

**Helping the Helper: A Systematic Review Regarding Clinical Supervision Techniques and
the Impact on Supervisee Competencies**

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Abstract

Supervision is key to a new social worker's continuing development. Research supports the importance of supervision, but the literature is lacking regarding what is and is not taught in curriculum, what best practices are in training someone to become an effective supervisor, and what the impact of supervision can be on supervisee competence. The following systematic review asks the question, will providing quality supervision increase a supervisee's competence, with specific focus on curriculum, best practices, and the impact of supervision. The dearth of research in this area implies a call for changes to curriculum, application of established supervision best practices, and that there is a positive effect on supervisors' knowledge and confidence, supervisees' competence, and client outcomes when a supervisee receives effective supervision.

Keywords: supervisor, social work, supervisee, clinical competence, curriculum, best practices, impact, supervision

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Introduction

“There are more than 700,000 professional social workers employed in the United States, and more than three million worldwide” (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021, p.1), all of which must be trained prior to entering the field. However, there is no clear standard for how this should happen. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), “the sole accrediting agency for social work education in the United States and its territories,” (2023) does outline nine general competencies that social work students should master before graduating, but these standards are interpreted differently by each institution and the assessment tool for scoring this mastery is subjective, making a standard difficult to find.

Once in the field, receiving supervision is key to a new social worker’s continuing development of these competencies. How to be a supervisor and how to learn those skills is not outlined or regulated by the CSWE. It is unclear how one is to receive this training. The literature is clear, supervision is important. It assists supervisees in gaining skills, theoretical viewpoints, professional growth, support, professional role modeling, and mutuality (Bogo & McKnight, 2005; Tsui, 1997). Receiving effective supervision guards against burnout and leads to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates (Manthrope et al., 2013). It offers encouragement, appreciation, greater confidence, and assists social workers in providing good quality service to their clients. Yet research regarding what is and is not taught in curriculum, what best practices are in training someone to become an effective supervisor, and what impact supervision has on practitioner competency and client outcome is lacking.

Tsui (1997) reviewed research on social work supervision from 1970-1995 finding a further need to explore the relationship between supervision and client outcome. Furthermore, Bogo and McKnight did a similar review of literature from 1995 to 2005, still finding “a dearth

of empirically-based knowledge to support claims made about the importance of supervision or the effectiveness of various approaches” (2005, p. 61). If research continues to lack in this area, there will be poorly supervised social workers not gaining the guidance they need to help clients and clients not receiving quality services, leaving our communities in need. This systematic review will explore research conducted over the past ten years regarding social work supervision, specifically how it is addressed in curriculum, what best practices are in approach, and what impacts receiving quality supervision can have on practitioners and clients.

Method

A systematic review (SR) was chosen for this project due to SR’s ability to be specifically targeted to a particular research question and utilize explicit, transparent methodology through the selection of strict eligibility criteria (DistillerSR, 2023). The results of such reviews are reliable, accurate, comprehensive, exhaustive, and replicable. Systematic reviews have been conducted since 1753 and have grown in use and importance since that time with countless texts and projects following this format (Poklepovic & Tenveer, 2019). They not only deliver “a clear and comprehensive overview of available evidence on a given topic,” they “also help identify research gaps in our current understanding of a field” (Why are systematic reviews important? section). This project follows the systematic review process for the research question, will providing quality supervision increase a supervisee’s competencies. It identifies gaps in the literature regarding applying changes to curriculum, implementing best practices, and supporting the impact good supervision can have on a supervisee’s competence.

Source

The database *EBSCOhost* was used for this project due to their high-quality materials collected from licensed and reputable publishers (EBSCO Information Services, 2021). Their

sources are evaluated for accuracy before approval and their search tools feature expanders and limiters to assist in garnering results for ease and accuracy of use.

