

Examination of the Turkish Doctoral Programs in Social Sciences and Humanities Through a Process Evaluation Model

Türkiye’de Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Alanındaki Doktora Programlarının Süreç Değerlendirme Modeli ile İncelenmesi

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate Turkish doctoral programs in social sciences and humanities using a process evaluation model within a mixed methods research design. A convergent mixed methods approach was employed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Initially, the quantitative statistical results are presented, followed by a discussion of the qualitative findings, utilizing a side-by-side comparison approach. The survey, developed by the researchers, was administered to 310 academics to gather their assessments of doctoral programs, considering variables such as graduation year from the Ph.D. program, academic title, field of study, and university type. The t-test and ANOVA results revealed no significant differentiation among academics with respect to these variables. Conversely, content analysis was applied to examine qualitative data obtained from 10 academics through the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis program. Six themes identified through content analysis indicated that nearly all participants perceived structural issues in doctoral programs, explaining the lack of significant differentiation in the quantitative findings. Based on these findings, implications are suggested for researchers, academics, and decision-makers to address this issue.

Keywords: Mixed methods research design, Process evaluation model, Social sciences and humanities, Doctoral programs

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Türkiye’deki sosyal ve beşeri bilimler alanındaki doktora programlarının karma yöntem araştırması kullanarak süreç değerlendirme modeliyle incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Nicel ve nitel verilerin toplanmasında yakınsak karma yöntem yaklaşımı uygulanmıştır. Öncelikle nicel istatistiksel sonuçlar verilmiş, ardından yan yana karşılaştırma yaklaşımı dikkate alınarak nitel bulgular

Günay A., Aslan A., & Açıkgöz Ö., (2024). Examination of the turkish doctoral programs in social sciences and humanities through a process evaluation model. *Journal of Higher Education and Science/Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi*, 14(2), 282-295. <https://doi.org/10.5961/higheredusci.1370432>

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Received/Geliş Tarihi : 03.10.2023

Accepted/Kabul Tarihi: 24.07.2024



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tartışılmıştır. Araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen anket 310 akademisyene doktora programlarını değerlendirmeleri için uygulanmış olup uygulamada katılımcıların doktora mezuniyet yılı, akademik unvan, çalışma alanı ve üniversite türü gibi değişkenler dikkate alınmıştır. T-testi ve ANOVA sonuçları akademisyenler arasında bu değişkenlere ilişkin anlamlı bir farklılaşmanın olmadığını göstermiştir. Diğer taraftan içerik analizi MAXQDA nitel veri analizi programı aracılığıyla 10 akademisyenden elde edilen nitel verilerin analizinde kullanılmıştır. İçerik analizi sonucunda belirlenen altı tema, katılımcıların neredeyse tamamının doktora programlarında yapısal bir sorun algıladığını ortaya koymuştur; Bu durum nicel bulgularda anlamlı bir farklılaşmanın neden görülmediğini açıklamaktadır. Bulgulara göre, araştırmacılara, akademisyenlere ve karar vericilere bu sorunun çözümüne yönelik bazı öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Karma yöntemler araştırması, Süreç değerlendirme modeli, Sosyal ve beşeri bilimler, Doktora programları

INTRODUCTION

Doctoral programs play a crucial role in equipping researchers with qualifications such as knowledge, skills, and competencies to overcome challenges and generate original ideas autonomously in both work and learning environments (European Qualification Framework [EQF], 2005; Turkish Qualification Framework [TQF], 2015). Researchers are expected to acquire these qualifications at the most advanced level during these programs. Upon successful completion, they earn the title of “Doctor,” signifying their ability to contribute independently to literature and practice through research. Consequently, this achievement paves the way for researchers to become academics, serving as a critical milestone in their academic journey, influencing their promotion and appointment.

A doctorate corresponds to level 8 in both the EQF and TQF. Earning a doctoral degree typically requires at least four years of effort and work, contingent upon the complexity, structure, and graduation requirements of the doctoral program. Additionally, when conducting an analysis, differences in doctoral training among countries, including admission criteria and training courses, should be considered. Candidates are required to submit their diplomas, transcripts, doctoral proposals, curriculum vitae, intention and reference letters, as well as language proficiency documents to foreign universities (Aslan et al., 2020). Conversely, for Turkish doctoral programs, applicants must submit their master’s degree with a thesis, academic personnel and postgraduate education entrance exam scores, foreign language exam scores, and undergo a scholastic assessment test and interview.

In doctoral programs, researchers are expected to complete at least seven courses, along with a seminar and a doctoral qualification exam. Upon meeting these requirements successfully, they are tasked with writing and defending doctoral dissertations (Turkish Graduate Education Regulation, 2016). Enrollment in doctoral programs is highly competitive, and candidates should theoretically possess knowledge, skills, and competency to conduct research. The doctoral dissertations serve as evidence that they can contribute to their field of study through the knowledge and skills gained in their doctoral programs.

The social sciences and humanities encompass the study of human behavior and interaction within social, cultural, environmental, economic, and political contexts. These fields explore

both historical and present aspects while considering future concerns, covering a spectrum from individual to global perspectives. Consequently, disciplines within the social sciences and humanities foster a comprehensive understanding of our world and how individuals can navigate a knowledge-based society. Given the intricate nature of social events, the significance of the broader study area in the social sciences and humanities has become more pronounced than ever.

Against this backdrop, this study is centered on doctoral programs within the realms of social sciences and humanities in Türkiye. Despite being the 19th largest economy globally (WB, 2022) and boasting a population of over 83 million (TÜİK, 2022), Türkiye has experienced economic crises and social events in the past 50 years, shaping the social transformation within the country. Consequently, chronic economic, social, and political instability has emerged as persistent issues. Hence, this research focuses on doctoral programs in social sciences and humanities in Türkiye, selecting them as subjects of investigation. This choice is rooted in the expectation that these doctoral programs will contribute to the formulation of policies and practices, addressing the development needs of the country.

The principal educational outcomes of a doctorate are defined as the creation of new knowledge (research output) and the development of a skilled individual (Boud & Lee, 2009). Specifically, the emphasis on analyzing the productivity and citation impact of research outputs from doctoral graduates has become the primary quality indicator for doctoral education (Hasselback & Reinstein, 1995). While the primary purpose of the doctorate remains the training of individuals for academic careers, there has been an increasing trend in recent years to equip candidates with skills suitable for diverse careers beyond academia (Steyn, 2019).

Presently, the global performance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is gauged through world university rankings such as The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Ranking, Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings (THE, QS, ARWU, 2021). These rankings utilize “the number of scientific publications (or scientific publications per academic)” as a performance indicator to measure research influence within their frameworks (Aslan, Açıkgöz, & Günay, 2021). Additionally, the number of doctorates awarded serves as a performance indicator in THE. In this context, Türkiye had 59,027 scientific

publications, ranking 18th globally; however, the number of citations per document was 0.88, resulting in a world rank of 135 in 2020 (Scimago Journal Rankings [SJR], 2021). Moreover, the average number of publications on the Web of Science (WoS) per academic is 0.36 in Türkiye (CoHE, 2020). Notably, at universities where the medium of instruction is in a foreign language, the ratio for WoS publications tends to be low (Balolu & Bilgiç, 2021a). Furthermore, Türkiye's h-index performance falls below 10%. These data indicate that the quality of research outputs from Turkish academics is subpar, consequently impacting the quality of doctoral graduates. The question arises as to why these academics may not be proficient enough to publish their scientific studies in international peer-reviewed journals.

