

# Complementary Therapies and Supporting Care Practices: Descriptive Analysis of Nursing Theses Conducted in Türkiye between the Years of 2010-2020

## Abstract

**Background:** The quality and quantity of nursing studies on Complementary Therapy and Supportive Care (CTSC) practices are proof of the progress of that field as well as the steps taken towards scientification.

**Aim:** In the study, it was aimed to examine the nursing theses written in Türkiye on CTSC practices from demographic, thematic and methodological perspectives.

**Methods:** The data were collected with the document analysis technique, one of the qualitative study methods. Between January 25 and April 8, 2021, two researchers checked the nursing departments on the website of the National Thesis Center of the Turkish Council of Higher Education and examined 6855 theses between the years 2010 and 2020. The titles and abstracts of the theses were scanned with keywords and 392 theses, which were determined to be made in the field of CTSC practices, were classified according to the prepared schedule.

**Results:** Most of the theses were written in the last five years, and it was determined that most (20.9%) were written in the year 2019. The theses of 60.2% are at the master's level and 83.2% are experimental. The theses were mostly written in internal medicine nursing (26.0%) and were conducted on patients (60.2%). In the theses, surgical intervention (21.9%), cancer (15.1%) and invasive interventions (13.0%) were studied, and pain (32.5%) and anxiety (16.0%) were mostly considered in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the practices. The most used methods were music (21.7%), massage (17.6%), and aromatherapy (16.8%).

**Conclusion:** The number of theses applied to CTSC is increasing every year, and experimental methods are preferred. The scope of the study can be expanded by examining the articles on the subject in the national and international literature.

**Keywords:** Complementary therapies, supportive care practices, nursing, thesis

Ali Kaplan<sup>1</sup> , Özlem Kaplan<sup>2</sup> ,  
Şerife Çetin<sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>First and Emergency Aid Program, University of Kayseri, İncesu Health Services Vocational School, Kayseri, Türkiye

<sup>2</sup>Department of Nursing, Health Science Faculty, University of Erciyes, Kayseri, Türkiye

<sup>3</sup>Dialysis Program, University of Kayseri, İncesu Health Services Vocational School, Kayseri, Türkiye

Current affiliation of Ali Kaplan and Şerife Çetin is: Department of Medical Services and Techniques, İncesu Ayşe ve Saffet Arslan Health Services Vocational School, University of Kayseri, Kayseri, Türkiye

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**Corresponding author:** Ali Kaplan  
E-mail: alikaplan@kayseri.edu.tr

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## Introduction

Traditional and complementary medicine is the whole of knowledge, skills, and practices that can be explained or not based on theories, beliefs, and experiences specific to different cultures, which are used for protection from physical and mental illnesses, diagnosis, healing, or treatment, as well as for maintaining good health.<sup>1,2</sup> In 2014, the Ministry of Health published the "Traditional and Complementary Medicine Practices Regulation" in order to determine the traditional and complementary medicine practice methods for human health, to train and authorize the people who will apply these methods and to regulate the working procedures and principles of health institutions where these methods will be applied.<sup>3</sup> Complementary therapies subject to regulation are acupuncture, homeopathy, hypnosis, chiropractic practice, apitherapy, osteopathy, phytotherapy, mesotherapy, leech therapy, music therapy, cupping, prolotherapy, reflexology, larval (maggot), and ozone practices.<sup>3,4</sup>

Complementary Therapy and Supportive Care (CTSC) practices, which are widely applied in East Asia, today provide an important health service for more than half of the world population.<sup>5</sup> CTSC utilization rate of practices in a study conducted in Türkiye was found to be 60.5%. This ratio shows that one out of every two patients used CTSC practices.<sup>6</sup> Studies conducted in Türkiye on CTSC practices generally show that apitherapy, phytotherapy, hypnosis, leech, homeopathy, chiropractic, cup practices, larva practices,

mesotherapy, prolotherapy, osteopathy, ozone practices, reflexology, and music therapy methods are used.<sup>7</sup> In the literature, it is seen that these CTSC applications are applied in diseases such as asthma,<sup>8</sup> hypertension,<sup>9</sup> headache,<sup>10</sup> rheumatic diseases,<sup>11</sup> liver disease, and kidney failure.<sup>12</sup>

