



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH

International Journal of Current Research
Vol. 15, Issue, 11, pp.26539-26541, November, 2023
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24941/ijcr.46300.11.2023>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

COUNSELOR-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP AS A CORRELATE OF UTILIZATION OF COUNSELLOR SUPERVISION: THE CASE OF COUNSELLORS WORKING IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 20th August, 2023
Received in revised form
27th September, 2023
Accepted 15th October, 2023
Published online 28th November, 2023

Key words:

Counselling, Counsellor Supervision,
Counsellor-Supervisor Relationship .

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Citation: Sylvia Oliech and Thomas Njoroge Kinga. 2023. "Counselor-supervisor relationship as a correlate of utilization of counsellor supervision: the case of counsellors working in nairobi county, Kenya". *International Journal of Current Research*, 15, (11), 26539-26541.

ABSTRACT

Despite the critical role played by counsellor supervision in the counsellors' professional and personal growth of counsellors many studies report low utilization of supervision services. The low rate of utilizing supervision services is likely to affect the quality of counselling services especially in Kenya. Several studies have attempted to determine the cause of low utilization of counsellor supervision. This study sought to determine how counsellor-supervisor is related to utilization of counsellor supervision services. The study employed a correlational research design. The target population was 2561 counselling professionals registered with the Kenya Psychologist and Counsellors Association. Multistage sampling including stratified, proportionate and simple random sampling was used to obtain a sample of 139 counsellors and 55 counsellor supervisors who took part in the study. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to analyze the data. The findings indicated that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between counselor-supervisor relationship and utilization of counselor supervision. It recommended that professional bodies should offer counsellor supervision services as part of the professional development programs for counsellors. As well counsellor supervisors should be trained on the skills to nurture and maintain a professional relationship with their supervisees as a step towards enhancing the utilization of counsellor supervision services.

INTRODUCTION

According to Bradley (2021), supervision involves a counsellor seeking the help of a qualified expert to detect any psychological or behavioral challenges in the counsellor that might have resulted from difficulty in managing clients' problems. Alfonsson (2017) postulates that a supervisor assumes responsibility for difficult procedures and methods, enhances techniques, and educates clients about alternate theories and practices, as well as changes in the industry. Therefore, the process of supervision is not only supportive but also educational. The objective is to support supervisee in utilizing counselling theories and methods to address client issues. According to Ladany, Mori, and Mehr (2013) supervision is a regularly scheduled, formal arrangement for counselors to discuss their work with someone more experienced in counselling and supervision. They further state that the purpose of supervision is to collaborate and enhance the effectiveness of counsellor-client relationships, thereby upholding the proper standards of counselling and offering a consulting approach to expand the horizons of experienced practitioners. Bradley and Becker (2021) notes that there is burgeoning evidence about supervision practices that are associated with formative outcomes. Specifically, Bearman *et al.* (2017) found that providers who received active supervision strategies, including modeling, corrective feedback, and role-playing, demonstrated continued growth post-training in fidelity and global competence in delivering cognitive behavioral therapy.

There are two major goals that inform supervision. One is monitoring client care and ensuring clients are receiving the right and appropriate therapeutic counseling to enhance professional functioning. In this regard, Supervision involves technical support to counselors in terms of support and provides an opportunity for the discovery of innovative designs and strategies in addition to professional and personal progress. In an exploratory study conducted by Fleming and Steen (2013), it was indicated that there were mixed feelings about counselors being supervised. The study had questions on the overall practice of supervision, attitudes towards supervision, and the general & ethical importance of counsellor supervision. The study found that there was significant and considerable satisfaction with supervision for supervision requirements based on the visual bipolar analogue scale (VAS). The areas that were analyzed were the boundaries of the supervisor-counsellor, the competencies of the supervisees and supervisors, and the ethics and training of the supervisors. Another study by Page and Wosket (2013) indicated that there should be a "well-articulated model in which the supervisors know where they are going with the supervisee and what should be done to go there". The work of Page and Wosket (2013) about supervising the counsellor argues that a cyclical model is best suited to create the best environment for both the supervisee and the supervisor. The relationship between the two creates the type of working relationship that would determine their levels of satisfaction with each other.

