



# Ethics of supervision: responsibilities of supervisors & supervisees

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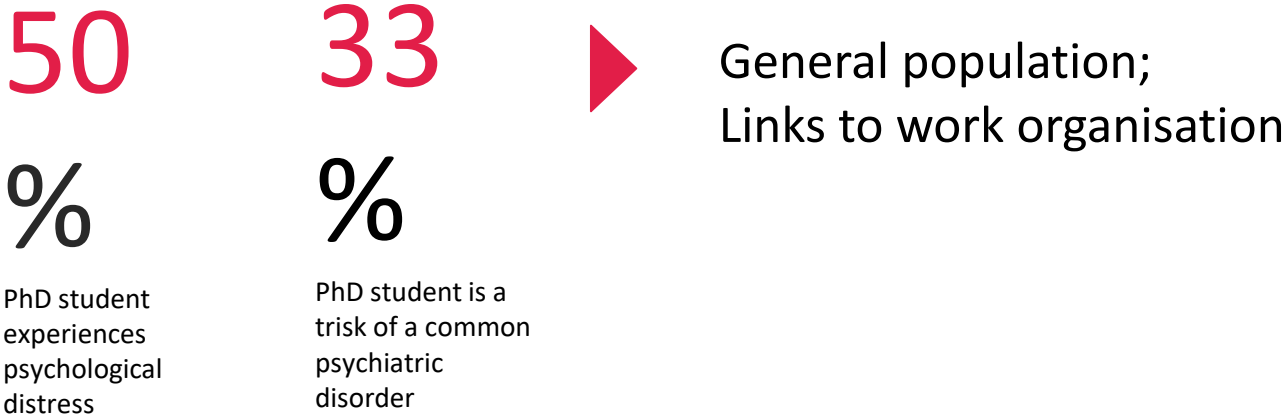
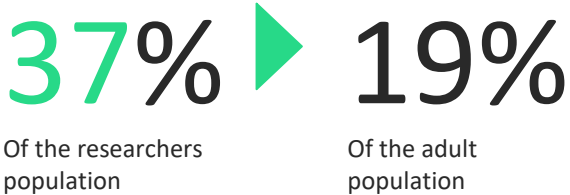


- Question structural elements that can enhance the doctoral journey for more ethical supervision
- Identify elements on which each of us can have an impact already today
- Identify areas where we need further work



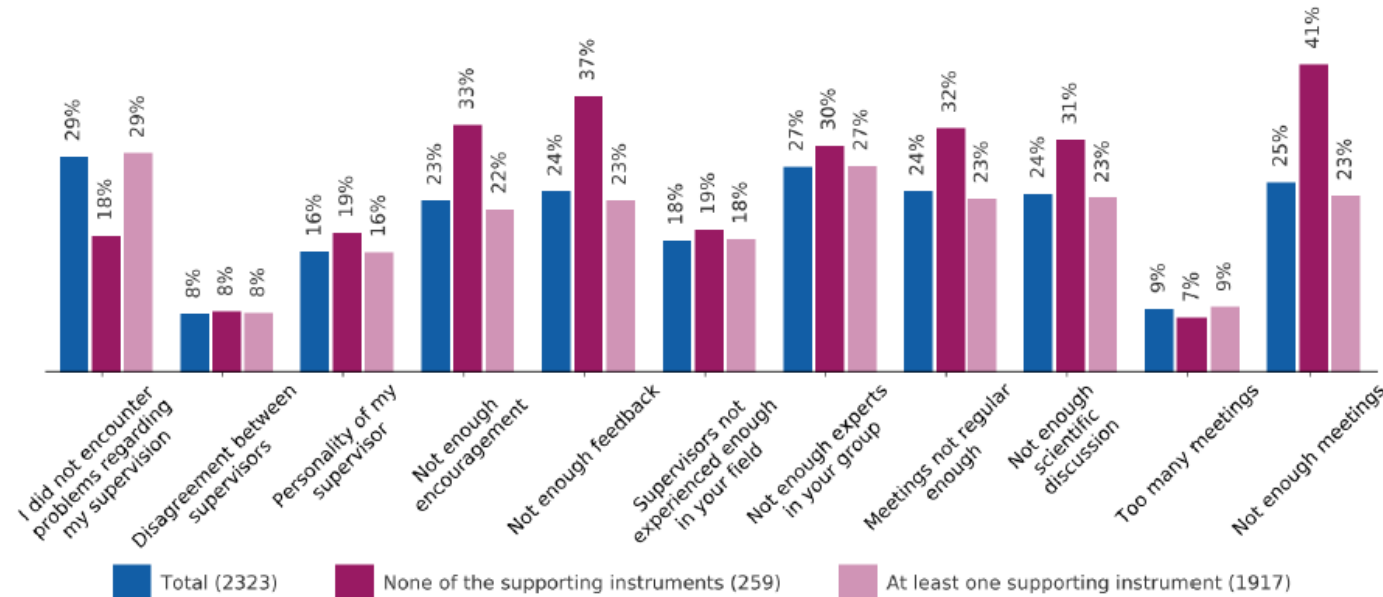
# Academia leads to poorer levels of mental health, and supervision practices are partially to blame for this