In recent years, the trend toward CTSC practices has increased in many countries, especially in European Union countries.<sup>5</sup> CTSC practices, which have become very popular among nursing professionals worldwide, have been integrated into nursing care as an independent role.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, nurses are expected to develop practices for CTSC, to determine effective strategies, and to guide healthy/sick individuals to use CTSC practices effectively and correctly. Therefore, studies on developing appropriate strategies for prevention and treatment are important. However, all of the complementary therapy methods in Turkish regulations are applied by certified physicians and nurses are limited in the practices they can do independently.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the theses planned for this area are not supported by the ethics committees, so researchers have difficulties.

The quality and quantity of the studies conducted in a field are proof of the steps taken towards scientificization as well as the development of that field.<sup>14</sup> In particular, it is important and a necessity to present the studies on different aspects of the same field as a whole. Nursing study has been examined by nurse researchers in most of the countries and study priorities in nursing have been determined. Determining the priorities contributes to the determination of the health problems of the country and the scientific development of the profession.<sup>15</sup> With this study, it was to create a resource that researchers in this field can benefit from by making a descriptive analysis of postgraduate thesis studies on CTSC conducted in the field of nursing in Türkiye and to shed light on other studies and nursing practices.

### Study Questions

1. How many nursing theses on CTSC practices have been published on the website of the Turkish Higher Education Council (HEC) National Thesis Center between 2010-2020?
2. What is the distribution of nursing theses related to CTSC practices according to their types and methods?
3. How many theses have been published on CTSC practices according to nursing fields?
4. Who has been these theses conducted about?
5. What are the conditions/diseases / symptoms/fields on which nursing theses related to CTSC practices have been studied?
6. Which CTSC practices have been used in theses?
7. Which variables have been affected by CTSC applications in theses?

## Materials and Methods

### Study Design

This study is a descriptive study designed in the screening model, one of the qualitative study methods.

### Population and Sample

The target population of the study consisted of all postgraduate thesis studies conducted in the field of nursing between 2010 and 2020 on Türkiye HEC National Thesis Center website. The criterion

sampling method, which is one of the purposive sampling methods, was determined for the sampling of the study.

### Data Collection

In determining the theses to be used in the study, firstly, the screening and selection criteria were determined by the researchers. The main criterion is that the scanned theses are in the field of nursing and CTSC practices. The following steps have been followed for document review.

1. Reaching the dissertation on the Türkiye HEC National Thesis Center website,
2. Understanding theses,
3. Analyzing the data of the theses,
4. Using data.

The study data were collected by two researchers (AK, OK) between January 25 and April 8, 2021 with a document analysis technique. In the study, first, the main science branches in the HEC National Thesis Center website were scanned and listed using the keyword "nursing." Then, from the detailed search section of the website, the listed majors were entered one by one, and 6855 theses between the years 2010-2020 were reached. By reviewing the titles and abstracts of the theses, "complementary," "alternative therapy," "music," "reflexology," "aromatherapy," "massage," "reiki," "acupuncture," "acupressure," "yoga," "warm," "cold," "TENS," "music," "cup," "phytotherapy," "leech," "hirudotherapy," "hypnosis," "ozone," "mesotherapy," "apitherapy," "prolotherapy," "The words" "osteopathy," "homeopathy," "chiropractic," "larva practice," "magot therapy," "frequency therapy" were scanned and the theses to be used in the study were determined according to the selection criteria. Inconsistencies or disagreements among researchers regarding study inclusion were resolved by consensus. Finally, 392 theses, which were determined to be made in the field of CTSC practices, were classified and evaluated according to the prepared schedule. The titles of the table created in the Microsoft Office Excel program are shown below. Theses included in the study were classified according to the chart and entered into the Excel program.

