



Opinions and Suggestions of Graduate Students about Postgraduate Education

Research Article

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the opinions and suggestions of graduate students about postgraduate education. Qualitative research design is employed to examine the opinions and suggestions of students who are currently pursuing graduate education. The participants of this study are the students pursuing graduate education at the departments of Educational Sciences (pedagogy program) and Field Education (subject-matter programs) at Dicle University during 2017-2018 spring semester. The sample of the study are consisted of 33 graduate students pursuing masters' degree with thesis, masters' degree without thesis, and doctoral degrees. To explore the opinions and suggestions of the students, interviews were conducted. For the analysis of the obtained data, both content analysis and descriptive analysis were utilized. With respect to the reasons why the participating students pursue a postgraduate education, the research findings reveal that students' aspiration for doing professional development, their aspiration for pursuing academic career in the field, their aspiration for conducting scientific research, their aspiration for continuous learning, their aspiration for life-long learning, and their dissatisfaction with the undergraduate education come out as main reasons. It has also been figured out that working in another institution other than university and allocating spare time for graduate education are the most common challenging issues for students in graduate education. In relation to a higher-quality post graduate education, the participating students suggested the following issues; more practice-based courses, solution for graduate education-permit from institutions, and rich and well-supported library.

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Keywords:

Graduate education, interview, graduate education challenges.

Introduction

Knowledge is a major factor as a driving force in information society. Information society is the society in which knowledge becomes the main source of real capital and wealth. Individuals in information society have to learn continuously. Therefore, the function of the school in the information society is not teaching

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much, but it should be improving the learning capacity of the individuals (Özden, 2013). An individual in the information society has to understand, interpret, and use the data from the science world, and gain the problem-solving ability (Altunay & Yalçinkaya, 2011).

Individuals in information society are supposed to improve themselves according to the current conditions, and acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies related to the field in which they are educated academically or they are interested, in order to renew themselves professionally. The acquisition of the knowledge, skills and competencies mentioned above can be achieved, to some extent, through the postgraduate programs in higher education institutions.

Postgraduate education is defined in Turkish dictionary as (2011:1589) "higher education degree attained after accomplishing the undergraduate education". Postgraduate education is the education that is given to provide opportunity for the students having received a bachelor's degree or diploma to specialize in the field of their research interest through master's (science specialization) or doctoral studies (Oğuzkan, 1993:102). Graduate education carries an indispensable role in the training of academic staff. Graduate education can be defined as a formal education, the objective of which is to train scientists who will contribute to the development of science, the training of next generation, and the development of the country through research after undergraduate education (Özden & Ergin, 2013).

The qualified human power trained in undergraduate programs formerly, has been currently trained through master's and doctoral degrees. Compared to before, having bachelor's degree is not regarded as a privilege. However, attaining master's and particularly doctoral education give a precedence to an individual in terms of professional skills. Graduate education degree is assumed to be carried out differently considering the content and facilities of undergraduate education (Güven & Tunç, 2007). The intellectual aims of undergraduate students and graduate students are different. While undergraduate students cover the subjects superficially, graduate students engage in a lifelong commitment by structuring the knowledge in detail. The main goal of graduate education is to train very well equipped professionals within a few years (Rosovsky, 2004).

Graduate education is regarded as the highest level of education in which both the academicians required by the academia (higher education institutions), and the human resources and researchers required by society are trained. The individual, who is graduate of master's degree program and is registered to PhD programs, is regarded as the one who is in the first stage of scientific research while the individual having a PhD diploma is considered as a highly qualified researcher (Günay, 2018).

Graduate education is a distinguished education because the experts and administrators of several fields, especially the faculty members of universities, are trained at this level. In the long term, the future of a society depends on the quality of education provided at this level. In that sense, all planning efforts associated with the field of graduate education needs to be carried out with the perspective providing the highest social benefit to the society (Karayalçın, 1998). Higher education institutions have the responsibility to generate information and transmit the generated information to the students through education, and to the society through publications. Universities have chief roles in training high-quality human power such as professors, scientists, and scholars who are needed to conduct research for the development of the country and for solving the problems of the country. Graduate levels of higher education institutions are responsible for this crucial role (Karakütük, 2002a; Karakütük, 2002b).

Reviewing the extant literature about graduate education, a number of studies conducted with prospective teachers (Bozpolat, 2016; Çimen, 2015; Demir & Beşoluk, 2017; Erkiçi, 2007; Gömleksiz & Et, 2013; İlhan, Öner Sünkür & Yılmaz, 2012; İyibil & Akpınar, 2013; İzgi, 2016; Sarıkaya, 2018; Şaşmaz Öner, Yılmaz & Güçlü, 2012; Türer, Balçın, Sevindik & Er, 2013; Ünal & İlter, 2010) and active graduate students

(Alhas, 2006; Arı, Pehlivanlar & Çömek, 2005; Aydemir & Çam, 2015; Babayiğit, 2019; Bağrıacık Yılmaz, Su Tonga & Çakır, 2017; Çelik, 2019; Demir, 2007; Gömleksiz & Yıldırım, 2013; Nural & Bayraktar, 2007; Savaş & Topak, 2005) have been published. Regarding the studies conducted as part of the issue of graduate education in the relevant literature, there are researches carried out with students and faculty members (Dilci, 2009; Gündoğdu, Küçüköğlü & Kaya, 2007), deans of graduate schools (Karakütük, Aydın, Abalı & Yıldırım, 2008) and secretaries of graduate schools (Çoruk, Çağatay & Öztürk, 2016). The most important part of the studies carried out with graduate education students consists of researches related to the problems encountered in graduate education and the suggestions associated with these problems (Alabaş, Kamer & Polat, 2012; Aladağ & Dalgıç, 2019; Arabacı & Akıllı, 2013; Balı & Dönmez, 2018; Başer, Narlı & Günhan, 2005; Çetin, Asker, Çirkinoğlu & Karaca, 2007; Çiftçi & Bulut, 2019; Güçlü & Avcı, 2007; Güven, Aktan Kerem & Ersoy, 2007; Güven & Tunç, 2007; Katılmış, Çelik & Kop, 2013; Kıray, 2005; Kuzu & Becit, 2007; Nayır, 2011; Oluk & Çolak, 2005; Özmen & Aydın Güç, 2013; Sayan & Aksu, 2005; Teyfur & Çakır, 2018). Apart from the studies about graduate education, which were reported in the literature review part, there exist a number of studies about undergraduate students (Lopatto, 2004), graduated students (Gemme & Gingras, 2012) and doctoral students (Ezebilo, 2012; Golde & Dore, 2001; Pyhäältö, Toom, Stubb & Lonka, 2012).