While research outputs, encompassing scientific publications, intellectual property rights, and the number of doctoral graduates, might be adequate for measuring the quality of doctoral programs, this approach is subject to debate. Concentrating solely on outputs and overlooking the inputs—namely, the qualifications of students during the doctoral application—may not be the most appropriate method. Therefore, the quality of inputs (students) might also need to be taken into account when assessing the quality of doctoral programs.

Attention should be directed towards the effectiveness and quality of doctoral programs. Theoretically, these programs are intended to equip researchers with qualifications outlined in EQF and TQF. However, Aslan et al. (2021) conducted an examination of 124 dissertations in the field of educational sciences, evaluating the scientific impact of these studies. Their findings revealed that among the dissertation holders—82 of whom are academics at universities—64 scientific publications were generated from their dissertations, and other researchers cited 34 of these publications. In another study by Aslan & Açıkgöz (2021), the contributions of 88 dissertations in the disciplines of economics, law, psychology, political science, and international relations were assessed through bibliometric analysis. The researchers uncovered that among the dissertation owners—67 of whom are academics at universities—23 scientific studies were derived from their dissertations, and others cited nine dissertations. These findings suggest that doctoral programs may face challenges in adequately training individuals in line with the criteria outlined in EQF and TQF. Therefore, there is a need to place emphasis on the doctoral program, particularly its process dimension, to ensure that researchers acquire knowledge, skills, and competency throughout this journey.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: The next section outlines the theoretical background for the topic. Then, the significance of the study is discussed, and research question terms are presented. After that, the methodology of this research is given in terms of data collection, participant characteristics, and data analysis. The following section presents the results, and the last section is the conclusion.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this study, a management-oriented evaluation approach was adopted—one of the most crucial methods for providing administrators with pertinent information about the implement-

ed program (Karataş & Fer, 2009). According to Stufflebeam (1971), information is presented to management to facilitate decision-making. Throughout the evaluation process, information is delineated, gathered, and disseminated to stakeholders (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). The objective of this evaluation approach is not to establish proof but to enhance the applied program (Harrison, 1993). The evaluation approach employed here encompasses context, input, process, and product, known as the CIPP model.

Context evaluation focuses on gathering information about the strengths and weaknesses of a system to plan improvement-oriented objectives for the system. Input evaluation deals with the strengths and weaknesses of alternative strategies that can be chosen to achieve determined objectives. Process evaluation involves assessing the strengths and weaknesses of a given strategy under actual implementation conditions to reinforce the strategy or its implementation. Product evaluation provides information about whether the objectives were fulfilled or not. In the CIPP model, the approach seeks answers to questions such as “What should we do? How should we do it? Are we doing it correctly? And did it work?” (Stufflebeam, 1971).

As highlighted by Karataş & Fer (2009), the CIPP model proves to be a valuable and straightforward tool for evaluators, aiding them in posing pertinent questions during the evaluation process. Moreover, it allows researchers to conduct a specific type of evaluation (Harrison, 1993). However, this study solely concentrates on the process evaluation within the CIPP model. Two primary reasons guided the choice of this evaluation model. Firstly, applicants competitively vie for enrollment in doctoral programs due to the stringent requirements, which represent a strength in doctoral training. The qualifications demanded from applicants, such as academic personnel and postgraduate education entrance and foreign language exam scores, imply their competence for undertaking doctoral studies. Secondly, the Turkish Qualification Framework (TQF) and the Turkish Graduate Training Regulation (2016) outline the qualifications that Ph.D. holders should possess upon completing their doctoral programs. These include bringing innovation to science, developing a new scientific method, or applying a known method to another field (Turkish Graduate Training Regulation, 2016). Given the low publication rates and citation counts of Turkish academics in peer-reviewed journals (SJR, 2021), the researchers of this study direct their focus toward the implementation of the doctoral program. Participants in the study were asked to share their experiences in doctoral education through quantitative and qualitative data collection tools, aiming to gather information to enhance the implementation of the doctoral program.

Information about the graduation year of participants reflects the perceptions of both junior and senior academics, aiding in identifying strengths and weaknesses in the program's implementation. Field of study information is crucial for differentiating among participants' disciplines. The selected fields align with the low representation of education, social sciences, humanities, and administrative sciences in the Web of Sci-

ence (WoS) database (Baloğlu & Bilgiç, 2021b). Additionally, the university type variable indicates the classification of research and candidate research universities compared to other non-research universities in Türkiye. Research and candidate research universities, established in national higher education policies in 2017, are evaluated based on 32 indicators related to research capacity, quality, interaction, and cooperation (CoHE, 2020). Thus, these universities are considered pioneers in Türkiye. This study aims to gather perceptions of academics working at different types of universities in Türkiye regarding doctoral education in their institutions. The academic title variable refers to the positions of academics at the universities, including professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructors, and others. Their perceptions were collected to discern the strengths and weaknesses of doctoral program implementation at both university and country levels.

SIGNIFICANCE of THE STUDY

Several studies have assessed doctoral programs in Türkiye within the literature. Küçükoğlu (2015) examined Ph.D. ELT programs in Türkiye, considering variables such as program descriptions, content, and atmosphere. This evaluation was conducted using quantitative data derived from the perceptions of 116 students and graduates of the Ph.D. ELT program. Yağan (2018) evaluated curriculum and instruction doctoral programs in Türkiye, focusing on the perceptions of 29 students, 27 academics, and the quality of their doctoral dissertations. Karadağ & Özdemir (2017) assessed the doctoral education process in the field of education based on the perceptions of seven academics and six doctoral students. These studies utilized quantitative or qualitative research methods to evaluate doctoral programs.

This current study distinguishes itself from the aforementioned studies in terms of research method, participants, and field of study. The doctoral program is initially evaluated across various dimensions, including courses offered, contributions of academics, doctoral qualification exam, thesis monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge, skill, and competence acquisitions of Ph.D. holders. A mixed research method is employed to triangulate and generalize the findings, involving 310 mostly academic participants in the quantitative research and 10 academics in the qualitative research. Their perceptions regarding the evaluation of doctoral programs are anticipated to fortify these programs. Furthermore, this study not only evaluates doctorate programs in education but also spans across other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, distinguishing it from other studies. Consequently, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the enhancement of doctoral programs in the fields of social sciences and humanities in Türkiye.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study primarily aims to address the following questions:

RQ1: Are there any statistical differences in academics' perceptions of the process component evaluation of Ph.D. programs in the social sciences and humanities based on university type, departments, titles, and Ph.D. graduate year variables?

RQ2: What are the academics' perceptions of Ph.D. students' acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical skills concerning their study fields at the most advanced level?

RQ3: What are the academics' perceptions of Ph.D. students' acquisition of research skills concerning their study fields at the most advanced level?

