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Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Enes KAYA
Kafkas Üniversitesi
eneskaya1989@gmail.com
Orcid: 0000-0001-7844-6799

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS STUDYING HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGEMENT AND THE MANAGERIAL PROFESSION: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Abstract

Manager and management are crucial concepts for the professional management of businesses. They are also critical for organizations to survive, compete with rivals, and gain a sustainable competitive advantage by creating fundamental changes that can advance them. This study is designed to deeply examine the views of health management students on management and the management profession. The research was conducted using a qualitative research design, and 21 undergraduate students in the Healthcare Management department at Kafkas University were selected as participants. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, and the data obtained were analyzed using the MAXQDA 2024 program. The data were examined using content analysis, and as a result, 5 main themes and 9 categories related to these themes were created. The findings show that participants have developed a dual perspective on management. In this context, the management and managerial profession has been evaluated from the perspective of health management students aspiring to become managers in the healthcare field. The qualities that ideal managers should possess, the advantages and challenges of management, and the career preferences and orientations of health management students have been presented in detail. This qualitative study provides an in-depth look at the mental map of health management students, offering unique contextual insights into management and leadership literature; it also provides applicable

implications across a wide range of areas, from educational policies and career counseling to strategies concerning healthcare institutions and industry stakeholders, hospital human resources strategies, and recommendations regarding policy and legislation.

Keywords: Management, Manager, Healthcare Management, University Students, Qualitative Research.

**SAĞLIK YÖNETİMİ EĞİTİMİ ALAN ÜNİVERSİTE
ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN YÖNETİM VE YÖNETİCİLİK MESLEĞİNE İLİŞKİN
ALGILARI: NİTEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA**

Öz

Yönetim ve yönetici işletmelerin profesyonel şekilde yönetilmesi noktasında oldukça önemli kavramlar olup örgütlerin varlıklarını sürdürebilmeleri, rakiplerle rekabet edebilmeleri ve sürdürebilir rekabet avantajı elde edebilmeleri noktasında örgütleri ileriye taşıyabilecek köklü değişiklikler yaratılması bakımından da kritik öneme sahip iki kavramdır. Bu çalışma, üniversitede sağlık yönetimi eğitimi alan öğrencilerinin yönetim ve yöneticilik mesleğine ilişkin görüşlerini derinlemesine ele almak amacıyla tasarlanmıştır. Araştırma, nitel araştırma deseniyle gerçekleştirilmiş olup Kafkas Üniversitesi Sağlık Yönetimi bölümünde lisans eğitimini sürdüren 21 öğrenci araştırmanın katılımcıları olarak belirlenmiştir. Katılımcılar amaçlı örnekleme yöntemiyle belirlenmiş, elde edilen veriler MAXQDA 2024 programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Veriler içerik analizi yöntemiyle incelenmiş ve sonuç olarak 5 ana tema ve bu temalara bağlı 9 kategori oluşturulmuştur. Bulgular, katılımcıların yöneticiliğe dair ikili bir bakış açısı geliştirdiğini göstermektedir. Bu kapsamda, yöneticilik mesleği sağlık alanında yönetici olmaya aday sağlık yönetimi bölümü öğrencilerinin gözünden değerlendirilmiş; ideal yöneticilerin sahip olması gereken nitelikler, yöneticiliğin avantajları ve zorlukları, sağlık yönetimi öğrencilerinin kariyer tercihleri ve yönelimleri ortaya konmuştur. Bu nitel çalışma, üniversitede sağlık yönetimi öğrencilerinin zihinsel haritasını derinlemesine ortaya koyarak yönetim literatürüne özgün bağlamsal bilgiler sunmakta; eğitim politikalarından kariyer danışmanlığına, sağlık kurumları ve sektörel paydaşlara, politika ve mevzuata dair önerilere kadar geniş bir yelpazede uygulanabilir çıkarımlar sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yönetim, Yönetici, Sağlık Yönetimi, Üniversite Öğrencileri, Nitel Araştırma.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing complexity of healthcare institutions, the growing number of healthcare organizations in both the public and private sectors, rising care and treatment costs, and the increasing need for healthcare services have increased the need for professional healthcare managers with the competencies to ensure more effective and efficient use of resources (Çil Koçyiğit, Ekinci & Erbay, 2017). Effective and efficient management of healthcare institutions requires knowledge in areas such as healthcare management, health economics, health law, hospital accounting, medical terminology, hospital information systems, and medical services (Ağırbaş, 2016: 17). Training managers required for different managerial levels within

healthcare organizations is crucial (Çimen, 2010). Considering that this element directly affects human life and taking into account the unique characteristics of healthcare services and institutions, the Healthcare Management department provides educational services in this field by offering theoretical and practical training in the aforementioned courses, internships in various healthcare institutions, and training prospective healthcare professionals for hospital management. According to Ekinici and Aksan (2024), it is important that those who manage a very important sector like health and very large structures like city hospitals today are people who have received health management education or who have graduated from a management-related department.

The literature review revealed that qualitative studies directly examining healthcare management student's perceptions of management and managerial profession remain limited, which highlights the originality of this study. In this context, the aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of students studying health management regarding management and the managerial profession. A qualitative research was conducted on students studying health management at Kafkas University. Considering the above points, the research questions were determined as follows, depending on the aim of the research:

- What is management in your opinion? Can you explain?
- Who is a manager in your opinion? Can you define them?
- What characteristics should a manager possess?
- What are the advantages of being a manager in your opinion?
- What are the difficulties of being a manager in your opinion?
- Would you like to be a manager after graduation? Can you explain why?
- In which administrative unit of the hospital would you like to be a manager after graduation? Why?
- Do you think that health management graduates should be appointed to the management levels of health institutions and organizations? Why?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Concepts of Management and Manager

It is generally accepted that management practices emerged from the centuries before Christ to the present day, coinciding with people living in or forming small or large communities. Management, whose history is as old as humanity itself (Koçel, 2020: 45), is the activity of achieving goals through others and getting others to do work (Genç, 2013: 17-18). According to another definition, management is the process of achieving goals through people (Kavuncubaşı and Yıldırım, 2018: 95).

In addition to being appointed to their positions, managers must possess certain qualities while performing management duties. These include: having experience in management and/or having studied a management-related field or having received management-related training (familiarity with relevant terminology and legislation, etc.), taking courses (management/leadership courses, economics, quality, law, business, etc.), possessing

certifications, having leadership qualities, having good communication skills, etc. (Ekinçi & Aksan, 2024).

With the changing world conditions, people's needs and expectations have also changed. As a result of socialization, people's interactions with each other have increased. These changes have led to the proliferation and increasing importance of service businesses. The largest and most important segment of service businesses is healthcare institutions that provide health services (Öztürk and İlman, 2015). These institutions and organizations have some unique characteristics that distinguish them from other service businesses. In this context, when moving from general management to health management, it is defined as "the planning, organization, direction, control, and coordination of resources and processes that enable the fulfillment of medical care and healthy environment demands by providing specific services to individuals, organizations, and communities" (Schultz & Alton, 1976; cited in Çimen, 2010). In this respect, management in the health sector represents a highly important and specialized field. Within this scope, information regarding health management and the profession and education of health managers is presented below.

Healthcare Management and the Profession and Education of Healthcare Managers

Due to the nature of the services provided by healthcare institutions and organizations, the need for intensive use of technology in these institutions and organizations necessitates the most effective use of available scarce resources. Furthermore, healthcare institutions and organizations encompass numerous and diverse disciplines. For these reasons, healthcare management is considered one of the most challenging management fields (Yorulmaz, 2019; Öztürk and İlman, 2015). A Healthcare Manager is defined as "a person who has graduated from departments such as "Health Administration", "Health Management", "Healthcare Institutions Management", "Healthcare Institutions Management", "Healthcare Business Administration", "Healthcare Institutions Business Administration" of faculties/colleges of universities that provide undergraduate education. Their title is Healthcare Manager / Healthcare Administrator" (Official Gazette, 2014).