Graduate education is an important issue to be dwelled upon because it is closely related with the effective use of national resources and development level of the country (Karaman & Bakırcı, 2010). The graduate education, which has functions such as generating knowledge through research and development activities and raising qualified human power, has a strategic value in the development of societies (Bozan, 2012). Assigning such a significant mission to the graduate education, regarded as strategic, reveals that graduate education should be well established from various facets (Özmen & Aydın Güç, 2013). It is thought that it is important to take the opinions and suggestions of students who currently pursue graduate education, in order to build a strong ground for this level of education. It is expected that this research will provide a broad perspective for the respective literature, considering different groups of participants such as non-thesis master's degree, thesis master's degree, and PhD students. Utilizing the obtained opinions and suggestions of the participants, it is expected that this study aims to contribute to the extant literature in terms of evaluating and improving the graduate education from different perspectives.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the opinions and suggestions of the students pursuing graduate education. Depending on the main purpose of the study, the following research questions were investigated;

For the students currently pursuing graduate education;

1. What are the influential factors for graduate students to undergo graduate education?
2. What are the opinions of the graduate students regarding the role of their graduate programs in building up their academic knowledge, skills and competencies?
3. What are the opinions of the graduate students about whether the pursued program meets their expectations or not?
4. What are the challenges of the graduate students regarding graduate education?
5. What are the suggestions of graduate students for a high quality graduate education?

Method

In this research, qualitative research design was employed to explore the opinions and suggestions of graduate students. Qualitative research aims to produce a comprehensive and contextual insight based on rich and detailed data (Mason, 2002). Qualitative research gives different points of views allowing us to understand the new insights and challenges in detail, which emerge in the changing world (Seggie & Bayyurt, 2015). Qualitative researchers are involved in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they configure their world, and what their experiences mean. This refers to understanding people's experiences with specific questions, and therefore it requires a qualitative research design (Merriam, 2009). In this study, interviews were conducted in order to explore the opinions and suggestions of graduate students about the respective topic. Interview is a way of obtaining information about the experiences of social world through asking people to talk about their lives (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002).

Design of the study

In this study, the phenomenological research design was employed. Phenomenology focuses on cases in which we do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding. These phenomena can be observed through events, experiences, perceptions, attitudes, concepts and situations that we experience in the real world. Data sources in phenomenological research are individuals or groups who experience the phenomenon and can externalize or reflect this phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this sense, the basic question of phenomenology is "what are the meaning, structure and essence of the experience with respect to the phenomenon for an individual or a group of people?". Phenomenology aims to reflect upon our daily experience comprehensively (Patton, 2002). The main purpose of phenomenological research in education is to comprehend the experiences occurred in the educational process and to enhance the learning-teaching process. Therefore, ordinary incidents experienced with the perception, thought or belief arose in this process are the subjects of phenomenological research in education (Ersoy, 2017). In this study, in accordance with the research questions, it was aimed to explore the opinions, challenges, and suggestions of the students who were pursuing graduate education and experiencing this process.

Study Group

The students pursuing their graduate education in the Department of Educational Sciences (pedagogy courses) and Field Education (subject-matter courses) at Dicle University in the academic year of 2017-2018 Spring Semester, are the participants of this research. The study group includes 33 students who pursue their master's degree without thesis, master's degree with thesis, and doctoral education.

To explore and reflect the diverse perspectives of the students, pursuing graduate education from differing departments and classes, maximum variation sampling and convenient sampling method were utilized. Maximum variation is ensured through defining the different cases most closely associated with the study and selecting the best possible diversity which representing those cases (Maxwell, 2018). Convenient sampling is a sampling strategy based on the principle of reaching the most convenient data source (Patton, 2002). In this research, the students attending graduate degrees at Dicle University were considered as convenient participants while the students' participation from different degree programs in Educational Sciences and field education refers to the maximum variation.

Demographic characteristics of graduate students are listed in the Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of graduate students

Student characteristics	f
Gender	
Female	17
Male	16
Profession	
Teacher	22
Research assistant	4
Instructor	3
Other	4
Graduate education level	
Master's without thesis	7
Master's with thesis	16
Doctorate	10
Graduate education term	
Course term	21
Thesis term	12
Graduate program	
Curriculum and Instruction	17
Educational Administration and Planning	7
Visual Arts Education	3
Mathematics Education	2
Elementary School Education	1
History Education	1
Elementary Science Education	1
Physics Education	1

A total of 33 graduate education students, 17 of them were female and 16 of them were male, participated in this study. More than half of the participants were teachers. There are 2 unemployed and 2 freelance working participants in "others" group. 21 of the participants are in the course term and 12 are in the thesis term. As all students of master's degree without thesis program are in course term, the students in thesis term are either master's degree with thesis programs or doctorate programs students. Approximately half of the participants were students who attend the department of Curriculum and Instruction.

Interview Form and Data Collection Process

Following the literature review conducted for interview process, interview drafts were prepared by the researcher. For the validity of interview questions, expert opinion was gathered from five faculty members studying in the field of Educational Sciences. Interview questions were rearranged in accordance with the opinions and recommendations of the experts. In addition, three graduate students who were not included in the research were interviewed with the questions of the interview form. Finally, it was concluded that the questions were clear and comprehensible.

The following questions were asked to the graduate students during the interview;

1-Could you explain the reasons that led you to pursue graduate education?

2-What are your views on the role of the graduate program in gaining academic knowledge, skills and competencies. Please explain?

3-Could you explain your views how the graduate education program you pursue meet your expectations?

4-What kind of difficulties you have experienced in graduate education. Please explain?

5-What are your suggestions for a qualified graduate education? Please explain?

Semi-structured interviewing techniques were employed to get data. In this type of interview, the topics that the researcher will be dealing with are predetermined, and each participant is addressed with similar questions. In qualitative research, mainly semi-structured and unstructured interviews are used (Buran, 2015).