Terms

To answer the question if providing quality supervision will increase a supervisee’s competencies, the search terms supervisor, social work, supervisee, clinical competence, and supervision were used. These were then expanded to gather more robust results as seen in Table 1. The limitations of full text, peer reviewed, English only, and the most recent ten years were utilized reducing the number of articles to 110. The subjects of students, college students, higher education, further education, and university students were eliminated for the focus to remain on those already in the field. This further narrowed the search to 66. Psychology was then excluded to narrow the search more specifically to social workers, reducing the total number of reviewed articles to 23.

Table 1

Search Term Parameters

Original Search Term	Supervisor	Social Work	Supervisee	Clinical Competence	Supervision
Expansions / Inclusions	- Supervision - Supervising - Supervisory - Clinical Supervision	- Social Workers - Social Work Practice - Social Services	- Supervisees	- Skills - Competency - Training - Education - Development - Learning	-Training - Education - Development - Learning

Process

This search was conducted via EBSCOhost between February and May of 2022. The terms supervisor, social work, supervisee, clinical competence, and supervision were used to find articles relevant to the question of if providing quality supervision will increase a social work

supervisee's competence. The terms were expanded, and search limits were placed, reducing the total number of relevant articles to 23. All 23 abstracts were read and reviewed for relevance to the question. Nine articles were eliminated because of their focus on intersectionality, cross-cultural and interprofessional supervision, history, safety, the importance of supervision, and interns taking on supervisory roles. The remaining 14 articles specifically addressed the topics of interest: curriculum, best practices, and impact of supervision to be addressed in this systematic review.

Those 14 were read in full and reviewed for thoroughness and accuracy utilizing a measurement tool called AMSTAR for the "assessment of multiple systematic reviews" (Shea et al., 2007, Conclusion section). This original tool consisted of "11 items" to assess for "good face and content validity" in "measuring the methodological quality of systematic reviews." Shea et al. continued the development of this tool, creating an updated version in 2017, the AMSTAR-2, that was utilized in this review (Shea et al., 2017). This updated version assesses reviews on important areas such as PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison Group, and Outcome), review methods, the quality of literature review, if more than one reviewer was utilized, if excluded studies and bias were addressed as well as justifications, funding, and conflicts of interest are present. AMSTAR was chosen for this review due to its ability to "assess the methodological quality of SRs;" it has been investigated, widely used, and has verified reliability and validity (Lu et al., 2020, Background section).

Conclusion

A reputable and reliable database was used in this search to address the detailed and focused research question of if providing quality supervision will increase a supervisee's competencies, specifically curriculum, best practices, and impact of that supervision. Search

terms were added, expanded, and limited for a robust, specified search. Abstracts and full articles were read and analyzed for manageability and further relevance in aligning with the research question. Those that did not fit within the parameters were eliminated and the remaining 14 will be utilized in a full systematic review. The well known, reliable and valid AMSTAR-2 guidelines were utilized to assess relevance of each article to the research question. Due to the above, there is confidence that this was a successful search in gathering the most relevant information for this review.

Results

This section details the major categorized results of this systematic review answering the question, will providing quality supervision increase a supervisee's competencies. It is organized into three major categories, Curriculum, Best Practices, and Impact, as these are the main components impacting supervision competency. These results show support for changes in curriculum, suggestions for best practices, and that making these changes will have a positive impact on supervisee competence.

Curriculum

According to the National Association of Social Workers and The Association of Social Work Boards (2013, p.10), "Effective supervision requires knowledge of the principles of supervision and the ability to demonstrate necessary skills such as addressing both strengths and challenges of the supervisee, modeling and discussing ethical practice, and providing support and encouragement in the learning context. Supervisors should be familiar with the administrative and organizational structure of the agency or practice domain of the supervisee." Whereas this statement is made by two very important social work bodies, there remains no educational standards to guide or hold accountable institutions in teaching these supervision skills. The

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) does address the supervision a student is required to have during their field experience, but again what that specific skillset is, is missing. They are simply to be supervised by “an individual who holds a baccalaureate or master’s degree in social work from a CSWE accredited program,” having “at least two years of post-social work degree practice experience in social work” (CSWE, 2022, p.22). A social worker who has this education and experience profile is not automatically qualified to be an effective supervisor, learning micro skills alone is not enough to be a good leader (Pritzker & Applewhite, 2015).

