An Analysis of PhD Students' Views on the Competencies of their Supervisors

Doktora Öğrencilerinin Danışmanlarının Yetkinlikleri Konusundaki Görüşlerinin İncelenmesi

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Özet

Bu araştırmada doktora öğrenimlerinin tez aşamasında bulunan öğrencilerin, kendilerine danışmanlık yapan öğretim üyelerinin "temel yetkinlik", "teknik yetkinlik" ve "yönetsel yetkinlik" özellikleri konusundaki görüşlerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma desenlerinden durum çalışması (örnek olay) deseni tercih edilmiştir. Araştırmanın örneklemi amaçsal örnekleme tekniklerinden ölçüt örnekleme tekniğine göre belirlenmiş, veriler 15 kişilik bir çalışma grubundan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Araştırma verileri içerik analizine göre analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre katılımcı öğrencilerin bazıları teknik, yönetsel ve temel yetkinlikler itibarıyla danışmanlarını yetersiz görürken, bazı öğrencilerin öğretim üyelerinin yetkinlikleri konusunda kanaatlerinin olumlu olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Öğrenciler birbirleriyle doğrudan ve sosyal medya üzerinden iletişim kurarak danışmanlık süreçlerinin nasıl işlediği konusunda bilgi sahibi olabilmekte ve kendi durumlarını ötekine göre değerlendirebilmektedirler. Araştırmanın danışmanlık kurumunun etkinliği konusunda bir kanaatin ortaya çıkarılmasına katkısı nedeniyle özgün ve önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Danışmanlık, doktora öğrencisi, eğitim, eğitim yönetimi, yetkinlik yönetimi.

Abstract

This study aims to examine the opinions of PhD students who are in their dissertation-writing stage, on their supervisors' "core competency", "technical competency" and "managerial competency". Designed as a case study, it employs a qualitative research methodology. The sample of the study consists of 15 PhD students determined by using the criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposive sampling methods. The data were collected through a semi-structured interview form. The obtained data were analyzed through content analysis. The findings revealed that some of the PhD students found their supervisors inadequate in terms of technical, managerial and core competencies while some of them had positive opinions on the competencies of their supervisors. PhD students learn about how supervising processes work and compare themselves to their peers by communicating with each other directly and through social media. The study is original and important since it makes a significant contribution to revealing the effectiveness of PhD supervision.

Keywords: Competency management, education, educational management, PhD student, supervising.

In the current information age, information is constantly changing and increasing due to the economic, political, technological and cultural changes, and developments in the IT field. Therefore, the importance of training well-qualified individuals has increased significantly. The competency of faculty members, as the main actors in teaching students at universities where information is produced and transmitted, is gaining growing importance. It is critical to examine the extent the "supervising" practice is able to perform its measurability and accountability in higher education. According to the 2020 Council of Higher Education (CoHE) data, 7,940,133 students study at 207 universities in Turkey and the number of the PhD students is 101,242 (Yükseköğretim Kurulu [YÖK], 2020a). Apart from the low quality of the doctoral education, the number of PhD students is relatively small in number when compared with the developed countries (■ Table 1). This shows the necessity of placing the due emphasis on post-graduate education, especially to contribute to scientific development and progress and to train academics. Thus, it is crucial to reveal the problems experienced during the supervisor-student interaction which forms the basis of doctoral education and to develop solution proposals.

Table 1. Ranking of the countries according to the ratio of post-graduates to the total population (2016–2017).

Countries	Number of post-graduates	Population (million)	Ratio of post graduates to total population (%)
South Korea	12,931	24,894	5.19
Slovenia	1003	2065	4.85
Switzerland	3847	8373	4.6
Slovakia	2182	5430	4.01
United Kingdom	25,020	65,595	3.81
South Africa	2060	56,015	3.68
Finland	2013	5495	3.66
Sweden	3584	9923	3.61
Germany	28,147	82,348	3.4
Norway	1442	5234	2.75
Holland	4528	17,030	2.65
Czech Republic	2484	10,566	2.35
Spain	10,889	46,484	2.34
USA	67,499	323,405	2.1
France	13,729	66,859	2.05
Canada	7059	36,264	1.95
Israel	1546	8546	1.8
Estonia	213	1315	1.61
Greece	1601	10,775	1.48
Lithuania	411	2868	1.43
Latvia	264	1959	1.34
Japan	16,039	126,994	1.26
Hungary	1154	9814	1.17
Poland	3376	37,970	.88
Turkey	4516	79,512	.52

Source: OECD, 2016.

The supervising practice in higher education in Turkey is based on Article 22 of Higher Education Law No. 2547, which describes the duties of supervisors as "In accordance with a program arranged by the head of the related unit, to set aside certain days for the advising and guidance of students, helping them as needed and directing them in line with the aims and basic principles of this law". In order to fulfil this duty at the postgraduate level, the board of postgraduate institutes appoints supervisors to each student according to the *Post-Graduate Education Regulations of Council of Higher Education*, which was effected in accordance with the same law. Article 15 of *the Post-Graduate Education Regulations of Council of Higher Education* (YÖK, 2016) states that post-graduate education "provides the student with the necessary skills to conduct independent research, to interpret, analyze and

reach new syntheses by examining scientific problems and data with a broad and deep perspective."