In data collection process, the data were gathered through focus-group interviews or face-to-face interviews depending on the meeting conditions with the participants. Focus group interview is considered as a way to use time efficiently because it allows to reach the opinions of a certain number of people at the same time (Glesne, 2012). Graduate students stating that they were not willing to be interviewed, were excluded from the study. All of the students who participated in the interview were voluntary participants. The opinions and suggestions of the participants, both in the focus-group and face to face interviews, were written on the interview forms by the participants. During the interviews, the researcher also took some notes related to the interviews. Some of the graduate students' opinions and suggestions were confirmed to ensure the reliability of the obtained data. The meetings were held between the dates 24.04.2018-11.05.2018, and took between 30 and 40 minutes on average.

Analysis of the Data

The main purpose of the qualitative research is capturing participants' perspectives (Yin, 2011). One of the fundamental characteristics of phenomenology studies is the reflection in which individuals experience a particular situation and reveal it. Therefore, the experiences expressed by the participants should be reflected as same as they stated (Gedik, 2016). In this research, in order to fulfill the necessary requirements of phenomenological studies, content analysis and descriptive analysis techniques were employed together during the analysis of the obtained data. Content analysis is a technique to figure out certain words or terms involving in a text-cluster. Researchers analyze the existence, meanings and relationships of words and terms, and make inferences about the messages in those texts (Büyükoztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2012). In the descriptive analysis, direct quotations are often included, in order to reflect the views of interviewed or observed individuals in a realistic way. It is intended to deliver the findings to the readers with an organized and interpreted manner (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Both content analysis and descriptive analysis techniques were used in this research; themes and sub-themes were presented and the opinions and suggestions of graduate students were conveyed through direct quotations. In the excerpts, instead of the names of the participants, the participants' numbers assigned to them and the graduate education levels were used and such abbreviations were coded as (P 3, without thesis YL), (P 6, with thesis YL), (P 12, with doctorate).

The responses given by the graduate students in the interviews were coded by two experts. The codes obtained from the participants were examined by the researchers and other field experts, and the codes were classified as; "agreement" and "disagreement". Reliability formula recommended by Miles & Huberman (1994) was used to calculate the reliability of coding. Reliability = Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement). Depending on this formula, the researcher found 75 agreements and 6 disagreements. As a result, the reliability was calculated as $75 / (75+6)$: 92.6 %. Based on this calculation, the research is considered to be reliable.

Findings

In accordance with the purpose of this study, the findings obtained from the responses of the students pursuing graduate education were reported in this section.

Findings Associated with the Influential Factors for Graduate Students' Decision about Undergoing Graduate Education

Responses regarding the first research question are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Influential Factors for Graduate Students for Undergoing a Graduate Education

Themes and Sub-themes	f
Personal Factors	
Desire for continuous learning	14
Not satisfied with undergraduate education	11
Finding teaching monotonous	4
Life-long learning	4
Taking the professors as a role model	1
Military service	1
Occupational Factors	
Desire for professional development	23
Desire to have a career in the field	14
Desire to conduct research	13
Social Factors	
Desire to be beneficial to the society	5
Educate more qualified students	4

Table 2 shows that "Desire for professional development" is the most frequent response to the question of what the factors are influential in graduate students' decision about undergoing a graduate education. "Desire to have a career in the field", "Desire to conduct research", and "Desire for continuous learning" sub-themes follow the first one consecutively.

Some examples of graduate students' responses for "Desire for continuous learning" sub-theme are as follows; *"The individual needs to renew himself and strive for continuous learning in order to adapt to changing circumstances. I preferred graduate education with the awareness that being a teacher also means being a life-long student."* (P 2, Thesis without Masters'). *"I have loved studying, reading and working on things that attract me since my childhood. I always want to keep my mind alive, and learn things through making my mind busy with it"* (P 33, Doctorate).

The following are the example from the graduate students' responses to "Not satisfied with undergraduate education"; *"Graduate education is always a part of my life. I started to work after completing undergraduate education, but over the years, I felt like I was repeating myself and then graduate education was the biggest step in my life to renew myself. Therefore, I preferred starting graduate education to 'renew' myself not to 'repeat'."* (P 10, Master's with thesis).

The following are the examples from the graduate students' responses to "Occupational development"; *"To be more conscious, self-confident, investigating, questioning individual in the profession..."* (P 2, Doctorate). *"The most important reason why I would like to have graduate education was my desire to develop myself in my field. (P 13, Master's with thesis). "I think I will get deeper knowledge in my field. Particularly, I believe that learning methods related to scientific research will contribute to the development of my career."* (P 4, Master's with thesis).

The following are the examples from the graduate students' responses to "Desire to have a career in the field"; "I'm doing master's to have a career in my field" (P 6, Master's with thesis). "The most important reason of my graduate education is to do a career. I want to be an expert and competent person in my field." (P 4, Master's with thesis).

The following are the examples from the graduate students' responses to "Desire to do research"; "I started graduate education to make research related to the deficiencies in my field" (P 8, Master's with thesis). "As a physicist, I'm always curious about the way the research is carried out and I want to carry my career one step further with the graduate education." (P 30, Master's with thesis).

The following are the examples from the graduate students' responses to "Desire to be beneficial to the society"; "I am having graduate education as I believe that I will be a more beneficial person for my society with my graduate degree." (P 6, Master's with thesis). The participants noted; "To educate more qualified students"; "Touching the life of young people is breath of my life" (P 23, Doctorate).

Findings Associated with the Role of Students' Graduate Programs in Building up Their Academic Knowledge, Skills and Competencies

Students' responses with respect to the second research question are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The Role of Graduate Program in Building up Academic Knowledge, Skills, And Competencies

Themes and Sub-themes	f
Positive opinions	
Contribution to academic development in the field	19
Enhancing scientific research skills	12
Contribution to the field of teaching	7
Contribution of professors' experiences to students	5
Critical point of view	5
Different perspectives	4
Scientific perspective	4
Raising awareness	2
Learning skills to learn	2
Study discipline	2
Negative opinions	
Lack of sufficient contribution	3
Allocate more to the theoretical knowledge	3
Disappointment with what he/she expected	2
Hope to find more support	2
Not to act against certain stereotypes	1

As reported in Table 3, with respect to the program's role in gaining knowledge, skills and competencies "contribution to academic development in the field" and "enhancing scientific research skills" sub-themes have the highest frequency within positive opinions. In negative opinions, "lack of sufficient contribution" and "allocate more to the theoretical knowledge" are the most frequent sub themes within negative opinions.

