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**THESES IN CSR; “WHAT THEY SAY AND HOW THEY SAY IT?”**

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**Abstract**

This study is a content analysis which focuses on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) theses in Turkey. The main question of the research is “Are there any parallels between the scientific literature in Turkey and the rest of the world in terms of CSR studies?”. In order to answer the research question, the study tries to determine the content of the scientific thesis studies (such as research fields studying CSR, samples and methods used in researches, study subjects etc.) with a focus on future studies and possible methods. The research includes post graduate theses on CSR between 2007 and 2016. There are 128 post graduate theses focused on CSR between 2007 and 2016 in Turkey. Research includes theses in Turkish and open for access. In this context, 92 scientific thesis studies (13 doctorate and 79 master’s degree) are analysed. The study makes a comparison between Turkey and the rest of the world in terms of scientific literature on CSR and provides suggestions for future research.

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**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Content Analysis, Turkey.

**1. Introduction**

This research analyzes the scientific literature in Turkey by focusing on theses on CSR. Since a literature analysis contributes to understanding the scope of the intellectual structure as well as predicting the progress indicators of a particular field (Ingwersen, 2000; van Dalen and Henkens, 2001; Dobers et.al., 2000, Margolis and Walsh, 2003), this study focuses on the progress of the CSR studies in Turkey

initially by addressing the evolution of the CSR definition. Conventional definition of CSR, which is the most highly cited definition of the concept, describes CSR as “The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll, 1979). This has evolved into a contemporary definition in time which explains the concept as follows “societal expectations of corporate behavior” (Whetten et.al., 2002). Given the background, the study concentrates on specific questions, such as;

1. Which discipline involves the concept of CSR?
2. Which sampling groups are involved in CSR studies?
3. How data are gathered in CSR studies?
4. What are the other concepts related to CSR?
5. What drives researchers curiosity for CSR?
6. What is the position of Turkey in CSR studies?

## **2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

CSR studies used to focus on corporate level subjects while new studies have been concentrated on organizational analysis over the past decades (Lee, 2008). International literature suggests that “individual actors are the ones who determine the strategy, make decisions and apply CSR initiatives even if CSR is implemented on an organizational level,”. Individual actors perceive initiatives and take action.

One of the first steps for an organization is to develop CSR strategies in order to implement CSR initiatives in the organization. (Suliman et.al., 2017). Theories and methodological approaches in organizational behavior, human resources management and industrial and organizational psychology can make significant contributions to CSR researches in understanding cultural change, leadership, individual motivation, performance and psychological processes.

Aguinis and Glavas (2012) suggest that there is an information gap to be closed in terms of micro organizational behavior, human resources management and industrial and organizational psychology researches and addressing CSR on individual analysis level. Analyzing the results of the CSR principles and implementations would be more productive rather than emphasizing the current or future decision makers’ (for e.g. executives, employees) tendency to approve these principles and implementations. The concept of CSR can be explored in areas where companies are more liable. These are investors, consumers and non-governmental organizations (De Bakker et.al., 2005, 311).

According to Suliman et.al. (2017), organizations are more inclined to implement CSR due to consumers increased interest in ethically responsible companies and their products/services. According to CSR principles, corporations have specific responsibilities to society. These responsibilities are protecting, fostering, increasing and enhancing the benefit of stakeholders and society (Tai and Chuang, 2014). Protecting and improving are two active aspects of CSR. Companies need to protect society from the negative impacts of their actions such as pollution, discrimination, unsafe products etc. Companies also need to improve the welfare and provide positive benefits for the society through philanthropy, community relations etc. (Carroll, 2015)

Kotchen and Moon (2011) introduces a new definition which can be used for a better understanding of CSR. According to Kotchen and Moon (2011); “CSR interpretations imply that companies have an incentive to act more socially responsible in order to offset actions that are perceived as socially irresponsible. In parallel, corporate social irresponsibility is a set of actions that increases externalized costs and/or promotes distributional conflicts.” CSR activities also effect stakeholders and have positive benefits for stakeholders. CSR activities of a company influence stakeholder activities and support, improve the corporate image and enhance stakeholder and company relationships. (Du, et.al., 2010). PwC Global CEO survey (2016) reveals that 64% of CEOs believe that “CSR is not just a stand-alone program, but it is core to their business”. This research shows that, companies care about building trust with consumers, stakeholders, governments, and their employees.