As clearly shown by this statement, doctorate education is a long-term process that requires more dedication and quality than other levels of education. Supervising aims to help students to plan their education, to provide academic, social and cultural guidance, to guide and direct them in a professional sense, and to prepare a suitable environment for the development of the personality of the student as a whole with mental, social and emotional aspects (Köser & Mercanlıoğlu, 2010). As is clear in the duty description, supervisors are expected to act as a bridge between the student and the institution, and to lead and guide their students in the matters related to the personal development as well as helping them with the academic knowledge they

have. In the current study, no data on the quality of the post-graduate education in Turkey were included since no such data could be found. In addition, the available quantitative post-graduate education data are quite limited.

Among the countries listed in ◼◼ Table 1, Turkey is behind even such countries as Slovenia, Slovakia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland in terms of the PhD student ratio by the country population.

The World Bank data on the population rates over 25 with a PhD can be seen in ◼◼ Table 2. Considering the data in the table, when the population of the USA is taken into account, it can be said that the ratio of PhD graduates to the population of 25+ is relatively high. The ratio of 25+ population in Turkey is 0.42% of the doctoral graduates in 2018. The figures in the University Monitoring and Evaluation General Report for 2019, which the CoHE shared with the public in July 2020, reflects a pleasant picture in both undergraduate and graduate education (YÖK, 2020b). According to the report, 7250 students from 135 universities graduated with a PhD in 2018. In 46 out of 135 universities, the number of doctoral students is 9 or less. While there were no doctorate graduate students in 37 of these, only 22 of these universities had 100 or more doctoral graduates. According to the same report, the average number of students graduating from the doctoral program is 54.

It is hard to say that the universities contribute to the scientific knowledge produced in Turkey or at the global scale. The contribution of doctoral dissertations to the universal knowledge should also be investigated. As a starting point it is important to inquire into the quality of the academic supervising practice based on the opinions of the students, who represent one side of the issue. It is particularly important for higher education institutions to develop measurable standards on how successfully their academic supervising is conducted (both on the process and completion of the dissertations). Therefore, focusing on the opinions of doctoral students, this study is expected to make a significant contribution to the literature, with regard to improving the quality of academic supervising practice.

Literature Review

Mentoring is a pedagogical relationship in which the mentor and the student actively participate (Grant & Graham, 1999). Academic mentoring is highly complicated and is a process with various responsibilities and intellectual and interaction dimensions (Barnes & Austin, 2009). In the literature, the term "academic mentoring" is frequently used instead of "academic supervising". Mentoring is a process in which a more mature

◼◼ **Table 2.** Ratio of PhD graduates in countries to the total population of 25+ (%).

Countries	Ratio of PhD graduates to the total population of 25+ (%)
Switzerland	2.93
Slovenia	2.76
USA	2.03
Germany	1.25
Sweden	1.24
Finland	1.14
Australia	1.14
Latvia	1.11
United Kingdom	1
Turkey	0.42

Source: World Bank, 2020.

and more experienced person leads a relatively novice person by acting as a guide (Jacobi, 1991). Mentoring is the function of a successful and higher-ranking person who advises, guides, and facilitates the career and intellectual development of the student (Blackwell, 1989). According to a study conducted by Moses (1989) on higher education, mentoring is defined as a process in which ideally, a professor takes a graduate student under his or her wing, helps the student set goals and develop skills, and facilitates the student's successful entry into academic and professional circles. According to Mathews (2003), mentoring is a learning approach.

Advising has an important role not only scientifically but also in humanitarian success and participation in social life. The Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA, 2006) defines academic counseling as a series of interactions related to curriculum, pedagogy, and student learning outcomes. Academic advising is a set of activities that encourage students to use their abilities and academic knowledge to take their learning activity beyond the campus boundaries.

Academic advising teaches students the sequence of courses according to the curriculum and enables advisors to transfer their academic experiences to students, paving the way for the student to create a personal and professional identity (Lance, 2009). Especially at the doctoral level, the supervisor is not only an academic and technical coach, but he/she is also the person who helps the student in career planning, establishing interpersonal relations, and benefiting from social processes. Students learn from their supervisors about the climate of the academic environment, organization culture, unwritten behavior, bureaucratic procedures, and informal communication besides

formal communication. In this respect, it is important for an advisor to be a good "role model" for the student.

