

Responding to Supervisory Feedback: Doctoral Students' Understanding of Supervisors' Attitudes and Improvement of the Feedback

* Dr. Syed Abdul Waheed, Assistant Professor (Corresponding Author)

** Dr. Nadia Gilani, Assistant Professor

*** Saira Zafar

Abstract

Pursuing doctoral studies after the commencement of the dissertation is exceptionally challenging. Doctoral students meet several times to seek feedback from their research supervisors, and they observe supervisory attitudes very closely. Responding to supervisory feedback is one of the challenges that must be addressed for qualifying the dissertation successfully. The present study aims at how doctoral students respond to the supervisory feedback and how the feedback can be improved because of participants' perspectives on the feedback and supervisory behavior. Narrative research was employed for grasping a better understanding of participants' understanding of supervisory feedback and attitudes. Thirteen doctoral students were approached through maximum variation purposive sampling who was pursuing a doctoral degree in various physical and social science disciplines in different semesters at public and private universities of the Punjab province in Pakistan. The data were collected through conversational interviews to examine the in-depth understanding of doctoral student's storied experiences. The main themes emerged from the thematic analysis were; responding to the feedback, supervisory attitudes, and relationship and improving supervisory feedback. The emergent themes were described and interpreted through significant words, phrases, and statements of the participants. The study has implications for the improvement of supervisory feedback and bringing reforms in doctoral studies.

Keywords: Supervisory Feedback, Supervisory Attitudes, Doctoral Studies, Improving Feedback
Introduction

A doctoral program is based on the main component of research, which is a source of learning for doctoral students for becoming professional researchers. This research process has a substantial element of feedback that is recognized as extremely important for students' development (Walker, 2006). Supervisors' attitudes and behavior have a critical function in doctoral students' research journeys that determine their progress and destination (Lee, 2008; Kehm, 2006). Supervisors' attitudes and behavior are considered a mutual commitment where doctoral students and their supervisors share the common responsibility of accomplishing the degree program (Park, 2006). Martinuso and Turkulainen (2011) found that "It is not supervisor behavior as such that explains degree progress, but its interplay with the students' expectations and characteristics" (p. 106).

Literature indicates that supervisors' behavior towards their students has a significant impact on the quality of research and their performance (Ehrhart, 2004). Hui et al. (2007) explored that supervisor's behavior can be very effective concerning three aspects: goal-oriented behavior (it refers to achieving target objectives or initiating research techniques for students), students-oriented behavior (it is defined as supervisors' dealing with their doctoral students) and moral values (supervisors' ethical considerations towards their students).

Some examples of supervisors' "good" behavior towards doctoral students are feedback that helps them make a timely decision, motivate doctoral students, and make plans for regular research meetings with them (Emler & Cook, 2001). The supervisors accredit, motivate and assist by their positive behavior as a mentor of their students (Martinsuo & Turkulainen, 2011; Waheed, 2020).

* Department of Educational Research & Assessment, University of Okara, Pakistan.

Email: s.a.waheed@uo.edu.pk

** Department of Teacher Education, University of Okara, Pakistan Email: nadia.gilani@uo.edu.pk

***MPhil Education Email: sairazafar3006@gmail.com

Maintaining positive and good behavior is significantly involved in helping students make their decision, solving difficulties that students face in the whole research journey, and listening to students' ideas related to the doctoral research process (Turner et al., 2002). Moreover, supervisors' good behavior includes unbiased and equal dealing with all students and not using their authority as supervisors for personal interests and benefits (De Vries et al., 2002; Dickson et al., 2001).

A study was conducted on supervisory behavior where supervisors' behavior was examined using a "computer coding system" that referred to how to exhibit good supervisory behavior towards doctoral students. The study examined that supervisor's behavior affects doctoral students' motivation in both ways, such as boosting up their energy or diminishing it (Morgan et al., 2005). Several studies have described that supervisors' behavior is associated with doctoral students' response to feedback or progress in their research process (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1995; Porter & Bigley, 2003; Gibson & Vermeulen, 2003). Conversely, if the supervisors' behavior is not too good with their doctoral students it may be considered for modifying for maintaining good supervisory relationships (Kaymakci et al., 2005).