McMahon (2014) argued that monitoring supervision should be conducted frequently to ascertain the feelings of the supervisee and make any changes if necessary. Some concerns were identified from the interviews conducted including the lack of evaluation skills and resources from the supervisors' sides, the lack of maintaining boundaries (especially of confidentiality) between the two parties and the effects of wariness due to the continued presence of the supervisors. McMahon (2014) wrote about formulating a balance in systemic supervision between mentoring and monitoring. In their 2013 publication, Wong, Wong, and Ishiyama talked about current advancements in clinical supervision, highlighting the significance of a constructive and friendly dynamic between supervisors and their subordinates for the smooth functioning of their duties in the workplace. Bond (2015) indicated that the supervision of counselors has two dynamics, positive and negative, where it can be useful in areas of giving support, joining efforts and empowering. Supervision can also lead to fear of exposure and the challenges like negative perception by the supervisor and ultimately the management (Adkison-Bradley, 2013; Milne & Watkins (2014).

The counselor-supervisor relationship plays a crucial role in the utilization of counselor supervision. The effectiveness of the supervision process largely depends on the quality of the relationship between the counselor and their supervisor. A strong, trusting relationship between the counselor and supervisor creates a safe environment for the supervisee to explore their challenges, doubts, and concerns about their counseling work. If the counselor feels comfortable discussing their experiences and seeking feedback, they are more likely to fully engage in the supervision process and utilize the guidance provided. Effective counselor supervision requires open and honest communication between the counselor and supervisor. If the relationship is characterized by open dialogue, active listening, and constructive feedback, the counselor will be more inclined to share their successes, struggles, and areas for growth. This, in turn, facilitates a more productive supervision process and better utilization of the supervision services. Counselors often face emotionally demanding situations while working with clients. A supportive supervisor can provide emotional support, validation, and understanding, which helps the counselor cope with the challenges of their work. Feeling supported and cared for by the supervisor encourages the counselor to seek supervision regularly and take full advantage of the support available. Stoltenberg and McNeill (2017) investigated supervisory relationships with a focus on power differentials in research review that incorporated responses from two hundred and seventy-eight supervisors and supervisees and found that deserting attendance to power dynamics in supervisory relationships jeopardizes supervision. Power relationships were described from two perspectives: supervision centered on a hierarchical metaphor of power in which the supervisor is an expert who disciplines an unknown student and on fraught discipleship, isolation, trauma, and conflict models established to model many supervisory relationships. The author called for nurturing supervisory relationships based on supervisee diversity and developmental needs aimed at empowering and promoting a positive supervisory experience. The relationship is important in therapy, for the supervisee to trust the supervisor it calls for a good relationship, winning trust. This may be achieved by applying unconditional positive regard.

In five studies on specific unproductive behaviors of supervisors completed by three hundred and twenty-eight supervisees, Watkins (2017) listed lack of sympathy and support, lack of instruction and teaching, consistent failure to track concerns of supervisees, indirectness, and intolerance, lack of encouragement, and praise, closed-mindedness, lack of respect for differences, chauvinism, drawbacks, shortcomings, and centralization of evaluation as being some of the traits displayed by ineffective supervisors. The author recommended an increase in the knowledge based on ineffective supervision as this would benefit the supervision. On giving feedback, a supportive and validating supervisor-supervisee relationship can boost supervisee confidence and self-efficacy. When supervisees feel supported in their professional journey and receive validation for their efforts, they are more motivated to engage in supervision services to

further their growth. Sanchez *et al* (2015) contend that many times counselors rely on the development of relationships that help them steer the challenges in the profession and consist of constant interactions with clients, administrators, and peers.

Objectives of the Study

The following was the objective of the study

To determine the relationship between counselor-supervisor relationship and utilization of counsellor supervision in Kenya.

Hypothesis of the Study: There is no statistically significant relationship between counselor-supervisor relationship and utilization of counsellor supervision among counsellors in Nairobi County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized the correlational research design to determine the relationship between supervisor-counsellor relationship and utilization of supervision among counsellors in Nairobi County, Kenya. The target population included 2561 counselors registered with KCPA. They comprised of different cadres as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Population of counsellors in Nairobi County, Kenya

Cadre	Total Number
1 Senior supervisors	2
2 Accredited supervisor	46
3 Associate supervisor	42
4 Senior counselors	10
5 Accredited Members	96
6 Associate Members	2365
Total	2561

Stratified sampling was used because it enabled the researchers to have a representative sample for each cadre of the respondents. Proportionate and simple random sampling was used to identify respondents in each cadre of counsellors. Sample size was calculated using Hossan-Chowdhury (2011) formula shown below

The sample size for counselors:

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{Z^2 \times P(1-P)}{1 + \left(\frac{Z^2 \times P(1-P)}{e^2 N} \right)}$$