### Study fields reviewed in theses

- Year of the thesis publication year
- Type of thesis
- Method of the thesis
- Nursing field including the thesis
- With whom the thesis was done
- Situation/disease/symptom/field studied on in the thesis
- Variables affected by CTST practices in the thesis
- Used CTSC practices method

### Ethic Approval

Before starting the study, ethics committee approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Kayseri University, (Approval Number: 31, Date: 28.05.2021). Informed consent was not obtained because individuals did not constitute the sample of this study. The ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki were complied with at all stages of the study.

### Data Analysis

The statistical package program evaluated the data obtained from the study in the computer environment IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0 (IBM

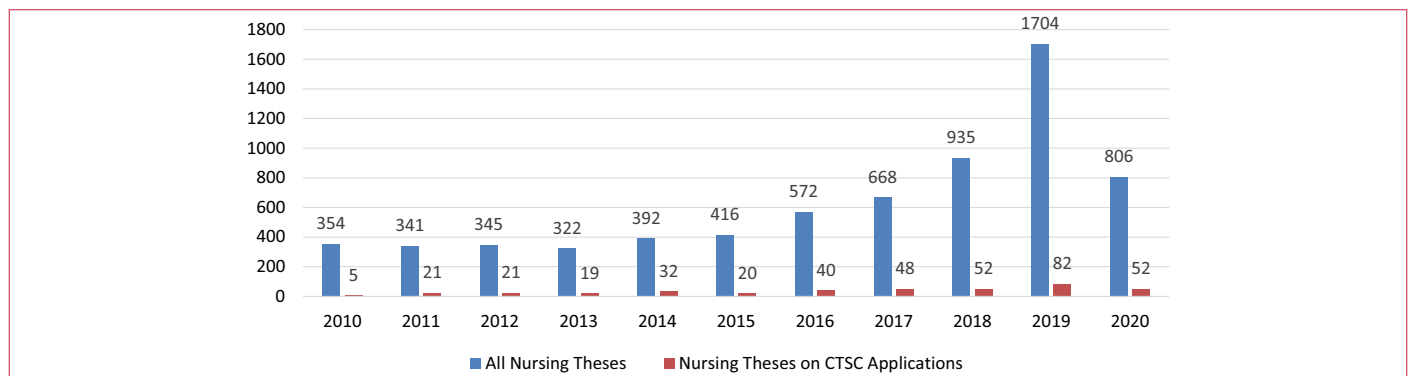


Figure 1. Distribution of the reviewed nursing theses by years (n=6855).

Corp., Armonk, New York, USA). The data of the study are conceptual, descriptive, and numerically specified. Number and percentage calculations were used in the analysis of the data related to the theses in the study, and the data were presented using tables and figure.

## Results

In this study, in which nursing theses on CTSC practices methods were examined, 6855 nursing theses belonging to the years 2010-2020 on the website of the HEC National Thesis Center were reviewed, and reached 392 theses on CTSC practices. The distribution of all reviewed nursing theses and nursing theses done for CTSC practices methods by years is given in Figure 1. Accordingly, most of the nursing theses on CTSC practices were conducted in the last five years, and it was determined that they were written in 2019 with 20.9%.

It was determined that 60.2% of the nursing theses examined for CTSC practices were at the master's level, 39.8% were at the doctoral level, and 83.2% of the theses were experimental and 16.8% were descriptive. Considering the distribution of the theses included in the study by nursing fields, it was determined that CTSC practices were made in the field of internal medicine nursing the most (26.0%), followed by fundamentals of nursing (17.9%) and surgical nursing (17.6%), respectively. It was determined that 60.2% of the nursing theses on CTSC practices were made on patients (Table 1).