This practice goes beyond education, spilling into state licensure standards. For example, in the state of Indiana, social work supervision qualifications to gain licensure do not include any requirement, examination, training, or qualifiers to provide supervision beyond being a "qualified supervisor as determined by the board" (Indiana General Assembly, 2022, sec. 3.5a). As soon as a clinical social worker obtains their Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) certification in the state of Indiana, they are *qualified* to supervise others working toward gaining their own LCSW, many times having no further experience than their Master of Social Work (MSW) degree and two years post graduate work as a clinician.

Tsui (1997) highlights this, stating that supervision training is recommended but not often received and 15 years later Engelbrecht (2012, Rationale section) continued to find that “management and supervision” remain “a neglected agenda.” His qualitative study found themes of supervisors lacking formal supervision training and continuing education. One of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (NASW) values is competence (NASW, 2022). If a social worker is acting in a supervisory role and is not properly trained, this is an ethical issue.

Barker and Hunsley's The Use of Theoretical Models in Psychology Supervisor Development Research From 1994 to 2010: A Systematic Review

Barker and Hunsley looked at supervisor training in their 2012 systematic review, specifically seeking theoretical models that have been used and unfortunately found this same lack of quality research, citing that some studies did not even include basic demographic information. Educators are often charged with training students to become supervisors, but the tools do not exist. These authors are in favor of implementing competency-based training in supervision to advance this arena. There is not currently much evidence in the literature to look to. Barker and Hunsley are supportive of the creation of such tools to assist educators in being able to assess the impact of supervision training efforts (2012). This article clearly shows population and the authors' preference for intervention and outcome but lacks a comparison group and timeframe. Excluded studies as well as information on funding and conflicts of interest were also missing.

Bradley and Becker's Clinical supervision of mental health services: a systematic review of supervision characteristics and practices associated with formative and restorative outcomes

In 2021, Bradley and Becker sought to examine supervision that is associated with formative and restorative outcomes. Looking at qualitative articles, conducting a meta-analysis, this review found that many supervisors utilize formative practices including corrective feedback, discussing interventions, and role play well, but need more training in restorative. Bradley and Becker were looking for specific outcomes in their research, but again found weak methodology overall in assessing supervision studies, noting many used correlational or quasi-experimental designs versus randomized, controlled samples. Several studies only provided vague details about strategies used and comparison groups, making it difficult to generalize

findings. Unfortunately, this review found that many supervision practices are not guided by evidence, which is concerning.

Bradley and Becker (2021) were able to conclude that supervisors appear to be a valuable resource but are underutilized, again highlighting the need to teach and have guidelines for this skillset. More rigorous research needs to be done to understand which strategies are most effective. Overall, this study followed AMSTAR guidelines. One glaring issue was the use of only one reviewer. This was addressed as a potential bias of the study, however. The authors explained their exclusion criteria but did not provide a list of excluded articles. Conflict of interest, funding, and bias were addressed as the authors, but not in the articles reviewed.

Manthrope et al.'s Content and Purpose of Supervision in Social Work Practice in England: Views of Newly Qualified Social Workers, Managers and Directors.

In 2013, Manthrope et al. specifically called for social work supervision “to be remodeled and given greater priority,” with more attention given to investigating the “effectiveness of supervision and to the support of those managers who are expected to provide it” (p. 52). Ten years have now passed with no real movement in that direction. If research continues to lack in this area, there will be poorly supervised social workers not gaining the guidance they need to help clients and clients not receiving quality services, leaving a community in need.

Supervision curriculum standards are clearly lacking and there is a call for change. Exploring what practices are currently in place is the next important piece. The following literature discusses what skills and tactics are most effective. Some themes that arose in the review are as follows with suggestions of practices to be adopted and implemented based on effectiveness.