Supervisory feedback on the doctoral dissertation can be improved if supervisory attitudes and behavior are positively changed (Dawson et al., 2019). Providing supervisory feedback to doctoral students needs to devote much time, enthusiasm, and professional identity to the research paradigms (Worthington, 2006). Most of the supervisors give feedback according to a pre-planned standard, set goals and ideas that initially is shared by the supervisors that can improve their feedback (Ali et al., 2016; Alonso, 1983).

Several significant systematic reviews have indicated that supervisory feedback is a primary factor to doctoral students in the research process (Black et al., 2003; Hattie et al., 1996). The evidence explains how supervisory feedback should be improved (Carless et al., 2011). According to a student's survey, supervisory feedback is provided poorly, and there is a need to improve its quality (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2014). Supervisory feedback has been defined as a process in which doctoral students and their supervisors are associated with a sense of accountability and responsibility (Park, 2007). The recent era has focused that supervisory feedback may be improved by extending the doctoral program's rules and evolving new planning and procedures for improving the feedback (Powell & Green, 2007; Olson & Clark, 2009).

In doctoral programs, the universities intensively work on the quality of supervisory feedback that attempts to ensure that supervisory feedback can be improved by attending to the influential managerial features of the doctoral program (Hodkinson, 2004). This improvement process assumes that there are some scarcities in supervisory feedback, and all these can be improved by organized patterns of feedback and by transmitting knowledge from supervisors to doctoral students (Beausaert et al., 2015). In contrast, this transmission process explored that such knowledge is better than can be added through field experience because when supervisors and their students interact and receive feedback from each other, it becomes productive for improving the supervisors' expertise (Cox et al., 2011).

Some theorists have indicated that supervisors improve their feedback when they have trained in new research skills that include basic research skills of writing and reviewing the research drafts. They described how supervisors provide better feedback and behave 'good' during the feedback process (Bernard, 1982). They argued that most supervisors are aware of the discrepancy in their feedback quality and doctoral student's need. If the supervisors consider such most common discrepancies, they can provide effective feedback.

The purpose of the present study was to explore how doctoral students respond to the feedback provided by their supervisors and how it can be improved in light of doctoral students' suggestions for addressing the supervisor's attitudes and behaviors. In doctoral studies, supervisory feedback works as a backbone for doctoral students, and it should be investigated how doctoral supervisors improve their feedback over time in public and private universities. Sometimes, there is a huge difference between supervisory feedback and doctoral students' expectations regarding their feedback. There is a need to understand how doctoral students' reflections on supervisory feedback can help improve their feedback, and students can respond to it appropriately.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How did doctoral students respond to the supervisory feedback on their dissertations?

2. What were doctoral students' perspectives on supervisors' attitudes toward providing feedback?
3. How can supervisory feedback on doctoral dissertations be improved in the light of students' reflections?

Methodology

The qualitative research approach was employed to explore doctoral students' experience of responding to supervisory feedback and how the feedback can be improved, having experienced various attitudes from the supervisors. The qualitative approach "focuses on understanding and meaning that is based on verbal narratives and observations rather than numbers" (McMillan, 2008, p. 11). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) argued that the qualitative approach permits the researchers to explore new perceptions for explaining a particular phenomenon. Further, the narrative research was one of the most suitable approaches to qualitative research used to understand doctoral students' storied experiences that help explore how doctoral students respond to the feedback and suggestions to improve.

