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A Content Analysis of Graduate Theses on Agility in Business Administration[a]

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A Content Analysis of Graduate Theses on Agility in Business Administration

Abstract

Background: Agility is a widely discussed concept in national and international literature. Nevertheless, bibliometric and content-based analyses of how it is conceptualized and operationalized in graduate theses in Türkiye are limited.

Aim: The aim of this research is to determine how the concepts of *Agility, Strategic Agility,* and *Organizational Agility* are reflected in graduate theses in the Department of Business Administration between 2004 and 2025.

Method: To fulfill the aim of the study, content analysis, as a qualitative research method, was applied. A total of 43 graduate theses on agility, organizational agility, and strategic agility were identified in Department of Business Administration, Türkiye between 2004 and 2025.

Findings: Analyzed studies were conducted at 25 different universities, and a significant increase in academic interest in the concept of agility was observed, particularly after 2015. Quantitative methods and SPSS-based analyses were predominantly preferred in theses. The studies were conducted in various sectors, including manufacturing, services, healthcare, defense, and IT; the samples consisted primarily of employees and managers. Key concepts frequently included leadership, innovation, digitalization, and competitive advantage.

Conclusion: The findings demonstrate that the concept of agility has evolved from being solely an academic area of discussion into a management paradigm supported by applied research across various sectors. The results demonstrate that agility-themed graduate theses have become a focus of academic interest in Türkiye and that the concept of agility has been addressed across various sectors, particularly since 2015, providing a strategic perspective on organizational transformation processes.

Keywords: Agility, strategic agility, organizational agility, graduate theses, content analysis.

İşletme Alanında Çeviklik Konulu Lisansüstü Tezlerin İçerik Analizi

Öz

Arka plan: Çeviklik ulusal ve uluslararası literatürde yaygın olarak tartışılan bir kavramdır. Buna rağmen Türkiye'deki lisansüstü tezlerde nasıl kavramsallaştırıldığı ve işlevselleştirildiğine dair bibliyometrik ve içerik tabanlı analizler sınırlıdır.

Amaç: Bu araştırma ile amaçlanan; *Çeviklik*, *Stratejik Çeviklik* ve *Örgütsel Çeviklik* kavramlarının 2004-2025 yılları arasında İşletme Anabilim Dalı'nda hazırlanan lisansüstü tezlere nasıl yansıdığını tespit etmektir.

Yöntem: Çalışmanın amacını gerçekleştirmek için nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden içerik analizi uygulanmıştır. 2004-2025 döneminde Türkiye'de İşletme Anabilim Dalı kapsamında çeviklik, örgütsel çeviklik ve stratejik çeviklik üzerine toplam 43 lisansüstü tez tespit edilmiştir.

Bulgular: Analiz edilen çalışmalar 25 farklı üniversitede yürütülmüştür. Özellikle 2015 sonrası dönemde çeviklik kavramına akademik ilginin belirgin şekilde arttığı görülmüştür. Tezlerde ağırlıklı olarak nicel yöntemler ve SPSS temelli analizler tercih edilmiştir. Araştırmalar üretim, hizmet, sağlık, savunma ve bilişim gibi çeşitli sektörlerde yürütülmüş; örneklemler çoğunlukla çalışan ve yöneticilerden oluşmuştur. Anahtar kavramlar arasında liderlik, yenilikçilik, dijitalleşme ve rekabet avantajı sıklıkla yer almıştır.

Sonuç: Bulgular, çeviklik kavramının yalnızca akademik bir tartışma alanı olmaktan çıkıp, farklı sektörlerde uygulamalı araştırmalarla desteklenen bir yönetim paradigmasına dönüştüğünü göstermektedir. Araştırmanın sonucu çeviklik temalı lisansüstü tezlerin Türkiye'de akademik ilgi odağı haline geldiğini ve özellikle 2015 sonrası dönemde çeviklik kavramının farklı sektörlerde ele alınması, örgütsel dönüşüm süreçlerine stratejik bir perspektif kazandırdığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çeviklik, stratejik çeviklik, örgütsel çeviklik, lisansüstü tezler, içerik analizi.

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1. Introduction

Organizational agility, which refers to an organization's ability to adapt swiftly and effectively to changing conditions, encompasses entering new markets, developing products and services, or transforming business models. Strategic agility, on the other hand, emphasizes the ability to rapidly align the entire strategic framework of a business with a dynamic business environment to gain a competitive advantage. Factors such as technological advancements, evolving customer expectations, and unpredictable market fluctuations have rendered the ability to adapt swiftly to market conditions a fundamental necessity (Doz & Kosonen, 2008).

In this context, organizational agility is defined as the capacity of an organization to keep its internal processes, structures, and culture flexible in order to adapt to continuously changing external conditions (Worley & Lawler, 2010). Strategic agility, conversely, refers to an organization's capability not only to adapt to current changes but also to proactively adjust its strategic direction by anticipating future opportunities and threats (Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011). In recent years, the concepts of organizational and strategic agility key dynamics of modern business have attracted significant attention from academic researchers.

This study aims to analyze postgraduate theses published in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) in Türkiye in the fields of organizational agility and strategic agility within the discipline of business administration. Using content analysis, a qualitative research technique, the study examines metrics such as the number of theses by year, affiliated universities, research methods and techniques used, sample groups, regions, sectors, and keywords.

