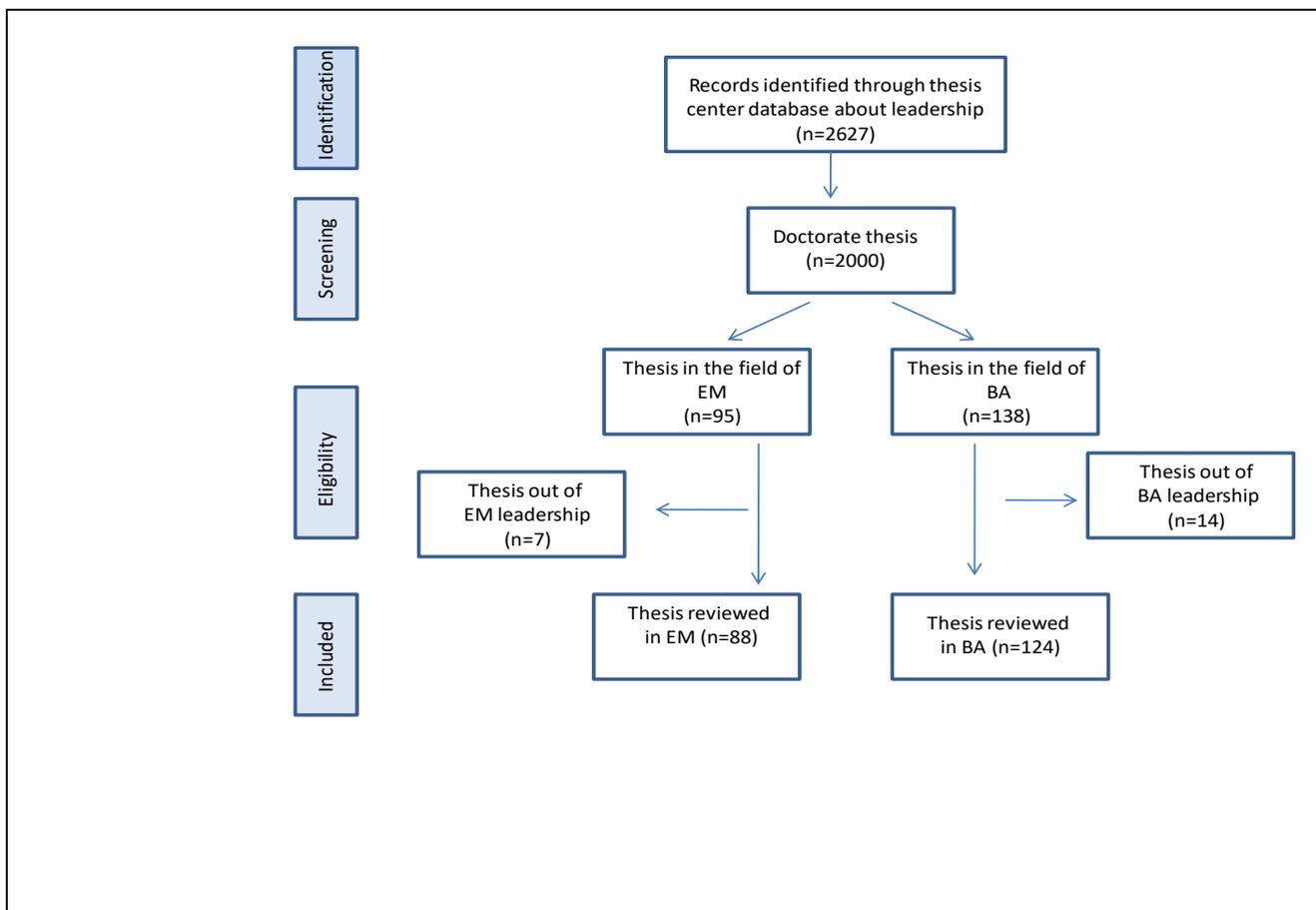
### 2.2. Data Source and Screening Process

In systematic reviews, the author needs to be very sensitive and careful in analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating the database on which the study focuses (Kılınç et al., 2020). For this reason, the following criteria were applied when determining the data source in the study;

- This study includes only theses published in the fields of "educational management" and "business administration" related to leadership in the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) thesis center database.
- Only doctoral dissertations on leadership were analyzed.
- All theses related to the subject in the YÖK database were included in the study without any time limitation.