Considering that a profession is defined as a set of activities undertaken to earn a living, governed by socially determined rules and based on knowledge and skills acquired through specific training (Yeşilyaprak, 2005: 191), it is clear that the profession of healthcare management requires significant expertise. Due to its complex structure and diverse dimensions, healthcare management necessitates knowledge and skills in various fields such as human health, communication, psychology, sociology, accounting, law, business administration, economics, and others. Individuals graduating with a degree in healthcare management and holding the title of healthcare manager are also expected to possess expertise in numerous specialized areas such as resource management, human resource planning, public relations, marketing, financial management, and others (Çimen, 2010).

Health management, a specialized field within management science, is increasingly recognized as a professional occupation both globally and in Turkey (Camuz Berber, Çandereli & Arslan, 2023). Detailed information regarding health management education is presented below.

The necessity of managing the healthcare sector by professionals has formed the cornerstone of the healthcare management department. Accordingly, the need for a healthcare

management department was first discussed in the United States in the 1910s. In fact, in his 1929 book, Michael Davis emphasized that hospital management should be done by professionals. Five years after the publication of Davis's book, the first graduate program in healthcare management was established. In addition to this graduate program, which has continued for approximately 90 years, healthcare management is also taught at the undergraduate and even associate degree levels (Karaşin & Tatlı, 2022).

METHOD

The study group/participants of this research consists of undergraduate students studying health management at Kafkas University. Data were collected through structured face-to-face interviews within the scope of qualitative research methodology. According to Baltacı (2019), qualitative research advocates for the importance of depth and originality of information; it focuses on deep and specific data obtained from smaller study groups instead of large samples (Baltacı, 2019). Interviews were conducted between October and November 2025; each interview lasted an average of 10 minutes and was recorded with the participant's consent. The obtained recordings were transferred to Microsoft Word files and then analyzed by reading them line by line.

Purposive sampling was used in the sample selection for the study. Within the scope of purposive sampling, students actively studying health management (undergraduate) at Kafkas University were included in the research. In purposive sampling, sample size was determined by considering saturation and excess data points (Merriam, 2018: 79). Accordingly, the data collection process was terminated if no different opinions were obtained from the new participants. In qualitative research, the repetition of data after a certain stage indicates that the data has reached saturation (Morse, 2016).

Reliability and Validity

In qualitative research, the concepts of validity and reliability require flexible and contextual processes that differ from quantitative research methods (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Therefore, the principle of "credibility" is particularly important in ensuring data reliability in qualitative studies (Başkale, 2016). Accordingly, the following steps were followed in the research:

Validity of Interview Questions: The interview questions used in the research were structured based on a comprehensive literature review. The content validity of the questions was tested with the opinions of expert academics in the relevant field; the final interview form was created by making the necessary adjustments in line with the feedback received.

Participant Consent: The obtained data were meticulously analyzed, then the findings were presented to the participants, and the accuracy of the content was confirmed with their consent.

Inter-Coder Agreement: After ensuring data reliability, the research process focused on the validity dimension. At this stage, an inter-coder agreement approach was adopted to minimize subjective effects and increase thematic consistency. Qualitative data obtained from the fieldwork were coded separately by two independent experts; subsequently, the thematic differences that emerged were addressed in mutual evaluation sessions. As a result of these discussions, a common understanding was developed and the themes were clarified through consensus.

Thanks to these methodological steps, the validity and reliability of the research were supported in a multidimensional way.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The analysis of the data obtained from the interviews conducted within the scope of the research was carried out in accordance with a qualitative research design. In the first stage of the analysis process, the documents of the interviews with the participants were transcribed into text documents without any changes. Then, the resulting text documents were read several times by the researchers in order to gain a holistic perspective, and codes were created directly from the data as a result of these readings. In this process, similar codes were combined under common names, then codes that were close to each other formed broader structures called categories, and similar categories formed main themes. Thus, an inductive path progressing from data to theory (from practice to theory) was followed (Creswell, 2016).

The entire analysis process, including data coding, categorization, and theme creation, was managed using MAXQDA Pro 2024, a qualitative data analysis software. In this study, participants' opinions were systematically examined and interpreted using the "content analysis technique." Various visualization techniques were utilized to present the findings and make the data more understandable. Code hierarchy maps were used to show the hierarchical structure of each theme, word clouds were used to show the most frequently occurring words and concepts in the texts, and network analysis (relationship map) was used to reveal the relational network between concepts.

Ethical Issues

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board of the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at Kafkas University, Republic of Turkey, with decision number 65 dated 30/12/2024.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In this section, the data obtained from the research were evaluated through content analysis, and findings were presented within the themes corresponding to each research question.

Demographic Findings Regarding Participants

Table 1 provides information about health management students.

Table 1.

Demographic Information Regarding Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Class
K1	Female	20	2nd-year
K2	Female	20	2nd-year
K3	Female	21	2nd-year
K4	Female	19	1st-year
K5	Female	21	3rd year
K6	Male	22	3rd year
K7	Male	22	2nd-year
K8	Female	22	3rd year

Participant	Gender	Age	Class
K9	Female	21	3rd year
K10	Female	20	1st-year
K11	Female	19	1st-year
K12	Female	21	2nd-year
K13	Male	21	3rd year
K14	Male	20	4th year
K15	Male	20	4th year
K16	Male	20	2nd-year
K17	Male	23	2nd-year
K18	Male	22	3rd year
K19	Female	24	4th year
K20	Female	22	4th year
K21	Male	20	1st-year

Table 1 shows that of the 21 students participating in the study, 12 (57%) were female and 9 (43%) were male. Furthermore, it was determined that among the undergraduate health management students participating in the study, 4 (19.04%) were first-year students, 7 (33.33%) were second-year students, 6 (28.5%) were third-year students, and 4 (19.04%) were fourth-year students. It was also found that the participants were between 19 and 24 years old.

Other Findings Related to the Study

This section presents the findings resulting from the analysis of data obtained from interviews with health management students participating in the research. In the qualitative analysis process, participants' statements were examined in depth, and a total of 303 codes were initially created for text segments that formed meaningful wholes. Following this initial coding phase, codes with similar or identical semantic content were carefully reviewed and simplified by combining them under a single code name to represent common concepts.

As a result of this analytical process, categories were created by evaluating the relationships and semantic affinities between the refined codes. In the final stage, these interrelated categories were grouped under broader and more comprehensive structures called themes. This inductive approach of qualitative analysis resulted in a final structure consisting of 5 main themes explaining the research data, 9 categories related to these themes, and a total of 48 codes under these categories. This structure, summarizing the research findings, is presented in Table 2 as the Code Book.

Table 1.