The *Business Administration* section of the YÖK National Thesis Center (YÖKTEZ) database was filtered, and the keywords *Agility*, *Strategic Agility*, and *Organizational Agility* were used individually and together. Inclusion criteria included theses being written in the Business Administration department, the concept of agility being considered as a key variable, and access to the full text of the thesis. Theses that only indirectly addressed the concept of agility (e.g., as a sub-concept) and theses written in a department other than the Business Administration Department were excluded. Based on these criteria, a total of 43 theses, dated between 2004 and 2025, were included in the analysis.

This study systematically reveals how the concept of agility is positioned in graduate theses in Türkiye, the methods used to examine it, and the sectors in which it is applied. Furthermore, the analyses conducted in this study highlight academic trends and gaps in agility research in graduate theses. In this respect, it is believed that this study will both contribute to the national literature and serve as a guiding resource for future research.

2. The Concept and Definition of Agility

In an increasingly uncertain business environment, organizations must detect, understand, and adapt to changes in all external factors that may influence their product-market domain in order to survive and thrive (Irk & Döven, 2018). This adaptive capacity is defined by the concept of *agility* (Candan et al., 2017). Agility, which combines the ability to think quickly and act promptly with rational decision-making (Dahmardeh & Banihashemi, 2010), refers to the rapid adaptation of unpredictable market changes into business operations (Kettunen, 2009). It encompasses the convergence of concepts such as adaptability, responsiveness, speed, and flexibility (Ertaş, 2022).

Agility is considered a dynamic capability defined as "an organization's ability to innovate, adapt to change, and create changes that are favorable to customers but unfavorable to competitors" (Teece et al., 2016, p. 18). It also includes the formation of multi-firm alliances or virtual organizations for the rapid launch of new products to market (Sharpe et al., 1999).

As market conditions continuously fluctuate and occasionally pose threats, these dynamics necessitate rapid strategic responses. According to Goldman et al. (1995), agility is primarily associated with an organization's ability to cope with unexpected changes, survive unprecedented threats arising from the business environment, and turn changes into opportunities.

Gunasekaran (2001) asserts that today's global mobility and change have driven companies to closely monitor consumer demands and quickly respond by producing right here, right now, and personalized products. Therefore, companies are required to embrace an agile structure.

The concept of agility and agile manufacturing was first introduced in the report 21st Century Manufacturing Strategy, developed in 1991 by the Iacocca Institute at Lehigh University (Kasap & Peker, 2009). This report marked a radical shift in manufacturing strategy, going beyond traditional approaches like mass production and lean manufacturing, and laid the groundwork for a new business model to sustain competitive advantage (Zhang & Sharifi, 2000). Since then, agility and agile manufacturing have been embraced as models that impact all business operations—from environmental adaptation to changes in operational practices and the development of capabilities (Akkaya & Tabak, 2018).

Agility, which emerged in the manufacturing industry, has also become widespread in the software industry with the method known as Scrum. In 2001, a leading group of engineers published the Agile Manifesto, based on interdisciplinary approaches to improving software development. The *Agile Manifesto* defined the philosophy of this approach by emphasizing individuals and interactions over processes and tools, product over comprehensive documentation, customer collaboration over contract negotiations, and responsiveness to change over adherence to a plan. This manifesto advocates a flexible, customer-centric approach to value, responding quickly to change, rather than comprehensive plans and lengthy processes. Thanks to these values, agility has become a fundamental philosophy that enables businesses to survive and thrive in environments characterized by uncertainty and rapid change (Cohn, 2006; Malla, 2025).

Agile methodologies, along with approaches like Scrum and Kanban, have transformed the way software development teams work. This approach provides faster delivery times for projects in the software industry and better adaptability to changing requirements, while maintaining and improving software quality (Malla, 2025).

Sharifi and Zhang (1999) developed a model to implement agile manufacturing. To validate this model and apply the methodology, they conducted a survey of 1,000 companies from three manufacturing sectors and followed up with case studies involving 12 firms (Zhang & Sharifi, 2000). In this model, agility is composed of three main components: Agility Drivers, Agility Capabilities, and Agility Enablers.

Agility drivers refer to how the business operates and represent the firm's strategic agility; Agility Capabilities relate to the organization's internal dynamic competencies, i.e., organizational agility; and Agility Enablers refer to the utilization of tools such as technology, innovation, human capital,

and organizational design to support agility (Akkaya & Tabak, 2018). Zhang and Sharifi (2000) emphasized that agility enablers should be fully integrated with information systems and technological support. They also noted that the implementation of this integration must be tailored to the specific structure of the organization.

In the model by Zhang and Sharifi (2000), Agility drivers stem from changes and pressures in the external environment that compel organizations to explore new strategies to sustain their existence and competitive edge, closely related to strategic agility. These drivers vary by company and context, resulting in diverse impacts and implications. Agility Capabilities represent the core competencies organizations need to respond positively to change and exploit opportunities—essentially linked to organizational agility.

Agility Enablers, on the other hand, encompass tools to integrate organizational capabilities, such as digitalization, human resources, and innovation. The gap between the required level of agility and the organization's current agility forms the basis for subsequent decision-making processes. Given different organizational structures, companies are subject to varying levels of pressure from environmental change and thus require customized combinations of tools and practices to address these challenges (Zhang & Sharifi, 2000).

