TRANSFORMING STUDENTS’ PRACTICE THROUGH SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS

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• The PACFA definition of supervision does not differentiate between supervision provided during training and the supervision of qualified practitioners (PACFA Training Standards, 2014)

• Clinical supervision is defined as “a contractual, collaborative process which monitors, develops and supports supervisees in their clinical role … In clinical supervision, the central focus is on both the optimum treatment outcomes for the client and the professional development and self-care of the supervisee”
CHALLENGES OF TRAINING SUPERVISION

• Training supervision has an important gatekeeping function for the profession.
• However, supervisors’ evaluative role in training contexts is challenging for the development of a strong alliance with supervisees.
• There are no coherent approaches to training supervision. We don’t know what quality training supervision looks like and how it differs from post-qualifying supervision.
RESEARCH BASE OF THIS PRESENTATION

• This presentation draws on an annotated bibliography and literature review of training supervision I undertook for the School of Counselling, Australian College of Applied Psychology in 2015
  • A search was undertaken of EBSCOhost and Google Scholar using the terms counselling; counseling; psychotherapy; therapy, supervision; supervised; student; trainee; education; and training
  • 18 peer-reviewed articles were sourced, published between 2007 and 2015, predominantly in the US

• I also draw on:
  • Research I undertook with a colleague, Dee Mahon, in 2015 on community organisations’ views of the outcomes of student placements (N = 69)
  • The Australian Counselling and Psychotherapy Workforce study conducted in 2015-2016 – the student sub-sample (n = 444)
Education providers are accountable for the quality of students’ service delivery (Lauka & McCarthy, 2013).

Service standards for clinical practice and supervision are needed. Such standards need to cover:

- Practice and supervision components of the training program
- The relationship of training programs to placement organisations
- Roles of director of training, teachers and supervisors
- Facilities for seeing clients (e.g. auditory and physical privacy)
- The scope of services provided by students
- Record-keeping
- Evaluation mechanisms (Lauka & McCarthy, 2013)

Students in private practice need additional mentoring on small business practices provided by a mentor other than the clinical supervisor.
IDENTIFIED LACK OF STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND REQUIRED INTERPERSONAL QUALITIES FOR STUDENTS IN TRAINING PROGRAMS

- Standards will assist training providers to identify problematic students and supervisees, and justify interventions, as gatekeepers can refer to the standards as the basis for decisions (Brown, Murdock & Abels, 2014)

- It is more empowering for students to be informed of expected standards before commencing training (Homrich, DeLorenzi, Bloom & Godbee, 2014)
ETHICAL CONCERNS

• Ethical concerns identified by the field are the clinical competence and professional behaviour of trainees, maintaining confidentiality, and responding to risks to the safety of clients and others

• Dual roles and functions, and boundary violations, are other aspects of ethical challenges in training environments (Brown et al., 2014)
USE OF INFORMAL SUPPORT TO DEAL WITH STRESSES OF TRAINING AND PRACTICE

• A study by Farber and Hazanov (2014) (n = 164) found that students most commonly used student peers, colleagues, and academics who are not supervisors, for informal support.

• The content shared included: treatment dilemmas, clients’ presenting problems and gender, and feelings about clients. Identifying information was least often shared.

• Students were likely to use informal support when they felt stuck or challenged, felt they had made a clinical mistake, or didn’t feel sufficiently understood by their supervisors and peers.

• Although the usefulness of informal supervision was rated highly, formal supervisors were rated as more useful overall (Farber & Hazanov, 2014).
STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON CHALLENGES OF TRAINING

• I think I am about to face the biggest challenge as a 2nd year counselling student when I would be starting my placements. I have to keep that in my mind that they are not case studies but real people talking to me about their issue

• To meet a person on his/her level and not be judgemental but seeing the world through their eyes

• Dealing with my own issues from the past and how it affects me at present (PACFA Workforce Study, 2015)
Q43 What is the biggest challenge you face as a counselling or psychotherapy student?

