

Conceptual definition and empirical investigation of ethics in doctoral supervision

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Rationale

- Learning ethical codes of conduct is a central part of researcher development. Most students learn ethical guidelines and codes of conduct from their advisors or senior colleagues (Alfredo & Hart, 2011) -
> **the quality of the ethical conduct adopted by students is influenced by the supervisory practices they encounter during their studies.**
- Supervision does not, however, exist in a vacuum that consists only of the student and the supervisor, but rather is rooted in context of a scholarly community (Becher & Trowler, 1989, 1989; Dysthe, Samara, & Westrheim, 2006) -> **the supervisory relationship is an arena for mediating disciplinary traditions, practices, cultures, and norms.**



Prior research

- *Good supervision contributes to degree completion, length-of-time to candidacy, student well-being and satisfaction, and competence development (Meyer, Shanahan, & Laugksch, 2005; Case, 2008; Pyhältö, Stubb, & Tuomainen, 2011)*
- *Ethical problems in supervision (e.g. incompetent / inadequate supervision, abandonment, intrusion of supervisor views and values, abuse, exploitation, dual relationships, encouragement to fraud, authorship issues (Goodyear, Crego, & Johnston, 1992; Mahmud & Bretag, 2013)*
- *Less known about how student perceptions of the ethicality of supervision influence the doctoral experience in terms of study process outcomes.*



Research Question

- *Do attributes of ethics in supervision predict positive (engagement, and satisfaction with supervision and with doctoral studies) or negative (burnout, and attrition intentions) outcomes in the doctoral experience,*
- *and if so, how?*



Participants

- *236 doctoral students at two research universities in Finland*
- *Educational sciences, teacher education, psychology*
- *183 women, 53 men*
- *The sample is representative of the doctoral student population in the two universities in terms of the fields, average age, and sex.*



Methods

Ethical Issues in Supervision Scales

- *Based on a set of qualitative studies (Löfström & Pyhälto, 2012; 2014; 2015; 2017), in which ethical issues in doctoral supervision were categorised according to five ethical principles (cf. Kitchener 1985; 2000):*

Breaches of:

- ***respect of autonomy:** Intrusion of supervisor views, narrowness of perspectives*
- ***non-maleficence:** Exploitation and abuse, misappropriation, dual relationships*
- ***beneficence:** Not promoting well-being, not promoting integrating into the scholarly community, not promoting a collegial culture, lack of supervisor competence*
- ***justice:** Inequity, unfair treatment*
- ***fidelity:** Abandonment, inadequate supervision*



Methods

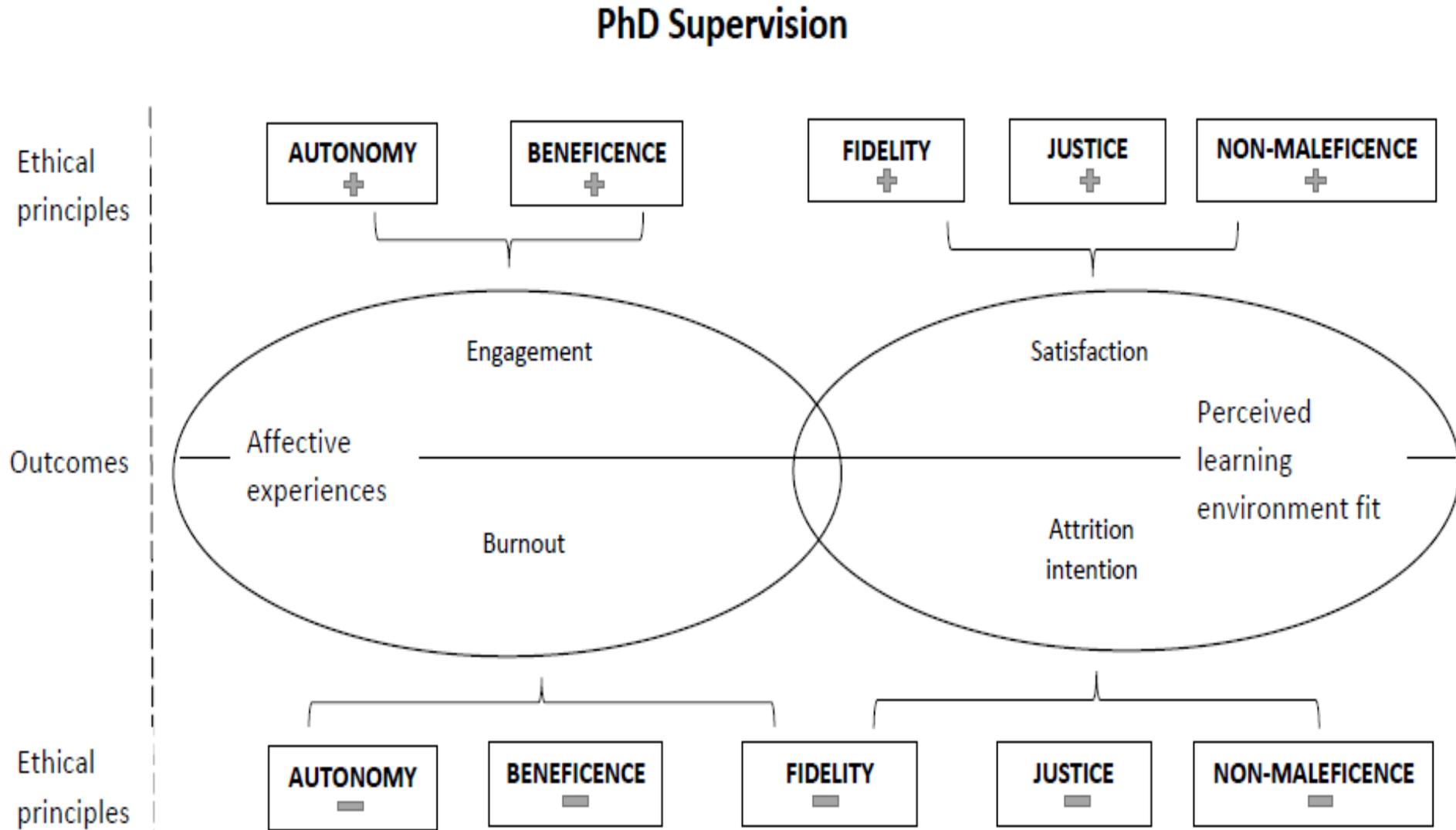
Doctoral Study Survey (Pyhältö, Stubb & Tuomainen, 2011)