In this study, doctoral dissertations on leadership published in the fields of "educational management" and "business administration" were examined in YÖK Thesis Center. A search was made by typing the keyword "leadership" into the search engine in the YÖK database and 2627 theses were reached. In the second stage, this number was reduced to 2000 by filtering in the category of "doctoral dissertations" and then the theses to be examined within the scope of the research were classified "according to their fields"; 97 doctoral dissertations in educational management and 138 in business administration were accessed. In the detailed examination phase, 7 theses in educational management and 14 theses in business administration were excluded from the scope of the research due to their irrelevance. In the final stage, 88 theses from educational management and 124 theses from business administration were included in the scope of the studies to be examined. In this process, the PRISMA checklist, which is a guide to help prepare protocols for planned systematic reviews and meta-analyses, providing the minimum set of items to be included in the research (Moher et al., 2015) was used. Figure 1 shows the steps of identifying and screening the sources within the scope of the current systematic review.

Figure 1. Steps in the Identification and Screening of Sources in the Current Systematic Review



### 2.3. Data Analysis

Within the scope of this study, a research diary was prepared by the researcher to analyze the doctoral dissertations on leadership. Detailed information about the research process was noted in this research diary. The description, scope, extraction and inclusion process of the data are among the information included in this diary. In order to analyze the data included in the research, a data collection form was also prepared in accordance with the objectives of the research. This form includes the following headings regarding the analysis criteria of the theses identified within the scope of the research;

- What is the year of publication?
- In which discipline was it conducted?
- What is the research method used?
- What is the sample group?
- Whose leadership was measured within the scope of the research?
- Which type of leadership was investigated?
- With which other variables was the issue of leadership addressed?

The theses identified within the scope of the research were examined in depth and analyzed within the framework of the above-mentioned titles. The findings obtained after the analysis are presented through various figures, tables, graphs and word cloud visuals.

