

Development of a supervision framework for the supervision of counselors in India

Vinod Victor¹, Dr. S.V. Surya Rekha²

¹PhD Research Scholar, Centre for Research and Evaluation, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India;
Assistant Professor, Montfort College, Bangalore, Karnataka, India
²Professor Retired, Montfort College, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

ABSTRACT

Background. Counselors are subject to unprecedented levels of accountability. Despite the long-standing practice of clinical supervision in behavioral health professions, research and training in this area, particularly in the Indian context, have been limited. Hence it uses the exploratory sequential design to create the framework for the supervision of counselors in the Indian context.

Methods. The participants were the first 5 supervisors through the purposive sampling method. The semi-structured interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed. The themes identified from the content analysis were compared with the existing literature for item generation for developing a questionnaire. The revised questionnaire with 66 items was sent for expert validation using the total population sampling method. The Cronback's alpha and Pearson correlation were used to check for reliability and validity.

Conclusion. The finalized four domain would be used to develop the supervision framework with the Supervisor keenly focused on the counselor's development.

Keywords: supervision, supervisor, supervisee, counseling, counselor, multiculturalism, competency, framework, knowledge, skills, attitude

INTRODUCTION

Counseling and Psychology are the two most popular words in the world today, thanks to the Pandemic and social media influencers. However, even with this trend, Supervision still has a long way to go before it can take center stage in the Indian context. The Western world requires supervisors to receive specialized training before certifying them as approved supervisors (Page, 2006). However, there is a wide variability in styles and quality. Pearson talks of mitigating this by educating the consumer, the supervisee (Pearson, 2004). While this might help a little, who is going to check if the Supervision provided is adequate or even worth it? However, this bottom-up method may not be helpful in a culture that gives more credence to the top-down method in terms of age or hierarchy over training.

On the other hand, new theories of counseling are springing up every other day. Counseling and psychology have advanced to the point where they are in a phase known as "A sixth force"—a more comprehensive, integrative, and integrated approach (Fleuridas, 2019). Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Physicians were increasingly approached by individuals seeking integrative and holistic approaches to health care and well-being. Patients seek guidance from primary and specialty care providers on the safe incorporation of these modalities into their lifestyles (Hill et al., 2015). This period also saw the rise of integrative medicine education with many American hospitals affiliated with mainstream universities driving this change. Alongside this, there was also the push towards integrative practice of counseling and psychology. With this much of drastic changes happening in healthcare, mental health was also coming into the mainstream all over the world, with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating it.

Healthcare providers need to be aware of the individual patient's beliefs, culture, and use of culturally based health practices because patients may adopt such practices for general wellness or as adjunct therapies without the benefit of discussion with their healthcare provider (Kesler et al., 2015). Hence, comprehensive cultural competency included knowledge and awareness of culturally based healing and wellness practices, bringing it under the purview of supervision competency. Though clinical supervision has long been practiced in the behavioral health professions, most research and training in this subspecialty has occurred during the last 30 years.

Research on clinical supervision is few, in contrast to the abundance of research-based literature available for counseling and psychotherapy. (Durham, 2019). Despite such scarcity, In their groundbreaking work on clinical supervision, Bernard and Goodyear (2018) state that all mental health practitioners need to become proficient in clinical supervision since almost everyone who chooses to work as a counselor will eventually supervise others(Bernard & Goodyear, 2018).

In the realm of behavioral healthcare today, programs, clinics, and counselors are subject to unprecedented levels of accountability. There is a constant lookout for new and creative ways to provide therapy and clinical supervision as a result of increased demands for cost containment (Durham, 2019). Supervisors are tasked to closely observe the counseling services that counselors perform to ensure that every treatment opportunity is maximized. The supervisor's function needs to grow, and many of them find themselves unprepared to handle the increasing demands assigned to them. Although the use of technology raises ethical concerns regarding security and confidentiality, it is essential to continue exploring ways to enhance the effectiveness of our services while adhering to ethical standards. (Durham, 2019).

The knowledge imparted during clinical supervision is rooted in the supervisor's expertise, developed through their accumulated experience, training, and prior supervision. However, its impact on the supervisee is also shaped by the supervisee's personal dynamics, including their relational or interpersonal skills, level of self-confidence, and degree of self-awareness. (Bernard& Goodyear, 2018).

Hence the need for supervision and supervision training has become more critical in the present times as well as the future. With greater accountability demands along with effective costs, it is not just supervision training, but quality and effective supervision training is the need of the hour.