RQ4: What are the academics' perceptions concerning Ph.D. students' development of new ideas, processes, or approaches at the most advanced level?

RQ5: What are the academics' perceptions concerning the promotion of the objective thesis monitoring process in a Ph.D. program?

RQ6: What are the academics' perceptions concerning which new skills Ph.D. students should acquire or at which skills they should be competent?

RQ7: What are the academics' perceptions concerning Ph.D. students' contributions to their research fields?

METHOD

In this study, a mixed methods research design was employed to thoroughly and comprehensively address the research questions. This approach enables researchers to achieve a more profound understanding of the problems or questions than either a quantitative or qualitative design alone. The convergent mixed methods approach was specifically adopted in the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. In this approach, researchers gather quantitative and qualitative data, analyze them separately, and then compare the results to determine whether they mutually support each other (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2019).

The researchers initially present the quantitative statistical results, followed by a discussion of the qualitative findings using a side-by-side comparison approach. The study adhered to ethical considerations, and an ethics report numbered 69789 and dated 6th May 2021 was obtained from one public university in Türkiye.

Data collection instruments

In the development of the survey instrument, Forehand (2005), the EQF (2015), Karataş & Fer (2009) The Turkish Qualifications Framework (2015), and the TGER (2016) were considered. and were considered in the determination of the items in the survey. Besides, the perceptions of 10 experts (one professor and one assistant professor in the field of economy, three associate professors, two assistant professors, and three experts with a Ph.D. degree in the field of education) were derived to develop the items of the survey.

A 5-point Likert-point scale ranging from (0) strongly disagree, (1) disagree, (2) neutral, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree- was utilized in the instrument to find out the participants' perceptions of the Ph.D. programs concerning process components. To ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 208 academics from various Turkish universities working in the departments of social sciences and

humanities.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was implemented for the construct validity of the scale. Firstly, the correlation matrix was examined, and it was found that the relations were sufficient among the items ($r > 0.30$), and the pairwise comparisons had a great amount of quantitative property. Following the analyses of the correlation matrix and pairwise comparisons, the multicollinearity among the items was examined and seven items were excluded from the analysis ($r > 0.80$). Besides, the determinant value made the factor analysis possible (Determinant > 0.0001). Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) is expected to be higher than 0.5. When the anti-image correlation matrix was analyzed, it was understood that the condition for all the items was met. As a result of the first-factor analysis, the factor loads of two items were low (< 0.32) and omitted from the analysis. The factor analysis was conducted again. The index of KMO happened to 0.92, which is considered marvelous (Dziuban & Shirkey, 1974). The v_2 value of Bartlett's sphericity test was found as 3001.607 ($p < 0.01$, $df = 253$) which yields an appropriate assessment for the factor analysis (Bartlett, 1950). A 0.50-factor load in the EFA was regarded to analyze the data. As a result of EFA, one component construct occurred explaining 45.41% of all the variance. The factor loads of the items happened to be higher than 0.544. Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate the reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient result indicated it was 0.943. Nine items were omitted from the pilot study. The instrument consists of 23 items.

On the other hand, the semi-interview questions were formulated by the researchers in collaboration with three experts in the field of education and social sciences, taking into consideration EQF, TQF, TGER, Forehand (2005), and Karataş & Fer (2009). Content validity of these questions was assessed by four experts specializing in the fields of education and social sciences. All interviews were conducted online via the ZOOM software, with each session lasting between 45 minutes and one hour. To address specific aspects related to participants' perceptions of Ph.D. programs regarding process components, additional questions were introduced when deemed necessary. Participants' consent was obtained before recording all interviews, ensuring compliance with ethical considerations.

Participants

The study's population comprised academics and experts who had completed their Ph.D. studies in the fields of social sciences and humanities. A convenient sampling method was employed to engage participants and gather responses to the survey. Before proceeding with the data analysis, the researchers conducted an outlier screening following Kline's guidelines (2011). A total of 12 data points were excluded from the dataset based on the Z score (+3 and -3) criteria. Consequently, the study ultimately involved 310 participants. Detailed demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

As depicted in Table 1, a significant majority of participants have experienced Ph.D. graduation within the last 10 years, indicating that they can be classified as junior researchers in terms of their post-graduation experience in academia. Cor-

Table 1: The Demographic Characteristics of the Participants Involved in the Survey

		n	%
Graduation year from PhD program	0-4	120	38.7
	5-9	80	25.8
	10-14	34	10.9
	15-19	33	10.6
	20+	43	13.8
Academic title	Professor	72	23.2
	Associate Professor	63	20.3
	Assistant Professor	109	35.1
	Instructor	43	13.8
	Others	23	7.6
The Field of study	Education	161	51.9
	Social Sciences and Humanities	149	48.1
University-type	Research university	168	54.1
	Others	142	45.9

respondingly, a predominant number of them hold positions as assistant professors. Regarding their field of study, there is a slightly higher representation of academics working in their specific field compared to those in the broader field of social sciences and humanities. Similarly, the number of academics affiliated with research universities slightly surpasses those associated with other types of universities.

In the qualitative study, a case study design was adopted. A distinguishing feature of a case study is its holistic examination of factors related to a specific case (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Case studies can be conducted using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research designs. In this case study, participants' perceptions of Ph.D. programs in social sciences and humanities, specifically focusing on process components, were thoroughly and comprehensively explored to enhance the understanding of the quantitative findings. The selection criteria for the study group in the case study included factors such as publications and experience in monitoring graduate theses or dissertations. Table 2 provides details about the characteristics of the study group.

As outlined in Table 2, the predominant share of participants concluded their Ph.D. training a minimum of 20 years ago. All participants hold the rank of professor in their respective study fields, and the majority pursued their Ph.D.s in the fields of education, economics, management, and sociology, respectively. Specifically, six participants completed their Ph.D. training at research and candidate research universities, two at other Turkish universities outside the research and candidate research categories, and two at universities abroad.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of the quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used. Besides, t-test and ANOVA tests were conducted to find out whether there are any statistical differences among

Table 2: The Demographic Traits of the Participants in the Study Group

Participants	Graduation year from PhD program	Title	Field of study	University
P1	2001	Professor	Education	Research
P2	2009	Professor	Education	Others
P3	2012	Professor	Sociology	Research
P4	2002	Professor	Management	Research
P5	1997	Professor	Education	Research
P6	1986	Professor	Education	Research
P7	1998	Professor	Economy	Others
P8	1992	Professor	Economy	Research
P9	2001	Professor	Education	Others / University Abroad
P10	1995	Professor	Education	Others / University Abroad

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the Evaluation of the PhD Programs