When the supervising phenomenon is considered in light of the definitions above, it becomes clear that it should be handled within the framework of competency. Competency is all of the motivations, personal traits, values, knowledge and skills that underlie behavioral traits and that enable an individual to display superior performance (Palan, 2003). Although there are many different definitions in the literature, the origin of the concept of *competency* is based on McClelland's article "Testing for Competence Rather than Intelligence", which was published in 1973 in the *American Psychologist* journal. McClelland (1973) argues that to be able to perform well, an evaluation system related to competencies needs to be developed, unlike traditional intelligence tests. According to this definition, competencies are performance indicators related to human activities. As can be seen, competencies are individual qualities that produce observable results as a behaviour and performance.

Competency is associated with effective or unusual performance in a person's work and is based on five key factors as knowledge, skill, self-perception, personal characteristics, and motivation. Knowledge is a mental product that can be obtained through learning, observation and research. Skill is the ability of a person to do something. Self-perception is the individual's attitudes, beliefs and self-esteem. Personal characteristics are related to the physical and psychological aspects of the individual. Motivation, on the other hand, is the set of impulses such as emotions, desires and psychological needs that mobilize the person. Boyatzis (1982) defines competency as all of the personal characteristics including an individual's qualifications, skills, social role, knowledge, personal performance while performing the job. Competency is the predictor of how one can behave in different situations (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). It is the continuous behavior of the individual that produces concrete results that can be observed and measured. Based on these definitions, the characteristics of competency can be listed as follows:

- It should include components such as knowledge, skills and attitudes,
- It should include observable behavior and concrete results,
- It should be measurable,
- It should lead to superior performance and efficiency.

In order to benefit from the competencies at an optimum level, competencies must be managed. It is important to manage the student-supervisor interaction within the competency framework to reveal potential competencies of the student (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).

Determining the necessary competencies in the counseling process is essential for student success. Professional competency includes the profession's responsibilities, skills, and knowledge (Burkard, Cole, Ott, & Stoflet, 2004). NACADA (2017) has identified some essential competencies in academic advising. These competencies are relational competency, conceptual competency, and informational/informative competency. Relational competency covers establishing effective communication with the student, working in harmony, planning, and setting goals for the student's success. Conceptual competency is competencies related to advisor competence in terms of scientific thought and theories. Informative competency includes knowledge of curriculum, academic requirements and alternative perspectives, academic sensitivity to support student success, and technical knowledge in the field. The United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring (UKAT, 2020) has added professionalism to these core competencies. Professionalism involves appreciating students' thoughts and efforts, developing a student-centered approach, and sensitivity to students' needs. Professional competency includes continuous professional development, scientific research, and evaluation of professional practices, and contributing to colleagues and the institution.

In the study conducted by Menke, Stuck and Ackerson (2018) regarding academic advising competencies, the required competencies were determined as communication and listening skills, interpersonal skills, and field mastery. They concluded that communication skills are more important than knowledge such as field knowledge, using technology, teamwork predisposition, critical thinking, patience, or multicultural competency. A study on the advisor's effect on student performance conducted by McGill, Heikkila and Lazarowicz (2020b) determined that relational skills are essential. Another study, found that the advisor trust and support, the choice of the research topic, and communication skills are essential in the academic advising process (Filippou, Kallo, & Mikkilä-Erdmann, 2021). McGill, Ali and Barton (2020a) determined that willingness to work with students, effective communication, empathy, and field knowledge are important qualities of a good advisor. They found that academic advising is essentially a relational process.

In the current study, in light of the literature reviewed above, the core competencies that every supervisor must have are categorized into technical competencies and managerial competencies. The core competencies can be listed as success and effort, information sharing, holistic view of issues, business ethics, honesty and reliability, ability to work in teams, taking initiative in favor of students, feeling accountable, accountability, accessibility, communication and relationship building,

quality sensitivity, motivating the student, being original and creative. The technical competencies that a supervisor should have include considering the events and facts with cause and effect relationships, professionalism in technical aspects of the profession, knowledge of legislation and procedures, data analysis, knowledge in theoretical, managerial and reporting. The managerial competencies expected from the supervisors are problem solving, creating a research environment and research opportunities, overcoming uncertainties, developing holistic view of events, guiding and motivating students, complying with values and ethical rules in business and human relations, generating ideas, developing suggestions and concluding them, creating a collaboration environment, coaching and mentoring.

The competency of the supervisor is critical for the development and career of the student in a long-term education process as doctoral education. Defining the required competencies, determining performance indicators and evaluating the feedback related to them to conduct academic supervising during the PhD process are among the tasks to be performed within competency management. However, since there has been no research investigating doctoral education from the perspective of competency management in the literature, it is important to examine the issue with an inductive approach. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the opinions of PhD students about their supervisors within the framework of competency management. Driven by this aim, the present study sought to answer the following questions:

- What do PhD students think about their supervisor in terms of his/her core competencies?
- What do PhD students think about their supervisor in terms of his/her technical competencies?
- What do PhD students think about their supervisor in terms of his/her managerial competencies?