The Z-score (Z) used was 1.96, bearing margin of error (e) of 0.05. Distribution (P) was 0.1, and the population size was represented by N. Given the population size (N) for counselors alone was 2571, the following was calculated;

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.1(1-0.1)/0.05^2}{1 + (1.96^2 * 0.1(1-0.1)/ 0.05^2 * 2571)}$$

N = 138.28 people, which is rounded off to the nearest whole number and thus;

n= 139 counselors

The sample size for counsellor supervisors:

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.1(1-0.1)/0.05^2}{1 + (1.96^2 * 0.1(1-0.1)/ 0.05^2 * 90)}$$

N = 54.52 people, which is rounded off to the nearest whole number;

n= 55 counsellor supervisors The Sample was 139 counselors and 55 counsellor supervisors, making it 194 respondents took part in the study.

Table 2. Sample size of counsellors and counsellor supervisors

Cadre	Number	Sub-total
1 Senior supervisors	1	55
2 Accredited supervisor	29	
3 Associate supervisor	25	
4 Senior counselors	5	139
5 Accredited Members	25	
6 Associate Members	109	
Total	194	194

Data was gathered using a questionnaires for both the counsellors and counsellor supervisors. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to establish the relationship between counsellor- supervisor relationship and utelization of counsellor supervision services.

Descriptive Statistics on Counselor and Supervisor Relationship:

To determine the level of counsellor and supervisor relationship, participants were provided with a list of 10 statements assessing their perception of their relationship with their supervisors. The participants were required to rate their agreement to the statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1- Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree, 5- Strongly agree). The scale was further transformed into scores to analyze the level of relationship. The negatively worded items were reverse-coded. As there were 10 items in total, the maximum score that could be obtained was 50 (10 x 5) and the minimum was 10 (10 x 1). To calculate an individual's total score, the scores for each statement were added together, with between 31 and 50 were classified as a positive relationship. The results of this analysis are higher scores indicating a more positive relationship. The scores were then divided into two categories: scores between 10 and 30 were classified as a negative relationship, while scores presented in Table 4.12.

Table 3. Form of Counselor - Supervisor Relationship

Form of Relationship	Frequency	Percentage	Min	Max	Mean
Negative Relationship	21	11.9	27	50	42.67
Positive Relationship	155	88.1			
Total	176	100.0			

From Table 3, a majority of the counselors (88.1%) had a positive relationship with their supervisors, while 11.9% had a negative relationship with their supervisors. The lowest score achieved was 27, and the highest score was 50. The average score was 42.67 (SD = 6.490), suggesting that, on average, there was a positive relationship between the counselors and supervisors.

Hypothesis Testing: Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to test the null hypothesis that stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between counsellor -supervisor relationship and the utilization of counsellor supervision. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Relationship between counsellor - supervisor relationship and utilization of counsellors' supervision

Counsellor and supervisor relationship	Pearson Correlation	Utilization of supervision
		.156*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.038
	N	176

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between counsellor -supervisor relationship and utilization of counsellors' supervision.

The correlation coefficient was 0.156, and the p-value was less than 0.05, indicating that the relationship was statistically significant. These findings suggest that a positive relationship between counsellor and supervisor was associated with higher levels of utilization of counselling supervision. These findings agree with the findings of past researchers who have already established a relationship between the counsellor-supervisor relationship and the utilization of supervision. For instance, Cook *et al.*, (2012) found that the relationship between school counsellors and their supervisors affected the supervision process. Stoltenberg and McNeill (2017) conducted a study on supervisory relationships and examined power dynamics. The study found that ignoring power differentials in supervisory relationships can lead to ineffective and harmful approaches to supervision, as well as hinder the development of positive relationships. Further, Sanchez *et al* (2015) argued that counsellors relied on the development of relationships with their supervisors to help them steer the challenges in the profession.

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that a majority of the counselors had a positive relationship with their supervisors. The results revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between counsellor -supervisor relationship and utilization of counsellors' supervision. A positive relationship between counsellor and supervisor was associated with higher levels of utilization of counselling supervision.

Recommendations

The study recommended that counsellor training should emphasize the need for utilization of counselor supervision as an integral part of the counselling practice. Professional bodies should sensitize members on the need to utilize the existing counsellor supervision services. The professional bodies should offer counsellor supervision services as part of the professional development programs for counsellors. Counsellor supervisors should be trained on the skills to nurture and maintain a professional relationship with their supervisees as a step towards enhancing the utilization of counsellor supervision services.

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