Variables	Groups	n	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Graduation year from Ph.D. program	0-4 years	120	21	89	63.57	14.19
	5-9 years	80	22	87	55.82	17.36
	10-14 years	34	24	83	59.41	13.60
	15-19 years	33	24	88	59.27	17.26
	20t years	43	20	88	63.07	16.07
Title	Professor	72	20	88	60.72	17.54
	Associate Professor	63	22	87	59.27	16.13
	Assistant Professor	109	21	86	58.85	15.15
	Instructor	43	31	89	64.88	13.71
	Others	23	28	86	64.00	15.61
The Field of study	Education	161	20	89	61.36	15.11
	Social science	149	21	88	59.76	16.60
University	Research & Candidate Res. Uni.	168	21	88	61.21	15.53
	Other Uni.	142	20	89	59.86	16.22

the perceptions of academics in terms of types of university, departments, titles, and Ph.D. graduate year variables concerning the process component evaluation of the Ph.Ds. programs in social sciences and humanities. On the other hand, the content analysis method was used to analyze the qualitative data through the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis program. Content analysis provides readers with meaningful cognitive schemas through textual analysis (Batdı & Talan, 2019). It is used in qualitative data to identify concepts and relationships (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In the present study, the systematic classifications of codes and themes derived from the transcribed interview data were interpreted with content analysis. The two researchers of this study conducted the coding of the data and generated the themes and codes with an independent researcher. Cohen Kappa compliance values were calculated to ensure the reliability of the coding procedure (Viera & Garrett, 2005). The values turned out to vary from .70 to .83 (Appendix 1). These values indicate that the data coding of the research was implemented in a reliable way. Besides, the expressions in the data were quoted to support the themes and codes.

RESULTS

Quantitative results for the process component evaluation of the PhD programs (RQ1)

The descriptive statistics for academics' perceptions regarding Ph.D. graduate year from the Ph.D. program, title, field of study, and university variables, concerning the process component evaluation of Ph.D. programs in social sciences and humanities, are presented in Table 3. Analyzing the data in Table 3, it is evident that there is substantial agreement among participants in their assessments of Ph.D. programs concerning the process component, irrespective of whether they are junior or senior academics.

According to Table 4, a consensus appears in the participants' evaluation of the Ph.D. programs despite their titles, the fields of study, and university types.

The qualitative results

The themes and codes were generated based on the qualitative data through content analysis. As a result of the analysis,

Table 4: T-test and ANOVA Results Concerning the Evaluation of the Ph.D. Program

Variables	Groups	n	M	S	SD	P	T
The Field of study	Education	161	61.36				
	Social sciences and humanities	149	59.76	.391	308	.375	.889
University	Research & Candidate Res. Uni.	168	61.21				
	Other Uni.	142	59.86	.683	.308	.456	.747
		n	M	SD	F	df	P
Graduation year from Ph.D. program	0-4 years	120	63.58	14.19	3.341	4	.011
	5-9 years	80	55.83	17.36			
	10-14 years	34	59.41	13.60			
	15-19 years	33	59.27	17.26			
	20t years	43	63.07	16.07			
Title	Professor	72	60.72	17.54	1.504	4	.201
	Associate Professor	63	59.27	16.13			
	Assistant Professor	109	58.85	15.15			
	Instructor	43	64.88	13.71			
	Others	23	64.00	15.61			

the themes and codes were derived. The codes were provided under six themes in six models.

PhD students' acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical skills (RQ2)

The first theme is concerned with the Ph.D. students' acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The codes regarding this theme are indicated in Figure 1. The following expressions can be regarded as a reference for these codes. It was quoted from P1 coded participant "I think that it is very important to disseminate the seminar course presentations with all faculty. Therefore, conducting and presenting the seminar courses properly is crucial to enable the students to acquire the practical skills." It was cited from P2 coded participant's expressions "It is absolutely necessary to determine the qualifications framework for a doctorate program. When we consider our program, namely educational administration, and planning, we have to equip the entire program with the courses to achieve the qualifications determined in the framework." P3 coded participant indicated, "One of the primary problems in the doctorate programs is the lack of methodological knowledge and skills. Although we are supposed to discuss the issues in the doctorate programs at the most advanced level, we discuss them at the basic level." It was quoted from P9 coded participant, "...we have to focus on promoting production-oriented process. For instance, if you do your doctorate in the field of sciences, you have to come up with a beneficial model, patent or high-quality papers published in SCI-indexed peer-reviewed journals. If you do your doctorate in the field of social sciences, you have to publish papers, and books according to the determined criteria or conduct a study to fulfill social responsibility." These codes point out that some noteworthy enhancements should be implemented in the doctorate programs to enable the Ph.D. students to gain theoretical knowledge and practical skills concerning their fields.

Ph.D. students' acquisition of research skills (RQ3)

The second theme deals with Ph.D. students' acquisition of research skills. The codes generated in the context of this theme are provided in Figure 2. It was cited from P2 coded participants' expressions "If we can incorporate research skills into all classes from primary to higher education or enable students to gain the research skills, the Ph.D. student will be equipped with these skills in the doctorate program." P4 coded participant indicated, "I think that in every class we have to make Ph.D. students write discussion papers. They cannot learn how to write them we just lecture." It was quoted from P7 coded participant "At this point, benchmarking is very important. It is crucial for the Ph.D. students to acquire other experiences." It was cited from P10 coded participant "First of all, we have to define research skills the students should have in each doctorate program." It can be deduced from these codes articulated in the context of the research skills theme that the Ph.D. students should be promoted to be involved in research activities to develop their research skills.

Ph.D. students' development of new ideas, processes, or approaches (RQ4)

The codes for the theme of developing new ideas, processes, or approaches are depicted in Figure 3. It was expressed by P9 coded participant "We have to promote a research-based ecosystem for the doctorate programs. The system is hardly ever available somewhere or it is not available anywhere." P10 coded participant emphasized, "To illustrate, go to Stanford University today and you can take online lessons from the academics who know what is going on in the world very well and have the predictions for the future. You can accredit this lesson as credit in your doctorate program." P8 coded participant stressed out "The doctoral dissertations should be definitely based on a project, research, and development. A doctoral dissertation cannot be conducted according to just a literature re-