Maximum variation purposive sampling was used to select participants from various physical and social sciences disciplines to understand the diverse perspectives of the students who were enrolled in different semesters. The doctoral students were selected who had defended their research proposals and had started writing a dissertation a year ago or more. The number of participants in this sampling is not pre-determined (Siedman, 2006). Nevertheless, thirteen doctoral students enrolled in various disciplines and semesters in public and private sector universities of Punjab were selected that served the purpose of saturation of the interview data. The demographic characteristics of these participants are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of the participants of the study

Participants	Gender	University	Semester	Age	Discipline
1	Male	Public	4 th	35 years	Education
2	Male	Public	6 th	40 years	Economics
3	Male	Public	4 th	45 years	Botany
4	Male	Public	5 th	37 years	Chemistry
5	Male	Private	3 rd	35 years	Sociology
6	Male	Private	7 th	34 years	Zoology
7	Male	Private	5 th	35 years	Library Sc.
8	Female	Public	6 th	40 years	Geography
9	Female	Public	3 th	38 years	Political Sc.
10	Female	Public	4 th	37 years	Chemistry
11	Female	Public	5 th	33 years	Botany
12	Female	Private	5 th	28 years	Zoology
13	Female	Private	6 th	34 years	Education

The data were collected through conversational interviews with doctoral students who received supervisory feedback on their dissertation and had experiences of responding to the feedback. These interviews are very productive to gather a detailed description of the participants' narrative experiences (Jones, 2020; Allan, 2020). The interview questions were followed by open-ended follow-up questions that allowed in-depth data guiding to explore themes from the interview transcripts. It permits the interviewees to extensively share their ideas, opinions, understandings, and practices (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Byrne, 2004). Participants were stimulated to describe their experience in response to interview questions that increased understanding of the phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2004). The primary purpose was to allow participants rich reflections on supervisory feedback and how they can improve it.

After the qualitative data were collected through interviews, the researchers listened to the recorded interviews as soon as possible to explore the reflections of doctoral students on supervisory feedback and their perspective on its improvement because of the supervisory attitudes. The audio recordings have been listened to several times for an in-depth examination of the participants' perspectives. Subsequently, interviews were analyzed through the coding process. The emergent themes were phrased based on the transcripts' coding, and they originated from the interview

transcripts as a result of thematic analysis. Each of the themes was based on five to seven codes which were initially categorized and transformed into themes. The researchers drew some keywords, phrases, and statements that were observed significant and highlighted doctoral student's reflections on the process of supervisory feedback, supervisory attitudes, and suggestions on improving feedback (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As a result of the analysis, three main themes emerged that were described and interpreted extensively.

Results

After the data collection, the researchers developed the themes that emerged from the interview transcripts' analysis. The transcripts were frequently read. The recorded interviews were listened to repeatedly to understand the genuine meaning of the themes and doctoral students' reflections and understanding of how to respond to supervisory feedback, supervisors' attitudes, and how feedback can be further improved. Consequently, the researchers developed three main themes: responding to supervisory feedback, understanding supervisory attitudes and relationships, and improving supervisory feedback. All these emerged themes help describe doctoral students' perspectives on supervisory feedback.

Responding to the Feedback

It was noticed that supervisory feedback was very crucial and direly needed during the whole doctoral research journey. The doctoral students also expressed how they responded to the supervisory feedback and reflected that it is essential to understand how supervisory feedback is responded to so that it can be further improved and the quality of research can be enhanced. The students' experiences revealed that they try to understand and respond positively when they receive feedback from their supervisors.

Doctoral students responded to their supervisor's feedback in many ways. Sometimes, they responded in written form during one-on-one interaction or telephonically. It was also observed that sometimes they became careless and showed a non-serious attitude towards responding to their supervisor's feedback well in time. It was also because they had developed less understanding of the nature of research and research problem under investigation that affected their response to the feedback. Conversely, institutions were not supporting their doctoral students, resulting in the late, inappropriate, or poor response to the feedback. A male doctoral student studying in the 6th semester in a public sector university remarked that *"He considered that doctoral students actively respond to supervisor's feedback. Nevertheless, sometimes they could not respond to the feedback properly when their departments did not behave appropriately during their job"*.