Codebook

Theme	Category	Codes
Perceptions Regarding the Concepts of Management and Manager	Management Definitions	Purposeful Activities (10), Use of Resources (6), Coordination and Cooperation (4), Process Orientation (6), Order and Control (8), Accomplishing work through others (3)
	Manager	Responsible Person (9), Directing/Leader (11), Planner

Theme	Category	Codes
	Definitions	and Organizer (5), Decision Maker (2)
Qualities of an Ideal Manager	Professional Skills	Decision Making (7), Communication and Persuasion (10), Problem Solving (7), Planning and Systematics (3), Leadership (4)
	Personal Characteristics	Justice and Equality (5), Honesty and Trustworthiness (7), Responsibility (1), Discipline and Seriousness (3), Empathy (3), Coolness (2), Knowledge and Logical (4), Other Positive Qualities (15)
Perceived Advantages and Challenges of Management	Advantages and Motivational Appeal	Status, Prestige and Desire for Success (12), Career and Development Opportunities (13), Autonomy, Flexibility and Good Working Conditions (8), Financial Gain (3), Personal Satisfaction, Self-Confidence and Sense of Achievement (5), Personal Competence and Leadership Potential (8), Desire to Evaluate Received Education (3)
	The Challenges of Management	High Responsibility (16), Stress and Pressure (6), Difficult Decision Making (6), People Management (7), Intense Work and Workload (8)
Career Choices and Orientations	Willingness to Become a Manager	Those Who Want to Become Managers (17), Those Who Do Not Want to Become Managers (2), Those Who Are Abstain or Conditionally Wish (2)
	Preferred Management Areas (Units)	Human Resources (10), Contracted Institutions (1), Accounting/Finance (5), Purchasing and Warehousing/Medical Supplies (5)
Thoughts on the Employment of Healthcare Managers	The Necessity and Justification of Employment	Giving the Job to the Expert (7), Scope and Adequacy of the Training Received (11), Productivity and Efficiency (3), Rights and Justice (5), Institutional Needs (3), Employment Problem and Addressing the Grievance (2)

In this section, the findings from the research are discussed in detail under each thematic heading, in accordance with the thematic structure presented in Table 2. Within this framework, the categories and codes within each theme are interpreted, supported by direct quotations from the participants' statements.

Perceptions Regarding the Concepts of Management and Manager

The first theme of the research, "Perceptions Regarding the Concepts of Management and Manager," was examined under two main categories, in accordance with the hierarchical structure detailed in Figure 1. These categories are divided into 'Definitions of Management' and 'Definitions of Manager.' According to the frequency distribution in Table 2, participants' opinions on this subject were particularly concentrated on the concepts of manager and manager, with 11 references defining the manager as a 'Director/Leader' and 10 references viewing management as a whole of 'Goal-Oriented Activities.'

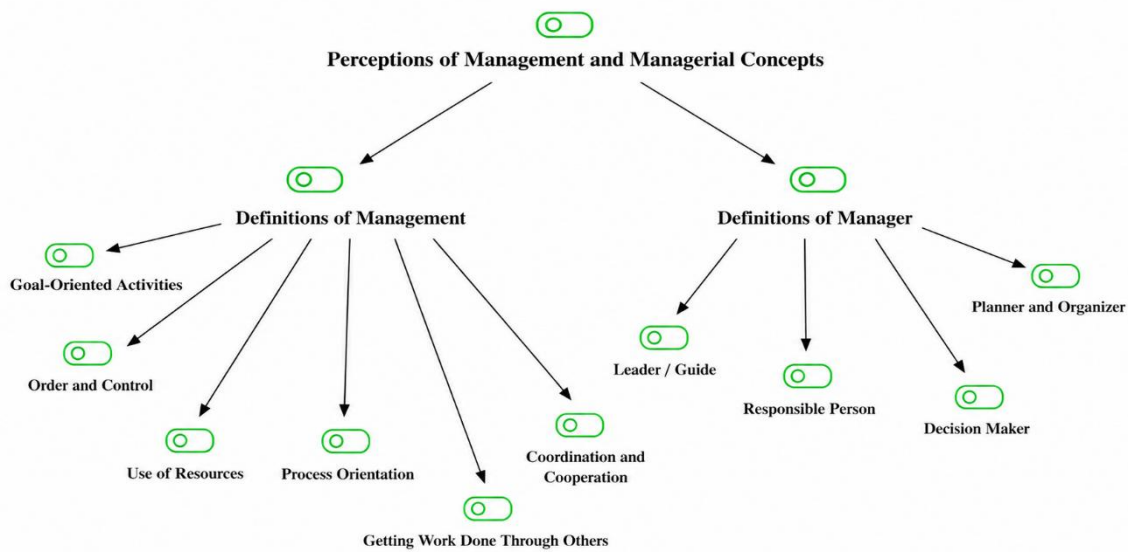


Figure 1. Hierarchical Code Map Regarding the Theme of Perceptions of Management and Manager Concepts.

Management Definitions

The study revealed that health management students participating in the research largely defined the concept of management as a set of organized actions undertaken to achieve specific goals. The participants' statements indicate that management inherently involves a cause-and-effect relationship, and all activities are structured to serve a predetermined objective. These definitions emphasize that management is a conscious and planned effort focused on a specific outcome.

“Management is the process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling people, time, money, and other resources to achieve a specific goal.” (K3)

“Management is the process of setting goals to achieve success in managing a company, hospital, or a store we open ourselves. Successful management increases productivity.” (K5)

“Management is the effective and efficient planning of resources by individuals and groups to achieve specific goals.” (K17)

The emphasis on achieving the defined goals was followed by the idea of the efficient use of resources necessary to accomplish these goals. Participants defined management as the process of bringing together limited resources such as people, time, and money to use them in the most efficient way. In this context, management is described as the art of allocating and directing available resources towards achieving goals.

“Management is the process of using existing resources in the most effective way to achieve a common goal in businesses and organizations.” (K20)

“It is the decision-making mechanism within an organization that has authority and improves the environment.” (K13)

The goal-oriented organization of resources and activities highlighted the process-oriented dimension of management in the participants' statements. Many participants viewed the concept of management as a whole of sequential and interconnected functions such as planning, monitoring, and organizing. This functional approach demonstrates that management is a systematic and structured series of activities.

“It is the process of planning and managing human time, money and other resources to achieve a specific goal” (K16)

At the point where management processes intersect with the human element, the function of ensuring coordination and cooperation becomes prominent. In the participants' narratives, management was defined as a mechanism that unites individuals and groups around a common goal, establishing harmony and cooperation among them. Therefore, management enables the transformation of individual efforts into a collective force in achieving organizational goals.

“Management is defined as the collection of activities undertaken to produce goods and services for a specific purpose by coordinating among people.” (K8)

“Management is the collection of administrative individuals who direct, govern, and hold together a group or community.” (K11)

The ability to ensure cooperation and coordination has placed the concept of order and control at the center of the participants' definitions of management. Management is defined as a power that regulates the functioning within an institution or community, controls the course of events, and ensures compliance with rules.

“Managing a group or business is about controlling the course of the business by leading and collaborating.” (K9)

“It is about managing the entire institution in accordance with the rules.” (K18)

The ultimate outcome of all these processes and control mechanisms was summarized by the participants as “getting things done through others.” This definition indicates that management is not an activity that directly does the work, but rather one that enables the work to be done. This approach, which characterizes management as an “art,” clearly reveals the attribution of the manager’s ability to influence and direct people. “Getting things done through others” (K1)

“Management is about using force on multiple people, getting things done through orders. It must be able to deal with crises when necessary. However, generally, managers cannot take much initiative due to the nature of their work, and they rarely deviate from standards. We can call management the art of getting things done.” (K19)

It was observed that the participants' definitions of management generally encompassed multiple themes. Rather than being reduced to a single function, management is perceived as a multi-dimensional activity involving goal setting, planning resources for those goals, coordinating people, and achieving goals by keeping the entire process under control. “Ensuring cooperation and understanding among people, guiding them towards their goals.” (K2)

This holistic perspective on the concept of management shows that it is understood within a broad framework encompassing both its strategic and operational aspects. The strategic

dimension represents the goal-oriented nature of activities, while the operational dimension represents the use of resources and coordination within this process.