## Common mental health disorders



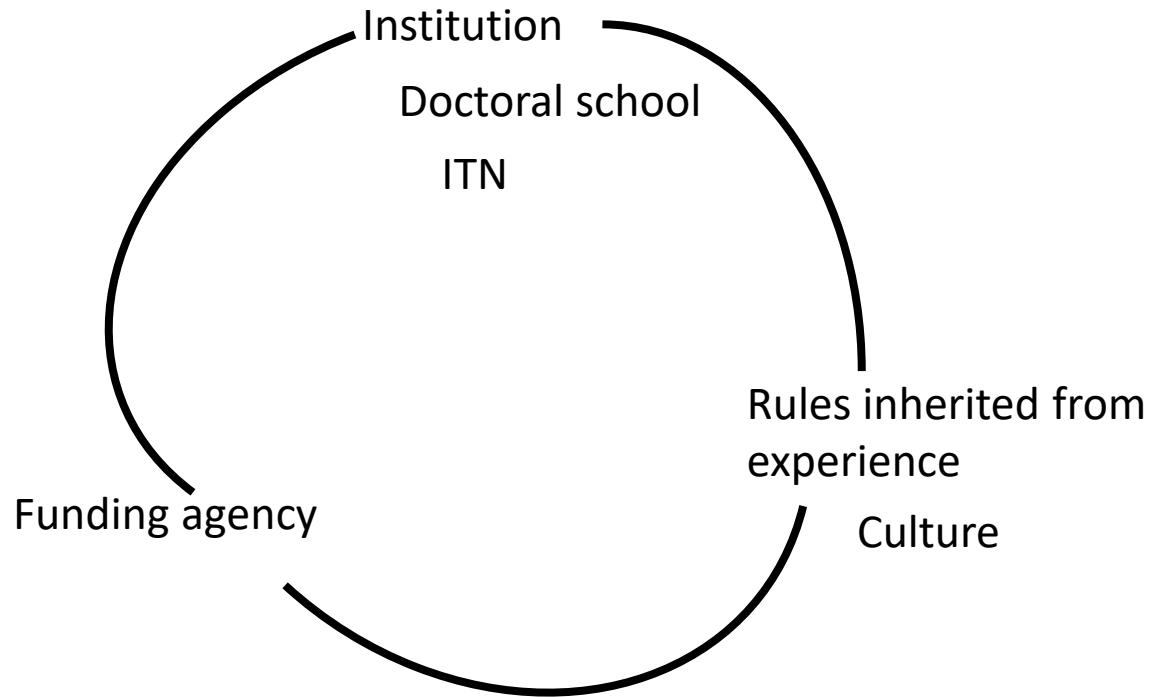
A survey by PhDNet/Max Plank institute shows that there are multiple variables correlated to this, including

- The type of contract you have
- The frequency of meeting your supervisor
- Having a PhD committee and PhD guidelines
- The frequency of weekend work
- The amount of working hours
- Profiles: some disciplines, gender, coming from Europe or not when doing a PhD in Europe
- Work environment: the frequency of bullying and being treated professionally



***“Did you ever encounter problems regarding your supervision?”*** Answers are filtered for having at least one and not having one of the above scientific support instruments.