Most of the doctoral students proclaimed that their professional departments did not support their employees for their studies that is why they responded late to their supervisor's feedback, which affected the quality of the response. One of the study participants stated that the *"school department did not allow leave when he intensely needs to attend a meeting with his research supervisor in the university"*. He further described that *"Education authorities feel jealous of those employees who are doing doctoral studies being ahead of the school or teacher"*. Such type of attitudes and issues cause stress that did not allow students to address the feedback given adequately by their supervisor. Another male doctoral student participant studying in the 4th semester in a public sector university added about responding to supervisory feedback that:

I chose correct words when I am responding to the feedback that shows Honour for my supervisor, and I try to establish ethical standards that are needed as a human being, and it is necessary to give a respectful feeling to my supervisor.

It was noted from other participants' perspectives that they were very careful about ethics when they responded to the supervisor's feedback. They tried to avoid such gestures that may negatively affect the mood of their supervisors. They considered the correct use of words in responding to supervisory feedback that can develop a good reputation and image of him or her in front of the supervisor. On the other hand, the students reflected that any mistake in responding to the feedback might create misunderstanding between them and be *"harmful"* for them. Some doctoral students quickly responded to the feedback as to their first and top priority. Nevertheless, there were not many such students who were promptly and regularly responded to the feedback. A doctoral participant studying in the 7th semester in a public sector university elaborated that *"He tries to respond immediately when he receives feedback. In case of any problem, he searches out in the google for correct response to avoid his supervisor's anger"*.

Most of the doctoral students responded to the supervisory feedback considering it a responsibility. When doctoral students did not understand the feedback, they raised the questions humbly and tried to clarify a response they are giving to their supervisors. In responding to the feedback, they try to clear all ambiguities to make their thesis more presentable and productive.

The participants' important statements exploring the theme of "Responding to the Feedback" are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Statements of Participants on Responding to the Feedback

Theme: Responding to the Feedback

"He [supervisor] considered that doctoral students actively respond to supervisor's feedback. Nevertheless, sometimes they could not respond to the feedback properly when their departments did not behave appropriately during their job".

"School department did not allow leave when he [doctoral student] intensely needs to attend a meeting with his research supervisor in the university".

"Education authorities feel jealous of those employees who are doing doctoral studies being ahead of the school or a teacher".

"He tries to respond immediately when he receives feedback, and in case of any problem, he searches out in the google for correct response to avoid the anger of his supervisor".

Supervisory Attitudes and Relationship

All the doctoral students had different experiences about their relationship with supervisors and supervisory behavior. It was revealed that supervisors' behavior affected doctoral students' performance, whether informal and friendly or harsh. This behavior determined students' relationship with their supervisors, and it varied from person to person. Sometimes, supervisors behaved very negatively on "common things and ordinary matters". For instance, supervisors responded inappropriately when students asked questions repeatedly or they could not understand the feedback. Such type of behavior discouraged the students, and they lost confidence that decreased their motivation. One of the doctoral students talked about his supervisor's positive behavior: "*We feel relaxed when a supervisor gives feedback in a good mood. The other students feel unlucky when they hear about such wonderful behavior, and they wish to have that supervisor as their supervisor*".

The doctoral students experienced that most of the supervisors give feedback in a good mood. On the other hand, some of the students pray a lot before meeting their supervisors. They pray when they are going to meet their supervisors, "*Oh God! Please, I pray my supervisor would be in a good mood today*". They considered that supervisors' good behavior motivates them towards their research, and they have a pleasant feeling of themselves as well. Some doctoral students experienced such harshness during the meetings and feedback process. One of the study participants who was doing a Ph.D. in a public sector university shared his experience about the "negative behavior" of his supervisor in these words: "*It hurts me and I could not sleep when supervisor behaves negatively. Sometimes, I find my supervisor sitting on a chair doing nothing, and I am waiting after having invested thousands of Rupees*".

