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Cover Page Footnote

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Working Alliance as a Mediator Between Supervisory Styles and Supervisee Satisfaction

Dan Li, David K. Duys, Yanhong Liu

To answer the research question whether there is a mediation effect of the supervisory working alliance between supervisory styles and supervisee satisfaction, we developed a mediation model and tested this hypothesized mediation effect with a sample of 111 participants that was comprised of master's and doctoral counselor trainees and counseling practitioners recruited from several counseling professional networks. Results indicated a statistically significant indirect effect of supervisory styles on supervisee satisfaction through the supervisory working alliance. Specifically, when supervisees rated higher on a mixture of three supervisory styles, they were more likely to report a stronger working alliance with their supervisors; this alliance, in turn, contributed to their higher levels of satisfaction with supervision. These findings also speak to the importance of maintaining a flexible, balanced approach in supervision, and shed light on how both supervisors and supervisees can contribute to the supervisory working alliance so as to enhance supervisee satisfaction.

Keywords: supervisory styles, supervisory working alliance, supervisee satisfaction, mediation analysis

Supervisory styles represent a unique manner and approach that supervisors use to implement supervision and respond to supervisees (Boyd, 1978; Holloway & Wolleat, 1981), which scholars have found to be closely related to supervisee satisfaction with supervision in counseling, psychology, and related fields (Bussey, 2015; Fernando & Hulse-Killacky, 2005; Friedlander & Ward, 1984; Schaaf, 2018). These positive correlations appear to indicate that perceived supervisory styles directly influence supervisee satisfaction with supervision. And yet, the relationship between supervisory styles and supervisee satisfaction may be more complex than has been postulated. In addition to the strong association between these two variables, researchers have found both to be closely correlated with the supervisory working alliance, respectively, in many studies (e.g., Cheon et al., 2009; Heppner & Handley, 1981; Ladany, Ellis, et al., 1999; Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, et al., 1999; Ladany, Walker, et al., 2001; Shaffer & Friedlander, 2017; Sterner, 2009). Meanwhile, a growing body of research suggested that the supervisory working alliance may mediate the relationship between supervisor characteristics and

supervisee development (e.g., Bambling & King, 2014; Crockett & Hays, 2015; Inman, 2006), particularly between supervisory styles and supervisee satisfaction (An et al., 2020; Son & Ellis, 2013). As such, we developed and tested a mediation model with the supervisory working alliance as the mediator between supervisory styles and supervisee satisfaction, with a group of counselor trainees and counseling practitioners.

Supervisory Styles

Supervisory style is a multidimensional entity (Friedlander & Ward, 1984). Scholars defined and studied it from various perspectives, as a wide range of behaviors that the supervisor exhibits in building a working relationship with supervisees (Hunt, 1971) and interacting with them in direct and indirect manners (Munson, 1993). Friedlander and Ward (1984) developed and validated three supervisory styles — *attractive*, *interpersonally sensitive*, and *task-oriented* — with robust reliabilities and construct validity, which coincide with the three supervisor roles of *consultant*, *counselor*, and *teacher*, respectively, in Bernard's (1997) discrimination model. In the present study, we adopt Ladany,

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Walker, et al.'s (2001) definition of these styles: attractive style supervisors appear to be "warm, friendly, open, and supportive toward their trainees," interpersonally sensitive supervisors are perceived as "invested, therapeutic, and perceptive when working with their trainees," and task-oriented supervisors are "focused, goal oriented, and structured during supervision" (pp. 263–264). Researchers extensively examined these styles as related to other process (e.g., Ladany, Walker, et al., 2001; Li, Duys, & Vispoel, 2020) and outcome variables in supervision (e.g., Berger, 2012; Bussey, 2015; Fernando & Hulse-Killacky, 2005; Schaaf, 2018).