Manager Definitions

Participants defined the concept of management in its functional dimension, positioning the manager as the central actor performing these functions. The most frequently emphasized role in manager definitions is that of a "person in charge." According to this role, the manager is the person responsible for the organization, supervision, and ultimate outcomes of an institution or unit. This responsibility of the manager is seen as broad, encompassing all areas of the institution's activities.

"The person in charge who organizes and supervises in any business." (K2)

"The manager may be the head of the institution and organization, the person who takes on all the challenges and supervises." (K18)

"The manager is the person at the beginning of the management process, the person unaffected by the damage." (K20)

In addition to the role of responsibility, the manager's identity as a "director and leader" was also frequently mentioned. According to this perception, the manager is the person who directs and leads the group or organization towards specific goals. The manager's directive characteristic indicates that they are seen as a proactive and influential figure. "Manager: The person who manages a group or community." (K6)

"A manager is the leader of a group assembled for a specific purpose. In other words, they are the one who administers." (K21)

The "planner and organizer" function of the manager is also clearly expressed within managerial roles. Participants defined the manager as the person who plans the work of others, brings together the necessary factors for production, and organizes the work.

"A manager is the person who plans the work of others to achieve specific goals." (K3)

"A manager is the person who supervises and organizes that work." (K10)

Another critical role highlighted in the definitions of a manager is that of a "decision-maker." According to the participants, the manager is the person who makes the fundamental decisions in an organization and ensures the implementation of these decisions. This role of the manager reflects their decisive influence and power over the direction of the organization.

"A manager is someone who brings order to a public institution or other business and achieves the set goals. Essentially, the manager ensures the institution's stability. Inputs, outputs, and even personnel are under the manager's decision and influence." (K5)

When the participants' perceptions of management and managers are evaluated as a whole, it becomes clear that management is a system and a whole set of processes, and the manager is the fundamental figure who makes this system work, directs it, and is responsible for its results. While management is an abstract concept, the manager is seen as the will that transforms this abstract concept into concrete actions and results. The definitions reveal that the answer to the question of what management is is closely related to the answer to the question of who the manager is and what they do.

Qualities of an Ideal Manager

The second theme, titled “Qualities of the Ideal Manager,” was addressed in two main dimensions: “Professional Skills” and “Personal Characteristics,” as visualized in Figure 2. As seen in Table 2, the participants' ideal manager profile emphasized “Communication and Persuasion” skills professionally, with 10 references. In terms of personal characteristics, the code “Other Positive Qualities” (being constructive, proactive, intelligent, punctual, flexible, risk-taking, broad-minded, honest, patient, consistent, exemplary behavior, sincerity, authoritative, assertive, determined, and open to criticism, etc.) reached the highest concentration with 15 references.

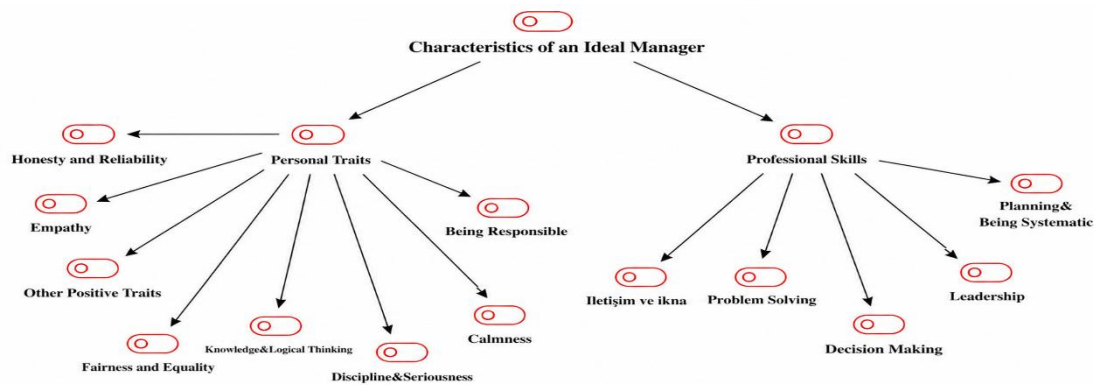


Figure 2. Hierarchical Code Map Related to the Theme of Ideal Manager Qualities.

Professional Skills

Participants cited decision-making skills as a primary competency for an ideal manager. In their view, a manager is seen as an actor capable of making critical decisions that determine the organization's direction. The importance of using this skill quickly and accurately was emphasized in the statements, as the manager's decisions are believed to affect the entire organization.

“Must be quick to make decisions; must be able to persuade, act strategically, and take risks” (K2)

“He needs to make quick decisions and handle crises well. He needs to influence employees like a leader, be forward-thinking, have a culture, and influence employees with his communication.” (K20)

Another professional skill that a manager needs to possess in order to effectively implement decisions is communication and persuasion skills. Participants stated that establishing open and effective communication with both superiors and subordinates is essential for organizational harmony.

“He must be patient. He must be reliable, punctual, and have broad authority. He must be fair and trustworthy, equal, and have high persuasive ability.” (K8)

“A manager must be calm, have high persuasive ability, be consistent, have very good communication skills, and be decisive.” (K9)

“He must have the ability to persuade.” (K15)

The inherent challenges and unexpected situations in managerial activities have made problem-solving skills an indispensable quality for the ideal manager. Participants' statements indicate that a manager should be someone who intervenes and produces solutions during times of crisis. This skill reflects the manager's capacity for analytical thinking and developing practical solutions in the face of difficulties.

"Communication skills, decision-making ability, problem-solving skills." (K3)

"Should be dominant, knowledgeable, assertive, well-dressed, able to maintain respect and affection, fair and quick, agile, able to solve problems, solution-oriented." (K19)

The consistent display of these skills is made possible through planning and leadership abilities. According to the participants, the ideal manager is someone who plans activities in advance, acts systematically, and can lead their team within this system. Leadership was interpreted as the manager influencing and inspiring employees to direct them towards common goals.

"First and foremost, they must have leadership skills, good communication skills in their workplace so they can get along. They must be flexible. They must have decision-making and problem-solving abilities. They must be able to empathize." (K5)

"A manager must be decisive, systematic, in control, make logical decisions, work confidently, value ideas, be honest and not lie. They think twice before making a decision." (K10)

"They must be proactive, a leader/manager must be able to empathize and *provide motivation.*" (K17)

Personal Characteristics

Participants extensively discussed not only professional skills but also the personal qualities an ideal manager should possess. Foremost among these qualities is the manager's adherence to the principles of fairness and equality in their behavior and decisions. A manager's impartiality, fairness, and equal treatment of all employees form the basis of respect and trust.

"Being decisive, just, calm, constructive, having a broad perspective on an event, and being punctual." (K6)

"Being honest, hardworking, punctual, exhibiting exemplary behavior, being successful and talented, being fair and equitable." (K12)

"Being sincere, yet authoritative, having control over individuals and the institution, and being fair." (K13)

Another important personal quality that complements the principle of justice is honesty and trustworthiness. For the participants, the ideal manager is someone whose words and actions match, who exhibits consistent behavior, and who is transparent with their employees. A manager's trustworthiness is seen as a critical factor in making employees feel secure and increasing their commitment to the organization.

"A manager must be honest, upright, punctual, workaholic, and know what they are doing and how it should be done." (K7)

“A manager must first and foremost be able to take risks, accept all kinds of criticism, keep a disciplined group together with their decisions, be reliable, make the right decisions at the right time and place, and most importantly, be honest.” (K11)

In addition to the manager's ethical stance, intellectual capacity was also considered important. In this context, being knowledgeable and logical was highlighted. The ideal manager is expected to have in-depth knowledge of the area they manage and to evaluate situations through logic rather than emotional reactions.