The following are some opinions about the sub-theme "contribution to academic development in the field". "I think graduate education program is quite beneficial in providing academic knowledge, skills and competencies (P 29, Master's with thesis)". "The graduate education program I have been pursuing has certainly increased my knowledge, skills and competency in academic subjects. Particularly, it provides the necessary motivation in academic terms, due to the academic climate I am in. As there are people around you who write books and conduct research papers, you feel the urge to do something on this road (P 27, Ph.D.)".

The sample opinions expressed for the part "enhancing scientific research skills" are as follows: "I think graduate education contributes to my comprehension of scientific research, methods and techniques better (P 25, Ph.D.)". "My skills such as using academic language, doing detailed research, complying with scientific ethical rules, etc. were improved significantly (P 32, Master's with thesis). "I have noticed that instead of educating students who can just transfer the information they got in undergraduate education, graduate education aims to educate students who knows how to get information and also how to use it appropriately. (P 7, Ph.D.)".

An opinion related to "contribution to the field of teaching" is cited as following; "The master's program I've been pursuing, has contributed me a lot within a year. Before the graduate education, I conducted my classroom instruction in a traditional way, but now I do more activities with students with the help of my education. I have enriched my classroom instruction with activities to develop students' skills, (P 13, Master's with thesis)".

Student opinions about "contribution of teachers' experiences to students" are as follows: "I'm really pleased with my professors' knowledge and experiences, I adopt them as a role model and indeed I feel motivated in this way (P 5, Master's with thesis)". "I think the program contributes to academic knowledge, skills and competencies of the students with the guidance of professors and advisors (P 27, Ph.D.)".

Following are the opinions related to "Different perspective"; "Prior to graduate education, I was so straightforward with my decision that I never changed my decision, especially in matters related to education. As I do research more, I accept that there are different dimensions of the issues (P 10, Master's with thesis)". "After I started the graduate program, I realized my weaknesses. Acquiring up-to date knowledge made me feel stronger (P 18, Master's without thesis)."

An opinion related to "Study discipline" is reflected in the following quotations; "I learned the methods through following the details of scientific research. In order to progress more, I realized that I need to be more systematic and organized in my studies and I should follow these principles in every aspect of my life. (P 10, Master's with thesis)".

Following are the opinions related to "Lack of sufficient contribution"; "Unfortunately, I have to say that there is no difference between undergraduate and graduate education in terms of qualifying students in academic knowledge, skills and competences". "I don't think the lessons are challenging enough. We could have a more intensive and active training (P 16, Master's without thesis)". "I think there are deficiencies considering the theoretical and scientific background of the lecturers, they don't have the necessary qualifications like scientific thought (P 26, Ph.D.)".

Following are the opinions related to "Allocate more to the theoretical knowledge"; "I think there should be applied courses in graduate education, especially some courses should include field experience (P 17, Master's without thesis). "The students should be required to do more research and write papers to use the information they obtained in classes in practice (P 8, Ph.D.)".

Findings Associated with Graduate Students' Opinions to What Extent Graduate Programs Meet their Expectations

Students' responses regarding the fourth research question are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Satisfaction with the Objectives of Program They are Attending

Themes and Sub-Themes	f
Positive opinions	21
Considerably	9
Be competent in the field	5
Professors' contribution	3
Partially	2

Contribution to the solution of occupational problems	2
Contribution beyond the expectation	1
Continuous renewal	
Negative Opinions	
Lack of satisfaction	5
Fall behind the objectives of the program	3
Expecting more support from the advisors	1
Having great difficulty	1
Both Positive and Negative Opinions	
Partially satisfied	4

As evident from Table 4, "Considerably" and "Be competent in the field" sub-themes about the satisfaction with the program objectives have the highest frequency among the sub-themes. "Lack of satisfaction" and "Fall behind the objectives of the program" are the most frequent responses among the negative opinions sub-themes. "Partially satisfied" responses related to the satisfaction with the program objectives also exist in the findings.

In relation to "Considerably" for the satisfaction with the objectives of the program, some of the graduate students stated that *"I can tell you that it generally satisfied my expectations because new knowledge, skills and competencies that I acquired in that program have a positive impact on my environment. It was really beneficial to have discussion in the classroom on new topics (P18, Master's without thesis)". My expectation from the graduate education was simply to have learning satisfaction. Whenever I get a book on education even after completing a term, I get excited about reading it immediately. That means graduate education has met my expectations (P 10, Master's with thesis)"*

Regarding "Be competent in the field", the students stated their opinions as following: *"The graduate education met my expectation because; I aimed to do research in my field and have transferred the results to my field. I believed that I have achieved it so far (P 30, Master's with thesis)". "I aspired to take part in projects and studies abroad and to experience different approaches to education in various countries through graduate education. I could manage to do these with the help of my graduate program. Furthermore, it helped me understand people's psychology and how they explain the meaning of their lives. I mean it enhanced my personal life and relationship with others (P 27, Ph.D.)"*

Opinions related to "Professors' contribution" are as the following; *"I learned a lot in graduate education. I know it is impossible to do or manage anything without exerting effort. Thanks to my valuable professors, I believe that I will gain advantage in this rough process (P 13, Master's with thesis)"*.

The followings are some statements related to the sub-theme "Contribution beyond the expectation": *"Compared to the beginning of the term, now I can say that the program provided me with some valuable information about which I was very unfamiliar before my graduate education (P 1, Ph.D.)". "When I first started the program, I had moderate expectation from it. However, I experienced an education beyond my expectation thanks to the lesson I took and my professors' knowledge in the field. I can concede that the program contributed me a lot regarding both theoretical and practical sides of education (P 5, Master's with thesis)"*.

