

Summary

Is Quantity Getting Over Quality?

Graduate Study in Psychology in Türkiye

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Psychology graduate programs in Türkiye are among the most preferred fields of graduate study and this demand leads to a rapid increase in psychology graduate programs day by day. However, the current number of psychology graduate programs is not known. Additionally, while the popularity of psychology leads universities to open master's or doctoral programs continuously, it is not known how well the programs meet the criteria determined by CoHE for opening graduate programs. CoHE does not have official data regarding the quality and quantity of graduate programs in psychology in Türkiye which may guide future educational policies. Although there are some examples of publications that provide information on the quality and quantity of graduate psychology programs in their countries (Norcross et al., 2005), no single publication includes that information in Türkiye. Therefore, the current study aims to make a detailed examination of current graduate programs in psychology in Türkiye. More specifically, we examined the number of graduate programs in Türkiye, the distribution of the fields of psychology among the existing programs, and the qualifications of the academic staff in graduate programs in psychology.

Method

Sample

We examined all universities ($N = 206$) in Türkiye. Eighty universities (33 state universities and 47 foundation universities⁸) had at least one graduate program that APA refers to as a psychology subfield⁹. A total of 249 graduate programs in psychology were offered at these universities, and 245 of these programs were active at the time of data collection. All analyses were conducted on these 245 programs.

Procedure

We first examined the list of universities in Türkiye published by CoHE. At the time of data collection (i.e., 2020-2021 academic year), there were 206 universities in Türkiye, two of which did not carry out the education process. Second, by examining the web pages of all graduate programs of all universities and the web pages of psychology departments, we determined universities with graduate programs in psychology subfields. Third, to obtain the education and expertise information of the faculty members working in these programs, we examined the websites of the related graduate programs. The information of 36% of the faculty members was accessed in this way¹⁰. If there was no academic staff information on the website, or it was missing or outdated, we used the YÖKAKADEMİK database, where CoHE shares various data on all academics in Turkish universities. The information of 59% of the faculty members was accessed in this way. If we could not obtain information about the faculty member's field of expertise after screening these two sources, we used the Thesis Center of CoHE, which is a database where CoHE shares various data on the master's or doctoral theses of many academicians, and we determined the expertise of the faculty members. The information of 4% of the faculty members was accessed in this way.

Despite all this research, if we could not access the graduate program staff or any information regarding a faculty member, we looked at the Google cached versions of all the pages of the university's website (< 1%). If we could not obtain enough information, we finally examined the archived pages of the graduate program in the last two years from the web.archive.org website (< 1%). Despite this, if we could not access the information, we stated in the dataset that we could not access this information.

8 There are two types of universities in Türkiye. The first is the state universities, which are established and financed by the government. The second is foundation universities established and financed by the relevant foundation based on the fees paid by the students enrolled in the university and the services university sells. These universities are similar to the type of university in the USA where students continue their education by paying a fee.

9 Although psychological counseling and guidance is expressed as a psychology subfield by APA, this program is a separate undergraduate program operating in the Faculties of Education in Türkiye (please see Discussion part for detailed information). The graduate program of this program does not offer a traditional counseling psychology curriculum in Türkiye. Therefore, psychological counseling and guidance graduate programs opened in Faculties of Education were not included in this study.

10 Since the same academician was assigned to more than one program, the frequencies could overlap. Hence, only percentages are given over the total (where each academic staff is counted as a single frequency).

According to CoHE regulations, to open a master's program in a department, it is required to have at least three faculty members, two of whom are (at least) associate professors. On the other hand, to open a doctoral program in a department, the requirement is to have at least six faculty members, three of whom are full professors or two of whom are full professors, and one of whom is an associate professor. The doctorate or associate professorship¹¹ of these faculty members must be in the field of the graduate program to be offered. Master's and doctoral programs opened even though they do not meet these criteria, were coded as the programs that education was not given by an appropriate number of faculty members who have expertise in the relevant field. Using this process, we collected data from January to April 2021. We also preregistered the current study (please see https://osf.io/3famh/?view_only=6d61824ef-627401da4d8c3e92a4a2fde) and used Jamovi 1.6.23 for all descriptive statistics.