“A manager is a knowledgeable person who thinks logically.” (K4)

“He/She must have decision-making, analytical skills, a good understanding of the job, and communication skills.” (K14)

The manager's personal attitude and work ethic were also among the issues highlighted by the participants. Discipline and seriousness are important qualities expected of an ideal manager. The manager's serious approach to their work and adoption of a disciplined work style were considered valuable in terms of setting an example for subordinates and demonstrating commitment to achieving corporate goals.

“The manager is knowledgeable, superior, disciplined, practical, and intelligent.” (K4)

“Discipline, honesty, objectivity, diligence. I can also include determination, intelligence, the ability to take responsibility, and openness to criticism.” (K21)

The manager's approach to interpersonal relationships also holds a central place in the definition of the ideal manager. The ability to empathize, in particular, was frequently mentioned by the participants. The manager's ability to understand employees' feelings and thoughts, to put themselves in their shoes, is seen as key to creating a more humane and motivating work environment.

“They should have high empathy, decision-making ability, objective decision-making skills, and be organized. They should also be respectful of people.” (K10)

When it comes to coping with the pressure and stress of leadership, composure has emerged as an important personal trait. A manager who can maintain their composure and act rationally without panicking during crises or difficult situations was perceived by participants as more successful and reliable.

“A manager needs to be calm. They need to be highly persuasive. A manager needs to be consistent. They need to have excellent communication skills and be decisive.” (K9)

In addition to these fundamental characteristics, participants also listed other positive qualities that an ideal manager should possess. Qualities such as diligence, the ability to take responsibility, openness to criticism, patience, and constructiveness were mentioned as other elements that complete the portrait of an ideal manager. This indicates that ideal management is perceived as a multi-dimensional concept that cannot be reduced to a single characteristic.

“A good manager is consistent in their behavior and sets an example. In short, they must have representative skills.” (K18)

When the professional skills and personal characteristics attributed to the ideal manager are evaluated together, it is seen that the participants portray a leader profile that possesses

technical and managerial competence, a strong character, and a high moral stance. According to them, a successful manager should be fair, honest, empathetic, and trustworthy. The combination of these two dimensions enables the manager to achieve corporate goals and gain the respect and loyalty of employees.

Perceived Advantages and Challenges of Management

The third theme, which examines the attractive and deterrent aspects of the management profession, is grouped under two contrasting categories, as shown in Figure 3: 'Advantages and Motivational Appeal' and 'Challenges of Management'. When the number of citations in Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the participants overwhelmingly expressed the perception of 'High Responsibility' as the biggest challenge of this profession with 16 citations. In contrast, 'Career and Development Opportunities' was cited 13 times and 'Status, Prestige and Desire for Success' was cited 12 times as the most attractive aspects of the profession.

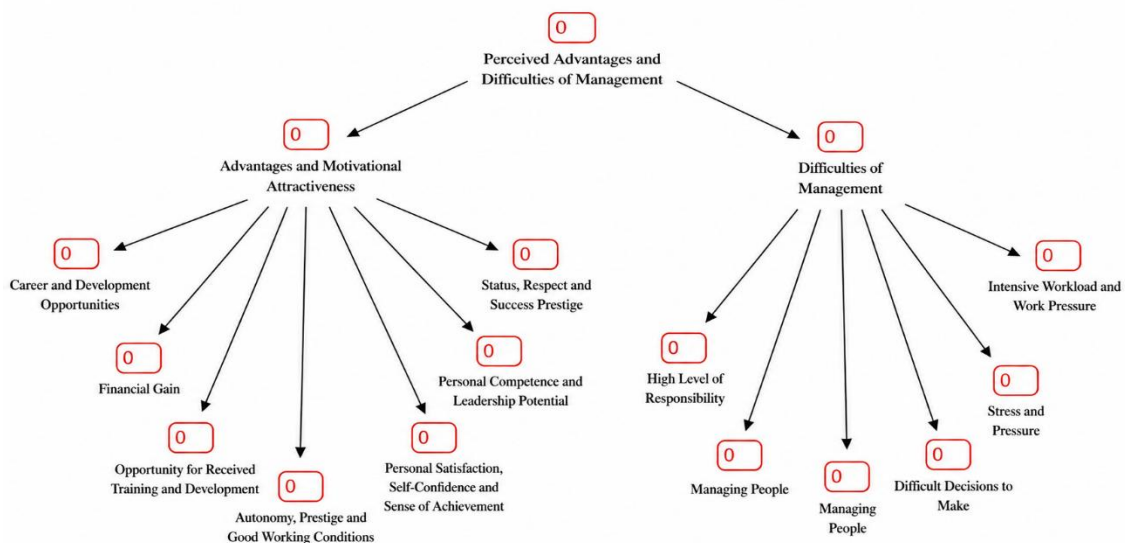


Figure 3. Hierarchical Code Map Regarding the Theme of Advantages and Challenges of Management

Advantages and Motivational Appeal

Participants perceive managerial positions as a significant indicator of status and prestige. Being a manager is thought to confer power, including the ability to influence employees, have authority, and give orders. This makes management attractive as a means of achieving a more prestigious position in both the social and professional world. The desire for success is one of the key driving forces behind achieving and maintaining this status.

“You have a rank other than being an employee. Because you have that rank, your morale and motivation are high.” (K14)

“Giving orders is better than working under orders. You become a respected person because of your knowledge and skills.” (K19)

“Yes, because I want to be a leader in society, to have a certain status.” (K21)

Career and development opportunities, a natural extension of status and prestige, are seen as another significant attraction of management positions. Participants stated that this position offers a stepping stone for professional advancement and provides an opportunity to realize their personal visions. Management is viewed as a development area for showcasing professional competencies and preparing for higher-level roles.

“It’s a high-ranking position in terms of career. It’s good economically.” (K2)

“Yes, I would like that. Because I want to improve myself in management, I want to change my perspective on life’s challenges.” (K14)

“The workload decreases, they can develop themselves better, the manager is not affected by losses. So that’s the biggest advantage.” (K20)

The autonomy and flexibility offered by management are also a significant source of motivation. Participants' statements reflect the perception that managers have greater freedom in setting their own working hours and organizing their work. The idea of having more comfortable and flexible working conditions instead of working in difficult and grueling jobs makes a management career desirable.

“Not having to do any difficult work, coming and going as he pleases, speaking in an authoritarian manner.” (K7)

“He has no time constraints; he has the ability to start or finish work whenever he wants. He can postpone his tasks and take time off whenever he wants.” (K8)

In addition to these advantages, financial gain has frequently been cited as a tangible benefit of management. The perception that a management position equates to a higher income level is among the factors shaping participants' career goals. Having better economic conditions is seen as a reward for the responsibilities that come with this role.

“Yes, I would like to be a manager. Because managing a group and guiding them is a very good thing. Also, it's important for my CV. And the salary a manager receives is better than others.” (K11)

“Decision-making authority, prestige and superiority, financial gain.” (K17)

In addition to external rewards, the intrinsic satisfaction offered by leadership is a strong attraction. The personal satisfaction, pride, and self-confidence derived from managing things, leading a team, and achieving goals are among the main reasons why participants desire this role. The feeling of accomplishment stands out as the intangible reward of leadership.

“Of course I want to. I want to achieve things and gain self-confidence. I think it will create a sense of seriousness, a feeling that I have a mature personality.” (K4)

“When I graduate, I would certainly like to be a manager. Being in charge of my own business is something to be proud of, sitting at that desk, I would become a manager so that my father could walk through the door and see me like that.” (K12)

This sense of accomplishment is also fueled by the personal competence and leadership potential that participants see in themselves. Many participants believe they possess the necessary qualities to be managers and can succeed in this field. The desire to unlock and utilize the leadership potential they believe they have is driving them towards a management career.