The followings are some statements related to the sub-theme "Lack of satisfaction": *"I could say that the education in the program didn't satisfy me much. I had expected to question and discuss the issues more from different points of views throughout the graduate education but during the education I couldn't find what I expected (P 29, Master's with thesis)". "I can tell that while waiting for in-depth studies and more scientific environment in doctoral education, these I experienced in that education couldn't met my expectations. (P 25, Ph.D.)"*. Some opinions about the program's "Fall behind the objectives of the program" is such as; *"When I started that program I expected to be a good researcher at the end of the graduate education but I couldn't achieve this (P 16, Master's without thesis)"*.

Statements for “Partially satisfied” sub-themes are noted by the participants in the following quotes; “Although I am very satisfied in many ways, I am not pleased with some other issues. Our greatest chance was that our professors were very well-read like a book. I was disappointed because I expected to be more active during the education (P 32, Master’s with thesis)”. “When I started the program, I tried to follow the current development in my field, carry out my responsibilities properly, and find rational and enlightening solutions to the problems I encountered in my profession. I could meet these expectations to some extent. However, I think the training I got during my education is not sufficient for me to be capable of comprehending the issues in my field. I believe that some classes could have raised my awareness about the issues in my field but they didn’t (P 2, Ph.D.)”.

Findings Associated with the Challenges that Graduate Students Experienced Throughout the Graduate Education

Students’ responses regarding the fourth research question are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. Challenges regarding graduate education

Themes and sub-themes	f
Individual difficulties	
Transportation	8
Be tiring	7
Other social status	6
Economic	3
Health	1
Program based difficulties	
Courses overlapping with the classes at school	4
Compulsory attendance	3
Busy advisors	2
Intensive program	1
Lack of application	1
Large groups	1
Low motivated groups	1
Work life based difficulties	
Working at a different institute	15
Time	10
Fail to get permission	2
Problems with school management	1
Be busy at work	1
Inadequate facilities based difficulties	
Inadequate facilities in the place of residence	2
Lack of a rich library	2
Lack of data bases	1
Difficulties in research process	1
Lack of technological facilities	1
Conference attendance problems	1
Those having no difficulty	
Experience no difficulty	3

Table 5 presents the most frequent difficulties as "working at a different institution" and "time". These themes were followed by sub-themes expressing difficulties such as “transportation”, “be tiring”, “other social status” and “problems in organizing the schedule”.

The responses considering the most frequent sub-theme "working at a different institution" are as following; "Working in a different institute is a serious disadvantage and difficulty (P 1, Ph.D.)". "I have difficulty because I am already very busy in my working life (P 16, Master's without thesis)". "I have really difficulty in attending the classes especially as a teacher at a public school (P 8, Ph.D.)".

These are the statements about "Time" sub-themes: "I have difficulty in traveling time between my work place and university (P 13, Master's with thesis)." "As I both work and do master, I have great difficulty in time management. Sometimes, I couldn't allocate enough time for my studies. I couldn't focus on some of my studies which I believe I could do better if I had more time (P 30, Master's with thesis)".

Some responses addressed "Transportation" as a difficulty: "I am following a graduate education far from my work place. I have to take long bus rides every week, which is very tiring for me both financially and morally (P 5, Master's with thesis)". "I work in a county. I had problems with the time of arrival and finding transportation (P 33, Ph.D.)".

The followings are some statements related to the program's "Be tiring" sub-theme; "After long journeys it was really difficult for me to attend classes and return to work again late (P 25, Ph.D.)". "I'm tired of travelling from another city. Although it is not really far away, I get quite exhausted as I woke up early in the morning and had classes till very late hours (P 13, Master's with thesis)".

Difficulties based on "Other social status" are stated as followings; "As I got married and had child in thesis period, my graduate education took longer than normal (P 22, Master's with thesis)". "Due to the fact that I am very busy both in my work and family life, I cannot read required materials for graduate education. I think this is the most important difficulty for me (P 10, Ph.D.)". "I have to carry out different social status after school and I have different responsibilities so I have difficulty in fulfilling them (P 2, Ph.D.)".

Opinions about "Courses overlapping with the classes at school" are stated as following; "The overlap courses in the program caused some problems because I sometimes have difficulty in explaining the situation to both sides (university and school) (P 2, Ph.D.)". "I couldn't manage to organize my schedule so I have difficulty during the course period (P 13, Master's with thesis)".

There is an opinion about "Inadequate facilities in the place of residence": "There isn't an education faculty where I live and there is no academic library there so these are the problems I could state (P 12, Ph.D.)". An opinion about "Fail to get permission" , "When I started the education first I was unable to get permission from the place I worked as a result I missed the first hours and then I had motivation problems (P 19, Master's without thesis)".

Findings Associated with the Students' Suggestions for Higher Quality Education

Students' responses regarding the fifth research question are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Suggestions for Higher Quality Graduate Education

Themes and sub-themes	f
Academic suggestions	
Performance oriented courses	14
Encouragement for academic activities	8
More elective courses	4
Professors support	4
Less but more qualified students	2
Taking the students from related fields	2
Interviews in selecting the students	2
Contact with advisors easier	1
Inform the students	1
Bending the rules regarding attendance	1
Suggestions for work life	
Solution to permission problem	5
Suitable times for courses	1
Right to change university	1
Suggestions to increase the facilities	
Rich library	4
Economic support	2
Lounges to study and relax	2
Enhancing the databases	1
Material support	1
Fellowship facilities	1

It is revealed in Table 6 that the most frequent response considering the suggestions for more qualified education is as the following; "Performance oriented courses" sub-theme. After that it is possible to see "Encouragement for academic activities", "professors support", "more elective courses", "Solution to permission problem" and "rich library" successively.

These are some suggestions for "Performance oriented courses": "I believe that it would be more comprehensible if there would be performance oriented courses. We received theory based education in some courses. I think it would be more beneficial if we managed to get performance oriented courses (P 19, Master's without thesis)". "Apart from allocating time for theoretical side, application side should receive the same importance as well (P 30, Master's with thesis)". "After a while, to stick on theoretical side makes you less satisfied from the courses (P 10, Master's with thesis)".

Suggestions related to "Encouragement for academic activities" are as following; "It would be more beneficial for us to attend the symposiums each semester together with our advisors (P 10, Master's with thesis).", "In doctoral education the professors should be more concerned, instructive and supportive to help students attend congresses and symposiums and for research papers and proceedings (P 12, Ph.D.)".