3. The Concept and Definition of Organizational Agility

Introduced into the literature in the 1990s, the concept of agility has been defined as an organization’s ability to adapt to changes and rapidly respond to customer needs, desires, and expectations (Yıldırım, 2022). In the 2000s, this definition was expanded to encompass the organization’s ability to manage problems and anticipate changing and evolving conditions (Bakan et al., 2017). Accordingly, agility refers to an organization’s capacity to sustain itself and gain a competitive advantage amid uncertainties in both its internal and external environments (Harraf et al., 2015).

Organizational agility is also described as an organization’s ability to reconfigure its strategies and policies, restructure existing resources, and respond rapidly to stakeholders and target audiences in accordance with external environmental changes (Ganguly et al., 2009). Environmental changes encompass shifts in consumer behavior and attitudes, supplier and competitor activities, stakeholder dynamics, legal frameworks, and economic market conditions (Overby et al., 2006). Faced with ongoing uncertainty and challenges in their environments, organizations are increasingly prioritizing agility, innovation, organizational capabilities, quality, speed, and flexibility (Sucu, 2020). Moreover, due to the intense competition emerging from rapidly changing market structures, agility is perceived as a key solution by many organizations (Singh et al., 2013). As a result, agility has come to be regarded as a critical means for organizations to adapt to shifting environmental conditions (Nafei, 2016).

The concept of organizational agility is not only limited to the ability to respond quickly and customer-focused, but also includes the capacity to provide sustainability and competitive advantage in the face of uncertainty. In this context, agility is considered not only a reaction mechanism but also a fundamental component of a proactive management approach.

According to various definitions in the literature, organizational agility can be described as an organization's ability and capacity to quickly adapt to change and seize opportunities that arise from

those changes in order to meet customer expectations and demands (Akkaya & Tabak, 2018; Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2016; Ravichandran, 2018). It also refers to an organization's ability to effectively utilize internal and external resources to perceive economic opportunities and threats and respond accordingly (Kanten et al., 2017).

İnanır (2020) provides a broader definition of organizational agility as: Organizational agility is the capability to remain sensitive to external changes, gain a competitive advantage through new technologies, adopt governance principles such as collaboration, communication and transparency, foster a lean and flexible organizational culture, center the customer within operations, meet customer demands rapidly and ensure employee morale, motivation, merit and loyalty.

These definitions demonstrate that agility is not merely a mechanism that responds to external changes, but also a strategic capacity that transforms internal processes, embraces governance principles such as collaboration and transparency, and fosters a lean and flexible organizational culture. In addition, the association of a customer-centric approach with human factors such as employee commitment, motivation and merit shows that the concept also overlaps with the human-oriented management approach (Irk & Bıyık, 2024; İnanır, 2020).

Wendler (2014) defines organizational agility as an organization's ability to produce customer-oriented products in dynamic and highly competitive environments by reconfiguring its resources and combining proactiveness, flexibility, innovation, quality, and profitability to gain a competitive superiority. Similarly, Moreno (2017), in an article published on the Digital Forbes Platform, describes organizational agility as an organization's capacity to perceive market changes as opportunities, continuously develop new strategies accordingly, revise existing strategies based on emerging conditions, empower employees to make critical decisions, and respond quickly and flexibly.

Agility reveals a holistic management approach that is not limited to top management strategies but also includes internal organizational participation and employee decision-making abilities. İmamoğlu et al. (2021), in alignment with Moreno (2017), define organizational agility as the ability to formulate strategies based on environmental conditions, empower employees to make key decisions in complex projects, respond swiftly and flexibly to uncertainty, and transform unexpected changes into opportunities for transformation.

The core components of organizational agility are the ability to perceive and respond quickly to changing conditions (Overby et al., 2006). Perception involves the organization's capacity to detect, monitor, anticipate, and interpret change, and identify opportunities and threats. High perceptual capabilities are essential for adapting to change and maintaining organizational viability (İmamoğlu et al., 2021). Responding to environmental change, in turn, refers to reacting with the right actions at the right time (Seo & La Paz, 2008). Furthermore, organizational agility enhances a firm's competitiveness (Zitkiene & Deksnys, 2018), making it an increasingly critical capability in today's business landscape. The dominant view in the literature on agility is that it is an indispensable management paradigm for organizations to survive in the global and digital age of uncertainty.

The dimensions of organizational agility were introduced into the literature by Sharifi and Zhang (1999, 2001). According to their widely accepted model, organizational agility consists of competencies that enable a company to respond positively to changes and benefit from sectoral shifts.

The dimensions of organizational agility are defined as responsiveness, speed, flexibility, and competency (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999, p. 17).

Özeroğlu and Koçyiğit (2020) fundamentally associate responsiveness with strategic agility, emphasizing organizations' ability to recognize and capitalize on opportunities early. This competency encompasses not only reactive but also proactive behaviors. “Responsiveness”, refers to an organization’s ability to perceive changes and react quickly and effectively to take advantage of them (Özeroğlu & Koçyiğit, 2020, p. 16). “Speed”, denotes the organization’s capability to produce goods efficiently in less time and to deliver current or new products to the market promptly. It reflects the speed of operational processes in bringing products to market (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999, p. 18).