Aguinis and Glavas (2012) emphasize the need for expanding the methodological repertoire for future studies. There is a serious need for theorization opportunities offered by qualitative research methods and information diversity provided by combining quantitative methods (Özen, 2002).

### 3. Method

This study includes the post graduate theses focused on the concept of “Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)”. The information is gathered from the website of “T.C. Council of Higher Education” (<http://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi>). The method of the research is content analysis. There are 128 post graduate theses focused on CSR between 2007 and 2016 in Turkey. Research includes theses in Turkish and open for access. Consequently, 92 scientific thesis studies (13 doctorate, 79 master’s degree) were analyzed in total.

### 4. Findings

#### 4.1. Fields of Studies

Table 01. displays the departments where (CSR) theses are produced between the years of 2007 and 2016. It can be seen that, over the past decade, most of the CSR studies (45,65%) have been related to the field of business administration. The rest of the studies are from the fields of Public Relations and Publicity (14,13%) and Communication Sciences (6,52%).

**Table 01.** Departments of the Theses

Department	Master’s Degree	Doctorate	Total	Percentage (%)
Business Administration	39	3	42	45,65
Public Relations and Publicity	7	6	13	14,13
Communication Sciences	5	1	6	6,52
Other	28	3	31	33,70
<b>Total</b>	79	13	92	100

Research also reveals that 31 more departments (33,70%) conduct studies on the concept of CSR other than Business Administration, Public Relations and Publicity and Communication Sciences

departments. Additionally, results point out that there is a limited interest for the concept from Business Administration doctorate studies.

#### 4.2. Universities Where Theses Are Produced

Table 02. displays the universities where CSR theses were produced between 2007-2016. Over the last decade, highest percentage of scientific theses on CSR were produced in Marmara University (17,39%). Istanbul University had 15,22% of the studies while Anadolu University had 7,61%.

**Table 02.** Universities Where Theses Are Mostly Produced

University Name	Master's Degree	Doctorate	Total	Percentage (%)
Marmara University	13	3	16	17,39
Istanbul University	11	3	14	15,22
Anadolu University	6	1	7	7,61
Other	49	6	55	59,78
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Research shows that there are 55 universities (59,78%), that conduct studies on the concept of CSR, other than Marmara, Istanbul and Anadolu Universities.

#### 4.3. Methods Used in Theses

Table 03 displays 50 (54,35%) of the theses used quantitative methods, 38 (41,30%) of them used qualitative methods and mixed methods were used in 4 (4,35%) of them.

**Table 03.** Used Methods

Methods	Master's Degree	Doctorate	Total	Percentage (%)
Quantitative	41	9	50	54,35
Qualitative	36	2	38	41,30
Mixed	2	2	4	4,35
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.4. Studied Sample and Sampling Method

Research shows that mainly (40.22%) public/private sector employees were selected to form the samples of the theses. The samples studied for the CSR are shown in Table 04.

**Table 04.** Studied Sample

Sample	Number of Theses	Percentage (%)
Public and Private Sector Employees	37	40,22
Consumers	16	17,39
CSR Projects	9	9,78
Business Executives	7	7,61
Bank Employees	6	6,52
Students	6	6,52

Unspecified	11	11,96
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Random Sampling method has been used in 28 theses (30.44%). Table 04 displays the distribution by sampling methods. It can be seen that there is no information given by the authors in 17 theses (18,48%) for the sampling method.

**Table 05.** The Most Preferred Sampling Method

Sampling Method	Number of Thesis	Percentage (%)
Random Sampling	28	30,44
Non-Random Sampling	14	15,22
Convenience Sampling	12	13,04
Case Study	7	7,61
Complete Enumeration Sampling	6	6,52
Quota Sampling	3	3,26
Stratified Sampling	3	3,26
Judgement Sampling	2	2,17
Unspecified	17	18,48
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.5. Data Gathering Techniques Used in Studies

Survey is on the first rank with 55.43% and it is the most preferred method among all data gathering techniques. As can be seen in Table 06, there are 51 surveys, 9 interviews and 32 literature reviews used as the data gathering techniques.