Best Practices

Olds and Hawkins's Precursors to Measuring Outcomes in Clinical Supervision: A Thematic Analysis

Olds, K. & Hawkins, R. conducted a thematic analysis in 2014 to explore the definition of what supervision is, how it is operationalized, and to identify supervision competencies. These researchers also found that supervision had better outcomes when there was fidelity. Through this analysis, they found the common themes of ethics, knowledge of profession, diversity, reflective practices, supervisory alliance, structured supervision, learning facilitation, research, and evaluation. They feel that progress has been made toward operationalizing these supervision competencies, but more work still needs to be done. This was a thorough analysis by authors that have been close to this work. They recognized their potential bias but did not provide a list of excluded articles. Again, conflict of interest and funding were addressed for the authors, but not in the articles reviewed.

Marc et al.'s The Social Work Supervisor: Skills, Roles, Responsibilities

In 2014, Marc et al. used a quantitative design to observe two small groups of social workers participating in group supervision over seven sessions. These researchers were specifically interested in the supervisor's role, skills, and responsibilities in group supervision. From these observations, they found that successful supervision requires additional skills beyond theoretical and practical training. Additional skills needed include problem solving, healthy communication patterns, active listening, empathy, insight, objectivity, and providing a supportive framework for supervisees. Supervision is an interactional process where the supervisor must have an appropriate skill set and the supervisee needs to accept supervision for it to be successful.

The study had some positive results in support of this paper's research question, but there were also limitations. Convenience and snowball sampling were used, and the sample size was small (Marc et al., 2014). Because of this, results will not be able to be generalized. In addition, the two groups could not be equally compared due to some participants having a previous relationship and some being strangers. There was also a slight difference in the supervision approach. One group held preliminary interviews prior to starting group supervision leading to a notable difference in participants' comfort level. There were also outside factors in one of the groups pressuring the supervisor to be more flexible with established rules. There was support here for supervisors having a specific skill set, but they did not discuss how a supervisor was to go about gaining these needed skills.

Rankine and Thompson's "Moving out of the safe zone": Promoting learning communities and reflective supervision in a social work statutory child protection agency

In 2021, Rankine paired up with Thompson to support using critical reflection as a supervision methodology. They studied supervisors within learning communities to assess if participating would improve their reflective capacities and specifically critical reflection. From this experience, the supervisors found a need to be more present in their supervision sessions, a need to have greater balance between empowering their supervisees and offering advice, and a need to utilize more strengths-based approaches. They need to facilitate supervision sessions as a safe space for critical reflection. Other themes that arose were the importance of having a supervision contract, setting an agenda, and allowing space for emotion and empathy. Supervisors also expressed the challenges of time constraints and striking a balance between management and mentoring responsibilities. Overall, there is potential for this reflective approach from supervision sessions to carry over into the supervisee's work with clients. The

results of this study were positive, but a limited, convenience sample was used, limiting generalization, meaning more research needs to be done.

This report supports the utilization of reflective supervision as essential for supervisees in learning to use critical reflection and robust decision-making skills in practice with their clients (Rankine & Thompson, 2021). Furthermore, the researchers support the use of supervisor learning communities to assist supervisors and supervisees in increasing their skill sets, holding one another accountable, and practicing in an ethical manor. Supervisors need “training to develop and ensure that their support of social workers is competent, safe and accountable” (p. 102).

Shea et al.’s Infant mental health home visiting therapists’ reflective supervision self-efficacy in community practice settings.

Shea et al. (2020) were also interested in reflective supervision. They linked supervisee “participation in the reflective supervision relationship” with clinical competency skills such as: building trust and rapport, using observational skills, being open and self-aware, listening, understanding, remaining present, and understanding multiple relational forces (p. 198). When the supervisee experiences these within supervision, they can apply them to their work with clients. The researchers noted growth in confidence and self-efficacy with reflective practice skills over a 12-month period.