The following suggestions are some example for "Professors support": "Professors should exhibit positive ad encouraging attitudes towards the students (P 9, Master's with thesis)". "For a high quality education faculty members are crucial. Professors should guide the students well and lead them to the scientific field throughout the graduate education (P 13, Master's with thesis)".

The following suggestions are some example for "Contact with advisors easier": "Students should contact with advisors easily" (P 6, Master's with thesis)". Suggestions for "Inform the students during undergraduate education": "I think the importance of graduate education should be explained adequately at the undergraduate level so

that more qualified, conscious and willing students can be selected for graduate education. All in all, graduate education can reach high quality standards (P 33, Ph.D.)”.

The following suggestions are some example for “Solution to permission problem”: *“Graduate students’ permission from the work problem should be solved (P 1, Ph.D.)”.* *“Legal arrangements should be carried out especially for the graduate students who also have an active working life to provide them with the necessary flexibility regarding the taking permission from the work for a high quality graduate education (P 4, Master’s with thesis)”.* *There is a suggestion regarding “Rich library”: “University libraries should provide students with all necessary journals ad publications during the graduate education (P 13, Master’s with thesis)”.*

Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendations

It is figured out that the graduate students have certain rationales for undergoing graduate education such as; desire for career development, desire to have a career in the field, desire to conduct research, desire for continuous learning, not satisfied with undergraduate education, and lifelong learning. It is evident that the ones who stated “being teacher as something monotonous” are also teachers. Besides that, the study elicited that the desire to be beneficial to society and educating more qualified students influence the graduate students’ decision to pursue a post graduate education. It can be said that the influential reasons for doing a graduate education are career development, doing career, continuous learning, and lifelong learning. Findings of the present research have revealed that this study confirmed the results of various studies; such as Arı, Pehlivanlar and Çömek's study (2005) “improve the field knowledge and follow a career”, Sayan and Aksu’s study (2005) “improve yourself, having an academic career, and making progress in your career”, Kıray’s study (2005) “improve yourself in your career, personal development, and gaining higher social status”, Oluk and Çolak’s (2005) “academic career and having a position at university”, “Dilci’s (2009) “professional development”, Alabaş et. al.'s (2012) “personal development, professional seniority and having an academic position”, Aydemir and Çam’s (2015) “academic career”, Gömleksiz and Yıldırım’s (2013) “doing career, improving yourself, and desire to be good in the field”, Nural and Bayraktar’s (2007) “improving yourself in educational science and continuing your profession effectively”, Teyfur and Çakır’s (2018) “to be good and effective in your field and having an academic career”, Aladağ and Dalğıcı’s (2019) “professional development” and Babayiğit’s (2019) “academic career and personal development”.

In this study, with respect to the role of the graduate education in making the students gain the academic knowledge, skills, and competencies, the findings are classified under two themes as; positive and negative opinions. Findings regarding positive opinions are; graduate students contribute to the field academically, graduate education enhances the students' research skills, and graduate education contributes to the field of teaching by providing the teachers with different perspectives. With respect to the negative opinion which is relatively rated less than the former, the study revealed that graduate education doesn't contribute enough to the field and more theoretical information is included in the graduate education. In the study of Alhas (2009), regarding the skills that the graduate education brings to students, creating a basis for students in academic studies, accessing information through searching, contribution to the solution of educational problems in a scientific way. Aladağ and Dalğıcı’s (2019) study concludes that access and use the information efficiently, and contribution to your profession and professional progress are the aims of the graduate education. It is clear that the findings of the current study overlap with the finding of the respective study.

Participants' opinions regarding their expectations from the graduate program are examined under three sub-themes as; positive, negative and partially positive or negative. In the positive dimension, the results indicate that the graduate program meets the students' expectations and enables them to be competent in their field. There are also some negative opinions stating that the graduate program falls behind the expectations of graduate students. Some of the students stated that the graduate program partially meet their expectations. Gömleksiz and Yıldırım (2013) carried out a study presenting some positive and negative opinions regarding

the expectations from graduate education. Demir (2007) noted that there exist both positive and negative opinions of the students after the completion of the courses in relation to the graduate students' opinions about how much their expectation from the education process and the department was met. It is obvious that these opinions support the current findings.

It is understood that, in relation to the challenges of graduate students as part of graduate education, working at a different institution and time-management are noted as the most encountered challenges. Teachers mostly stated working at a different institution as a challenge. Other than those difficulties, transportation, being tiring, other social status, and not organizing the schedule are stated as difficulties that the graduate students have been experiencing. There are some problems in graduate education provided by the universities in Turkey such as; problems of academic staff, financial problems, library service problems, foreign language problems, administrative problems, problems related to thesis advisor, lack of necessary equipment (Karaman & Bakırcı, 2010). In the literature, there are studies reflecting the similar difficulties experienced by the graduate students participated in this study, such as in Dilci's (2009) study, graduate students' "adaptation to the schedule of programs and courses", in the study of Çetin et. al. (2007) "difficulty in attending the classes", Kuzu and Becit's (2007) "insufficient time, transportation problems, attendance problems, ineffective advisory system", Nayır's (2008) "difficulties in attending the classes due to the fact that they are in the working hours", Gömleksiz and Yıldırım's (2013) "insufficient time, lack of application, problems of distance", Arabacı and Akıllı's (2013) "the overlapping classes with the working hours of some participants", Kıray's (2005) "low attendance to the classes due to the distance", Oluk and Çolak's (2005) "having difficulty in following both work and graduate education at the same time", Alabaş and et. al.'s (2012) "problems arising from the school and the problems caused by university", Sayan & Aksu's (2005) "taking two jobs together, the permission problem and economic difficulties", Başer et. al.'s (2005) "time management problem caused by the issues that teachers have a great deal of class load and they have to study hard for the graduate courses", Ezebilo's (2012) "gaining less access to information sources, lack of guidance and advising", Özmen and Aydın Güç's (2013) "problems especially with advisors and then problems with transportation, personal life", Pyhäntö et al., (2012), "problems with field-specific expertise, advising and resources", Katılmış et. al.'s (2013) "access to resources", Balı and Dönmez's (2018) "being tired due to the heavy course load together with work, transportation, getting permission to attend courses, and economic problems", Teyfur and Çakır's (2018) "problems with the lack of necessary guidance from advisors and problems of permission to attend classes", Aladağ and Dalğıç's (2019) "problems with time/not to be able to get permission from the work and transportation problem". Besides these findings, Güven and Tunç (2007) found out that graduate students have great difficulty in "individual and faculty facilities". In addition, it is understood that a small part of the students do not experience any difficulty in graduate education.