Method

Research Design

This study adopted the case study research design. Case studies are appropriate for investigating the "current" situations without interfering with the variables. Case studies describe, define, and interpret the causes and the results of the "current" situations; (Creswell, 2016; Yin, 2014) and are particularly appropriate for the study of situations where the boundary between phenomena and context is uncertain (Cohen & Manion, 2000; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Davey, 1990; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; McMillan, 1996). Moreover, case studies enable the researchers to be involved in the process by reading the descriptive statements (Berg, 2001; Merriam, 1998).

Participants

The participants of the study are 15 PhD students determined by criterion sampling, which is a purposive sampling method. The rationale for using the criterion sampling technique in the study is that it is suitable for collecting data from individuals, events, objects and situations with the characteristics identified in relation to the problem (Neuman, 2007; Patton, 2014). The criteria were determined as being a dissertator, having experience to assess the competency of the supervisor, and the continuation of the experience.

Data Collection Tool

The data were collected through a semi-structured interview form. In the form, description of the core, technical and managerial competencies were described so that the students could fully understand the exact scope and nature of these competencies and evaluate their supervisor competencies according to certain criteria. This technique was preferred since it is appropriate for comprehensive and systematic data collection through interviews with participants by limiting the subject to be studied beforehand (Patton, 2014). In addition to personal information, some open-ended questions prepared based on the theoretical framework according to the general purpose of the research were included in the interview form.

Reliability and Validity

The validity of the study is increased by triangulation using the theoretical data, the experience of the researchers, and the memos from the interview (Creswell, 2016; Merriam, 2013; Patton, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). As validity can be both internal and external in qualitative research, the external validity was increased by ensuring the generalizability (transferability) of the obtained results by using multiple data sources. In addition, the external validity was increased by resource diversity and analyzer diversity. Furthermore, the external validity was strengthened by presenting "direct quotations" from descriptive statements. The internal validity (credibility) was achieved through participant confirmation, long-term interaction, deeply-focused data collection, inclusion of an adequate number of participants, and expert review (Creswell, 2016; Merriam, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2014). The reliability of the study was achieved by ensuring both internal and external reliability (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008; Merriam 1998). The internal reliability was obtained by applying consistency examination, and the external reliability by confirmation review. In addition, the descriptive statements of the participants were transcribed verbatim (Creswell, 2016; Merriam, 2013).

Data Collection

In an attempt to reveal various concepts and insights from memos in the data analysis, a comprehensive dataset was obtained from the students regarding the context of the subject. As the case study does not require a specific data collection technique, tool and data analysis method, statistical information was collected from multiple sources as well as interview-based and observation-based data. To develop a deep understanding of the situation being studied, obtaining as much data diversity as possible was targeted (Creswell, 2011; Merriam, 1998).

Data Analysis

The content analysis technique was used for the data analysis. Content analysis is a systematic technique in which some words of a text are summarized into smaller content, code, category and themes with coding based on certain rules. Since database coding was preferred in the study, the analysis began without predetermined codes, and the codes were determined during the analysis process on the basis of participant statements (Brinkman, 2013). Thus, the descriptive statements were interpreted by bringing similar concepts, codes, and themes together (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). For this purpose, to make mind maps of the doctoral students about the competencies of their supervisors, interview notes were transcribed and analyzed with the content analysis technique (Creswell, 2017; Mason, 2002; Patton, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). During the data analysis process, the interview notes were transcribed and the similar and different expressions were grouped together, and the student evaluations were divided into two groups as positive and negative. Then, the "concepts" and "codes" from the descriptive statement codes were identified, followed by the "sub-themes" and "main themes" that emerged from the similarities between the codes (Creswell, 2016). The interview records were transcribed, and the transcribed interview texts were analyzed using the phenomenological coding technique. In the first stage of the analysis, pre-coding (open coding) was performed, and in the second stage, the axes were formed by matching the research questions with the codes. In the third stage, the explanatory themes were determined by the formation of the axes, and in the last stage, the "essence" that constitutes the common meaning was reached. In other words, through phenomenological analysis, the main reason behind the participants' experiences was revealed. To ensure consistency in the codes, sub-themes and main themes, the formula developed by Miles and Huberman (2015) as *Reliability=Consensus / (Consensus + Disagreement) × 100* was applied, and the coefficient of agreement between the coders was calculated. Miles and Huberman (2015) state that this ratio should be at least is 70%. The consistency coefficient was found to be 94%. The main themes were identified according to their meanings and the competencies determined in the theoretical framework. The inductive analysis method was applied on the data obtained in the study to contribute to the literature by producing new knowledge (Patton, 2014). The reference intensities of the coding and the categories were analyzed with the MAXQDA qualitative analysis program and reported in the findings section. The participants' real names were kept anonymous, and coded as P1, P2, …P15.

Limitations

This is a qualitative study conducted with a limited number of participants. The opinions of doctoral students on the competencies of their supervisors were examined from the viewpoints of fifteen doctoral students. To produce more effective solutions to the problems related to the subject and to analyze the existing problems in more detail, it may be possible to reach more participants based on the themes that emerged in this study, and thus to illustrate the current "situation" better.