The researchers used the Reflective Supervision Self-Efficacy Scale for Supervisees (RSSESS) to measure changes in confidence levels regarding reflective supervision and practice skills (Shea et al., 2020). They found “some evidence that the RSSESS is a valid and reliable tool” (p. 198). While this study had a much larger sample of 116, all participants were employed through the same agency, so the researchers felt there was limited generalizability desiring a

more diverse sampling and longitudinal study in the future. The assessment tool utilized was also self-report, which can be subjective.

Stevenson's Supervising Mental Health Clinicians in the Context of Complex Organizational Dynamics

In 2015, Stevenson highlighted the importance of relationships in supervision. This article reflects his personal experience in applying symbolization to supervision. He encourages supervisors to look beyond the supervisor/supervisee relationship to the bigger relational context of supervision, including relationships within the organization and with clients. He believes the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee can be reflective of occurrences on a larger scale within the agency and between the supervisee and the client. Therefore, what is modeled in supervision, the supervisee can then model in practice. He also discussed internal organizational supervision versus external supervision, expressing concern about a supervisor's objectivity if they work in the supervisee's agency. This article is limiting because it only discusses Stevenson's direct experience. His approach was not tested, compared, or supported, just discussed. He also did not address any negatives.

Successful supervision requires additional skills including problem solving, healthy communication patterns, active listening, empathy, insight, objectivity, and providing a supportive framework for supervisees (Marc et al., 2014). Supervisors need "training to develop and ensure that their support of social workers is competent, safe and accountable" (Rankine & Thompson, 2021, p. 102). This is a chronic issue that has carried on for far too long. If this lack of curriculum and implementation of best practices continues, there will be poorly supervised social workers not gaining the guidance they need to help clients and clients not receiving quality services. The next section outlines the positive impact that receiving effective supervision can

have on supervisees, their clients, and our communities.

Impact

Snowdon et al.'s Does clinical supervision of healthcare professionals improve effectiveness of care and patient experience? A systematic review

In 2017, Snowdon et al. conducted a systematic review to determine if providing health professionals with supervision improves effectiveness of patient care and experience. They found that supervision is associated with the effectiveness and process of care, but not necessarily with patient health outcomes. However, reduction in psychological symptoms in mental health patients may be associated with supervision of mental health professionals. A meta-analysis was planned for this review, but the articles were heterogeneous in areas of care, making comparisons difficult. The researchers utilized a comprehensive search plan with two reviewers, but there was no comparison group or timeline reported. Exclusion criteria were stated, but a list of excluded articles was not. They also did not address potential funding or conflicts of interests within the articles reviewed.

Alfonssona et al.'s The effects of clinical supervision on supervisees and patients in cognitive behavioral therapy: a systematic review

As seen above, patient outcome is often a measure of supervision success. Alfonssona et al. expanded on this in 2018 conducting a systematic review on the effects that clinical supervision has on therapists' competences and clinical outcomes. They specifically focused on therapists using Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) in practice with clients as well as in supervision. All five studies reviewed were heterogeneous in their scope, so making comparisons was again a challenge. Many of the studies were weak in their methodologies but did show support that supervision may benefit early career therapists. However, none of the studies

reviewed showed that supervision has a benefit for patients. There was support for live supervision being more effective than delayed supervision, but the models for that were unclear.

Overall, Alfonssona et al. (2018) concluded that there continues to be a need for more research to be conducted on the effects of clinical supervision. The population and intervention were defined in this review, but there was no comparison group, and outcomes as well as timeframes differed. The methods used were clear and stated prior to the review. A comprehensive search was conducted, and multiple reviewers were utilized. Exclusionary themes were identified, but a list of excluded articles was not. Sources of funding and potential conflict from each article were not addressed.