A number of suggestions are proposed by the students regarding a higher quality graduate education. It is possible to say that performance oriented courses, encouragement for academic activities, more elective courses, solution of the permission problem and the rich library are some prominent suggestions. The following are some studies that have similar findings regarding the graduate students' suggestions; in the study of Kuzu and Becit (2007) "the permission issue should be resolved, course hours and schedule should be reorganized", Gömleksiz and Yıldırım's (2013) "practice-based content should be increased, the quality of courses should be enhanced", Balı and Dönmez's (2018) "the number of elective courses should be raised, various courses should be provided, the courses should be designed as practical and analytical", Çelik's (2019) "number of elective courses should be increased, project and performance based education is a requirement for the graduate students, and scientific activities should be organized to ensure that students participate in scientific environments.", Aladağ and Dalğıç's (2019) "the way the courses are taught, absence and attendance tracking, economic support for research, and student centered schedule".

According to the results obtained, some suggestions are proposed:

- Graduate students expressed that they had permission problems to attend the classes and offered suggestions for solving the permission issue. Permission problems of all employees within graduate education working at different institutions other than university should be solved, especially teachers pursuing their graduate education.
- Students, who continue graduate education, recommended that the courses should be practical. The courses in graduate education program should be more practical.
- Working in another institution and time allocation are the most reported challenges. In this sense, distance education, online education etc. possibilities should be expanded.
- Graduate students should be given effective counselling that is more easily accessible to faculty members. Effective advising should be provided to students through maintaining easy access to their advisors.
- Students should be informed during the undergraduate period and the relevant students should be encouraged to pursue graduate education.
- Students have recommended that there should be more elective courses in the programs. Depending on the interests of students, they should be given the opportunity to choose more elective courses for the sake of their improvement.
- The data collected as part of this study are limited to the graduate students of a university. Further qualitative and quantitative research during graduate education should be carried out in order to develop different education facilities.

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Lisansüstü Eğitime Devam Eden Öğrencilerin Lisansüstü Eğitim ile İlgili Görüş ve Önerileri

Problem Durumu ve Araştırmanın Amacı

Araştırma ve geliştirme çalışmalarıyla bilgiyi üreterek hayata aktarma ve nitelikli insan gücü yetiştirme gibi fonksiyonları olan lisansüstü eğitimin toplumların kalkınmasında stratejik bir değeri bulunmaktadır (Bozan, 2012). Stratejik olarak değerlendirilen lisansüstü eğitime bu kadar önemli misyonların yüklenmesi bu eğitimin çeşitli yönleri ile sağlam temellere dayandırılması gereğini ortaya çıkarmaktadır (Özmen & Aydın Güç, 2013). Bu temellendirmeyi anlamlı bir biçimde yapılandırma bu süreci deneyimleyerek lisansüstü eğitime devam eden öğrencilerin görüş ve önerilerinin belirlenmesinin önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir. Araştırmanın elde edilen görüş ve öneriler doğrultusunda belirli boyutlarıyla lisansüstü eğitimin değerlendirilmesi ve geliştirilmesi bakımından alanyazına katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Bu araştırmanın amacı, lisansüstü eğitime devam eden öğrencilerin lisansüstü eğitim ile ilgili görüş ve önerilerini belirlemektir. Araştırmanın amacı doğrultusunda aşağıda yer alan sorulara yanıt aranmıştır.

Lisansüstü eğitime devam eden öğrencilerin;

- 1- Lisansüstü eğitim yapmalarında belirleyici olan nedenler nelerdir?
- 2- Devam ettikleri programın akademik bilgi, beceri ve yeterlikleri kazandırmadaki rolü ile ilgili görüşleri nelerdir?
- 3- Devam ettikleri programın beklentilerini karşılama durumu ile ilgili görüşleri nelerdir?
- 4- Lisansüstü eğitim ile ilgili yaşadıkları güçlükler nelerdir?
- 5- Nitelikli bir lisansüstü eğitim için önerileri nelerdir?

Yöntem

Lisansüstü öğrencilerinin görüş ve önerilerinin belirlendiği bu çalışmada, nitel araştırma yönteminden yararlanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada fenomenoloji (olgubilim) deseni kullanılmıştır. Fenomenoloji, derinlemesine ve ayrıntılı bir anlayışa sahip olmadığımız olgulara odaklanmaktadır.

2017-2018 öğretim yılı Bahar döneminde Dicle Üniversitesinde eğitim bilimleri ve alan eğitimi programlarında lisansüstü eğitime devam eden öğrenciler araştırmanın çalışma grubunu oluşturmuştur. Çalışma grubunda tezsiz yüksek lisans, tezli yüksek lisans ve doktora eğitimine devam eden 33 öğrenci yer almıştır. Araştırmada maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme ve kolay ulaşılabilir örnekleme yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada lisansüstü eğitime devam eden öğrencilerin konu ile ilgili görüş ve önerilerini belirlemek için görüşme yapılmıştır.

Araştırmada içerik analizi ve betimsel analiz teknikleri birlikte kullanılmış, tema ve alt temalar sunulmuş lisansüstü öğrencilerin görüş ve önerileri doğrudan alıntılar yoluyla aktarılmıştır. Alıntılarda katılımcı öğrencilerin isimleri yerine onlara verilen katılımcı numaraları ve lisansüstü eğitim düzeyleri belirtilerek; (K 3, Tezsiz YL), (K 6, Tezli YL), (K 12, Doktora) gibi kısaltmalarla kodlama yapılmıştır. Araştırmada, Miles & Huberman'ın (1994) önerdiği güvenilirlik formülü kullanılmıştır. Güvenirlik = Görüş Birliği / (Görüş Birliği + Görüş Ayrılığı). Hesaplama sonucunda araştırmanın güvenilirliği % 92.6 olarak belirlenmiştir. Yapılan bu hesaplama göre araştırmanın güvenilir olduğu kabul edilmiştir.