“Yes, I would like to, because I believe that after acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills in this field, I will be productive and reach a level where I can do effective work in management, and I also think I possess managerial qualities. That’s why I would like to be a manager.” (K1)

“Yes. Because I see that potential in myself. Also, I don’t like working in difficult jobs.” (K7)

Specifically, their being health management students created a desire to evaluate the education they received as an additional motivational factor. Participants believe that, as a natural consequence of their four-year undergraduate education, they should be employed in managerial positions in healthcare institutions.

“I would love to be a manager. Since I have received training in this field and I advocate for it, I consider myself fully trained in management.” (K2)

“I would love to be a manager. However, I would prefer to work in different fields for a few years beforehand to learn the content and become proficient. I would prefer to become a manager when I have sufficient knowledge and skills.” (K19)

In conclusion, the appeal of management is too multifaceted to be reduced to a single factor. Besides tangible and material rewards, abstract and psychological factors such as status, career advancement, personal satisfaction, and self-actualization profoundly influence participants' motivation. When these motivational elements come together, management emerges as a desirable career pinnacle for participants.

The Challenges of Management

Despite the attractive aspects of management, the most frequently cited challenge by participants was the high level of responsibility involved. A manager is ultimately held accountable for all activities and outcomes of a unit or organization. The idea that even mistakes made by subordinates can be attributed to the manager highlights the immense burden of responsibility this role carries.

“Understand the importance of management; since all responsibility rests with the manager, they must not make mistakes.” (K2)

“All the burdens are on the manager. They have to run around doing everything, and in case of any accident, all the responsibility falls on the manager.” (K7)

“The manager is held responsible for the mistakes made by the employee. They may not be able to cope with difficulties, and their workload may increase.” (K19)

This high sense of responsibility brings with it intense stress and pressure. Participants stated that the manager is constantly under pressure to perform and make decisions. This situation was described as a mentally exhausting process that requires the manager to be constantly alert. The necessity of making critical and difficult decisions further increases this stress.

“Additional responsibilities and stress, the need to make difficult decisions are the challenges of being a manager” (K16)

“Decision-making pressure, performance pressure, communication difficulties, workforce management.” (K17)

“The decision-making process is difficult for managers. Also, managers have a lot of responsibility because they are responsible for the whole business, not just one unit.” (K20)

Another significant challenge in management is managing people. Uniting and managing employees with diverse personalities, expectations, and motivation levels towards a common goal is seen as a very demanding task by those involved. Maintaining employee motivation, resolving disagreements, and satisfying everyone are among the most challenging aspects for managers.

“Choosing the right people keeps employees motivated.” (K1)

“The biggest challenge is a group that doesn’t agree with the manager. Because when the manager tells the group what needs to be done, dissenting individuals prevent it. The motivation of both the manager and the group decreases, and the actions to be taken are disrupted.” (K11)

Finally, the demanding workload and pace of management have also been cited as a significant challenge. Managers are perceived as having to deal with numerous tasks simultaneously within the organization, keep up with every responsibility, and remain constantly busy.

“Having more responsibility requires more effort. It makes it difficult to make decisions.” (K6)

“No. Because I would have to follow up on every task, I would have more responsibility, and I would have to go into more detail. That’s why I don’t want to be a manager after graduation; I need to work harder.” (K8)

When the perceived advantages and challenges of management are considered together, it is seen that participants have a ambivalent perspective on this role. While management offers significant opportunities such as status, career, and personal satisfaction, it also presents serious challenges such as high responsibility, stress, and heavy workload.

Career Choices and Orientations

The theme “Career Preferences and Orientations” examines students’ post-graduation goals and orientations through two main categories, as shown in the model presented in Figure 4. An overwhelming majority of participants, with 17 citations, fell into the category of ‘wanting to be a manager,’ demonstrating a strong desire for this profession. When asked about the departments they wished to work in, the most prominent preference was ‘Human Resources,’ with 10 citations.

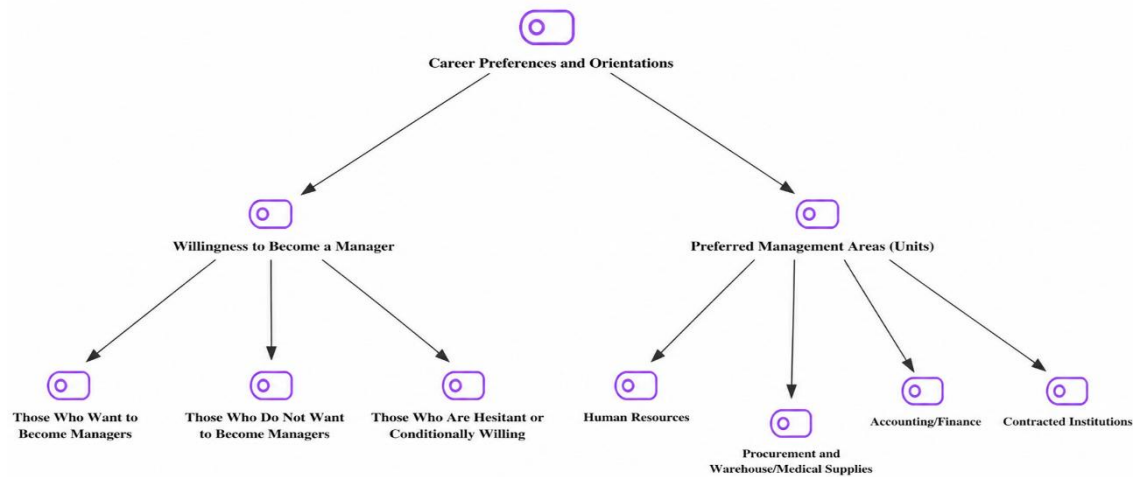


Figure 4. Hierarchical Code Map Related to the Theme of Career Preferences and Orientations
Willingness to Become a Manager

A large majority of the students participating in the study explicitly stated that they were open to management careers as part of their post-graduation career goals. This willingness generally stems from intrinsic motivations such as belief in personal potential, seeing it as a necessity of their education, and a desire to lead. Participants view a management position as both a professional pinnacle and an opportunity to crown their personal development.

“Yes, I would like to. Because I possess managerial qualities and I believe I deserve it.” (K6)

“I would like to be one because I am a challenge-loving person and I enjoy bringing people together.” (K18)

“I would like to. Because being a manager requires making decisions and implementing those decisions. So, as a manager, I would like to make decisions that will benefit the business. Also, being a manager is a high status in my opinion, so everyone wants to be a manager.” (K20)

However, some participants are hesitant about the idea of becoming a manager. Individuals in this group stated that they would not choose this career path, citing the heavy responsibility, intense stress, and increased workload that come with management. For them, the potential advantages of management are not attractive enough to outweigh the challenges it entails.

“No. Because I would have to follow up on every task, I would have a lot of responsibility, and I would have to go into more detail. That's why I don't want to be a manager after graduation; I need to work harder.” (K8)

“No, in my opinion, it's a very difficult and stressful job.” (K16)

Among the participants, there is also a group that exhibits an undecided or conditional attitude towards becoming a manager. These students find the advantages of management attractive but are also wary of the challenges. Some believe that gaining sufficient experience in

the field and learning the intricacies of the job is necessary before becoming a manager, and therefore do not see management as an immediate post-graduation goal.