NEED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

In India, stigma and discrimination against individuals with mental illnesses significantly hinder access to mental health services. Reducing this stigma, contextualizing evidence-based strategies and service providers not perpetuating stigma through professional development can be addressed by providing adequate supervision, led by trained supervisors with a simple but robust supervision framework. Despite the long-standing practice of clinical supervision in behavioral health professions, research and training in this area, particularly in the Indian context, have been limited. The fields of counseling and psychology are rapidly evolving, with new theoretical models emerging and integrating, such as Cognitive Analytic Therapy, which combines CBT and psycho-dynamic approaches. Another demand is the need for culturally appropriate approaches(Victor, 2024).

This trend of new emerging theories and integrative theories will only likely accelerate in the future. Therefore, a supervision framework is needed to bring cohesion among supervisors across different models. Such a framework would facilitate collaboration and ensure that the focus remains on supporting the supervisee's personal and professional growth, helping them to learn, develop, and thrive. Therefore, it is not just supervision training but quality and effective supervision training that is urgently needed. To regulate the profession and improve outcomes, developing a framework suited to the Indian context and training supervisors accordingly is essential.

Methodology Objective

- To develop a supervision framework for the supervision of counselors in the Indian context.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research places significant emphasis on situational and structural contexts, allowing subjects to provide detailed, nuanced answers that can offer valuable insights often missed by other methods (Strauss, 1987; Ewings, 2011). This approach is particularly useful when the research area has not been previously explored, serving as a crucial precursor to quantitative research. Conversely, quantitative research focuses on measurable data, enabling the development of accurate and reliable metrics for statistical analysis.

In the past, there was a tendency to favor one methodology over the other, with qualitative methods sometimes dismissed as "anecdotal" or "unreliable," and quantitative methods criticized as "detached" or "dehumanizing" (Andrzejewski et al., 2019). However, the research landscape is shifting towards a more integrated approach. While each methodology has its strengths and limitations, the mixed-method approach, which combines both, offers a more comprehensive set of advantages, allowing for a richer and more balanced understanding of research questions.

EXPLORATORY DESIGN

This study is an exploratory study. Exploratory research is often the first step in a sequence of studies, allowing researchers to formulate precise questions for future research as well as systematically gathering data to uncover

generalizations about social or psychological life (Given, 2008; Neuman, 2007). Such studies can have multiple objectives, including descriptive, correlational, and explanatory goals, and a well-designed exploratory study integrates all three aspects (Kumar, 2019).

The mixed methods approach leverages the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative techniques, recognizing that each is better suited to different research situations. To achieve the best outcomes, combining these methods or using multiple approaches is often necessary (Kumar, 2019). Given that this study employs a mixed-method approach, a sequential design is the most appropriate. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), mixed methods research can follow two sequential designs: exploratory and explanatory. This study focuses on the exploratory sequential design, where the qualitative phase precedes the quantitative phase, making it particularly useful for complex intervention development (Munce et al., 2021). Exploratory approaches, including the sequential design, are effective for intervention or program development (Nastasi et al., 2007; Panda et al., 2015). Since the current study involves developing a supervision framework for counselors in the Indian context, it adopts the exploratory sequential design.

Phase 1 – Qualitative

The qualitative part starts with semi-structured interviews. Supervisors were interviewed to understand the different themes of Supervision currently practiced in the Indian context, so the emerging themes can be studied further.

Participants

The participants were selected from Montfort Institution, Bangalore India (Montfort Society, 2018). Supervisors were selected through the purposive sampling method and the first 5 respondents were selected for the semi-structured interview.

Semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview format took place between the unstructured and highly structured interview formats using questions that are general and open-ended. The “script” included specific prompts to help guide the process (Begun, 2000). The interview used the interview guide as the script that had three functions –expectations from supervisees, assessment of supervisees, and remedial measures. The interviews were audio recorded. The audio of the semi-structured interview was transcribed.

Content Analysis

The transcribed verbatim and the tape were sent to two external experts for content analysis to identify the themes. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text). Researchers can then make inferences about the messages within the texts. The advantage of the content analysis method is that it directly examines communication using text. Twenty-five themes emerged with the analysis and were later combined into 16 themes.

Phase 2 – Quantitative

In the second phase, the themes identified from the content analysis of the semi-structured interviews were compared with the existing literature for item generation for developing a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed as a validation tool to validate the themes.