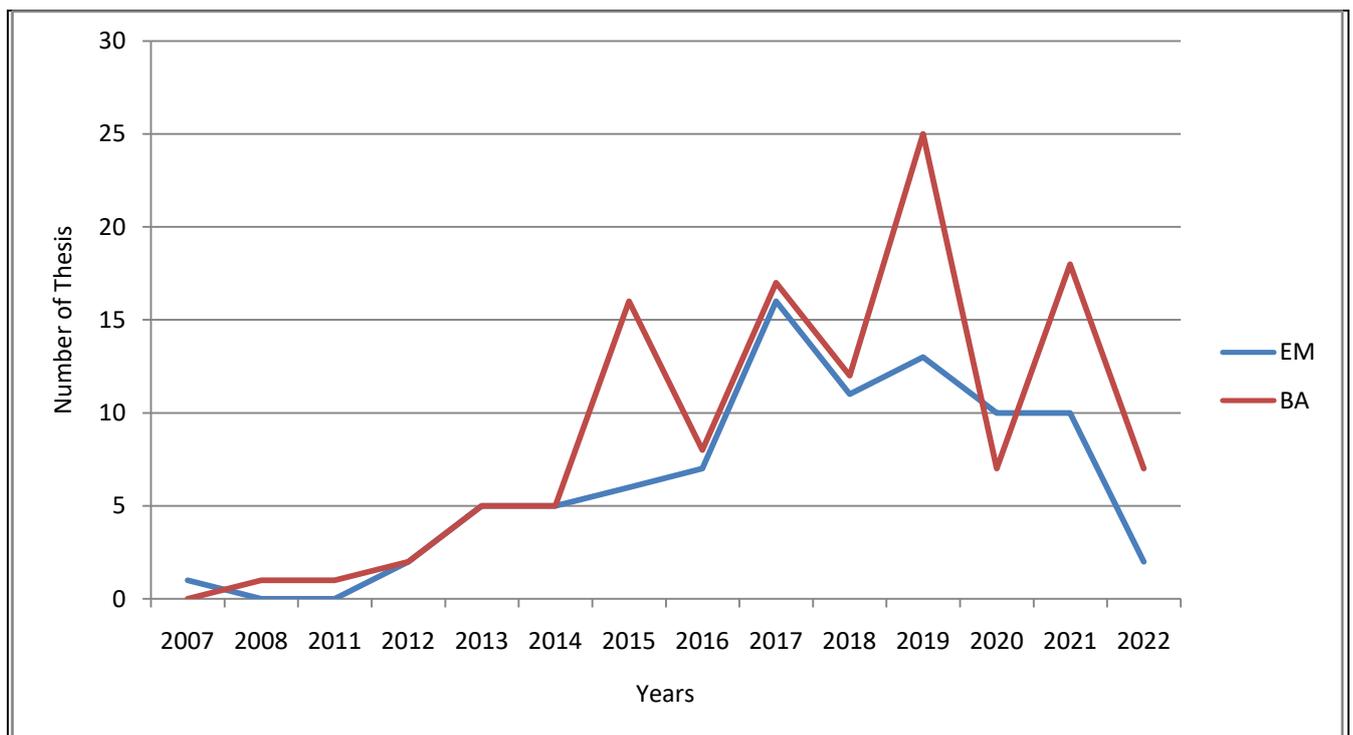
## 2.4. Validity and Reliability

Within the scope of the research, various strategies were applied to ensure validity and reliability. To ensure internal validity, the expert review technique suggested by Merriam (2018:210) was used to review the raw data of the research by an expert other than the researcher to check whether the findings were reasonable. The audit technique (Lincoln and Guba, 2010) was used to ensure reliability, and an independent reader followed the path and method used in the research and verified the findings of the study. In addition to this method, a research diary was kept throughout the process to ensure reliability (Merriam, 2018:214), and information and details about the research were noted.

## 3. FINDINGS

The first aim of the study is to investigate the distribution of doctoral dissertations on leadership according to years, disciplines, research method and sample group in the fields of "*educational management*" and "*business administration*" comparatively. Figure 2 shows the distribution of doctoral dissertations according to years of publication.

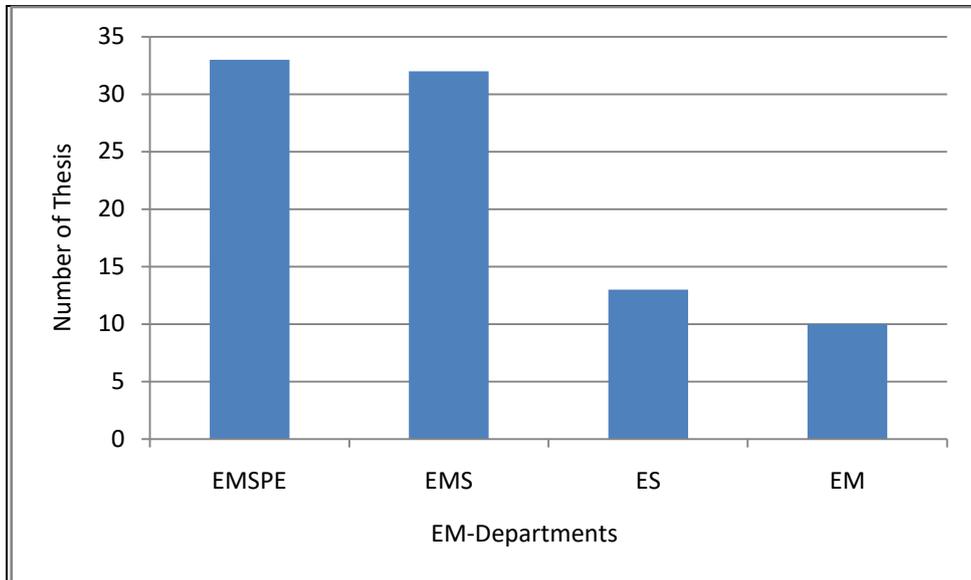
**Figure 2.** Number of Theses on EM and BA