Results

The findings revealed that 76 universities provided master's programs in at least one subfield of psychology in Türkiye. These universities offered a total of 182 different master's programs and 65 different doctoral programs. Detailed information on the master's and doctoral programs in psychology subfields in Türkiye is presented in Table 1.

Information on the expertise of faculty members working in a psychology master's or doctoral program and who have completed their doctorate in a subfield of psychology is presented in Table 2.

Education in 86 master's programs in 34 universities and 42 doctoral programs in 16 universities were given by faculty members who were experts in their fields. In 92 master's programs in 44 universities, education was provided by faculty members who did not have expertise in the relevant field¹². In 19 doctoral programs in 18 universities, education was given by faculty members who did not have expertise in the relevant field. Detailed information is presented in Table 3.

Despite being a psychology subfield, 18 master's programs were offered by different departments from psychology. Although nine doctoral programs were in a subfield of psychology, they were opened under different departments. Detailed information on the graduate programs opened under different departments than psychology is presented in Table 4.

Discussion

In the present study, we aimed to analyze the numbers, structures, and faculty characteristics of graduate programs in psychology in Türkiye. As an expected trend, master's and doctoral programs in clinical psychology had the highest frequencies among the graduate programs. However, according to Norcross et al. (2005), the highest number of master's programs is in counseling psychology, followed by clinical psychology and industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology, respectively, in the USA. In contrast to the USA and many other countries, there is no graduate programs in the field of counseling psychology in Türkiye and we suggest that this field should be among the graduate education fields in near future in our country. Another critical point is that, although I/O psychology has the second rank among the master's programs in Türkiye, the number of active doctoral programs is only one. Moreover, the number of master's programs in I/O psychology is much smaller than those in other countries, especially those in the USA (Michalski et al., 2019; Norcross et al., 2005). Given that I/O psychology is among the most popular and highest-paid psychology professions, especially in Western countries, these findings reveal that I/O psychology has not been a highly endorsed field in both academia and practice in Türkiye yet. In addition, the scarcity of Turkish academicians in the field further contributes to the small number of master's and doctoral programs in I/O psychology (please see Table 2). Since there are very few graduate programs in this field in Türkiye, individuals prefer to go abroad (mainly to the USA) to get a master's or doctoral degree in I/O psychology. However, since I/O psychology is still undervalued in Türkiye, these people generally do not prefer to come back and work as academicians. This cycle further contributes to the small number of I/O graduate programs with expert faculty members in Türkiye.

Results showed that although the faculty of most of the doctoral programs in psychology had relevant expertise in the field of study, all or most of the faculty members had expertise in irrelevant disciplines in 19 out of 65 doctoral programs. Moreover, faculty members of the majority of the master's programs did not have expertise in the offered field of psychology. The fields of study of the above-mentioned faculty members ranged from Western Languages and Literature to Computer and Instructional Technologies. We acknowledge that psychology is an interdisciplinary field (e.g., Williams &

11 In Türkiye, there is an area of specialization for the doctorate degree, as well as a specialization for the title of associate professor. The sub-field in which the doctorate degree is obtained and the sub-field in which the title of associate professor is obtained does not have to be the same.

12 As stated above, these programs are expressed in this way because they do not comply with the criteria set by CoHE. For example, if the academic staff of a clinical psychology master's program does not consist of at least three faculty members, two of whom are associate professors (or full professors), whose doctorate or associate professorship is from clinical psychology, that program is specified here.