This dimension is particularly critical in industries where time provides a competitive advantage. Gürbüz and Hatunoğlu (2022) associate the speed dimension with "adaptiveness" and "radicalness," emphasizing that agile organizations can quickly implement radical innovations. There is a strong relationship between the responsiveness dimension of organizational agility and the speed dimension. Furthermore, the organization's possession of appropriate technology influences this dimension of agility (Akkaya & Tabak, 2018, p. 189).

“Flexibility”, is the organization’s ability to adapt accurately and timely to updated customer demands, technological developments, and emerging conditions by utilizing available resources. Organizational flexibility is also influenced by the capacity of employees to handle diverse tasks, the organizational structure, and product variety (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999, p. 18). Sharifi and Zhang (1999) relate flexibility to product variety, job rotation, and organizational structure.

“Competency”**,** the fourth dimension, refers to the organization's ability to reconfigure its capabilities and resources to meet evolving needs in its environment. An organization’s technological infrastructure, vision, product/service quality, strategy, and change management form the core elements of its major competencies (Akkaya & Tabak, 2018, p. 188; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999, p. 17). Akkaya and Tabak (2018) define competence as the main element that ensures the sustainability of agile behavior by associating it with organizational learning and knowledge management.

4. The Concept and Definition of Strategic Agility

The term *strategic agility* was first introduced into the literature by Roth (1996), who defined it as an organizational capability. According to Roth, this capability entails identifying the right product needed in the market and delivering it at the right place, at the right time, and with appropriate pricing.

Weber and Tarba (2014) describe strategic agility as the capability of organizations to restructure their strategies in a way that is sensitive and adaptable to environmental change, enabling them to adjust to shifting conditions, develop innovative solutions, and create value. They identify two fundamental dimensions of strategic agility. The first is leadership, which interprets the direction of change and implements the most appropriate strategy using the right resources; the second is organizational design, which facilitates the implementation of strategic actions.

Doz and Kosonen (2008), who emphasize the importance of strategic agility in helping organizations become agile, categorize the concept into three dimensions: strategic sensitivity, leadership unity, and resource fluidity. Taşgit et al. (2023), in their study, examine strategic agility through the dimensions of strong information flow and rapid structural adaptation.

Hemmati et al. (2016) conceptualize strategic agility as a dynamic capability grounded in the resource-based view, which enables a firm to gain a competitive advantage by utilizing unique, valuable, rare, and inimitable resources. They identify the processes that constitute strategic agility as follows: vision clarity, selection of strategic objectives, delegation of responsibilities, recognition of appropriate talent, and action orientation.

Tikkanen (2014) defines firms that adopt strategic agility as those that continuously restructure themselves in response to internal and external environmental changes and remain constantly ready to seize emerging opportunities. According to him, such firms can secure competitive advantages in rapidly changing market conditions and thereby overcome potential economic crises while maintaining their market positions.

Strategic agility provides short-term competitive advantages and facilitates the long-term sustainability of firms by enabling them to respond to changes either reactively or proactively and to continuously renew their business models through innovative solutions (Sampath & Krishnamoorthy, 2017)

Strategic agility requires the interplay of different dimensions for an organization to adapt quickly and effectively to changing conditions. For example, a strong and clear flow of information is essential for timely recognition of environmental changes; the faster and more accurately this information is conveyed, the greater the development of strategic sensitivity.

Leadership translates this sensitivity into strategic vision, clarifies objectives, and accelerates decision-making processes, facilitating action. A flexible organizational structure enables rapid structural changes while also enabling the reuse and efficient use of resources. This allows the organization to remain resilient and agile, especially during times of crisis. Finally, strategically directing resources fosters an action-oriented approach, enabling timely response to opportunities.

According to Shin et al. (2015), strategic agility represents a firm's strategic intent to achieve agile operations. In their study, they modeled strategic agility as a managerial factor composed of core capabilities such as technological capability, collaborative innovation, organizational learning, and internal alignment. Their goal was to identify the fundamental elements of strategic agility in Korean manufacturing practices and, through this effort, they developed a Strategic Agility Scale.

The scale's dimensions and research questions were constructed through extensive interviews with Korean business professionals and a comprehensive review of the literature, establishing logical and theoretical connections. As a result of their research, Shin et al. (2015) asserted that strategic agility consists of four latent factors: technological capability, collaborative innovation, organizational learning, and internal alignment. They also concluded that strategic agility serves as a driving force for operational processes and has a positive effect on firm performance (e.g., customer retention and financial outcomes).

Technological Capability is the first sub-dimension of strategic agility. In the context of manufacturing firms, it refers to the firm's ability to meet customer expectations and demands at an operational level. To achieve agility, firms must remain open to new technologies in terms of time, cost, and efficiency. Technology accelerates the transition to change in both products and processes, enabling the replacement of outdated methods with new ones. Advanced manufacturing systems and information technologies are essential for agile production (Narasimhan et al., 2006; Shin et al.,

2015). The logical connection between agility and technological capability also serves as a platform for agility, enhancing overall firm performance (Shin et al., 2015).

Collaborative Innovation is the second sub-dimension of strategic agility. Inman et al. (2011) highlight the importance of collaborative innovation in achieving agility, emphasizing that flexibility in process configuration is essential for responding to varying customer needs without requiring large capital investments. It encompasses all necessary activities involved in designing and developing a product. According to Hoek et al. (2001), these activities require personalized product and process design and close, transparent communication between the firm and its customers. Through collaborative innovation, firms can differentiate themselves and gain a competitive advantage. Mishra and Shah (2009) found that collaborative innovation shortens production cycles in the development of new products and services, reduces time and costs associated with non-value-adding processes, boosts firm revenues, and positively influences performance.