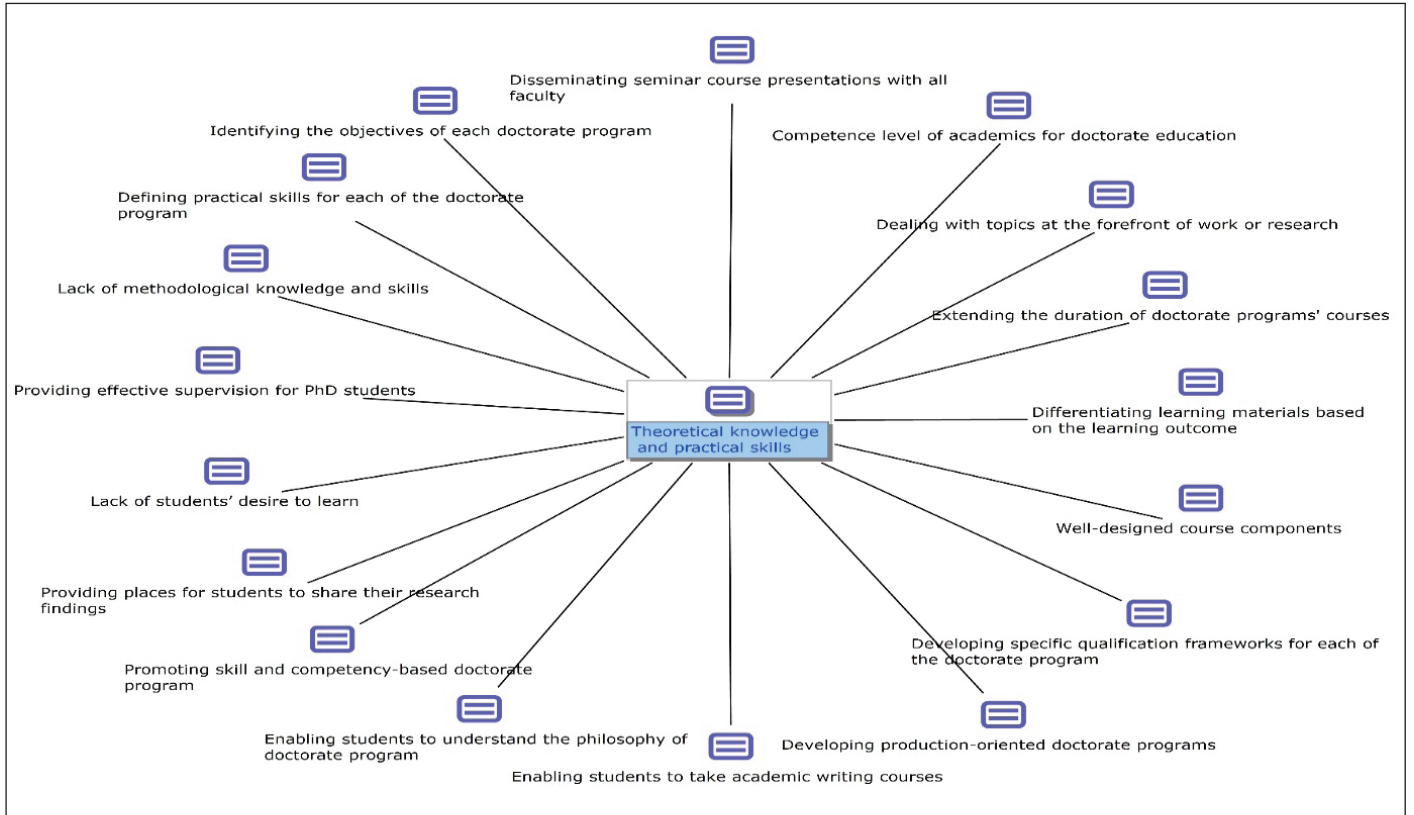


Figure 1: Theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

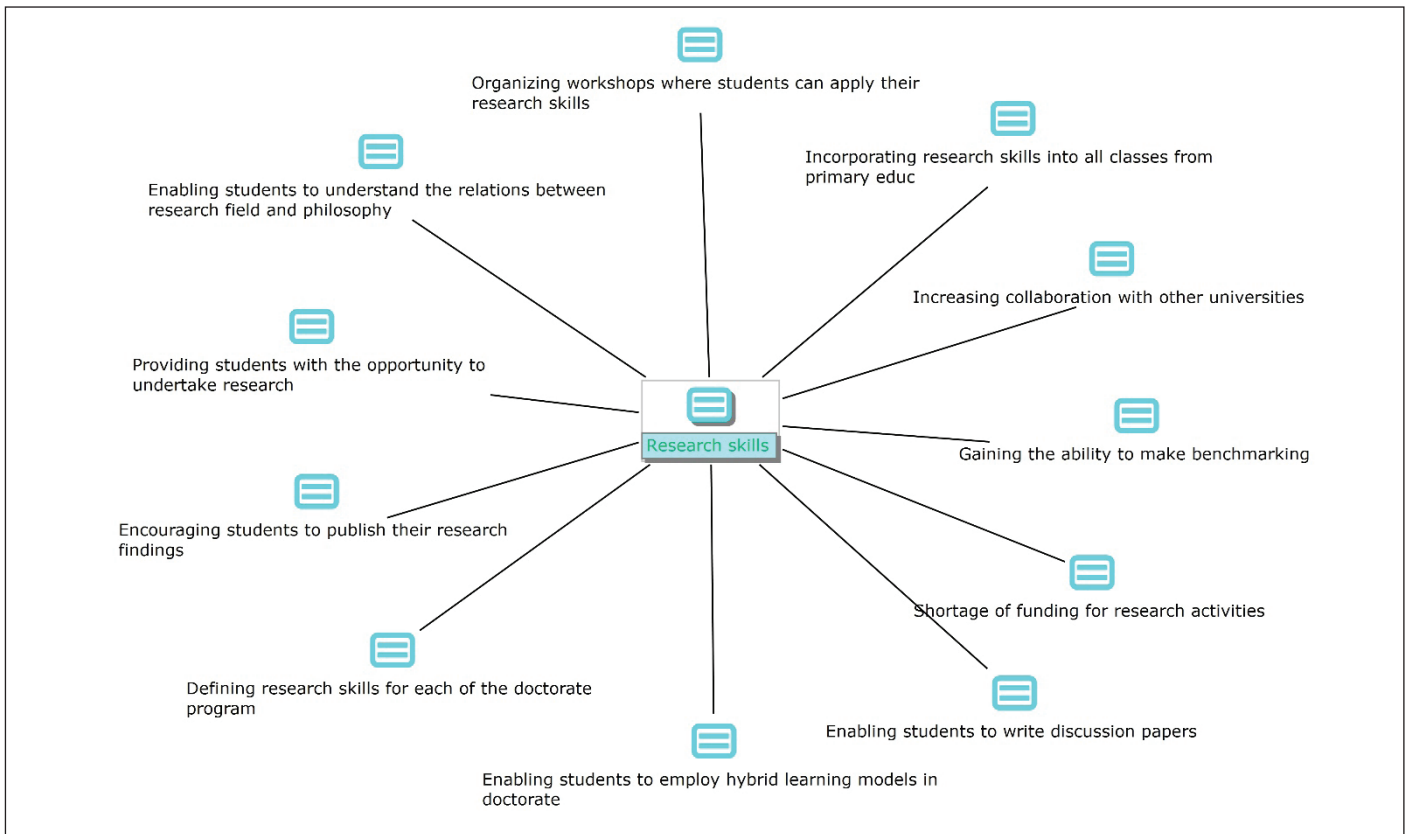


Figure 2: Research skills.