Item Writing

The identified 16 themes were compared with the existing literature for item generation for developing a questionnaire. The 16 themes led to the generation of a 77-item questionnaire. The items were discussed with experts with multiple edits and reduced to 66 items. The items were finalized into a 66-item questionnaire.

Content Validity

The revised questionnaire with 66 items was sent for expert validation using the total population sampling method. It was sent to 19 supervisors. The experts used a three-point Likert-type scale to validate the relevance of the items; where they had to mark each item as either ‘Essential’, ‘Useful but not essential’ or ‘Not necessary’. 10 supervisors sent back their validation. However, one sample was incomplete and hence invalid. $N=9$.

Lawshe’s method of CVR (content validity ratio) (Ayre & Scally, 2013) was used to rate an item “essential” calculated in the following way:

$$CVR = \frac{n_e - N/2}{N/2}$$

where CVR is the content validity ratio, n_e is the number of panel members indicating an item “essential,” and N is the number of panel members.

The CVR for Items - 1, 3, 7, 10, 21, 23, 26, 31, 32, 33, 34, 39, 50, 52, 61 was 0.78 and items - 17, 19, 38, 41, 46, 57, 62, 63, 65 was 1.0. Only 24 items that scored above 0.78 were classified as essential to be included in the

questionnaire. Hence, post-expert validation, the items on the questionnaire were reduced from 66 to 24. The categorized themes were reviewed with the finalized questionnaire and revised accordingly. The themes were reduced from 16 to 14. The 14 themes were categorized into four domains.

Pilot Study

A pilot test was conducted to check the reliability of the questionnaire. Using the snowball sampling method, an invite to score the scale online along with the Multicultural Supervision Competencies Questionnaire (MSCQ) by Paul Wong & Lilian Wong (Wong & Wong, 2004), was sent to various counseling groups on social media in the city of Bengaluru to score the two scales. A total of 35 supervisees completed the questionnaires. $N=35$.

Reliability & Validity

The data from the pilot study was statistically analyzed using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency or reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient determines whether a set of items consistently measures the same trait, with higher values indicating greater agreement between items (Frost, 2021). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was 0.943, aligning with the internal reliability standards of the MSCQ, which also reported high Alpha values in the .90s (Wong & Wong, 2000).

Additionally, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was employed to measure the linear correlation between the questionnaire and MSCQ. This coefficient ranges from -1 to 1 and indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables (Turney, 2022). A high Pearson correlation score of 0.883 was observed, which supports convergent validity and indicates strong construct validity (Boateng et al., 2018). Thus, the validity of the questionnaire is considered high.

The Supervision Framework

At the end of the phase, the finalized four domains were namely, knowledge, skills, tools, and attitude. This agrees with Kocyigit (2023), a non-Indian study that emphasizes knowledge, skills, and tools domains. Jeon & Myers (2022) also focuses on knowledge and skills. McCarthy, A. K., & McCarthy, R. (2023) focus on the attitudes concerning collaboration and supervisory relationships, while Flanagan et al. (2021) focus on the attitude domain with reflective supervision space.

Concerning studies done in the Indian context, Baldiwala et al (2022) and Mondal et al (2021) talk about knowledge, skills, and attitude. Gandhi and Rajan (2013) agree with knowledge, skills, and tools. Gopalakrishnan et al. (2021) agree with knowledge and skills. Perera et al (2021) - again focus on the attitude of the supervisor to safeguard supervisees' well-being and enhance skill development. The four domains that emerged will be the foundation to develop the supervision framework for the supervision of counselors in the Indian context.

Summary and Implication

In India's largely unregulated field of counseling and psychology, the need for training in Supervision is undoubtedly the need of the hour. The concept of supervision is slowly gaining ground. However, Supervision as gate keeping is still alien to the Indian context. In such an environment the need is for a more collaborative approach. "In counseling supervision, there is an unequal relationship – there is a counselor (with little power) and supervisor (with a lot of power)" (Reji & Kaushik, 2019). The framework can be developed to help the Supervisor regulate the power dynamics by being more 'student-oriented' for the counselor's development. As the lack of administrative authority outside of training programs limits the role-effectiveness of supervision, the developed model can also provide the supervisee with the requisite help to grow and be effective as a therapist when the Supervisor is keen on their development. As a result, it helps supervisors build aptitude quickly and help the emerging therapist ethically and effectively.

Future Scope

This paper is part of a larger study by the researcher and hence lists the first part of the research work.

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