Organizational Learning the third sub-dimension of strategic agility, refers to the firm's capability to generate, adapt, and disseminate knowledge while integrating internal and external factors. Organizational learning enhances task performance and strengthens experience-based organizational effectiveness. Knowledge-intensive organizations are constantly evolving, creative, multidimensional, and highly effective in problem-solving. Therefore, organizational learning is considered a core dimension of strategic agility (Shin et al., 2015). Organizational learning enables firms to acquire deeper understanding of the behaviors of customers, competitors, and market regulators, allowing them to accurately interpret market trends and respond effectively (Uğurlu et al., 2019).

Internal Alignment the fourth dimension of strategic agility, refers to the degree of consistency and collective effort among a firm's structure, goals, strategies, needs, and employees. It targets a strategically unified and ideal organizational state dominated by cohesive leadership. High levels of agreement and coherence among functional units regarding strategic matters are essential. Organizational alignment enhances a firm's ability to understand its environment and respond promptly, while also fostering strategic consensus internally. It is particularly critical for firms operating in highly uncertain sectors, as it can positively impact performance (Shin et al., 2015; Uğurlu et al., 2019).

5. Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine postgraduate theses published in Türkiye between 2004 and 2025 on the subject of *agility* within the discipline of Business Administration, as archived in the National Thesis Center database, and to identify trends in this field. The research is conducted using a qualitative research approach—specifically, the content analysis method. Content analysis is a research technique that entails a systematic and in-depth examination of various qualitative data (such as written, visual, or audio materials). The goal of this analysis is to identify meanings, themes, and patterns within the collected data in order to make sense of social reality.

Originally developed in the 1980s for analyzing content in mass communication, content analysis later became an accepted methodology in psychology and social sciences. It can be applied in both qualitative and quantitative studies. As a methodological and systematic objective technique, content analysis aims to identify, classify, and interpret fundamental components within texts or discourses. It involves analyzing the presence of predefined categories or codes within a given text or visual

(Robert & Bouillaget, 1997). Content analysis can also be described as the process of quantifying and digitizing what people write and say (Alanka, 2024).

According to Alanka (2024), content analysis is a set of methodological tools and techniques designed to derive meanings from concepts, texts, and verbal or written materials based on predefined criteria, operating as an objective, systematic, and deductive reading tool that investigates social reality. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008) emphasize that this method allows for similar data to be grouped, organized, and interpreted around specific concepts and themes, thereby facilitating a more detailed examination of collected data and the identification of key concepts, categories, and themes.

Several prior studies have conducted content analysis of postgraduate theses archived in the National Thesis Center. For example: Kırkıl and Boran (2025) analyzed theses on *Digital Librarianship*, Öztürk and Parlar (2022) studied *Family Education in Türkiye*, Gültekin and Turhan (2021) focused on *Happiness*, Yılmazel (2019) conducted a bibliometric analysis of theses on *Big Data*.

In Türkiye, the concept of agility has increasingly been explored over the past decade within the contexts of institutional dynamics, strategic management, and human resources. Examining postgraduate theses using content analysis thus provides valuable insights into the structural trends in the literature.

For instance, Demirel and Güler (2022) analyzed 39 postgraduate theses published between 2008 and 2021, revealing both the theoretical foundations and methodological and sectoral diversity of organizational agility research. They found that quantitative techniques were the most frequently used research methods, while interest in mixed methods remained limited indicating that methodological diversity in the field is still developing. Similarly, Güler (2023) used both visual mapping and content analysis to examine theses and articles on agility, uncovering networks of academic interaction. Through keyword co-occurrence and co-citation analysis, it was observed that the theses clustered thematically. This method was found to be effective for visualizing conceptual proximity among studies. The majority of the theses were found to focus primarily on strategic agility and organizational flexibility.

Likewise, Dal and Çelik (2025) examined the distribution of postgraduate theses by year and reported a sharp increase in agility-focused studies after 2020. This trend suggests that agility has gained prominence in organizational transformation efforts in the post-pandemic period. Additionally, most of the analyzed theses focused on the public sector, while private sector dynamics appeared to be underrepresented—indicating an institutional imbalance in the literature.

Finally, İpçioğlu and Koca (2024) conducted a bibliometric evaluation of postgraduate theses, analyzing author productivity and institutional distribution. Their study identified universities with high thesis output and highlighted influential authors in the field. These findings contribute significantly to understanding the academic clustering of agility research.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that postgraduate research on agility in Türkiye is expanding in both conceptual depth and methodological variety. However, the limited use of qualitative data analysis and sectoral comparisons indicates ongoing gaps in the literature. These gaps may be addressed in the future through meta-synthesis and cross-sectional studies.

In the present study, postgraduate theses in the field of Business Administration were reviewed through the National Thesis Center database to determine how the concepts of *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility* have been addressed. The scanning was based on the titles and contents of the theses published between 2004 and 2025. A total of 43 postgraduate theses were identified: 21 doctoral dissertations and 22 master's theses focusing on the aforementioned concepts.

6. Research Questions

To analyze postgraduate theses written between 2004 and 2025 on the subjects of *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility,* the following research questions are addressed:

RQ_1. How many theses include the variables *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility*? Among these, how many are master's theses and how many are doctoral dissertations? How many of these theses are written in English and how many in Turkish?