Reiser and Milne's A Systematic Review and Reformulation of Outcome Evaluation in Clinical Supervision: Applying the Fidelity Framework

Reiser and Milne also observed that much of clinical supervision research focuses on client outcomes as the test for its effectiveness (2014). They questioned this approach and focused their systematic review on alternative ways to assess supervision outcomes. They looked at 12 different supervision studies and applied the fidelity framework, focusing on design, training, delivery, receipt, and enactment of an intervention. Applying this framework revealed significant infidelity in supervision, which hampers progress. From their review, they concluded that emphasizing only on clinical outcomes can carry risks such as weak causal reasoning or failure to identify mechanisms of change, while underemphasizing other benefits. These researchers again did not include a full list of excluded articles but did discuss some of their merits. Funding and conflict of interest were not addressed at all, but potential limits were. The authors shared that their exclusion criteria may have been overly restrictive, limiting generalizability, while also potentially influencing treatment fidelity being misrepresented.

Younge and Campbell's A qualitative study exploring the perceived impact of supervision training on cognitive therapy supervisor practice

In 2013, Younge and Campbell explored the perceived impact of supervision training on cognitive therapists' practice. As a result of the training, participants "implement contracts, used specific supervision models and paid more attention to supervisee learning" (p. 1). All participants reported benefits from the training, including perceived improvements in knowledge, competence, and confidence. They felt this type of training brings objectivity and accountability while keeping them "up-to-date, motivated and maintain(ing their) skills" (p. 9). Two participants also reported feeling that client outcomes were better as well. This was not evaluated though, so it would need to be explored further.

This was a qualitative study with a small sample of seven participants in Northern Ireland (Younge & Campbell, 2013). Purposive sampling was used and there was a lack of diversity, so generalizability is unlikely. The participants also used varying supervision approaches, so there were no direct comparisons. This study does suggest supervision training has a positive effect on a supervisor's ability to successfully fulfill their role and effect greater skill set from their supervisee, but there is more work to be done.

Wilson et al.'s Trainee Therapists' Experiences of Supervision During Training: A Meta-synthesis

In 2016, Wilson et al. examined qualitative studies of supervision. They conducted a systematic review exploring the experience and impact of supervision on trainee therapists with a focus on four key concepts: supervision as learning, the supervisory relationship, power in supervision, and the impact of supervision. This review uncovered helpful and unhelpful aspects of supervision; supervision can support trainees personally and professionally but can also lead

to feelings of distress and self-doubt. The power dynamic in supervision was also explored, encouraging appropriate evaluation to maintain good practice as we would with clients. Recognizing and exploring this power differential is important, as the success of supervision depends largely upon the supervisory relationship. The population and desired intervention and outcome were clear from these authors. However, no comparison group or timeframe was offered. There was a clear research design, but no second reviewer. The reviewer did note potential for bias in this area and discussed it in supervision sessions. A meta synthesis was used, which is appropriate when looking at this type of qualitative data. There was not a list of excluded articles and no sources of funding or conflicts of interest addressed.

Rankine's The internal/external debate: The tensions within social work supervision

Rankine (2019) focused on internal versus external supervision. He used a qualitative analysis of supervision dyads. Recordings of typical supervision sessions were discussed with participants in semi-structured interviews and comparisons were made between those receiving internal or external supervision. He found that external supervision is best “for building capacity, resilience and confidential reflective space” for supervisees (p. 32). External supervision provides a safer space for supervisees in providing more objectivity. Utilizing external supervision can also avoid the conflicting demands an internal supervisor has in the dual role of manager and supervisor. There can be drawbacks to external supervision in regard to availability and cost. This research did note a need for further exploration due to small sample size and inability to be transferable to a wider population.

The focus of Rankine's 2019 article was on comparing internal and external supervision, however, one of his findings included what are the important attributes of successful supervisors. He found that supervision is crucial to social work practice. The highlighted attributes and skills

of a successful supervisor include critical reflection, culturally competency, being well trained, prepared, and knowledgeable, having good boundaries, and being able to appropriately challenge supervisees when while remaining honest, open, and trustworthy.