Considering the distribution of the nursing theses on CTSC practices according to condition, disease, symptom, and field on which they were studied, it was determined that surgical intervention (21.9%), cancer (15.1%), and invasive interventions (13.0%), were respectively in the top three (Table 2). When the effectiveness evaluation styles of the nursing theses included in the study were examined, pain (32.5%) and anxiety (16.0%) take the first place (Table 3).

In the reviewed theses, it was determined that the most frequently used CTSC practices methods were, respectively, music (21.7%), massage (17.6%), aromatherapy (16.8%), reflexology (12.5%), acupressure (12.2%), hot-cold practices (10.8%), yoga (4.1%), reiki (2.7%), transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (1.1%), and acupuncture (0.5%) (Table 4).

## Discussion

"Complementary Therapies and Supportive Care Practices" are preferred more by patients who have too many symptoms and who do not meet the needs of the current health service.<sup>16</sup> Various CTSC administration approaches, such as music, massage, acupuncture,

and mind-body medicine have been found to be beneficial for patients in terms of symptom management and quality of life.<sup>17</sup> As CTSC practices are increasing in all over the world, it is also increasing every day in Türkiye.<sup>6,18</sup> Nurses use CTSC practices in protecting and improving the health of individuals. Therefore, in recent years in

Table 1. Distribution of the theses by characteristics (n=392)

Features of the theses	n	%
<b>Theses of type</b>		
Master	236	60.2
Doctorate	156	39.8
<b>Study Method</b>		
Descriptive	66	16.8
Experimental	326	83.2
<b>Nursing Fields</b>		
Fundamentals of Nursing	70	17.9
Internal Medicine Nursing	102	26.0
Surgical Nursing	69	17.6
Pediatric Nursing	63	16.1
Psychiatric Nursing	9	2.3
Obstetrics and Gynecology Nursing	66	16.8
Public Health Nursing	13	3.3
<b>Theses According to the Applied Groups</b>		
Patients	236	60.2
Women	25	6.4
Students	5	1.3
Pregnant women	40	10.2
The elderly	20	5.1
Nurses	10	2.6
Baby/Kids	55	14.0
Rats	1	0.2

**Table 2.** Distribution of examined theses by state/Disease/Symptom/Fields (n=392)

State worked/Disease/Symptom/Fields	n	%
Cancer	59	15.1
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease/Asthma	7	1.8
Diabetes	5	1.3
Hypertension	8	2.0
Constipation	12	3.1
Surgical intervention	86	21.9
Birth Action	33	8.4
Hemodialysis	26	6.6
Invasive Interventions	51	13.0
Dysmenorrhea	9	2.3
Wound healing	5	1.3
Intensive Care Patients	14	3.6
Joint Connective Tissue Diseases	10	2.5
Atrial Fibrillation	2	0.5
Multiple Sclerosis	4	1.0
Bilirubin Height	5	1.3
Psychiatric Diseases	6	1.5
Group without any disease	50	12.8

Türkiye, it aimed to contribute to the literature by reviewing the theses concerning the practice of CTSC.

As a result of screening carried out in Türkiye HEC National Thesis Center between 2010 and 2020, 392 theses, in which CTSC practices were used, were reached. In another study in Türkiye between the years 1996 and 2013, regarding the use of complementary and alternative medical therapy that reviewed these written in the nursing field, it is stated that a total of 88 theses have been reached.<sup>19</sup> Considering the distribution of the theses included in the study by years, it was determined that the number of nursing theses related to CTSC practices increased every year until 2019, and there was a decrease in 2020. The reason for the low number of theses written in 2020 (13.3%) compared to 2019 (20.9%) is thought to be due to the coronavirus pandemic in Türkiye in 2020. The number of theses may have decreased due to the interruption of face-to-face education at universities during the pandemic period, the inability to obtain institutional permissions from hospitals within the scope of isolation measures, the slowdown of treatments in health institutions except for emergency interventions, and the decrease in the number of patients applying to health institutions.