Results

The demographic information about the PhD students participating in the study is given in ▮▮ Table 3.

The answers, code, sub-theme and main themes of the participants regarding the core competencies are given in ▮▮ Table 4.

▮▮ **Table 3.** Demographics of the participants.

Participant code	Marital status	Age	Gender
P1	Single	27	Male
P2	Single	37	Female
P3	Married	43	Male
P4	Single	29	Male
P5	Single	30	Female
P6	Single	31	Male
P7	Single	28	Female
P8	Single	34	Female
P9	Married	36	Male
P10	Married	34	Male
P11	Single	29	Female
P12	Married	36	Male
P13	Single	30	Male
P14	Single	35	Male
P15	Married	34	Male

Table 4. Descriptive statements, code, sub-theme and main themes related to "core competencies".

	Code	Sub-theme	Main-theme
Descriptive statements (positive opinions) • My supervisor is capable of sharing information. My supervisor has high level of professional ethics and holistic view of the subjects. My supervisor encourages teamwork. My supervisor is successful in communication and establishing relations. [P4] • My supervisor is creative and good at mentoring and teamwork. [P5] • My supervisor has professional ethics, fulfills his responsibilities, and gives positive energy in communication. My supervisor facilitates team work. [P3] • I trust my supervisor more because my supervisor has sense of responsibility and diligence. [P9] • I can contact my supervisor any time and my supervisor has a critical language of communication. [P8] • I think my supervisor honest and trustworthy. [P15] • My supervisor is easily accessible and guides us. My supervisor has professional ethics and is honest. [P6] • My supervisor has professional ethics. My supervisor is honest and trustworthy. I had no problems in communicating with my supervisor. Although the motivation of my supervisor is not so high, no problem. [P11]	Professional ethics Teamwork Information sharing Responsibility awareness Positive energy Reassuring Motivating	Positive relations	Core competency
• The academic knowledge and competency of my supervisor motivate me to know on what kind of subjectsI need to have knowledge and competency. [P8] • My supervisor is good at conducting academic studies. My supervisor is a competent person. [P2] • My supervisor has the listed core competencies. [P6] • My supervisor is a highly successful and competent in his field. [P14] • My supervisor shares his/her knowledge with me and has a holistic point of view. [P5]	To be knowledgeable To be competent To be successful	Academic competency	
Descriptive statements (negative opinions) • My supervisor considers his ideological views as science, evaluates his/her students according to his ideology. [P1] • My supervisor doesn't like reading and writing. I have trouble in finding his/her room and communicating over the phone. My supervisor regards his/her ideological views as science. [P1] • My supervisor does not take initiative in favor of the student. My supervisor is reluctant to communicate. [P12] • My supervisor shares his/her information, but when it comes to practice, I'm alone in that part. My supervisor doesn't help much when I get stuck. I can't say that he/she is prone to work as a team. My supervisor expects originality and creativity from me. [P13] • My supervisor doesn't care about the world as he/she has accomplished many things in life. I never trust my supervisor, I didn't prefer to work with him/her, and unfortunately, I had to work together because of the institute. The thesis is under his/her supervisory, but to whom will he/she account? Aside from the incentive, my supervisor is slowing down my doctoral process. [P10] • Individually, my supervisor is successful in the field but does not make an effort in supervising. [P11] • My supervisor doesn't like research, my supervisor suggests books, tells you what to do, and then he/she goes. [P1] • My supervisor can detect problems related to the field but he/she is problematic in problem solving. My supervisor does not guide the student, just does his/her own business. [P7]	Doesn't like reading Problematic in communication Inadequate motivation Distrust	Academic inadequacy	
• My supervisor is never the initiator of the communication, has no effort for motivation, and is disruptive in human relationships. [P7] • For my supervisor, the student is not valuable; He/she thinks that he/she will have students anyway. The thesis is his/her responsibility, but to whom will he/she account? My supervisor does not have a word that motivates me. He/she slows down my doctoral thesis process. [P10] • We could not solve the problem of communication and relationship building. It may be successful individually but his/her contribution to the student is arguable. His/her creative ability is weak. I don't think my supervisor feels responsibility for the student. [P12] • My supervisor evaluates his students according to his ideology. [P1] • My supervisor is disruptive in human relationships. [P7] • My supervisor is not prone to group work. [P1] • My supervisor is not prone to cooperation. My supervisor is inadequate in creating synergy by collaboration. [P7]	Ideological attitude Accountability Insufficient motivation Being a barrier Creativity Irresponsibility	Negative relations	

The answers, codes, subthemes and main themes regarding the technical competencies are given in ▮▮ Table 5.

The answers, codes, subthemes and main themes of the participants regarding the managerial competencies are given in ▮▮ Table 6.

In ▮▮ Table 7, the frequency of the codes in the opinions of the participants obtained by the MAXQDA Qualitative Analysis program is presented. As seen in the table, each main code is assessed within each competency separately. Therefore, there is consistency between the answers given and the codes. In addition, regarding the core competency code, a close relationship between academic inadequacy code and positive relations is clear. This was interpreted by the researchers as an effort of the supervisor to close his/her quality gap through positive interpersonal relationships.