Rankine highlighted the important effects of a well-trained supervisor within the context of his 2019 article comparing external and internal supervision. With his support toward external supervision, professional, purposeful supervision training will become even more important. Without proper training standards and practices, the external supervisor's approach is open to "interpretation and inconsistency" (p. 43).

Tebes et al.'s Providing Competency Training to Clinical Supervisors Through an Interactional Supervision Approach

Lastly, the feasibility of supervisory training is also important to consider. Tebes et al. focused on this in 2010. They provided structured competency training in interactional supervision over seven months to 81 clinical supervisors using a pre-, post-test, follow-up design to assess training feasibility and impact. Their results support supervisors gaining training in competency based interactional supervision, as it increased "supervisors' perceived ability to manage supervisory relationship, supervisee job performance, and promote the professional development of their supervisees" (p. 195). They found that this training "is (a) feasible and potentially effective approach to supervisor training" (p. 198). "Training in supervisory competencies is essential to effective clinical practice" (p. 190).

There was a lack of a control or comparison group in this study and the results were from self-report, limiting objectivity (Tebes et al., 2010). However, it lays the foundation for future research into the utility and effectiveness of competency training for clinical supervisors. The researchers also noted more exploration needed in the "relative importance (of) specific training"

and the appropriate length of training time (p. 197).

Ultimately, good supervision assists social workers in providing good quality service to their clients and showing cultural competence as well as transmission of evidence-based practices and outcomes (Social Work Policy Institute, 2011). Supervisors “helps social workers practice to the best of their ability” (Marc et al., 2014, p. 223). If a supervisee receives consistent and predictable reflective supervision from a compassionate reflective supervisor, the relationship will support “self-exploration and personal and professional development” of the supervisee (Shea et al., 2020, p. 201). Supervision is key to “developing high quality practice and ultimately improving outcomes” (Rankine & Thompson, 2021, p. 89). Good supervision leads to good social workers, and healthier clients.

Discussion

Exploring these articles through the lens of the AMSTAR-2 guidelines (Shea et al., 2017) brought surprises. First, when assessing for PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison Group, and Outcome), the population was typically clear, either supervisors, supervisees, and/or clients/patients. The intervention and the desired outcome were usually clear from the beginning or became clear as the research was analyzed as well. Many times, though there was no comparison group or defined timeline. This is concerning and goes along with the theme of several of these reviewed studies having weak, flawed, or just bad methodology.

Every article reviewed was clear on search term exclusions, but none provided a list of excluded articles as is encouraged by the AMSTAR-2 guidelines (Shea et al., 2017). Another area of concern was the lack of authors addressing potential biases in the articles they reviewed, specifically in funding and conflicts of interest. A few of the reviewers did address this, but most of them did not.

Conclusion

This systematic review supports supervision as an important piece for practitioner growth and effectiveness for their work with clients. It also highlights the lack of focus in curriculum on training social workers in the best practices of how to be an effective supervisor. More research is needed regarding how this should be done, if it should be regulated, and if so, by who. Once those questions are answered, further work needs to be done concerning effectiveness and feasibility. With evidence supporting the high importance of successful supervision's effect on supervisees and clients, it is time to focus on how to get supervisors these needed skills.

If appropriate, quality research is conducted, a clear, operationalized path forward can be established to close this gap for greater success among supervisors, those training them to be supervisors, supervisees, and clients. We need to take these known important supervisor skills, break them down in to teachable lessons, explore the best ways to teach them, form a structured way to assure these skills are being learned and implemented through a supervision training curriculum, regulate who can supervisee, how they should do it, and establish continuing education. Testing on effectiveness, reliability, and feasibility would also need to occur.

If an untrained clinician is not allowed to treat a client, an untrained supervisor should not be allowed to guide a clinician. It is time for CSWE, NASW, and state licensing boards to support training, continuing education, and credentialing around supervision.

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