Of the 392 nursing theses examined, 60.2% is master's degree and 39.8% is a doctoral dissertation. It is seen that master theses are more than doctoral theses. The reason for this situation may be the following: individuals do not continue their doctorate after completing their master's education, individuals do not meet the necessary conditions for the doctorate, such as foreign language score, and the

**Table 3.** Distribution of the theses according to variables affected by CTST practices (n=501\*)

Efficiency assessment forms	n	%
Pain	163	32.5
Knowledge/Attitude/Thoughts	66	13.2
Life Quality	35	7.0
Anxiety	80	16.0
Nausea/Vomiting	19	3.8
Sleep Quality	32	6.4
Tiredness	20	4.0
Vital signs	44	8.7
Itching	4	0.8
Wound healing	6	1.2
Constipation	15	3.0
Bilirubin Level	4	0.8
Oral Mucositis	1	0.2
Nutritional Tolerance	2	0.4
Comfort	5	1.0
Amount of Breast Milk	5	1.0

\*In some theses, more than one form of efficiency evaluation was used.

doctorate program is not in every university. The study of Bayındır and Cürük reviewed the nursing thesis on complementary and alternative medicine practices for pain in Türkiye; similarly, it was determined that there are more master's theses.<sup>20</sup> In another study in which these in the field of nursing were reviewed, it was found that there were more doctoral theses (59.1%) than the master's thesis (40.9%).<sup>19</sup>

When the method parts of the studies examined within the scope of the study were analyzed, it was determined that 83.2% of the studies were

**Table 4.** Distribution of the theses according to CTSC practices methods (n=369\*)

CTSC practices methods	n	%
Music	80	21.7
Reflexology	46	12.5
Aromatherapy	62	16.8
Massage	65	17.6
Reiki	10	2.7
Acupressure	45	12.2
Acupuncture	2	0.5
Yoga	15	4.1
Hot-cold practices	40	10.8
Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation	4	1.1

\*In some theses, more than one CTSC practices methods were used.

experimental and 16.8% were descriptive. Similarly, in the study of Arslan et al,<sup>19</sup> it was found that most of the theses were made in an experimental design. The reason why experimental methods are used more maybe that thesis studies are more comprehensive than normal studies, the level of evidence is high and journals prefer experimental studies more.

It was determined that 60.2% of the nursing theses regarding CTSC practices were done on patients. Similarly, in another study, it was determined that 51.7% of master theses and 49.6% of doctoral theses were done with the participation of sick individuals.<sup>18</sup>

It was determined that the reviewed nursing theses were mostly in the field of internal medicine nursing (26.0%), fundamentals of nursing (17.9%), and surgical nursing (17.6%). Unsal et al,<sup>21</sup> reviewed complementary and nursing studies related to supportive care practices in Türkiye, and similar to our study, they found that nursing in internal medicine and fundamentals of nursing is the first row and study have also found that performed on most patients. In another study, it was determined that while the most studies were conducted in the department of surgical diseases and pediatric nursing in the master's program, public health nursing and fundamentals of nursing were in the top two in the doctoral program.<sup>18</sup>

It was determined that 392 theses included in the study were mostly conducted on surgical intervention and cancer patients. As in the rest of the world, CTSC practices are mostly used by cancer patients in Türkiye and the rate of use is increasing day by day.<sup>22</sup> In a study in Türkiye, in which trends were determined in nursing master's and doctoral dissertations, it is seen that 3.6% of master's theses and 7.4% of doctoral theses study with cancer patients.<sup>15</sup> In the study conducted by Kav et al,<sup>18</sup> it was determined that the method of CTSC practices in Türkiye was used for most cancer patients. Our study is similar to the literature. Cancer is a disease that takes a long time to treat and has a serious physical and psychological impact on patients. Despite the positive developments in medicine, cancer is still seen as a disease that causes panic and anxiety in people, includes uncertainties, and remind death in pain and pain.<sup>23</sup> For this reason, it is thought that CTSC practices are mostly used in this patient group for the purposes of reducing the symptom severity of cancer patients and increasing their quality of life.