Most of the doctoral students worked according to supervisors' desire and attitude to avoid any confrontation. Interestingly, some of the students took the supervisor's negative attitude positively because they feel the pressure of doing their work. It was revealed that doctoral students prefer to keep silent in front of their supervisors when they observe "rude behavior" because they are more concerned about completing theses and attaining their degrees timely. Some doctoral students realized their supervisors' problem: they are teaching and giving feedback simultaneously and have to do many other administrative tasks. One of the male doctoral students of social sciences studying in a public sector university described that

Male supervisors mostly give more attention to female students, and female supervisors also do the same because they are more concerned for female students and wish that their research should be completed on time. They sympathize due to their domestic engagements and family care. I believe that supervisors should deal equally.

Some doctoral students elaborated on why supervisors give a favor based on gender. They reflected that it hurts them a lot and impacts negatively on their work and personality. Other doctoral students thought that the blue-eyed students might have magic. Therefore supervisors give more importance to them rather than to others. Such type of supervisory behavior abates students'

performance due to discriminatory behavior based on gender. Such supervisors crossed students' drafts thesis with the red pen and comment that "why you couldn't understand my feedback, you couldn't do it properly at all". Consequently, when supervisors consider the doctoral students a "fatigue and burden" for them, they get discouraged, and a negative attitude towards their research process is developed. Another doctoral student of 5th semester studying in a private sector university expressed that "Sometimes supervisors feel a burden to give feedback to their doctoral students. They want to have a room with AC (air conditioner) and don't give feedback at all".

Some other doctoral students added that in our institution supervisors do not work hard for their students. They state that we are wasting too much time selecting a topic that requires six months or even one year at the early stage of doctoral studies. Nevertheless, most doctoral students consider that sometimes supervisors compensate their students for such behavior. On the other hand, doctoral students expressed that occasionally they do not pay full attention due to specific reasons; that is why supervisors behave negatively.

The participants' important statements exploring the theme of "Supervisory Attitudes and Relationship" are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Statements of Participants on Supervisory Attitudes and Relationship

Theme: Supervisory Attitudes and Relationship

"We [doctoral students] feel relaxed when the supervisor gives feedback in a good mood. The other students feel unlucky when they hear about such wonderful behavior, and they wish to have that supervisor as their supervisor".

"Oh God! Please, I pray that my supervisor would be in a good mood today".

"It hurts me, and I could not sleep when the supervisor behaves negatively. Sometimes, I find my supervisor sitting on a chair doing nothing, and I am waiting after having invested thousands of Rupees".

"Male supervisors mostly give more attention to the female students and female supervisors also do the same because they are more concerned for female students and wish that their research should be completed on time".

"Sometimes supervisors feel a burden to give feedback to their students. They want to have a room with AC (air conditioner) and don't give feedback at all".

Improving Supervisory Feedback

Doctoral students reflected that supervisors could improve their feedback if they examine their feedback itself and if the students provide feedback on their supervisors' feedback as well. The supervisors should know if their feedback is weak and how they can improve so that students can better benefit from it. Doctoral students described that if supervisors do not consider their mistakes and close their eyes due to "ego problem", they cannot improve their feedback on the dissertations. The participants thought that most of the students realized that there is a need to improve supervisory feedback. Supervisors also understand when they cannot give effective feedback because the students are one of the critics of their feedback as they keep on observing and feel the need to improve it further. Therefore, supervisors can improve their feedback by spending more time out of the university's other academic and administrative activities. One of the participants studying in the 4th semester described how supervisors could improve their feedback. He stated:

Most of the doctoral students examined that if supervisors give feedback according to a time frame specified for this purpose, just like they have a time defined for their lectures, they can improve the feedback. The university should specify procedures for supervisors in which they are bound for continuous feedback on weekly basis, and they should be accountable for their performance in providing feedback.