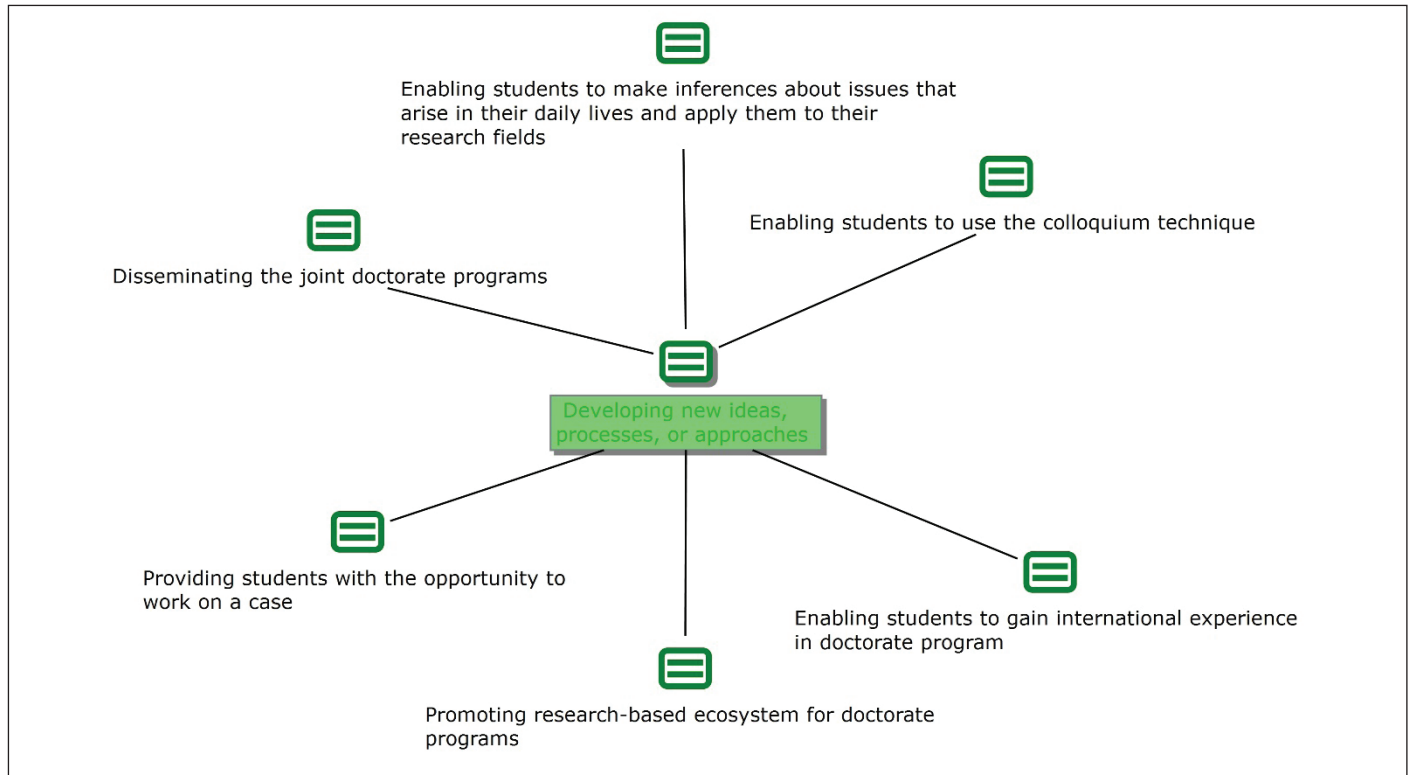


Figure 3: Developing new ideas, processes, or approaches.

view. The students should be given a chance to work on a case.” Of these codes, it is noteworthy for the students to be included in a research-based ecosystem and have an international learning experience to enable them to develop new ideas, processes, or approaches in their research.

Promotion of objective thesis monitoring process in Ph.D. program (RQ5)

The codes generated pertaining to the promotion of the objective thesis monitoring process in the Ph.D. program are presented in Figure 4. There are some of the expressions articulated in this theme. P9 coded participant cited, “You will consider the outputs. When you complete your Ph.D. training, what contributions will you make to the literature and practice? For instance, in the field of education, you are required to have at least two publications published in SSCI- indexed journals to defend your dissertation. You see how dissertation topics will change”. P3 coded participants, on the other hand, stated, “Those academics who have not published any scientific study in the past three years, should not be included in the thesis monitoring process.” P2 coded participant emphasized, “If we develop a process-based evaluation from the very beginning of the doctorate program to its end and eliminate those students who fail to meet the requirements of the program, the monitoring process will be more effective.” It is understood that the monitoring process should be implemented based on the empirical findings regarding students’ and academics outputs.

The skills Ph.D. students should acquire (RQ6)

The codes concerning the expected skills from the Ph.D. student theme are indicated in Figure 5. It was cited by a P1 coded participant “One of the most important skills I expect from the PhD students is that they should have research skills. Besides, they should gain higher-order mental skills.” Besides, it was quoted from a P2 coded participant, “They should have independent research skills and critical thinking skills.” The codes point out that Ph.D. students should acquire research skills, conduct research independently and publish their research.

Ph.D. students’ contributions to their research fields (RQ7)

The codes for the Ph.D. holders’ contributions to their research field theme are displayed in Figure 6. In the context of this theme, it was cited by a P9 coded participant that “Ph.D. students should contribute to developing new methods and generating different perspectives.” It was quoted from a P6 coded participant, “They should write articles, present papers in congress and seminars, write books or book chapters in the field of social sciences.” It was derived from the P1 coded participant’s expressions, “They should be competent to identify the problematic areas in their research fields and come up with new solutions for these areas at the forefront of work or research.” These codes reveal that Ph.D. holders are supposed to contribute to the literature or practice.