Answered: 444  Skipped: 652
PERSPECTIVES OF THE FIELD ON CHALLENGES OF HAVING STUDENTS ON PLACEMENT

• Managing student difficulties was the second most common cost raised by 41.8% (n = 28) of participating organisations. This included lack of work readiness and students who create “psychological stresses and conflicts”

• One respondent described the difficulties faced by the organisation:
  • Some students come and create issues at our workplace, and it is not worthwhile despite of all the other potential benefits students may bring ... We ended up spending lots of time and human resources in meetings and managing, recording and reporting, and conflict resolution. My staff are now reluctant to take on future students on placement

(Lewis & Mahon, 2015)
ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF GROUP SUPERVISION IN TRAINING CONTEXTS

• Smith et al. (2012) studied group supervision with 124 supervisors and 145 supervisees, and raised concerns about supervisors’ ethical conduct

• Thirty percent of supervisors said they shared group members’ disclosures with colleagues, sometimes talked about absent members in supervision groups, allowed discussion of identifiable client material, and did not always ask supervisees with dual relationships to excuse themselves from supervision

• Supervisors sometimes concurrently provided supervision to trainees in a group and individually

• Supervisors estimated that sexual relationships between supervisors and supervisees occurred 5% of the time

• Group supervision also poses ethical risks regarding self-disclosure. Student peers and supervisors need to agree to confidentiality at the commencement of group supervision. The potential for harm to supervisees as a result of self-disclosure in the evaluative training environment needs to be carefully considered and articulated (Smith et al., 2012)
(2) EFFECTIVE SUPERVISORY INTERVENTIONS

• A study of trainees (N = 201), which measured anxiety, self-efficacy and self-disclosure, found that the supervisory alliance was strongly linked to trainees' self-disclosure in supervision (Mehr et al., 2015)

• Supervisors who model self-disclosure and demonstrate empathy build strong supervisory alliances and foster increased self-disclosure

• Supervisors' willingness to discuss countertransference and supervisees' disclosure of countertransference are strongly linked (Hill et al., 2015; Mehr et al., 2015)
EFFECTIVE SUPERVISORY INTERVENTIONS

• Hill et al. (2015) found that supervision helped deepen theoretical orientation, skills and case conceptualisation.

• Helpful supervisory interventions:
  • Being challenged
  • Focusing on reactions to clients
  • Exploring clients’ dynamics
  • Developing case conceptualisation skills
  • Modelling by the supervisor
NEGATIVE SUPERVISORY INTERVENTIONS

• Negative supervisory relationships create conflict and confusion (Sangganjanavanich & Black, 2009)

• Negative aspects of supervision identified by supervisees varied:
  • Receiving negative feedback or micro-level criticism
  • Lack of relationship with the supervisor
  • Coldness and being intimidating (Hill et al., 2015)
(3) THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF TRAINING SUPERVISION

• Trainees' perspectives are rarely represented in the literature (Folkes-Skinner, Elliott & Wheeler, 2010)

• Reese at al. (2015) demonstrated that trainees who are more satisfied with supervision are more effective as therapists

• A longitudinal study by Hill et al. (2015) found that presenting challenging cases increased supervisees' bond with their supervisors

• Mehr et al. (2015) examined the necessary conditions for trainees to disclose in supervision using mixed methods with a relatively large sample (N = 201). The researchers found that the supervisory relationship is central to supervisees being willing to open up in supervision, and having less anxiety about disclosure

• A case study of a trainee commencing supervised practice demonstrated a journey from excitement, learning, and growing confidence, to disillusionment, feeling doubtful about the future as a therapist, and self-blame

• The trainee’s negative experience resulted from "stressful involvement" with a client, and taking work troubles home (Folkes-Skinner et al., 2010, p. 89)
INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND CULTURE ON SUPERVISION

• Few studies have examined gender and culture in training supervision, yet these aspects of identity strongly impact on the outcomes of supervision.

• A qualitative study by Bertsch, Bremer-Landeau, Inman, de Boer Kreifer, Price and DeCarlo (2014) (N = 81) examined gender-related events in supervision, and how supervisors attended to these.

• Gender discrimination and bias were related to negative perceptions of supervisors’ competence.