Note. EM = Educational Management, BA = Business Administration

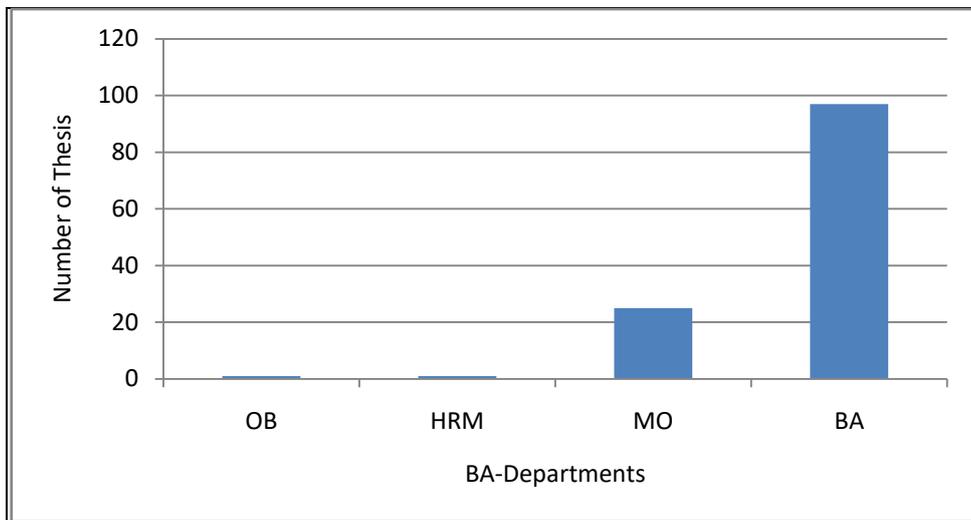
When Figure 2 is analyzed, it is seen that studies on leadership started in both fields in the 2000s. When the distribution according to publication years is analyzed, it can be said that there is an increase and decrease in similar years in both fields. It can be stated that the most studies in the field of business administration were conducted in 2019, while in the field of educational management, studies were conducted more intensively in 2017.

**Figure 3a.** Departments of Thesis on EM



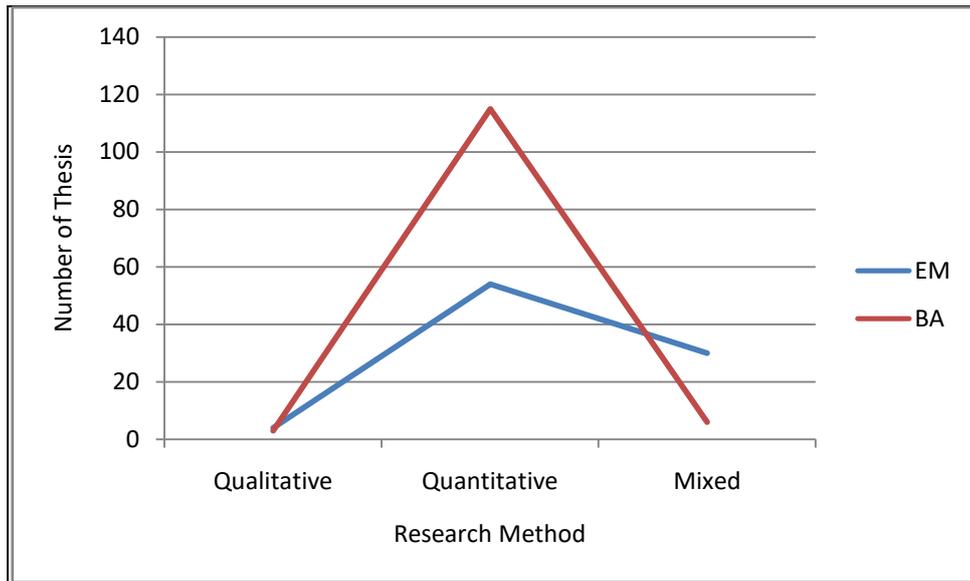
Note. EMSPE= Educational Management, Supervision, Planning end Economics, EMS= Educational Management and Supervision, ES = Educational Supervision, EM= Educational Management

**Figure 3b.** Departments of Thesis on BA



Note. OB=Organizational Behaviour, HRM=Human Resource Management, MO=Management and Organization, BA=Behaviour Administration

When Figure 3a and Figure 3b regarding the number of doctoral dissertations on leadership in educational management and business administration are analyzed, it is seen that in the field of educational management, the majority of the studies were conducted in the disciplines of EMSPE and EMS, while in the field of business administration, the majority of the studies were conducted in the discipline of BA, which has the same name with the field. This can be explained by the distribution of these disciplines in universities in Turkey. It is possible to say that the studies in the fields of educational management and business administration are realized through these disciplines. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the research method used in the studies conducted.

**Figure 4.** Research Models of Thesis

Note. EM = Educational Management, BA = Business Administration

When the distribution of studies on leadership in the fields of educational management and business administration according to research methods is examined, it is seen that quantitative methods are used the most and the number of quantitative methods is higher in the studies in the field of EBM. It is possible to say that mixed methods are used more in the studies in the field of EM.