RQ_2. What is the distribution of the theses by year?

RQ_3. Which universities have produced theses containing the variables *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility* within the field of Business Administration?

RQ_4. What research methods (including software used for analysis) and techniques were employed in these theses? What are the characteristics of their sample groups?

RQ_5. In which sectors and regions were the research studies conducted?

RQ_6. Which agility-related concept (agility, organizational agility, and strategic agility) is most frequently used in these theses?

RQ_7. How frequently are the keywords listed in Table 9 used in the theses?

7. Findings

In Türkiye, a total of 43 theses on *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility* are archived in the YÖKTEZ National Thesis Center database. The findings derived from the analysis of these 43 postgraduate theses, based on the research questions outlined above, are presented Table 1.

Table 1

General Evaluation of the Number of Postgraduate Theses on Agility, Organizational Agility and Strategic Agility (2004-2025)

Thesis	English	Turkish	Number
Master's	3	19	22
Doctorate	2	19	21
Total	4	39	43

According to Table 1, between 2004 and 2025, a total of 43 postgraduate theses were identified in the field of Business Administration, covering the concepts of *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility*. Based on the search in the National Thesis Center database, it was found that there are 22 master's theses (3 in English and 19 in Turkish) and 21 doctoral dissertations (2 in English and 19 in Turkish). The number of theses (2004–June 2025) is given in Table 2.

Table 2

Number of Theses by Year

Time Range of Theses Written by Year	Master's	Doctorate
2025 - June	1	-
2020 - 2025	17	20
2015 - 2020	3	1
2010 - 2015	-	-
2005 - 2010	-	-
2004	1	-
Total	22	21

Table 2 presents the number of theses written in five-year intervals between 2004 and June 2025. After a single master's thesis on agility in 2004, no theses were published between 2005 and 2015. Between 2015 and 2020, three master's theses and one doctoral dissertation were published. The number of studies significantly increased between 2020 and 2025, with 17 master's theses and 20 doctoral dissertations. As of June 2025, an additional master's thesis was recorded. The university ranking of theses on agility variables is given in Table 3.

Table 3

University Ranking of Theses Containing Agility, Organizational Agility and Strategic Agility Variables

University Rankings of Theses Written in the Field of Agility Between 2004 and 2025	Number	Master's	Doctorate
Istanbul Sebahattin Zaim University	4	3	1
Selçuk University	3	-	3
Istanbul Okan University	3	2	1
Istanbul Arel University	3	1	2
Istanbul University	3	1	2
Istanbul Gelişim University	3	3	-
Bahçeşehir University	3	3	-
Karabük University	3	-	3
Marmara University	2	2	-
Altınbaş University	1	1	-
Istanbul Aydın University	1	1	-
Pamukkale University	1	-	1
Yıldız Teknik University	1	-	1
Gebze Teknik University	1	1	-
Erzurum Teknik University	1	1	-
Kocaeli University	1	-	1
Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University	1	-	1
Aksaray University	1	-	1
Istanbul Ticaret University	1	-	1
Izmir Demokrasi University	1	1	-
Beykent University	1	-	1
Doğuş University	1	-	1
Karadeniz Teknik University	1	1	-
Yaşar University	1	-	1
Dokuz Eylül University	1	1	-
Total	43	22	21

A total of 43 theses written between 2004 and 2025 were analyzed to identify the universities that have produced research on agility. As indicated in Table 4, the university with the highest number of theses is Istanbul Sebahattin Zaim University, with a total of 4 theses (3 master's and 1 doctoral). Selçuk University, Istanbul Okan University, Istanbul Arel University, Istanbul University, Istanbul Gelişim University, Bahçeşehir University, and Karabük University each produced 3 theses, while

Marmara University published 2. Other universities contributed 1 thesis each. The research methods and software used in the theses are given in Table 4.

Table 4

Research Methods and Software Used for Analysis in Theses

Programs Used for Analysis	Number	Research Methods of Theses	Number
Spss	18	Quantitative	38
Spss- Amos	12	Qualitative	3
Spss- Smart Pls	3	Qualitative-Qualitative (Mixed)	2
Amos	3		
Spss- Process Macro	1		
Spss- Process Macro- Amos	1		
Situation Analysis (Qualitative)	2		
Interview (Qualitative)	1		
TOPSIS (Qualitative-Quantitative)	1		
Situation-Survey Analysis (Qualitative-Quantitative/Spss – Amos – Process Macro)	1		
Total	43		43

Table 4 presents an evaluation of the research methods and software tools employed in the 43 postgraduate theses written between 2004 and 2025 on the topic of agility. The data is organized in order of frequency of usage: A total of 38 theses used quantitative methods (mainly through surveys and statistical analysis), 3 theses employed qualitative methods (including case study and interview techniques), 2 theses applied mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative).

As for software usage: SPSS was used in 23 theses, SPSS with AMOS in 12 theses, SPSS with SmartPLS in 3 theses, AMOS alone in 3 theses, SPSS with Process Macro in 1 thesis, And 1 thesis applied a combination of SPSS, Process Macro, and AMOS for a mixed-method approach. The sample profiles in the theses are given in Table 5.