• Four main categories of gender-related events were identified:
  • gender discrimination
  • gender identity interactions
  • attraction in supervision or therapy
  • power dynamics
EFFECTIVE SUPERVISORY INTERVENTIONS FOR GENDER AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

• Focusing on therapeutic process and skills - strengthens supervisees’ self-awareness, skills, and increases exploration of feelings

• Focusing on supervisees’ feelings and countertransference - the supervisor’s reflective capacity and openness strengthens the supervisory alliance

• Building supervisees’ self-efficacy

• Developing multicultural awareness

• Focusing on the supervisory alliance

• Discussions of parallel process
SUPERVISING STUDENTS FROM DIVERSE CULTURES

- The supervision of students from diverse cultures is challenging for supervisors.
- Supervisors need to be aware of ethical principles on multicultural competencies; monitor their skills, values, attitudes and knowledge about their supervisees’ culture; and be aware of their own power and privilege.
- Supervisors need to be authentic and engage in meaningful conversations with supervisees about cultural difference.
- Explanations of idiom and slang help to acculturate international students.
- Comments about language proficiency and cultural stereotyping are to be avoided (Sangganjanavanich & Black, 2009).
(5) THE OUTCOMES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THERAPY PROVIDED BY SUPERVISEES IN TRAINING

• There is a crucial link between students' positive experience of supervision and their developing therapeutic effectiveness.

• A comparative one-year study also showed the benefits of using continuous client outcome data in supervision with trainees (n = 28) using the PCOMS measure with clients and the Supervision Working Alliance Inventory with trainees.

• In the feedback group, outcome data were examined by the supervisor and supervisee to focus on clients showing less progress or deteriorating. Clients progressing well were focused on later in the session to reinforce strengths.

• The feedback group demonstrated much better client outcomes (28% on PCOMS compared to 15% for the no feedback group) (Reese et al., 2009).
THE CHALLENGES OF PROVIDING SUPERVISION ONLINE

- Costs to students of internet access
- Training in using technology to ensure competence
- Secure access to the internet
- Back up plans should technology fail
- Consistency and communication of guidelines, responsibilities and expectations to supervisors and supervisees
- Efficient communication between the training provider, supervisors and supervisees

(Chapman et al., 2007; Vacarro & Lambie, 2007)
THE BENEFITS OF PROVIDING SUPERVISION ONLINE

Chapman at al. (2007) investigated synchronous and asynchronous supervision, and the effects on student supervisees’ confidence and competence. Measures of therapist competence and confidence were used pre, mid and post-supervision, as well as measuring supervisees’ attitudes towards technology. The study found that all supervisees increased in feeling competent and confident over the training (Chapman et al., 2007).

Benefits of online supervision include:

- Lower cost
- Convenience
- Effective use of time
- Access for students in remote and international locations
- A wider pool of supervisors
- Increased diversity of trainees

(Vacarro & Lambie, 2007; Watson, 2003, as cited in Chapman et al., 2011)
THE NEED FOR A DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF SUPERVISION IN TRAINING CONTEXTS

- The most popular and widely applied Transtheoretical model of supervision
- The model assumes that:
  - Supervisees mature over time with experience
  - Supervisees pass through a sequence of developmental stages (Levels 1 - 3) in eight practice domains, that represent qualitative shifts in their competence
  - Supervisees at each developmental stage face unique challenges
  - Stages of supervisee development may not be linear as their skills and competence vary across practice domains
  - New practitioners struggle with their professional identity and feelings of competence and therefore require more structure in the early stages of supervision
  - Supervisors therefore need to tailor their supervisory approach and interventions to each supervisee’s developmental stage

(Cohen & Lim, 2008; Hess, 2008; Stoltenberg, 2005)
EIGHT PRACTICE DOMAINS

- Assessment techniques
- Interpersonal assessment
- Case conceptualisation
- Treatment plans and goals
- Intervention skills
- Individual differences
- Theoretical orientation
- Professional ethics
RECOMMENDATIONS TO PACFA

• The need to train clinical supervisors in building and maintaining the supervisory working alliance
• The importance of using positive supervisory interventions with students
• The need to avoid interventions likely to be experienced negatively by students
• Considering how asynchronous forms of supervision can be used to support students between supervision
• Addressing the use of informal support in the Code of Ethics
REFERENCES


REFERENCES


National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). (2009). NHMRC additional levels of evidence and grades for recommendations for developers of guidelines.