**Table 1.** Sample Groups on Thesis

	EM	BA
Managers in private organization	-	22
Managers in public institution	-	3
Private sector employees	-	69
Employees in public institution	-	27
Academics at public universities	5	8
Academic administrators at state universities	-	2
Administrative staff at state universities	1	5
Academics at private universities	1	1
Administrative staff at private universities	-	2
Teachers in public schools	74	2
Teachers in private schools	2	3
Administrators in public schools	19	-
Virtual team workers	-	1
Voters	-	1
University students	2	1
Private sector client	-	1
Public institution client	-	1
Students in public schools	2	-
Central organization managers in Ministry of Education	1	-
Master tutorials	1	-







studies in the field of EM, while the leadership characteristics of the administrators working in the private sector were mostly investigated in the field of BA.

Leadership is a general concept and there are dozens of different types of leadership. According to the results of the research, almost all of the studies examined within the scope of the review focused on different types of leadership. It was determined that transformational, transactional, ethical, and educational leadership types were mostly studied in the field of EM, while transformational, servant, transactional, paternalistic, ethical, and authentic leadership types were mostly studied in the field of BA. In both fields, transformational, transactional, and ethical leadership types were found to be the most researched leadership types. Transformational leadership theory represents the cornerstone of leadership research and has attracted the attention of researchers since it was first studied (Siangchokyo et al., 2020). Although it is seen that it is mostly studied in scientific research, there are some studies in the literature that do not coincide with this result. For example, in a review of studies on school leadership, the most studied leadership type was determined as instructional leadership, and transformational and interactionist leadership types were determined as the fourth most studied subjects (Özdemir et al., 2022).

According to another result of the study, it was determined that almost all of the studies on leadership were not limited to the subject of leadership alone but focused on the relationship between leadership and different variables. Variables such as organizational commitment, motivation, organizational culture, organizational cynicism, organizational learning, creativity, intelligence types, trust and job satisfaction were found to be the variables most frequently examined together with leadership in the field of EM. On the other hand, in the field of BA, it was seen that the variables most frequently examined together with leadership are individual performance, organizational citizenship, organizational commitment, creativity, organizational culture, politics, job satisfaction, organizational identity, ethics, etc. According to another study from the literature, the most commonly studied outcomes with leadership are attitudes (*such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment*), cognitive perceptions (*such as organizational support and perceived structure, culture, norms and leadership self-schema*) and tangible outcomes (*such as sales, customer ratings, stock price or productivity*) (Hiller et al., 2011).

According to another study that examined the studies on transformational school leadership, it was concluded that the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction and organizational commitment was studied more; at the same time, organizational citizenship, school culture, school climate, informal relationships, emotional intelligence, organizational image, and motivation were also studied (Kılınç et al., 2020).

In this review study, 233 theses containing the keyword "*leadership*" were examined and an attempt was made to synthesize the findings. In addition, the relevant theses are limited to the studies conducted in the departments of "*educational management*" and "*business administration*" in the database of the Higher Education Council of Turkey. Another limitation of the review is the inclusion of theses that are open to access. Three theses that were not accessible were excluded from the review. In order to ensure the reliability of the research, iterative checks were made by adhering to the research diary kept by the researcher.

The fields of EM and BA are mainly concerned with management-related research in the business and education sectors. These two fields are disconnected from each other and operate under different departments. It can be said that both fields focus on leadership and that this topic is of interest to both fields. When these fields come together and sit at the same table with different perspectives on leadership, they can carry out deep and different studies. The perspectives of EM field experts on leadership in the field of BA will be different from the perspectives of BA field experts on leadership in the field of EM. Therefore, these two fields, which act differently from each other, can cooperate and contribute to leadership studies both in terms of content and methodology. A compilation study can be carried out by examining the studies on leadership in terms of their results and recommendations. Thus, it may be possible to compare the results of studies conducted in both fields. One of the findings of this study was to identify the variables studied in relation to the concept of leadership. According to this analysis, different studies can be conducted by addressing less studied leadership types (*instrumental, destructive, positive, adaptive, genuine, implicit, supportive, virtuous, agile, natural, plasma, quantum, enterprising, technical, fractal, supportive, holistic, cultural, archetypal, technological, emotional*).

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#### YAZAR BEYANI / **AUTHORS' DECLARATION:**

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