The size of the squares in ▮▮ Table 8 shows the frequency of the codes. According to the table, the opinions of the participants were mostly focused on "inadequacy in the profession". On the other hand, the least frequently mentioned issue is the "ordinariness". Since the study aimed to examine the students' opinions about the competencies of their supervisors, the finding showing that students focus on the "inadequacy in the profession" has significant value, indicating that some precautions should be taken immediately.

Discussion

The participants' opinions indicate that for doctoral students who aim to socialize and network successfully, it is important to have a well-qualified supervisor in the academic career process in terms of shortening their career process and enabling them to conduct high-quality studies. The following

▮▮ **Table 5.** Descriptive statements, codes, subthemes and main themes related to "technical competencies".

	Code	Sub-theme	Main-theme
Descriptive statement (positive opinions) • My supervisor helps on the way I will follow, knows the technical aspects of the profession. [P2] • My supervisor has knowledge of relationship management, looking at events and phenomena through cause and effect relationships. [P9] • My supervisor is a professional in his profession. My supervisor takes an active role in all processes. He/she looks at events and phenomena with cause and effect relationships. [P6] • I think my supervisor conducts relationship management professionally. [P15] • My supervisor is a guide within his/her responsibilities. My supervisor is a guide in problem solving. [P3] • My supervisor is very good in the field; he/she has knowledge on the developments and trends. My supervisor has ability to analyze problems from different perspectives. [P8]	Technical skill Relationship management Professionalism Analysis ability Guidance Problem solving Different point of views	Technical knowledge and skill	Technical competencies
Descriptive expressions (negative opinions) • My supervisor is not prone to cooperation. [P1] • My supervisor is not prone to cooperation. He/she is inadequate in creating synergy by cooperation. [P7] • My supervisor does not have the actual knowledge. [P5] • My supervisor has limited knowledge on research method. [P14] • My supervisor can sometimes be emotional and offensive in relationship management. He/she has insufficient methodical knowledge about publishing. [P4] • My supervisor is inadequate in his profession. [P11] • My supervisor does not have the actual knowledge on his profession. [P5] • My supervisor has limited knowledge on research method. [P14] • My supervisor has a lot of publications, so he/she expects us to make publications but he/she does not help us in making publications. [P13]	Inadequate cooperation Inadequacy in creating synergy Emotional weakness Unhelpful	Inadequacy in profession	
• My supervisor has very poor relations with students all the time; therefore, he/she is bad at relationship management. He/she somehow achieved the position he/she has and he/she is not competent for the academic profession. I've lost faith in finishing the thesis. My supervisor is theoretically and methodically inadequate. [P10] • First of all, my supervisor doesn't help at all with procedures and legislation. I'm just learning everything by asking. I have never experienced that he/she gives advice and helps with the publication. I can't get any results from the thesis. He/she says like "Do something and bring, do whatever you want." [P12]	Poor human relations Does not deserve his status Despair about publication Problem of qualification	Academic inadequacy	

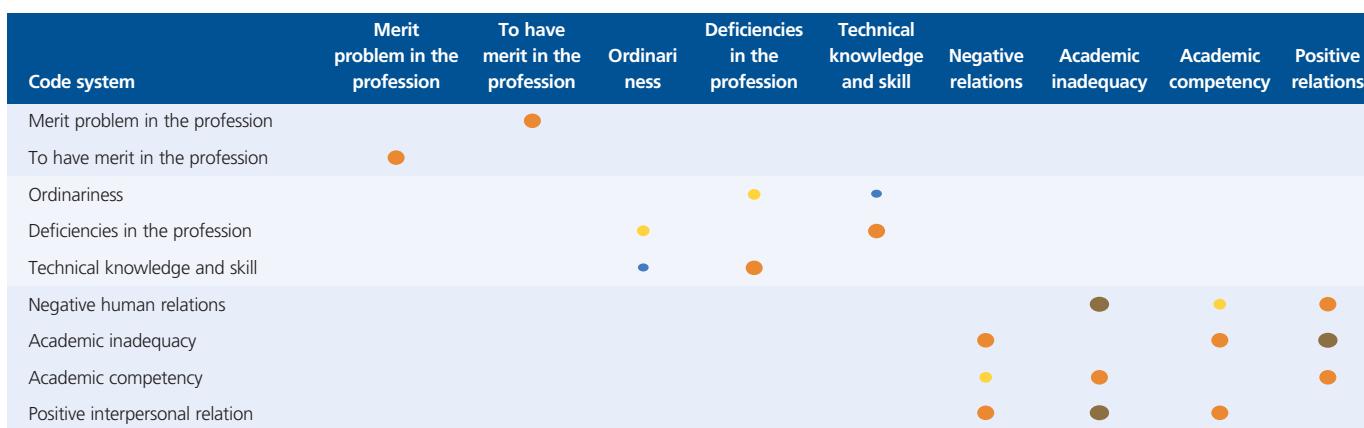**Table 6.** Descriptive statements, codes, subthemes and main themes related to "managerial competencies".