Table 5

Sample Profiles in the Theses

Sample Profile	Number
Employee	22
Manager	13
Manager + Employee (Mixed)	7
Expert Auditors	1
Total	43

Table 5 analyzes the sample profiles used in the 43 postgraduate theses; 22 theses based their research on employees within institutions, companies, or sectors, 13 theses focused on managers as the sample group, 7 theses included both managers and employees (mixed), Only 1 thesis was based on a sample group of expert auditors. The sectors and regions of research in the theses are given in Table 6.

Table 6

Sectors and Regions of Research in the Theses

Sectors Conducted in the Research	Number	Regions	Number
Manufacturing Sector - SMEs and Large Enterprises	13	Türkiye-Wide	18
Universities (Private and Public Educational Institutions)	6	Istanbul	9
Manufacturing and Service Sector (Mixed)	5	Province-Region	9
Healthcare Facilities (Hospitals)	3	International	5
Aviation Facilities	3	Türkiye-International	1
Telecommunications- InformationTechnology - Electronics Facilities	3	TR ISO 500	1
Banking Facilities	2		
Technoparks	2		
Energy and Petroleum Facilities	2		
Defense Industry Manufacturing Facilities	1		
Municipalities	1		
Charitable Institutions	1		
Auditing Facilities	1		
Total	43		43

Table 6 provides insights into the sectors where the research was conducted: 13 theses focused on the manufacturing sector, including SMEs and large enterprises, 6 theses were conducted in universities (public and private educational institutions), 5 theses studied combined manufacturing and service sectors, 3 theses involved healthcare institutions (hospitals), 3 theses examined aviation enterprises, 3 theses focused on telecommunications, IT, and electronics firms, 2 theses were in the banking sector, 2 theses studied technoparks, 2 theses analyzed energy and petroleum companies, The remaining theses covered defense industry manufacturing, municipalities, charitable organizations, and audit firms, with 1 thesis each.

And also provides insights into geographical regions where the research was conducted: 18 theses were conducted on a national scale (Türkiye), 9 theses focused specifically on Istanbul, 9 theses were conducted in various other cities or regions, 5 theses were carried out abroad, 1 thesis included comparative research between Türkiye and a foreign country, 1 thesis focused on companies listed in the ISO 500 Türkiye ranking. The most frequently studied agility variables in postgraduate theses are given in Table 7.

Table 7

Most Frequently Studied Agility Variables in Postgraduate Theses (Agility, Organizational Agility, Strategic Agility)

The Concept of Agility	Number
Organizational Agility	33
Strategic Agility	7
Agility	3
Total	43

Table 7 shows that among the 43 postgraduate theses: 33 theses focused on Organizational Agility, 7 theses adDoctorateessed Strategic Agility, 3 theses examined the general concept of Agility without specific categorization. This indicates that *Organizational Agility* is the most frequently researched concept among the three. The most commonly used keywords in postgraduate theses involving agility are given in Table 8.

Table 8

Most Commonly Used Keywords in Postgraduate Theses Involving Agility

Keywords	Number
Leadership (Leadership Styles - Digital Leader - Strategic Leader - Visionary Leader - Servant Leader - Transformational Leader)	12
Innovation (Innovative HRM - Innovative Work Behaviors - Innovative Organizational Climate) - Innovation - Innovation Performance	6
Competitive Advantage - Strategic Goals - Strategic Awareness - Strategy Development - Strategic Skills	6
Digitalization - Digital Transformation - Smart Technologies - Technological Change	5
Employee Motivation	2

Based on the keyword frequency across the theses: 12 theses included terms related to Leadership, such as: Leadership Styles, Digital Leadership, Strategic Leadership, Visionary Leadership, Servant Leadership, Transformational Leadership; 6 theses emphasized Innovation and related terms, including: Innovative Human Resource Management, Innovative Work Behaviors, Innovative Organizational Climate, Innovation, Innovation Performance; 6 theses focused on Strategic Concepts, such as: Competitive Advantage, Strategic Goals, Strategic Awareness, Strategy Development, Strategic Competence; 5 theses referenced Digital Transformation, including: Digitalization, Smart Technologies, Technological Change; 2 theses included Employee Motivation as a keyword. These findings suggest that agility-related concepts are frequently studied in conjunction with topics such as leadership, innovation, strategy, and digital transformation.

8. Conclusion

Environmental factors such as uncertainty, volatility, and complexity in today's business world directly influence strategic decision-making processes. Within this context, agility is defined as the capability of businesses to respond rapidly and effectively to external changes, leverage emerging opportunities, and maintain sustainable competitive advantage. While organizational agility focuses on restructuring internal dynamics to serve this purpose, strategic agility emphasizes the capacity to transform environmental uncertainty into long-term opportunities.

The concept of agility is applied across multiple sectors including manufacturing, services, healthcare, aviation, information technology, energy, public administration, and defense. Particularly in the context of digital transformation and crisis environments, the significance of agility has increased substantially.

Agility has emerged as a rapidly growing topic in postgraduate research, examined in depth across various sectors in both strategic and organizational contexts. It has been especially studied in relation to leadership, organizational transformation, strategic flexibility, and competitive advantage. The rising interest in agility has been largely fueled by digitalization, dynamic market conditions, and global crises. A total of 86% (n = 37) of the theses on agility were published between 2015 and 2025, indicating a sharp increase in academic interest over the past decade.