Most of the doctoral students added that supervisors could improve their feedback by following a disciplined schedule of working on student theses. Such schedules can depict which day's supervisors are available for their students and how they can give their input on supervisory feedback. They argued that supervisors must conduct meetings after every week or fifteen days. It can reduce students' hesitation in asking questions regarding the feedback that can help improve the feedback and students' understanding of addressing it appropriately. If supervisors give feedback in such a way as if he/she is doing a Ph.D. again, it can improve their feedback, but it is hard to do as most of the supervisors are very busy with other university matters. One of the 6th-semester doctoral students from a private university described that "If supervisors select their doctoral student's research topic

according to their specialized area, *they can give more effective feedback that can improve students' understanding of their theses*".

The students elaborated that if supervisors give feedback according to their qualitative or quantitative research expertise or another area of expertise in a theoretical field, it can improve their feedback on a particular thesis. One of the most severe problems is that supervisors are not experts in the doctoral thesis area. Nevertheless, some of the participant students perceived that supervisors complained about some administrative hurdles, so they cannot improve their feedback. Another doctoral student reflected that *"Supervisors can improve their feedback by continuous contact with the students. It can be improved if supervisors give feedback with a commitment to their doctoral students rather than making lame excuses about other activities they are engaged in"*.

Most of the doctoral students argued that their supervisors are not willing to give feedback as a responsibility. They are more concerned with their salaries, which is why they are not interested in improving their feedback and assessing it to improve it further. Although students feel that there is a need to change such attitudes of supervisors that can help improve the feedback, it is a very long process and seems to be impossible. On the other hand, supervisors must modernize their knowledge of giving feedback with time to enhance the feedback's accuracy and quality. A doctoral student of 4th semester from a public sector university remarked that supervisors could improve their feedback *"if they attend workshops related to research practices and update their knowledge according to the recent trends, then surly supervisory feedback will be improved"*. Most of the doctoral students added that supervisors have limited knowledge about the research process, and there is a real need to learn multi-dimensions of research that can improve their feedback.

The participants' important statements exploring the theme of "Improving Supervisory Feedback" are given in Table 4.

Table 4

Statements of Participants on Improving Supervisory Feedback

Theme: Improving Supervisory Feedback

"Most of the doctoral students examined that if supervisors give feedback according to a time frame specified for this purpose just like they have a time defined for their lectures, they can improve the feedback. The university should specify procedures for supervisors in which they are bound for continuous feedback on weekly basis, and they should be accountable for their performance on providing feedback".

"If supervisors select their doctoral student's research topic according to their specialized area, then they can give more effective feedback that can improve students' understanding of their theses".

"Supervisors can improve their feedback through continuous contact with the students. It can be improved if supervisors give feedback with a commitment to their doctoral students rather than making lame excuses about other activities they are engaged in".

"If they attend workshops related to research practices and update their knowledge according to the recent trends, then surly supervisory feedback will be improved".

Discussion

Most of the participants revealed that it was a significant difficulty that doctoral students did not pay full attention to their research work that affected their understanding of supervisory feedback. Holdaway (1995) argued that supervisors thought doctoral students should be hardworking, energetic, determined, and have the intellect to pursue Ph.D. studies with responsibility. Also, supervisors expected that doctoral students should be encouraged so that they should be enthusiastic in pursuing their dissertation in the right direction. Phillips and Pugh (2000) argued that doctoral students are the key persons responsible for their dissertation and openly show that undertaking a doctoral degree is students' own choice. Therefore, the doctoral students should be accountable and their supervisors, who decide together what is needed to achieve the doctoral studies' required objectives. Put another way, this is decided that the doctoral students are responsible for attaining innovative knowledge, skills, and information about the whole research process.

Some of the supervisors may traditionally provide feedback, and in that case, their feedback is restricted to complete research degrees that do not encourage students to learn new techniques and skills of conducting research (Weaver, 2006; Waheed et al., 2019). Moreover, the present study's findings revealed that students' response to supervisory feedback is considered essential, and they liked to respond in written form and communicate one-on-one, but sometimes they could not respond due to their professional activities at the workplace. During responding to the feedback, they focus

more on ethical considerations that build a positive image in front of their supervisors. Levitt et al. (2018) described that there are many styles of supervisory feedback, and doctoral students respond to them accordingly in different ways. When they respond to feedback, they are not sure that the response is correct.