Bulgular

Lisansüstüne devam eden öğrencilerin lisansüstü eğitim yapmalarında belirleyici olan nedenler ile ilgili olarak “mesleki gelişim isteği” en sık belirtilen alt temadır. Bunu “alanında kariyer yapma isteği”, “araştırma yapma isteği”, “sürekli öğrenme isteği” ve “lisans eğitimi ile yetinmeme” alt temaları izlemiştir.

Programın bilgi, beceri ve yeterlikleri kazandırmadaki rolü ile ilgili “alanla ilgili akademik gelişime katkı” ve “bilimsel araştırma becerilerini artırma” alt temaları olumlu görüşlerde olan en yüksek frekansa sahip alt temalardır. Olumsuz görüşlerde ise, en fazla “yeterli katkının sağlanamaması” ve “teorik bilgiye daha çok yer verilmesi” alt temalarıdır.

Programın beklentileri karşılama durumu ile ilgili “önemli ölçüde” ve “alanda yetkin olmayı sağlama” alt temaları olumlu görüşlerde olan en yüksek frekansa sahip alt temalardır. Olumsuz görüşlerde ise, en fazla “yeterince karşılamama” ve “beklentilerin uzağında kalma” alt temalarıdır. Ayrıca, programın beklentileri karşılama durumu ile ilgili “Kısmen karşılama kısmen de karşılamama” alt teması da bulgularda yer almıştır.

Lisansüstü öğrencilerin lisansüstü eğitim ile ilgili yaşadıkları güçlükler konusunda “başka kurumda çalışma” ve “zaman” en çok belirtilen alt temalardır. Bu temaları, “ulaşım”, “yorucu olma”, “diğer toplumsal statüler” ve “ders programını düzenleyememe” gibi karşılaşılan güçlükleri ifade eden alt temalar izlemiştir.

Öğrencilerin nitelikli bir lisansüstü eğitim için dile getirdikleri öneriler konusunda “uygulamaya yönelik dersler” en sık belirtilen alt temadır. Bu alt temayı, “akademik etkinliklere teşvik”, “hocaların desteği”, “daha fazla seçmeli ders”, “izin probleminin çözümü” ve “zengin kütüphane” gibi önerileri belirten alt temalar takip etmiştir.

Tartışma, Sonuç ve Öneriler

Lisansüstü eğitim yapmada öğrenciler için belirleyici etkenlerin daha çok mesleki gelişim, kariyer yapma, sürekli öğrenme ve yaşam boyu öğrenme olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Arı, Pehlivanlar & Çömek (2005), Sayan & Aksu (2005), Kıray (2005), Oluk & Çolak (2005), Dilci (2009) Alabaş & diğerleri (2012), Aydemir & Çam (2015), Gömleksiz & Yıldırım’ın (2013), Nural & Bayraktar (2007), Teyfur & Çakır (2018), Aladağ & Dalğıç (2019) ve Babayiğit’in (2019) konu ile ilgili olarak ulaştığı sonuçların araştırma bulgularını destekler nitelikte olduğu söylenebilir.

Öğrencilerin devam ettikleri programının akademik bilgi, beceri ve yeterlikleri kazandırmadaki rolü ile ilgili görüşlerin olumlu ve olumsuz olmak üzere iki temada değerlendirilmiştir. Alhas’ın (2009) ve Aladağ & Dalğıç’ın (2019) yaptığı çalışmada ulaştığı sonuçların araştırma bulgularıyla örtüştüğü söylenebilir.

Öğrencilerin devam ettikleri programın beklentilerini karşılama durumu ile ilgili görüşleri olumlu, olumsuz ve hem olumlu hem olumsuz olmak üzere üç tema altında incelenmiştir. Gömleksiz & Yıldırım (2013) ve Demir (2007) konu ile ilgili olumlu ve olumsuz bazı görüşlere ulaşmıştır. Bu görüşlerin araştırma bulgularını destekler nitelikte olduğu söylenebilir.

Öğrencilerin lisansüstü eğitimde yaşadığı güçlüklerle ilgili olarak başka kurumda çalışma ve zamanın en çok karşılaşılan güçlük olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Bunların yanı sıra; ulaşım, yorucu olma, diğer toplumsal statüler ve ders programını düzenleyememe lisansüstü öğrencilerinin yaşadığı başlıca güçlükler olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Dilci (2009), Çetin & diğerleri (2007) Kuzu & Becit (2007), Nayır (2008), Gömleksiz & Yıldırım (2013), Arabacı & Akıllı (2013), Kıray (2005), Oluk & Çolak (2005) Alabaş & diğerleri (2012), Sayan & Aksu (2005), Başer & diğerleri (2005), Özmen & Aydın Güç (2013), Katılmış & diğerleri (2013), Balı & Dönmez (2018), Teyfur & Çakır (2018), Aladağ & Dalğıç’ın (2019) konu ile ilgili ulaştığı bütün bu sonuçların araştırma bulgularında belirlenen güçlükleri çeşitli yönleriyle desteklediği söylenebilir. Bu sonuçların yanı sıra Güven & Tunç’un (2007) yaptığı çalışmada lisansüstü öğrencilerinin en fazla sorunu “bireysel olanaklar ve fakülte olanakları” konularında yaşadıkları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Nitelikli bir lisansüstü eğitim için öğrenciler tarafından farklı öneriler belirtilmiştir. Belirtilen bu öneriler ilgili olarak uygulamaya yönelik dersler, akademik etkinliklere teşvik, daha fazla seçmeli ders, izin probleminin çözümü ve zengin kütüphane gibi önerilerin ön plana çıktığını söylemek mümkündür. Kuzu & Becit (2007), Gömleksiz & Yıldırım(2013), Balı & Dönmez (2018), Çelik (2019), Aladağ & Dalğıç'ın (2019) konu ile ilgili bu sonuçların araştırma bulgularıyla örtüştüğü söylenebilir. Araştırma sonucunda elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda; lisansüstü eğitimdeki dersler daha çok uygulamaya yönelik olması ve öğrencilere daha fazla seçmeli ders seçme olanağı verilmesi gerektiği ile ilgili öneriler sunulmuştur.

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