	Code	Sub-theme	Main-theme
Descriptive expressions (positive opinions) • My supervisor solves the dispute in a professional manner. He/she can overcome uncertainties. My supervisor approaches events from a holistic perspective. [P6] • My supervisor creates opportunities for research. He/she has the ability to overcome uncertainties and develop holistic view of events. [P5] • My supervisor is competent in solving problems. He/she can overcome problems by producing new ideas and working. My supervisor is competent in conceptual and theoretical thinking. [P2] • My supervisor has management skills. For him/her, ethical values are always prioritized. [P8] • My supervisor is successful in motivating students. [P4] • My supervisor has high persuasion skills, ability to produce ideas, suggestion skills. [P3] • My supervisor has high ability in communication based on trust. He/she has different perspectives on things. [P15]	Theoretical thinking Holistic view Solving problem New idea Ethical values Motivation ability	Have merit in profession	Managerial competency
Descriptive expressions (negative opinions) • My supervisor doesn't like research; he/she suggests books, tells us what to do and then goes. [P1] • My supervisor can detect problems related to the field but he/she is problematic in problem solving. My supervisor doesn't guide the student, he/she just does his job. [P7] • My supervisor cannot resolve disputes and problems because he/she has no such desire. My supervisor has no concern for valuing the student and to build a humanist relationship. My supervisor is not prone to cooperation. My supervisor will never pass the exam even if he/she has the authority for supervising. [P10] • My supervisor doesn't create opportunity for research. It is still unclear when the thesis will end. My supervisor is not successful in motivation. My supervisor can develop suggestions, but he/she can't come to conclusion. My supervisor is inadequate in mentoring. [P11] • My supervisor thinks every tub must stand on its own bottom. My supervisor doesn't value the student. [P12] • Even he produces suggestions, he/she doesn't support for ending the processes. [P13]	Not being a researcher Problem solving Not cooperative Uncertainty Motivation problem	Merit problem in profession	

statements obtained from the students indicate how important it is to have supervisors who can transform the lengthy and difficult doctoral process into an efficient and motivating process by improving their competencies in human relations as well as their academic competencies.

– *My supervisor is competent in sharing information. He has a holistic view of point and high business ethics. He encourages teamwork. He is successful in communication and relationship building.* [P4]

– *My supervisor has business ethics. She fulfills her responsibilities. She gives positive energy while communicating. She facilitates the teamwork.* [P3]

– *He is easily accessible, he guides us. He has business ethics, and is honest.* [P6]

Table 7. Frequencies of codes in the opinions of the participants.

Code system	Merit problem in the profession	To have merit in the profession	Ordinariness	Deficiencies in the profession	Technical knowledge and skill	Negative relations	Academic inadequacy	Academic competency	Positive relations
Merit problem in the profession		●							
To have merit in the profession	●								
Ordinariness				●	●				
Deficiencies in the profession			●		●				
Technical knowledge and skill			●	●					
Negative human relations							●	●	●
Academic inadequacy						●		●	●
Academic competency						●	●		●
Positive interpersonal relation						●	●	●	

It can be seen that the participants' negative opinions about their supervisors mostly gather around the areas of inadequacy in guiding, not motivating, communication problems, and not caring about the student. These opinions are considered as important since they reveal that even when the students find their supervisors successful, they assess them in terms of interpersonal relations, which indicates that the students are expected to be valued as a human being instead of only as a student.

— *My supervisor is never the initiator of the communication. He has no effort for motivation. He is disruptive in human relationships.* [P7]

— *For my supervisor, the student is not valuable; He thinks that he will have students anyway. The dissertation is his responsibility, but to whom will he account? He does not have a word that motivates me. He slows down my doctoral dissertation process.* [P10]

The students were also of the opinion that the supervisors should exclude their personal beliefs, ideological attitudes and behaviors from the supervising process. The following descriptive statements indicate that the students care about their supervisor as a scientist, not as an ideologist:

— *My supervisor regards his ideological views as science, evaluates his students according to his ideology.* [P1]

— *I think my supervisor doesn't like reading and writing. It is disruptive that she involves her beliefs and ideology in the process.* [P7]

The beliefs of the participants indicating that their supervisors need to educate themselves theoretically and methodically, not with their beliefs and ideologies, are reflected in the following descriptive statements:

— *My supervisor shares her information, but when it comes to practice, I'm alone in that part. She doesn't help much when I get stuck. I can't say that she is prone to work as a team. She expects originality and creativity from me.* [P13]

— *My supervisor doesn't care about the world as she has accomplished many things in life. I never trust her, I didn't choose to work with her, and unfortunately I had to work with her because of the institute. The thesis is under her supervision, but to whom will she account? Aside from the incentive, my supervisor is slowing down my doctoral process.* [P10]

— *My supervisor can detect problems related to the field but she is not good at problem solving. She does not guide the student. She just does her own business.* [P7]

From these statements, it is clear that the students want to get a high-quality supervising service and they find the contribution of their supervisors very important in conducting original scientific research. This was the only way for stu-

Table 8. The frequencies of the codes.