Doctoral students established a good relationship with their supervisors, sent a written positive response, and shared their ideas with them. Pakdaman et al. (2015) supported this finding that doctoral students consciously try to avoid performing non-ethical behavior while responding to supervisory feedback. It shows that following ethical behavior during responding to the feedback makes supervisory feedback more effective and builds a good reputation. The doctoral students responded in a good way in the present investigation. They suggested that supervisors improve their feedback by managing appropriate time schedules, continuous feedback, and learning new research techniques. Dowson et al (2019) supported this concept of time management that supervisors should follow a specific schedule for providing feedback to their students that improves the supervisors' performance and produces better results.

Doctoral students thought that most supervisors criticize their research drafts and do not feel the need to recommend improvements to the draft. They considered that the provision of supervisory feedback must lead to students' development, a straightforward supervisory process, and constant improvement. Chalmers and Fuller (1996) preferred this notion of the provision of continuous supervisory feedback and full commitment to doctoral students. It shows several benefits such as doctoral students' proper involvement in the research process and their satisfaction with the feedback (Nelson, & Friedlander, 2001). It was observed as influential and significant for improving a doctoral dissertation and accelerating their performance with the feedback (McCune & Hounsell, 2005).

O'Leary (2016) revealed that novel practices and methods have been developing in research culture. Supervisors' capability needed to be enhanced by updating their knowledge, which is essential to provide rigorous supervisory feedback to doctoral students in a productive way. The findings of the present study indicate that doctoral students were not satisfied with their supervisors' feedback. Equality, clarity, instructions for further progress, and recognition of information required to complete the degree program were much needed.

A different viewpoint that arises from the present investigation is inequality and supervisors' positive and negative behavior while providing feedback. Also, doctoral students believed that research supervisors discriminate among doctoral students mainly due to gender differences. This inequality of supervisory attitudes was investigated in the study (Holmberg & Thelwall, 2014). Their findings manifested that the timely provision of supervisory feedback was not the only necessary factor. Fairness or equality is also essential.

In a society, people score well on masculinity; the prevailing cultural beliefs are individual attainment, rivalry, and performance. Therefore, every doctoral student has been competing with their fellows regarding achieving high grades and timely completion of the doctoral dissertation. Consequently, this system provides a basic rationale that works behind doctoral students' understanding of who are expecting that their supervisors should provide feedback with equality (e.g., they should not discriminate among students) and remain fair (Hughes et al., 2018; Gilbreath & Benson (2004) argued that supervisors' positive and fair behavior help achieve their well-being, improving doctoral students' performance and mental health. On the other hand, Mills and Gay (2019) and Meng et al. (2017) concluded that supervisor's negative behavior affects doctoral students' performance and discourages them from pursuing their research.

Conclusion

Doctoral students responded to their supervisors promptly when they received feedback in the written and verbal communication, but sometimes lack of cooperation from their professional departments led them to address the supervisory feedback poorly and in a delayed fashion. Furthermore, the findings revealed that supervisors' attitudes and behavior towards their supervisees profoundly impacted their research progress. It was reflected that a positive behavior encouraged doctoral students for pursuing their research positively, and they felt more satisfied. On the other hand, their negative behavior abated their performance and affected their mental health and stability. It was revealed that doctoral students depended heavily on the feedback to be provided by the supervisors, and they could not work independently. Nevertheless, doctoral students need to experience positive attitudes, working relationships, and cooperative behavior from the supervisors. Consequently, good supervisory

behavior leads to several benefits, including a better understanding of the feedback, responding to feedback fast, and improving the quality of feedback and students' progress in a doctoral dissertation.

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