**Table 06.** Most Frequently Used Data Gathering Techniques

Data Gathering Techniques	Number of Thesis	Percentage (%)
Survey	51	55,43
Interview	9	9,78
Literature Review	32	34,79
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.6. Subjects Relevant to the Concept

The most frequently associated subject with CSR is “Consumer Perceptions” as seen in 23 theses. On the other hand, “Corporate Reputation” (14 theses) and “Financial Performance” (11 theses) are other subjects that are associated with CSR. Corporate Communication, Sector Perception, Organizational Commitment, Public Relations, Brand Loyalty, Education, Job Satisfaction are the subjects that are more frequently associated topics with CSR concept. All of the subjects are displayed in Table 07.

**Table 07.** Most Relevant Subjects for CSR

Subject	Number of Theses	Percentage (%)
CSR Perception of Consumers	23	25
Corporate Reputation	14	15,22

Financial Performance	11	11,96
Corporate Communication	6	6,52
Sectors	6	6,52
Organizational Commitment	6	6,52
Public Relations	5	5,43
Brand Loyalty	5	5,43
Education	3	3,26
Job Satisfaction	3	3,26
Corporate Governance	2	2,17
Globalization	2	2,17
Politics	2	2,17
Integrated Marketing	1	1,09
Human Resources Management	1	1,09
Business Ethics	1	1,09
Stakeholders	1	1,09
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.7. Frequently Asked Research Questions

Antecedents and results of CSR are the primary focus of the theses as the research question. There are certain research questions searched in CSR studies as indicated below. It should be stated that, prominent research questions are listed below rather than ranking mostly asked research questions.

1. Does CSR perception vary by sex and age groups?
2. How do consumers perceive CSR practices?
3. Is there a relation between CSR and corporate reputation?
4. Is there a relation between CSR and company financial performance?
5. Is there a relation between CSR and organizational commitment for employees?
6. Do CSR activities effect customer loyalty?

#### 5. Conclusion and Discussions

Evaluating the data, it can clearly be seen that the CSR thesis studies in Turkey are on organizational analysis level. In the early years, CSR studies focused on corporate level while new studies have been concentrated on organizational analysis over the past decades (Lee, 2008). In a similar way, this evolution is emphasized in literature and there is a suggestion for future researches. According to the international literature; “Even if CSR is on organizational level, individual actors are the ones who determine the strategy, make decisions and implement CSR initiatives”. Furthermore, individual actors perceive these kinds of initiatives and take action.

Another suggestion for future researches is that; there is an information gap to be closed in terms of micro organizational behavior, human resources management and industrial and organizational psychology researches and addressing CSR on individual analysis level (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012, 953). Analyzing the results of the CSR principles and implementations would be more productive rather than

emphasizing the current or future decision makers' (for e.g. executives, employees) tendency to approve these principles and implementations. The concept of CSR can be explored in areas where companies are more liable. These are investors, consumers and non-governmental organizations (De Bakker et.al., 2005, 311). For this reason, theories and methodological approaches in organizational behavior, human resources management and industrial and organizational psychology can make a significant contribution to CSR researches in understanding cultural change, leadership, individual motivation, performance and psychological processes. For example; What are psychological Fundamentals of CSR? Do feelings of rage, excitement and guilt mediate the relation between CSR initiatives and results? Are there any differences between CSR related values and age related attitudes? Are younger generations interested in CSR for a company's reputation? Are older generations interested in CSR due to legating etc.? What are the effects of the difference between those generations on a company's new CSR activities and policies? What are the motivational traits and attitudes that determine employee's participation in CSR? (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012, 956). As clearly can be seen in Table 07 there is a significant difference (91 %) between the abovementioned suggestions and subjects related to CSR studies in Turkey. It can easily be said that these suggestions are appropriate for Turkish studies on CSR. It is stated that qualitative method is used in 11% of CSR studies in other countries. More than half of these studies are case studies and interviews that are based on quantitative methods.

Consequently, the need for expanding the methodological repertoire for future studies is emphasized (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012, 954). In our study, the ratio for using qualitative method is 41,30% (see table 5). However, CSR related qualitative studies are far from using methods such as case studies etc. In this respect, it can be said that qualitative method use in CSR studies in Turkey is less than world average. There is a serious need for theorization opportunities offered by qualitative research methods and information diversity provided by combining quantitative methods (Özen, 2002, 17).

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