Considering the variables affected by the practices in the nursing theses included in the study, pain (32.5%) and anxiety (16.0%) are in the first place. In the study of Arslan et al,<sup>19</sup> it was stated that the effects on pain (29.5%) were mostly reviewed in the theses about CTSC practices. In another study, it was found that the second most evaluated subject in master's and doctoral dissertations (theses) was anxiety.<sup>15</sup> Pain is a subjective experience that individuals experience many times in their lifetime. Pain if left untreated, it can cause impairment in pulmonary, cardiac, endocrine, and urinary system functions and psychological problems in individuals.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, anxiety can cause problems such as fear, anxiety, panic attacks, excessive anxiety, agitation, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbance, fatigue, suicidal thoughts, excessive arousal, agoraphobia, compulsive rituals, pain and gastrointestinal complaints.<sup>25</sup> Since pain and anxiety can cause multiple health problems in individuals, it is thought that they are the priority issues in the studies.

In the reviewed theses, it is seen that music (21.7%) and massage (17.6%) as methods are mostly used. In the study conducted by Unsal et al,<sup>21</sup> similar to our study, music takes the first place. In another

study reviewing the thesis studies in the field of nursing, between the years 1996 and 2013 on the use of complementary and alternative medical treatment in Türkiye, it was similarly determined that the most frequently used methods were massage (30.7%), relaxation (21.6%) and music (20.5%).<sup>19</sup> Music therapy is a practice that has a positive effect on the treatment of pain and anxiety among the symptoms that occur during intensive care, surgery, psychiatry, obstetrics, pediatrics, oncology, radiotherapy and chemotherapy processes, and other interventional diagnosis-treatment processes applied to patients. In addition, it has important positive effects in terms of activation of the immune system, increasing the quality of life, reducing the amount of drugs used in the treatment of pain, and shortening the duration of hospital stay and spirituality.<sup>26,27</sup> Similarly, massage is a practice that encourages stress reduction and relaxation, activates various structures, relieves pain and swelling, prevents deformity, and supports functional independence in a person with certain health problems.<sup>28</sup> The theses about CTSC practices in the field of nursing are generally not supported by ethics committees. Due to these difficulties, researchers have a time problem and have to avoid such as studies. Accordingly, due to the gap in the regulation, the theses on massage and music are more likely to result in a positive outcome in the ethics committee than other CTSC practices. For this reason, it is thought that these practices are more preferred.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study had some limitations. The data obtained in the study is limited to 392 postgraduate theses, which were determined to meet the inclusion criteria on the HEC Thesis Center website. In addition, the fact that the study covers the theses published between 2010 and 2020 constitutes the limitations of the study.

#### Conclusion

According to the data obtained from the nursing theses on CTSC practices, it can be stated that the number of theses is increasing every year, and experimental methods are preferred more. In addition, CTSC practices were mostly performed on patients and were preferred more for the relief of symptoms related to surgical intervention. The effectiveness of CTSC practices on the theses was mostly planned on the evaluation of pain. Music, massage, and aromatherapy are mostly preferred among the CTSC practices. This study focused only on postgraduate studies. The scope of the study can be expanded by examining the articles related to the subject in national and international literature. In the future studies, keeping the study area, sample number and the examined topics wide in the collection of data will ensure that the results will be stronger. In addition to the descriptive analysis of the studies, examining and analyzing the results will increase the contribution of the studies to the field.

**Ethics Committee Approval:** Ethics Committee approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Kayseri University (Approval Number: 31, Date: 28.05.2021).

**Informed Consent:** Written informed consent was obtained from the patients who agreed to take part in the study.

**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

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