Table 1. Detailed Information on the Master's and Doctoral Programs in Psychology Subfields in Türkiye

Master's program	<i>f</i>	Doctoral Program	<i>f</i>
Clinical Psychology	67	Clinical Psychology	20
General Psychology	41	General Psychology	7
Industrial & Organizational Psychology	13	Social Psychology	7
Developmental Psychology	10	Developmental Psychology	6
Social Psychology	9	Experimental Psychology	5
Applied Psychology	5	Industrial & Organizational Psychology*	4
Cognitive Psychology	5	Cognitive Psychology	3
Experimental Psychology	5	Political Psychology	3
Family Counseling	3	Individual & Societal Psychology	2
Forensic Psychology	3	Religion Psychology	2
Health Psychology	3	Applied Psychology	1
Psychosocial Studies in Sport	3	Behavioral Neuroscience	1
Religion Psychology	3	Forensic Psychology	1
Addiction Psychology	2	Health Psychology	1
Couple & Family Therapy	2	Psychometry	1
Aviation Psychology	1	Traffic & Transportation Psychology	1
Cyber Psychology	1		
Educational Psychology	1		
Human Psychology & Communication	1		
Medical Psychology	1		
Neuropsychology	1		
Neuropsychology	1		
Traffic & Transportation Psychology	1		
Total	182	Total	65

* The number of active programs is only one.

Kolupke, 1986), and research and practice in psychology require a multidisciplinary approach in most of the fields such as I/O and health psychology (e.g., Ragin, 2015). However, we classified the programs as “not having an appropriate number of faculty members who have expertise in the offered graduate program” by taking CoHE’s formal requirements about the issue. The findings of the present study showed that, in Türkiye, many graduate programs were allowed to open even though the formal faculty requirements enforced by CoHE were not met, at least in the field of psychology. It is anticipated that this process will have potential harm to psychology education and practice. Of course, the most important of these harms is that faculty members guide students incompletely or even incorrectly in an area in which they are not competent. Individuals who graduate from master’s or doctoral programs with a “specialist” degree, even though they have incomplete or incorrect information, will have the potential to not benefit their clients and even harm them, consciously or unconsciously. Another

harm of such programs is that students studying in a master’s or doctoral program are deprived of their right to receive a more qualified education by spending the same amount of effort and in the same period of time.

The findings revealed that 18 master’s and nine doctoral programs in psychology were opened by various departments, including psychiatry, educational sciences, communication, labor economics and industrial relations, theology, politics and public administration, and sociology. To illustrate, clinical psychology master’s programs were offered by psychiatry departments of Faculties of Medicine, work psychology master’s programs were opened by labor economics and industrial relations departments, and religion psychology master’s programs were offered by the departments of theology. Moreover, all of the doctoral programs in political psychology in Türkiye were opened by the departments of politics and public administration. Interestingly, one of the labor economics and industrial relations departments even offered a doctoral program in general psychology.

Table 2. Field of Expertise of Faculty Members Working in Master's or Doctoral Programs in a Subfield of Psychology

Master's Program		Doctoral Program	
Expertise	<i>f</i>	Expertise	<i>f</i>
General Psychology	143	General Psychology	80
Clinical Psychology	57	Clinical Psychology	27
Social Psychology	25	Social Psychology	14
Experimental / Cognitive Psychology	21	Experimental / Cognitive Psychology	11
Developmental Psychology	16	Developmental Psychology	7
Applied Psychology	9	Applied Psychology	6
Educational Psychology	7	Educational Psychology	3
Industrial & Organizational Psychology	5	Psychometry	3
Religion Psychology	4	Religion Psychology	2
Family Therapy	4	Industrial & Organizational Psychology	2
Psychometry	4	Biopsychology	1
Biopsychology	1	Health Psychology	1
Intercultural Psychology	1		
Neuropsychology	1		
Health Psychology	1		
Sport & Training Psychology	1		
Traffic & Transportation Psychology	1		

Concerning our findings that even departments and graduate schools of psychology do not have enough qualified faculty members, it is not plausible to assume that these departments have qualified academic staff to teach these fields of psychology. Therefore, these results reveal that although there are rules and regulations determined by CoHE regarding graduate education in Türkiye, they are ostensible rules since they are not applied to every institution and CoHE cannot fully provide the necessary monitoring mechanism even when the rules it sets are correct. In other words, CoHE, which is the institution that determines the minimum criteria for opening graduate programs, can approve the opening of programs that do not comply with the rules it has set.