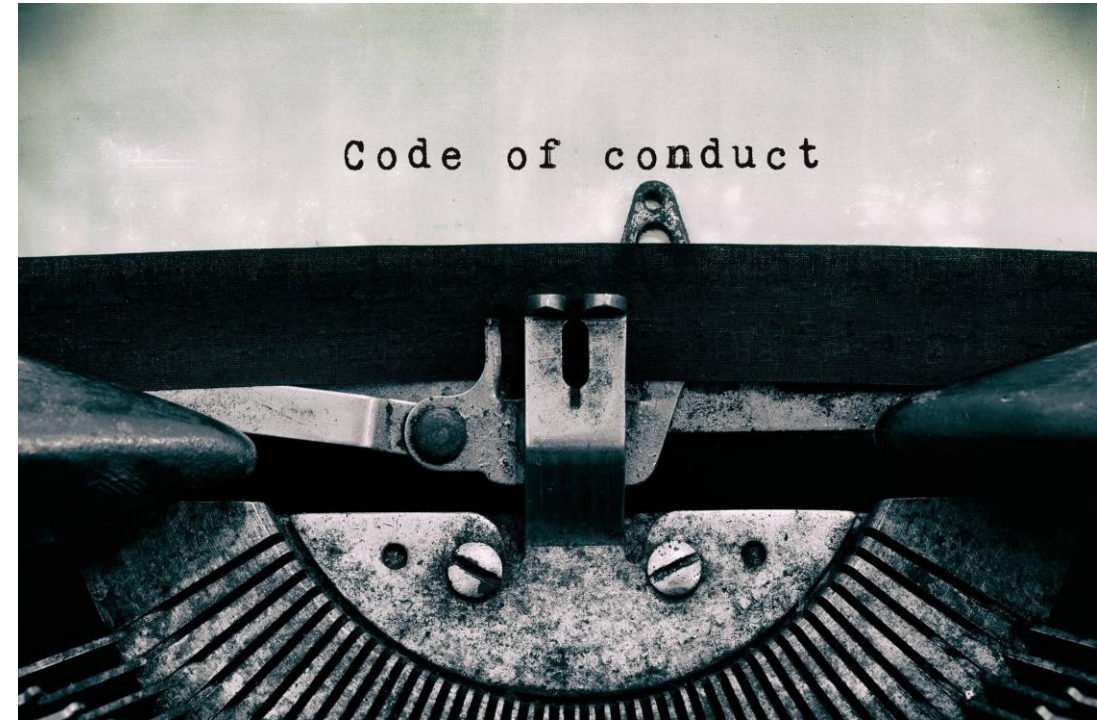
There are a multiplication of guidelines and rules which lead to some poor working conditions and supervision



- Ethics disappear in a flow of rules or seen as difficult to interpret
- Difficulty to establish good faith
- The multiplication of rules increases stress and poor supervision practices: the ethical discussion becomes a power-related discussion
- No opportunity to reflect on virtues, deontology, or consequences responsibly

# Ethical codes of conduct have their own limitations

- General principles agreed upon but where interpretation may vary
- Lack of context to guide readers
- Difficulties to make trade-offs and enact values
- Culture and interpretation