“On the one hand, I want to be a manager after graduation, but on the other hand, I don't want to at all. If you ask why I want to be a manager, well, a manager carries huge responsibilities on their shoulders. When I don't follow up on a record or solve a problem, I feel bad, and because problems arise, everyone holds the manager responsible. And because I know myself, sometimes I can't control myself when someone says something negative to me, so I don't want to be a manager. I don't want to deal with other people's responsibilities. The only thing I want is to be able to do what I want, to come and go whenever I want. That's the kind of thing I'd want to be a manager for.” (K9)

The participants' differing inclinations towards becoming managers reflect their personal assessments of the benefits and costs of this role. Those who want to become managers focus on the gains such as status, success, and personal development that the role brings, while those who do not want to or are hesitant place more importance on the costs such as responsibility, stress, and workload.

Preferred Management Areas (Units)

When examining the departments where participants aspiring to become managers wish to work, the human resources department stands out significantly. The primary motivation behind this preference is a love for communicating with people, contributing to their development, and actively participating in processes like recruitment to bring the right people to the organization. Participants identified this department as an area where they can best utilize their social and communication skills.

“I would like to work in Human Resources departments. I would like to evaluate people's success and help with recruitment.” (K2)

“I want to work in the human resources department. Because protecting people's rights and supporting people makes me happy.” (K14)

“I would like to be a manager in human resources. Because I want to benefit and help people.” (K21)

Accounting and finance departments stand out as the most popular fields after human resources. Participants who chose these departments generally explained their motivation as enjoying working with numbers and calculations, or having confidence in their mathematical abilities.

“I would like to be a manager in the accounting department of the hospital. Because I love accounting.” (K5)

“I would like to work in the accounting department. The reason is that I really enjoy bookkeeping and I prefer spending time with numbers.” (K9)

Units involving logistics and supply processes such as purchasing, warehousing, and medical supplies are also preferred by a specific group of participants. The reasons for this preference vary; some state that they like the content and nature of the work, while others perceive jobs in these units as more relaxed and less stressful.

“I would like to work in medical supplies. In the warehouse department, I would like to identify missing or different items arriving at the hospital and enter them into the system, count the materials while placing them in the warehouse, forward the material list for each unit to the responsible person, and send it to the billing unit for approval. I would also like to be a manager in this unit.” (K8)

“Purchasing unit. Because I like shopping.” (K16)

Furthermore, a desire to work in a more specific area, such as within partner organizations, was also expressed. When the participants' unit preferences are evaluated generally, it is understood that these choices are directly related to their personal interests, perceptions of their abilities, and character traits. People-oriented individuals tend to gravitate towards human resources, those with analytical thinking skills towards accounting, and those who are task and process-oriented towards units such as purchasing, thus targeting areas where they can effectively utilize their competencies.

“I would like to be in the 'Contracted Institutions' unit. I feel closer to that department.” (K4)

Thoughts on the Employment of Healthcare Managers

The final theme, “Thoughts on the Employment of Healthcare Managers,” as shown in Figure 5, includes various arguments grouped under a single main category: “Necessity and Justification for Employment.” The strongest and most frequently repeated justification from participants was that their education was sufficient and most suitable for the position; indeed, the code “Scope and Adequacy of Education Received” had the highest frequency with 11 citations. This is followed by the idea of “Giving the Job to the Right Person,” emphasizing that the managerial role should be given to qualified individuals, with 7 citations.

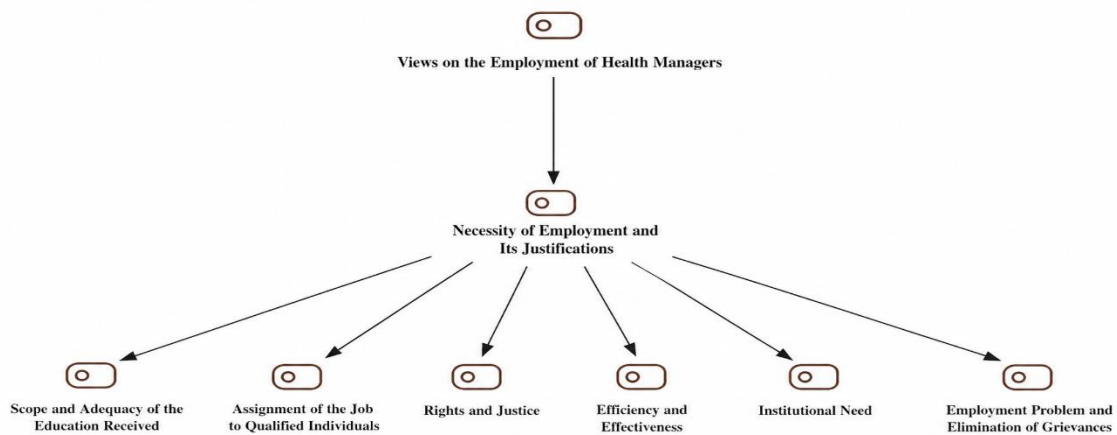


Figure 5. Hierarchical Code Map Regarding the Theme of Thoughts on Employment of Healthcare Managers.

The Necessity and Justification of Employment

Nearly all participants showed strong agreement that graduates from their department should be appointed to managerial positions in healthcare institutions. This idea is based on the principle that "the job should be given to the expert." Participants argued that management is a

specialized field and that having this task performed by individuals without training in the field harms the institution and creates an unfair situation.

“When I graduate, I would primarily like to become a manager in the private sector. After that, I would like to become a manager in the public sector. Because in some places, managers are graduates from fields that have no connection or relevance to management. I believe that the job should be left to the expert. (K5)

I believe that the job should be left to the expert. Everyone should do what they know best. For example, people who have no connection to accounting or coding are working in accounting. This is generally due to managers who appoint their own people. But this is very wrong. It infringes on the rights of those who have studied, and those who need to work within the institution cannot get their work done because of those who don't know the job.” (K11)

The source of this claim of expertise is cited as the scope and adequacy of the education they received. Participants stated that during their four-year undergraduate programs, they took comprehensive courses in both health sciences and management, thus becoming well-equipped professionals with a strong understanding of the unique dynamics of the healthcare system. This dual education is considered to differentiate them from graduates of other departments and make them the most suitable candidates for the position.

“Yes. I want healthcare managers to be brought in. Because healthcare managers are more knowledgeable and receive more extensive training in this field.” (K6)

“I think we should be brought in. Because we receive 4 years of training in that field, we can do better work at that level with the knowledge we have.” (K18)

“Absolutely yes. Healthcare managers should work in administrative units because we, as healthcare managers, receive four years of training in both healthcare and management, and we take courses on administrative units. Therefore, healthcare management graduates should work in administrative units, so that things are done correctly and the right people work in the right jobs.” (K20)

It is believed that employing graduates in health management will have a direct positive impact on organizational efficiency and effectiveness. It is stated that managers trained in this field can manage the health system more effectively, both administratively and in terms of service delivery, thus leading to better performance for organizations.

“Yes, I think so because people who have received training in this field can manage the health system more efficiently, both administratively and in terms of services.” (K3)

“Yes, the necessary unemployment will be eliminated. As a health administrator, I think we should work in institutions and organizations. I believe that if we are at the forefront, we will bring institutions and organizations to better places, so they should hire us.” (K12)

In addition to arguments of efficiency and merit, participants also view the issue as a matter of rights and justice. After years of education in this field, they believe that being appointed to relevant positions upon graduation is their most natural right. Appointments from other departments are interpreted as a violation of their rights and an injustice.