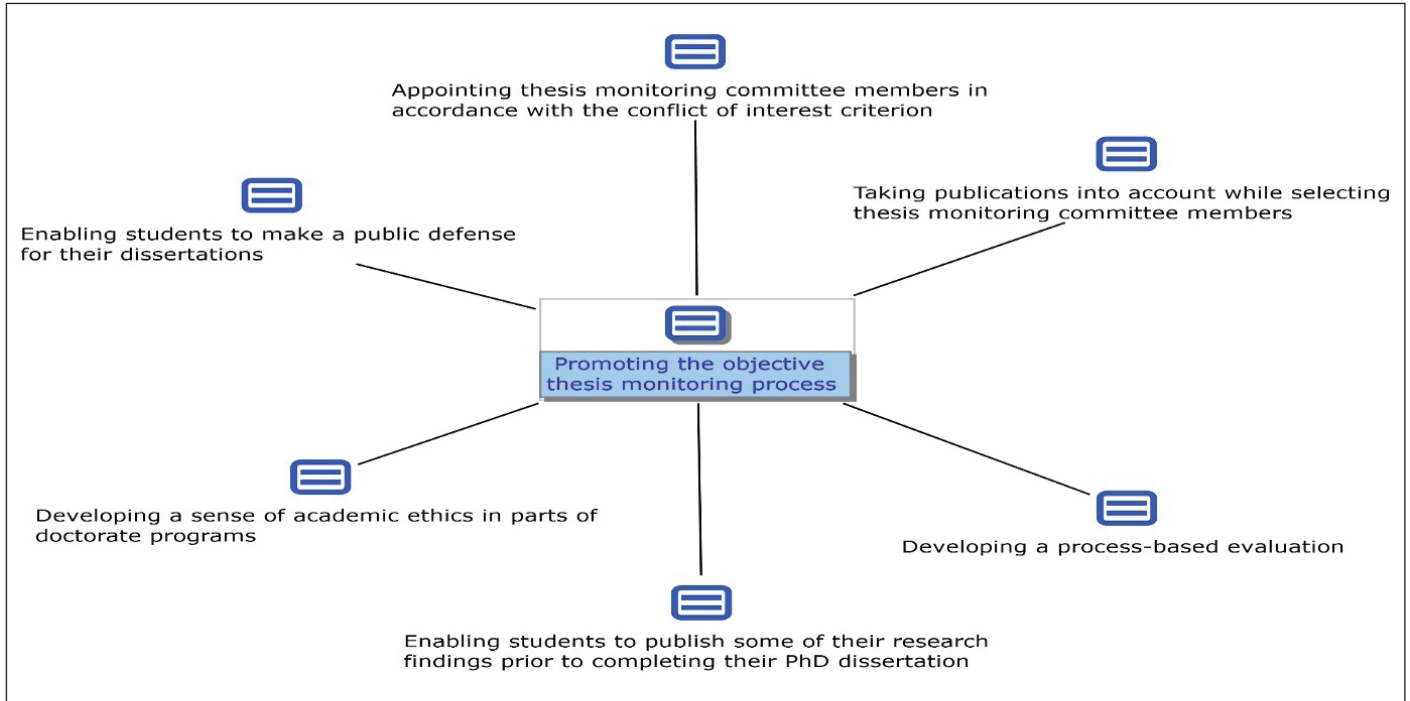


Figure 4: Promoting the objective thesis monitoring process.

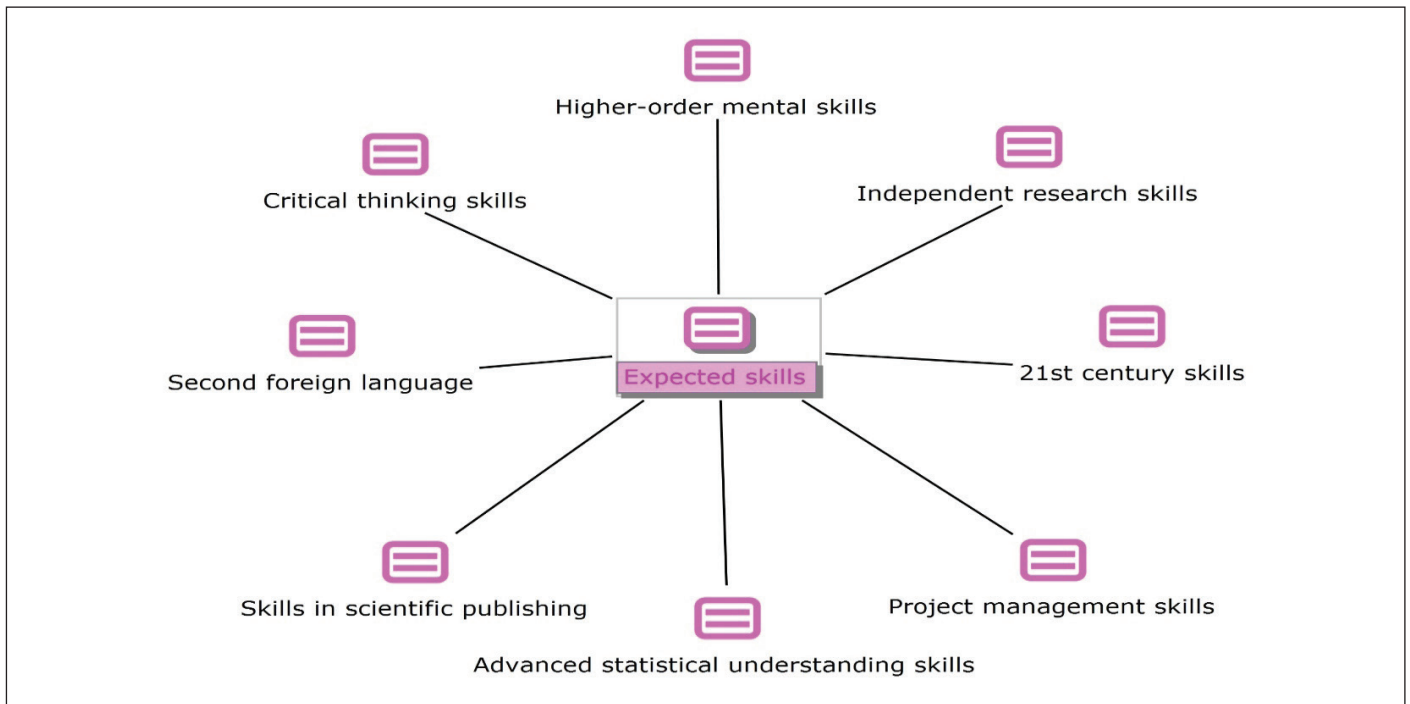


Figure 5: Expected skills from the Ph.D. students.

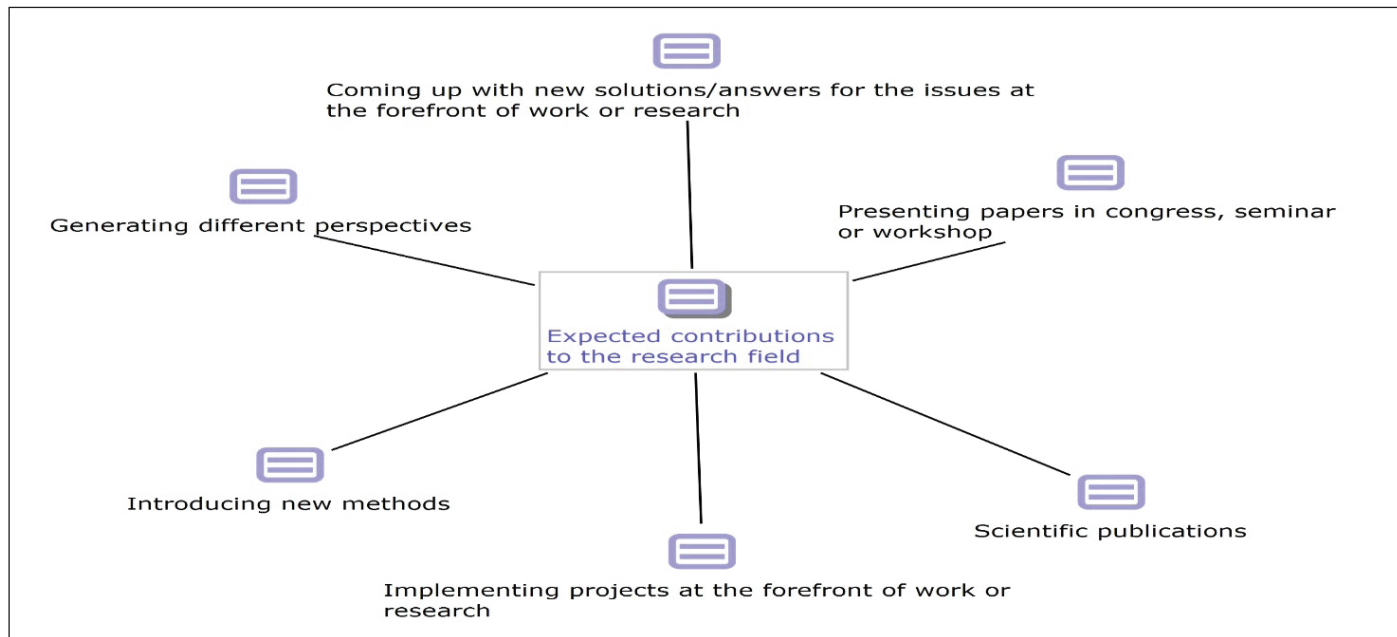


Figure 6: Expected contributions to the research field.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

In the scrutiny of Turkish doctoral programs in social sciences and humanities using a mixed methods research design, a process evaluation model was employed. The survey developed by the researchers in this study facilitated the extraction of participants' perceptions regarding their experiences with the implementation of doctoral programs. Participants evaluated various components of the doctoral programs, encompassing the courses offered, contributions of academics, doctoral qualification exam, thesis monitoring and evaluation, and their personal acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competence.