# Key ethical principles that apply to supervision

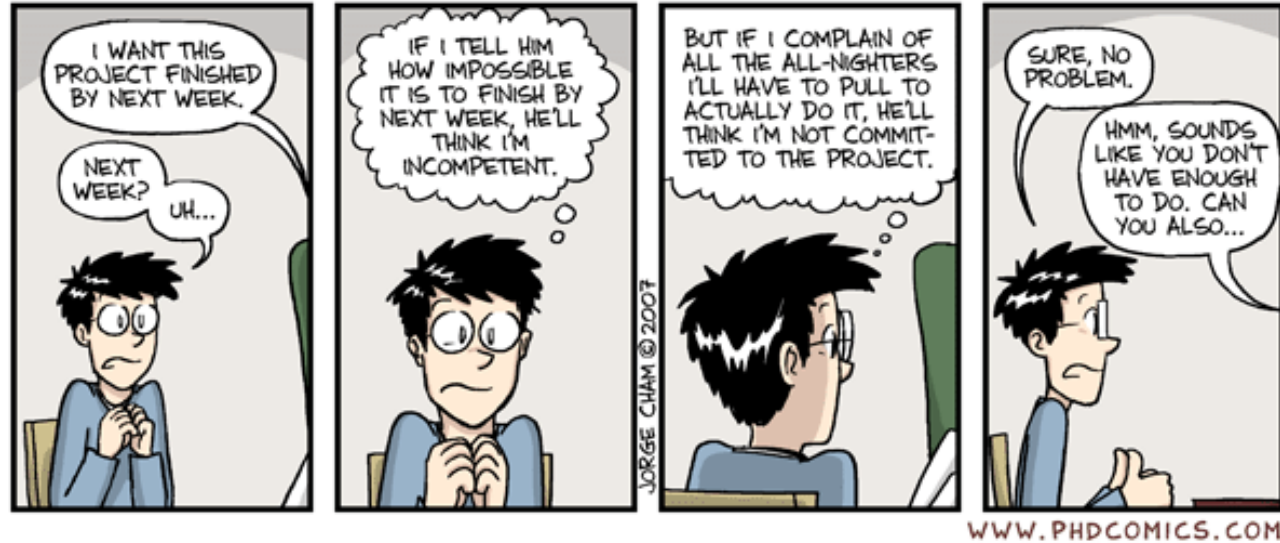
- Humanity: the doctoral researcher should be seen as an end, not a means
- Beneficence: identify what is for the good in supervision, taking in mind stakeholders
- Autonomy: supervisees have the right to freedom of action and choice, however there are stages to learn to deal with this autonomy.
- Non maleficence: preventing harm
- Honesty and transparency: for each part to think about what they can promise and do



*“We have an agreement in principle.  
The question is, do we all have the same principles?”*

## These principles also apply to the supervisee

- Humanity: the supervisor is to be treated as a person, not a means (respect, understanding)
- Beneficence: identify what is for the good in the doctoral project, taking in mind stakeholders (supervisors!).
- Autonomy: understand where autonomy is possible desirable, and where it is 'negotiated' differently; where is the autonomy of the supervisor
- Non maleficence: preventing harm
- Honesty and transparency: what can be promised and done



When it does not work....



# An ethical approach to supervision by establishing the responsibilities of all parts

Responsibility to lay out rules and norms

Responsibility to ask and abide by the rules and norms



Responsibility of hiring/moving internationally

Responsibility to set up oneself for success

Responsibility to get the project work done!

Responsibility to get the needed guidance

Responsibility to respect the individual work and thoughts of others

Responsibility to take ownership of the doctoral work

Responsibility to get/offer career mentorship



Preparation / Arrival stage:  
underestimated and prepared.  
A guide?

Supervision practices: set up  
expectations on when guidance is  
needed/how

Supervision practices: discuss  
ownership and autonomy: training?

Institutional/funding norms: assign  
a mentor and a supervisor?

**SET UP FOR SUCCESS**

**UNDERSTAND THE WORK**

**MAKE IT YOUR OWN**

**GROW FURTHER**

## We need to survey, test, and share results on best practices

- Offer 'getting set up guides': lift a bit of the burden from the doctoral fellows and their supervisors
- Train fellows to understand the existing guidelines: they have a role in shaping the journey but need to be taught it before things go sour
- Mentorship and supervision: towards a multi-layered supervision approach?
- Length of funding and actual PhD time, a pain point to keep up with ethical approaches