In conclusion, the present study revealed that the number of graduate programs in psychology excessively increased in Türkiye in the last two decades. Similar to other countries, clinical psychology is among the most popular graduate fields of study. However, other globally popular fields such as I/O psychology and developmental psychology are underrepresented among these programs mainly due to the scarcity of qualified academic staff. On the other hand, the increase in the number of graduate programs seems to be negatively related to the quality of these programs since faculty teaching in the majority of master's programs and some of the doctoral programs do

not have expertise in relevant areas. Moreover, several graduate programs in psychology are opened by other departments. We hope that the present study inspires other researchers to conduct relevant studies to examine the characteristics of graduate as well as undergraduate programs in psychology in the future in an attempt to determine the situation. The present study and future studies on the topic are hoped to provide researchers as well as educational authorities such as CoHE information and guidance that may help them improve the future policies and practices regarding psychology education in Türkiye.

Table 3. Fields of Expertise of Faculty Members in Programs that Opened Psychology Graduate Programs Although They Did Not Have Appropriate Faculty Qualifications According to CoHE Regulations

Master's program	<i>f</i>	Doctoral Program	<i>f</i>
Psychology-related expertise		Psychology-related expertise	
General Psychology	40	General Psychology	17
Clinical Psychology	19	Clinical Psychology	13
Social Psychology	8	Experimental & Cognitive Psychology	3
Experimental Psychology	4	Social Psychology	3
Educational Psychology	4	Religion Psychology	1
Industrial & Organizational Psychology	2	Industrial & Organizational Psychology	1
Developmental Psychology	1	Educational Psychology	1
Applied Psychology	1	Health Psychology	1
Health Psychology	1		
Other-related expertise		Other-related expertise	
Psychiatry	78	Psychiatry	22
Forensic Sciences	18	Business, Management, Public Administration & Related Sciences	12
Psychological Counseling & Guidance	16	Labor Economics & Industrial Relations	10
Educational Sciences	15	Forensic Sciences	9
Philosophy, Theology & Related Sciences	11	Philosophy, Theology & Related Sciences	8
Business, Management, Public Administration & Related Sciences	10	Political Sciences	5
Biological Sciences	4	Sociology	5
Labor Economics & Industrial Relations	6	Educational Sciences	5
Neurosciences	5	Psychological Counseling & Guidance	3
Physiology	3	Biology	1
Internal Medicine	2	Environmental sciences	1
Organizational Behavior	2	Consultant Training	1
Western Languages & Literature	1	Law	1
Computer & Instructional Technologies	1	Neurology	1
Pharmacology	1	Organizational Behavior	1
Communication Sciences	1	Medical Pharmacology	1
Social Work	1		
Sociology	1		
Emergency Medicine	1		
Sport Sciences	1		

Note. We could not find the information of 41 faculty members in master's programs and 15 faculty members in doctoral programs in any database we examined.

Table 4. Detailed Information on the Graduate Programs Opened under Different Departments than Psychology in Türkiye

Master's Programs			
Department	f_{total}	Offered program	f
Psychiatry	6	Clinical Psychology	6
Labor Economics & Industrial Relations	4	Work Psychology & Human Resources	2
		Management & Work Psychology	2
Theology	3	Religion Psychology	3
Sport Sciences	2	Psychosocial Areas in Sport	2
Educational Sciences	1	Educational Psychology	1
Communication	1	Human Psychology & Communication	1
Health Sciences	1	Health Psychology	1
Doctoral Programs			
Politics & Public Administration	3	Political Psychology	3
Theology	2	Religion Psychology	2
Sociology	1	Individual & Societal Psychology	1
Psychiatry	1	Clinical Psychology	1
Educational Sciences	1	Individual & Societal Psychology	1
Labor Economics & Industrial Relations	1	General Psychology	1

Note. We could not find the information about the aviation psychology master's program.