Code system	Opinions
Managerial competency	
Merit problem in the profession	●
To have merit in the profession	●
Technical competency	
Ordinariness	•
Deficiencies in the profession	●
Technical knowledge and skill	●
Core competency	
Negative interpersonal relations	●
Academic inadequacy	●
Academic competency	•
Positive interpersonal relations	●

dents to become helpful members of their society. In fact, this is the main purpose of the supervising practice. Otherwise, the lengthy education period and the overly high number of students have no meaning other than forming a piece of statistical information. Moreover, the number of doctorate students in Turkey is insufficient in quantitative terms as shown in ◼ Table 1.

The students assign great value to their relationship with their supervisor during the PhD process, and it should not be viewed only in the academic and technical sense, but also in terms of collegiality and human relations.

— *We could not solve the problem of communication and relationship building. He may be successful individually but his contribution to the student is arguable. His creative ability is weak. I don't think he feels responsibility for the student.* [P12]

— *My supervisor is never the initiator of the communication. He does not make any effort for motivating us. He is disruptive in human relations.* [P7]

Some measures have been actually taken on paper in selecting doctoral thesis supervisors among the faculty members at universities in Turkey with the qualities to be determined by Senate members. For a faculty member to be able to manage a dissertation in doctoral programs, he/she must have successfully managed at least one Master's thesis (YÖK, 2016). The duration of doctoral education is 5–7 years for those admitted with a Bachelor's degree, and 4–5 years for those admitted with a Master's degree. The average age of graduation is 33–34 years (OECD, 2018). According to OECD (2016) data, Turkey ranks 13th among 42 countries, with 4516 doctoral graduates. The USA ranks first with 67,499 graduates, Germany ranks second with 28,147 graduates, and the UK ranks third with

25,020 graduates. The ratio of the number of PhD graduates to the country population is 0.52% for Turkey. For Germany, which has about the same population as Turkey, this rate is 3.4%. In the 2019–2020 academic year, there were 101,242 doctoral students registered in higher education institutions, while the number of graduates with a PhD was only 8069 (YÖK, 2020b).

In their study on the assessment of the doctorate programs in Turkey, Güçlü and Yılmaz (2019) found that students completed their PhD process at an older age compared to other countries. According to the same study, most of the candidates registered in a doctorate program could not complete the program. The related research literature indicates that the late completion of doctorate education mainly results from factors such as family issues, work, doctoral program quality, supervisor-student interaction, economic problems, and uncertainty of the academic career (Güçlü & Yılmaz, 2019; Mayers, 1999; Miller, 2013; Nerad & Cerny, 1993; Picciano, Rudd, Morrison, & Nerad, 2008; Pump, 2013). A study by Özmen and Aydın (2013) on the difficulties encountered during the doctoral education process concluded that the doctoral students fail to find the support they expect from their supervisors , which prolongs the PhD completion and makes it difficult to conduct research. In their study on the relationship management in doctoral supervising, Li and Seale (2007) found that the most important problems of a doctoral student were caused by the lack of communication with the supervisor.

Conclusion

When the above research findings, theoretical framework, and statistical data are considered together, it is evident that there is a long way to go in the field of doctoral education. This study aims to be a step taken in this direction. Although the participants were expected to care more about their supervisors' academic and professional competencies, they mostly focused on the competencies related to communication and interpersonal relations, a finding that is supported by the literature (Burkard et al., 2004; Filippou et al., 2021; McGill et al., 2020a; Menke et al., 2018). Although technical and academic knowledge is essential in academic advising, transferring this knowledge to the student by leading the way is also a key advising competency. Based on participant views, it can be argued that effective communication and interpersonal relations are essential in academic advising.

Supporting this study with future quantitative and mixed research may contribute to a more accurate understanding of the subject. Future studies with qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research designs can contribute to the field by focusing on the number of students who fail during their doctoral study process, reasons of failure, and graduation rates of students by country. Academic advising is not a one-sided task, but a process in which the student and the advisor must be mutually active. The limits of advisors' interactions and communication with students, the extent to which they monitor the student, and the limits of their expectations from the student are important issues in relationship management.

This study is based on student views on academic advising roles and responsibilities. The research reflects the views of a limited number of students. Supporting the research with quantitative and mixed studies will help expand the knowledge on this subject. Also, repeating the research with longitudinal studies and different replicating, and including advisors' views in the research process will contribute to improving the depth and precision of our understanding of the subject. Finally, investigating the subject with meta-analyses may produce a more accurate portrayal of the current status of academic advising and help raise awareness about its importance.

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