Derived from the quantitative analyses, it was observed that there was no significant differentiation in the participants' perceptions regarding the components of the doctoral program. This lack of differentiation held true across various factors, including academic title, study field, university type, and graduation year from their Ph.D. programs. These findings align with the conclusions of Küçükoğlu's (2015) study, which similarly indicated a lack of statistically significant differences in the overall evaluation of Ph.D. ELT programs among participants with different levels of experience. The participants in this study appear to uphold a consistent framework in their understanding of the program's functions.

To comprehensively grasp this structure, six themes were distilled from participants' insights regarding the program's implementation through the qualitative data obtained from the interview process. The first theme centers on Ph.D. students' acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical skills within the doctoral program. The codes generated within this theme highlight the need to promote skill-based and competency-based doctorate programs, establish qualification frameworks for each program, and enhance outcome-oriented

approaches. These findings emphasize the importance of involving students in research-based programs, as revealed in the study by Karadağ&Özdemir (2017), where students were found to complete their doctoral programs without acquiring robust methodological knowledge and skills in their study fields. Consequently, when transitioning to academic roles, they were less likely to publish in peer-reviewed international indexed journals (Aslan & Açıkgöz, 2021; Baloğlu & Bilgiç, 2021a; CoHE, 2020).

The second theme delves into Ph.D. students' acquisition of research skills. A significant insight from this theme is the recommendation that research skills should be integrated into all classes, from primary to higher education, to equip students with the competence to conduct research. Participants emphasized that methodological knowledge and skills are often discussed at a basic level due to the deficiency in these areas during prior undergraduate and master's studies. Hence, it is suggested that doctoral students must enter the program with sufficient knowledge, skills, and competence in their study fields to engage in advanced discussions.

The third theme revolves around the Ph.D. students' development of new ideas, processes, or approaches. It was highlighted that a research-based ecosystem is scarcely available in the doctoral program, emphasizing the need for its promotion. Participants underscored that doctoral dissertations should stem from a project, research, or development initiative. As highlighted by Aslan&Açıkgöz (2021), researchers predominantly used secondary data in their doctoral dissertations, with a lack of a research-based approach in disciplines such as economics, law, political science, and international relations, except for psychology dissertations. The importance of a research-based ecosystem becomes apparent when considering the contribu-

tions of researchers' dissertations to literature and practice. The codes in this theme align with the first theme, indicating that Ph.D. students often do not engage in research-based doctoral programs.

The fourth theme focuses on promoting the objective thesis monitoring process. Within this theme, it was suggested that empirical outputs should be considered in the thesis monitoring evaluation process. For instance, students could be required to publish at least two studies in WoS-indexed journals before their dissertation defense to enhance the effectiveness of the monitoring process. Another point emphasized is the publication quality of jury members involved in the thesis monitoring process. However, it may be impractical to expect Ph.D. students to publish in WoS-indexed journals, given that over 92% of thesis-monitoring academics lack publications in such journals (Baloğlu & Bilgiç, 2021a). Hence, the evaluation of theses should consider empirical and concrete criteria, such as the generation of primary data in dissertations.

The fifth theme centers on the skills Ph.D. students should acquire during the doctoral program. The codes derived from this theme suggest that students should possess the competence to conduct independent research and publish their findings, along with higher-order mental skills. These perceptions align with the previous themes, emphasizing the need for a research-based approach in the doctoral program to foster researchers' competence in conducting research and developing higher-order cognitive skills.

The last theme focuses on Ph.D. holders' contributions to their research fields. The theme suggests that Ph.D. holders should contribute to their field of study through scientific publications, such as articles, papers, books, or book chapters, and by providing solutions to the problems they research. This theme is consistent with the findings of Aslan, Açıkgöz&Günay (2021), who observed that out of 124 dissertations completed in the field of education sciences in Türkiye from 2014 to 2017, only 64 publications were generated. This finding underscores the importance of implementing a more research-based doctoral program in the fields of social sciences and humanities.

The total number of doctoral graduates in Türkiye increased from 4,551 in 2013 to 7,598 in 2020, with approximately 40% in the fields of social sciences and humanities, including education (CoHE, 2021). However, concerns about the quality of many new graduates accompany this growth. Measuring the quality of teaching and learning in doctoral education is challenging, with various interdependent dimensions, such as the quality of the doctoral candidate, graduate, thesis, and supervisor. Employability and research outputs are key indicators of doctorate graduates' quality, and the qualification level of candidates at the entry level is assessed through various exams and interviews in Türkiye. However, the sufficiency of these measures is subject to debate.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study suggest that doctoral programs in social sciences and humanities in Türkiye generally do not adequately train graduates to acquire knowledge, skills,

and competence at the most advanced level. This implies that Ph.D. candidates may lack sufficient qualifications when starting doctorate programs, highlighting a quality issue in both graduates and programs. Therefore, revisions and redesigns of not only doctorate program curricula but also undergraduate and master's curricula are needed to enable students to gain advanced qualifications at universities. Moreover, students should be encouraged to engage in research and publish their findings during doctorate programs, enhancing their competence in conducting independent research in their fields or workplaces, ultimately improving the quality of doctorate programs and graduates. For the development of the doctoral program process in social science and humanities, decision-makers should coordinate with academics and administrators at universities. It is expected that doctoral-level studies in this field will guide decision-makers in Türkiye to address problems in socio-economic life.

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Appendix 1: Cohen Kappa Values for the Qualitative Themes

Theoretical knowledge and practical skills					Research skills					Developing new ideas, processes, or approaches					Promoting the objective thesis monitoring process				
K1	K2				K1	K2				K1	K2				K1	K2			
		+	-	Σ			+	-	Σ			+	-	Σ			+	-	Σ
	+	17	2	19		+	11	1	12		+	6	1	7		+	6	0	6
	-	3	12	15		-	2	9	11		-	0	5	5		-	1	4	5
	Σ	20	14	34		Σ	13	10	23		Σ	6	6	12		Σ	7	4	11
Kappa: .70 p: .000					Kappa: .738 p: .000					Kappa: .833 p: .003					Kappa: .814 p: .006				
Expected skills					Expected contributions to the research field														
K1	K2				K1	K2													
		+	-	Σ			+	-	Σ										
	+	8	1	9		+	6	1	7										
	-	1	6	7		-	1	6	7										
	Σ	9	7	16		Σ	7	7	14										
Kappa: .746 p: .003					Kappa: .714 p: .008														