- *Burnout (exhaustion, cynicism and inadequacy), 11 items*
- *Engagement (energy, dedication, and absorption, 9 items)*
 - *(developed based on Schaufeli et al., 2002; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001)*
- *Satisfaction with a) doctoral studies, b) supervision (1-7, 1 = very dissatisfied, 7 = very satisfied)*
- *Attrition intentions (yes / no)*



Results:

Contribution of ethical components in doctoral students' affective experiences and learning environment fit



Results: Summary of simple linear regression analyses for ethics variables predicting positive (+) and negative (-) outcomes in the doctoral process

Variable	Form (fidelity, benef., autonomy)					Rule (Non-malef, justice, fidelity)					Care (autonomy + benef.)				
	B	SE B	β	R ² (Adj.)	F	B	SE B	β	R ² (Adj.)	F	B	SE B	β	R ² (Adj.)	F
Engagement Energy +											.78	.19	.26***	.07	17.13
Engagement Dedication +	.72	.24	.22**	.09	12.76						.46	.22	.15*	.09	12.76
Engagement Absorption +											.50	.24	.14*	.02	4.50
Satisfaction: PhD studies +	.38	.09	.28***	.28	45.33	.50	.11	.32***	.28	45.33					
Satisfaction: supervision +	.83	.08	.52***	.64	134.55	.57	.10	.31***	.64	134.55	.16	.07	.11*	.64	134.55
Burnout Exhaustion -						-1.54	.54	-.18**	.03	7.98					
Burnout Cynicism -	-1.50	.26	-.35***	.12	32.16										
Burnout Inadequacy -	-.97	.37	-.19**	.08	10.99						-.73	.34	-.15*	.09	10.99
Attrition intention -						.13	.04	.23**	.05	12.46					

≤ .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .000

Conclusions 1/2

- *Prior research*
 - *both emotions and dynamics in the educational environment are important factors in the study experience (e.g. Pekrun, Goetz, & Frenzel, 2007; Golde, 2005; Pyhältö, Vekkaila, & Keskinen, 2012).*
- *Contribution*
 - *Ethical principles in the context of doctoral supervision contribute to the student's experience, and most importantly, they do so in different ways - some through an affective domain, some through the perceived person--learning environment fit.*
- *Future directions*
 - *Refinement of items*
 - *Longitudinal data*
 - *Inclusion of other disciplines besides behavioral sciences*



Conclusions 2/2

- *The tool **Ethical Issues in Supervision Scales** can serve the needs of institutions that wish to measure the “ethical pulse” of their doctoral education and supervisory practices.*
- *The tool complements the work of*
 - *Gray and Jordan (2012): instrument measuring the relationship between student perceptions of their supervisors and of academic integrity*
 - *Anderson and Louis (1994): instrument measuring graduate student experience and subscription to norms of science*



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Thank you for your attention

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