According to the content findings, it was determined that studies conducted after 2020 have increased rapidly. This trend indicates that the concept of agility has become more prominent and gained a wider place in the academic field due to the organizational transformation process of businesses following the pandemic.

The significant increase in agility research over the last five years (2020-2025) may be due to the potential challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic and its relationship to the rapid changes in the business world. This may have increased the number of academic agility-related studies.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced many companies to transition to a remote working model. Traditional, hierarchical business processes were not well-suited to remote management. At this point, agile methodologies came to the fore. Agile structures, which operate in short cycles, receive frequent feedback, are flexible, and can adapt quickly to change, have enabled the workforce to work more efficiently remotely. This new working order may have created an important research area for academics and students to delve deeper into agility.

Covid-19 accelerated digital transformation processes in many sectors. Physical stores turned to e-commerce, services migrated to digital platforms, and companies were forced to rapidly adapt to new technologies to survive. Agility was among the factors underlying this transformation. Digital transformation required more than just using technology; it also required changing business practices, organizational culture, and decision-making processes. Therefore, agile transformation processes in businesses may have become a rich topic for academic studies.

Furthermore, the pandemic brought significant uncertainty to the business world. Supply chains were disrupted, customer demands constantly shifted, and market conditions became unpredictable. To succeed in this uncertain environment, businesses had to adapt quickly to change rather than sticking to plans. Agility was seen as one of the most effective ways to achieve this adaptation. Agility is no longer a concept unique to the software industry; it has become central to the survival and growth strategies of organizations across all sectors. This may have increased academic interest in agility, leading to increased research and dissertations on this topic at universities.

The distribution of analyzed theses is balanced: 21 doctoral dissertations and 22 master's theses**.** These 43 theses were authored at 25 different universities in Türkiye. Istanbul Sebahattin Zaim University stands out with 4 theses (3 master's, 1 doctoral), followed by several universities contributing 3 theses each.

The data show that the majority of agility-focused theses were written between 2015 and 2025**,** with a notable concentration in the last five years. This further supports the increasing relevance of agility in academic and managerial discourse.

Regarding sectors, 13 theses were conducted in the manufacturing sector, followed by studies in education, healthcare, aviation, telecommunications, banking, technoparks, energy, defense, and public institutions. In terms of regions, most studies covered the national scale, with others conducted in Istanbul, various other regions, or even internationally.

In terms of sample profiles: 22 theses collected data from employees, 13 from managers**,** 7 from both**,** 1 from expert auditors**.** Most studies employed quantitative methods (n = 38), particularly through surveys using SPSS and AMOS**.** Qualitative methods (n = 3) and mixed-method designs (n = 2) were used less frequently.

Organizational Agility was the most studied variable, with Sharifi and Zhang's (1999) scale being the most widely used measurement tool. *Strategic Agility* was studied in 7 theses, each using different measurement approaches. Three doctoral theses agility more broadly and used custom-developed

scales. The most common keywords found in these theses were: *Leadership***,** *Innovation***,** *Competitive Strategy***,** *Digital Transformation* and *Employee Motivation***.**

To summarize the findings, a total of 43 graduate theses on agility, organizational agility, and strategic agility were identified within the Department of Business Administration in Türkiye between 2004 and 2025.

These studies were conducted at 25 different universities; academic interest in the concept of agility has increased significantly, particularly since 2015. Quantitative methods and SPSS-based analyses were predominantly used in these theses.

The most preferred research methods in theses and dissertations are quantitative techniques. In contrast, interest in mixed methods has been limited. This suggests that methodological diversity is still evolving. In the Department of Business Administration, agility-themed theses appear to be improving in both conceptual depth and methodological diversity. However, the limited availability of qualitative data analyses and sectoral comparisons points to gaps in the literature that still need to be filled.

The studies were conducted in various sectors, including manufacturing, services, healthcare, defense, and IT, and the samples consisted primarily of employees and managers. Key concepts frequently included leadership, innovation, digitalization, and competitive advantage.

These results suggest that agility has evolved from a conceptual discussion into a practical management paradigm supported by empirical research across sectors. In the literature, agility is commonly analyzed through dimensions such as sensing agility, decision making agility, and acting agility all of which are emphasized for their direct impact on firm performance.

The contribution of Turkish postgraduate research to the agility literature has created a solid foundation for both theoretical advancement and practical implementation. The findings of this study confirm that agility has become a central topic of academic interest in Türkiye. Particularly since 2015, it has been explored across various sectors with a strategic lens on organizational transformation.

In conclusion, agility's role in achieving sustainable competitive advantage is well-supported by both the literature and thesis analyses. The insights generated here are expected to inform future research, and further encourage the adoption of agility as an interdisciplinary management approach.

This study has several limitations. First, the scales, hypotheses, and research results used in the theses were not included in the analysis. This limited a more in-depth assessment of the operational definitions and implications of the concept of agility. Furthermore, only theses included in the YÖKTEZ database were examined; international theses databases were not included in the study. Likewise, publications such as articles, papers, books or book chapters were not included in the study.

The following recommendations for future research are offered: a comparative analysis of the scales used in theses to examine how agility dimensions are measured; thematic classification of thesis results to assess the relationship between agility and outcomes such as business performance and competitive advantage; comparative analysis with global trends using international thesis databases (e.g., ProQuest, EBSCO); and meta-analyses based on previous research findings.

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