“Yes, I think so. Because we study and graduate, I think we should become managers in return” (K16)

“I think that graduates of Health Management should work in all administrative sciences in health institutions. Graduates from different departments may not be competent enough to perform their duties correctly, they have a high margin of error, and it is not a fair situation” (K19)

This pursuit of rights is also intertwined with concerns about employment issues and post-graduation hardship. Participants stated that the insufficient number of positions opened for their departments has led to an unemployment problem and created hardship. Therefore, allocating these positions to graduates of their own departments is seen as a necessary step to address this hardship.

“Yes, it should be brought in. Because the hospital needs to be managed by someone other than the director. Another reason is that all the people studying Health Management should not be disadvantaged because this department has been opened.” (K14)

Ultimately, the participants' arguments point to an institutional need. It was emphasized that, like other professional institutions, hospitals and healthcare organizations also need professional managers. The idea that order and efficiency cannot exist without managers highlights the employment of healthcare management graduates as a fundamental requirement for institutional functioning.

“It absolutely must be implemented. Because, just as every institution and organization has a manager, it is essential for hospitals to also have a manager.” (K7)

“Of course, I think that if every place has a manager, then healthcare institutions should also have managers. Because, where there is no manager, everyone does things as they please.” (K15)

An Evaluation of the Overall Findings of the Research

When the research findings are considered as a whole, it is seen that the health management students participating in the study have a comprehensive, multi-dimensional, and sometimes ambivalent perspective on the management profession. This is clearly observed in the word cloud summarizing the general findings of the research. In the word cloud presented in Figure 6, the fact that the word "manager" occupies the most central and largest position shows that all perceptions and thoughts are shaped around this figure. The fact that concepts such as "management," "work," "people," "decision," and "responsibility" accompany the concept of manager reveals the basic components of the manager profile in the minds of the participants.



Figure 6. Word Cloud

reached when the data began to become similar. The results obtained in this study are as follows:

According to the research findings, health management students participating in the study most often described the concept of a manager as "one who directs/leaders," and management as a whole of "goal-oriented activities."

In this research, participants' ideal manager profile, in a professional sense, was most often described as a manager with strong "communication and persuasion" skills. In terms of personal characteristics, it encompassed a wide range of virtues, including being constructive, proactive, intelligent, punctual, patient, sincere and consistent, exhibiting exemplary behavior, being determined and smart, being open to criticism, etc., and possessing "other positive qualities." The study also determined that participants most frequently cited "having a high level of responsibility" as the greatest challenge of the management profession. Furthermore, it was determined that the most attractive aspects of management were, in order of frequency, 'career and development opportunities' (providing a stepping stone for professional advancement and enabling management to realize their personal visions) and 'status, prestige, and success'.

According to the results of the research, it was found that a very large proportion of the health management students participating in the research wanted to "become managers" when they graduated. A very large proportion of the participants stated that they mostly wanted to work in the human resources department in terms of career field in the health management field when they graduated. This situation reveals that management holds a central place in the career goals of the health management students participating in the research, and this goal is particularly concentrated in a human-centered field.

When examining the opinions of the students participating in the research regarding the employment of healthcare managers, it was concluded that the education they received was sufficient and most appropriate for them to become managers in the healthcare field. Furthermore, the students emphasized the importance of giving managerial positions to those who are qualified, highlighting the need to prioritize the principle of "giving the job to the expert." The study by Baynal Doğan, Demirtaş, and Doğan (2020), which examined hybrid management in healthcare management using qualitative research methods, found that hybrid healthcare managers (those who work in fields different from their areas of study) have knowledge gaps, particularly regarding financial matters, healthcare legislation, and the functioning of official processes in healthcare institutions. This finding supports the results obtained from this research. Additionally, the undergraduate healthcare management students participating in the research stated that the inadequacy of positions opened for their own departments leads to an unemployment problem and creates a grievance. They emphasized that allocating these positions to graduates of their own departments is an important step towards resolving this grievance. These findings indicate that participants developed a dual perspective on management. On one hand, they described the qualities of an ideal manager: fair, with strong communication skills, knowledgeable, and empathetic. This represents the idealized, desirable aspect of the profession. On the other hand, when discussing the challenges of management, they highlighted realistic and deterrent factors such as high responsibility, stress, pressure, and heavy workload. This dual perspective directly shaped the participants' career choices. The overwhelming majority of participants, despite all the challenges, wanted to become managers, suggesting that motivational factors such as the status, career opportunities, and personal

satisfaction offered by the profession outweighed the perceived difficulties. The minority who did not want to become managers or remained hesitant placed more emphasis on the challenges side of this equation.

The participants' thoughts on their own employment are also consistent with this general framework. The centrality of the concept of "education" in the network analysis forms the basis of this theme. Students believe that the comprehensive and well-equipped health management education they receive should entitle them to manage in this field. The study by Baynal Doğan, Demirtaş, and Doğan (2020), which examined hybrid management in depth from the perspective of health management using a qualitative research method, also supports this. Therefore, they justified their employment demands not on the basis of personal desire, but on the basis of merit, justice, and institutional efficiency. When all themes and analyses are considered together, it can be said that the research reveals that future health manager candidates have a highly conscious awareness of the profession. Participants are aware of the bright and attractive aspects of management, as well as the heavy responsibilities and challenges that this role requires. Based on the results of this study, the following can be suggested:

Suggestions developed for career counseling:

- For students who want to start working as managers in healthcare institutions, it could be suggested to organize a panel of graduates who have made a "choice knowing the difficulties." These graduates can help students form realistic expectations with sincere statements such as "yes, it's very difficult, I wish I had known sooner" or "despite the difficulty, it was worth it."
- Realistic career planning: It should be clearly explained that one cannot become a manager immediately after graduation, that it is a process.
- "Intermediate" career paths should be suggested: Students who want to become top managers immediately should first be offered roles that are "limited in responsibility but prepare them for management" (such as quality coordinator, unit manager).
- Individual competency analyses: Students' leadership, stress tolerance, and communication skills should be measured to provide personalized career guidance.

Suggestions regarding policy and legislation:

- Newly appointed healthcare managers should be encouraged to work under an experienced mentor in their first year. Students aspiring to be healthcare managers should be informed about this.

Suggestions for educational policies:

- "Realistic Management Simulations" should be made mandatory: Students should experience management not only in terms of strategy and authority, but also in challenging scenarios involving personnel conflict, budget constraints, ethical dilemmas, and union pressure, from an early age.
- A "Decision Making and Paying the Price" workshop can be organized before graduation: Students should answer the question: "Do I want to be a manager knowing these challenges, or would I be better off in another role?"

- Ethics and emotional resilience courses should emphasize that management requires not only authority but also intense responsibility and stress management.

• Gradual leadership and conflict resolution training: Starting from the first year, students should acquire progressively increasing leadership, communication, conflict resolution, and decision-making skills.

Recommendations for healthcare institutions and sectoral stakeholders:

• Students should be shown the challenges of management and strategies for coping with challenges, as well as conflict and crisis resolution methods, during their professional internships and practical courses: Interns should observe not only the manager's demeanor in meetings but also during crises, staff complaints, and administrative pressure.

Recommendations for hospital human resources strategies:

• Manager training programs: Structured manager candidate programs should be created for new graduates.

• Psychosocial support mechanisms: Stress management and burnout prevention programs should be implemented to reduce the perception of the challenges of management.

This study contributes to the literature by evaluating health management students' perceptions of management and manager concepts, defining the characteristics that health managers should possess, revealing the advantages and challenges of management from the perspective of students aspiring to become managers, and addressing a relatively understudied and shallow field of health management with a qualitative approach. Furthermore, by deeply revealing the mental map of health management students at the university, this study contributes to the literature by providing applicable insights across a wide range of areas, from educational policies and career counseling to strategies concerning health institutions and sectoral stakeholders, hospital human resources strategies, and recommendations regarding policies and legislation.

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