Scholars found supervisory styles to be related to many factors, such as supervisor–supervisee gender attitude match (Rarick & Ladany, 2013), supervisee counseling self-efficacy (Berger, 2012; Fernando & Hulse-Killacky, 2005), and supervisor age and education level (Reeves et al., 1997). Particularly, the positive correlation of supervisory styles with supervisee satisfaction was consistently reported across studies (Berger, 2012; Bussey, 2015; Fernando & Hulse-Killacky, 2005; Friedlander & Ward, 1984; Schaaf, 2018). In other words, when supervisees rated a higher mixture of different styles, they were more likely to report a higher level of satisfaction with supervision.

Despite the overall positive associations, when each supervisory style was independently examined in relation to supervisee satisfaction, the statistical significance varied from study to study. For instance, the interpersonally sensitive style was the only significant predictor of supervisee satisfaction in some studies (e.g., Fernando & Hulse-Killacky, 2005; Friedlander & Ward, 1984), whereas both interpersonally sensitive and task-oriented styles were significant predictors of supervisee satisfaction in Schaaf's (2018) study of speech-language pathology supervisees. Furthermore, interpersonally sensitive and attractive styles were predictors of satisfaction in supervision conducted face-to-face, while the interpersonally sensitive style was the only predictor of satisfaction in supervision performed virtually (Bussey, 2015).

Supervisee Satisfaction

Supervisee satisfaction with supervision is intuitively and widely used as an outcome measure (Ellis

& Ladany, 1997; Ladany, Ellis, et al., 1999; Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, et al., 1999; Wiley & Ray, 1986) to assess the effectiveness of clinical supervision (Worthington & Roehlke, 1979). It can also be used as a dynamic evaluation of supervisees' perceptions about various aspects of supervision, which may be subject to recent supervision events (Sterner, 2009) or a result of accumulated supervision experiences, such as supervisee resistance to the supervisory relationship and process (Cliffe et al., 2014). In this study, we adopt Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, et al.'s (1999) definition and view supervisee satisfaction as an outcome measure, which reflects "the supervisee's perception of the overall quality of supervision and the extent to which supervision met the needs and facilitated the growth of the counselor" (p. 448). We deem supervisee satisfaction critical because unsatisfied supervisees "may be less apt to learn from supervision" (Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, et al., 1999, p. 466).

In addition to the strong association of supervisee satisfaction with supervisory styles as reviewed earlier, supervisee satisfaction was also significantly related to many other factors, such as supervisors' multicultural competence (Crockett & Hays, 2015), their use of relational behavior in a specific session (Shaffer & Friedlander, 2017), their adherence to ethical guidelines (Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, et al., 1999), discussions of cultural variables in supervision (Gatmon et al., 2001), and supervisee nondisclosure (Ladany et al., 1996; Yourman & Farber, 1996). Many of these factors play a crucial role in enhancing the working alliance between supervisor and supervisee. As such, it is not surprising that researchers found a significant relationship between supervisee satisfaction and the supervisory working alliance that is to be reviewed in the next section.

The Mediating Role of the Supervisory Working Alliance

Bordin (1983) first put forth the supervisory working alliance as a parallel concept to the therapeutic working alliance in psychotherapy with three fundamental aspects — *goals*, *tasks*, and *bonds*. Accordingly, supervisory working alliance scales (Bahrack, 1989; Baker, 1990) developed based on Bordin's (1983) conceptualization share the same factors. But the high collinearity among the subscales sometimes posed a threat to the distinctness

of the three factors (Baker, 1990; Horvath & Greenberg, 1989). Efstation et al. (1990) perceived the supervisory relationship as a set of alliance-building and alliance-maintaining activities and viewed the supervisory working alliance as composed of supervisor-specific (i.e., *client focus*, *rapport*, and *identification*) and supervisee-specific (i.e., *rapport* and *client focus*) tasks and behaviors. Their supervisee form (Efstation et al., 1990) was used in the present study.

Scholars widely researched the supervisory working alliance as a crucial component of the supervisory relationship and found it to be significantly related to many aspects in supervision, such as discussions of cultural variables (Gatmon et al., 2001), and supervisor–supervisee gender match and gender attitude match (Rarick & Ladany, 2013). Notably, the positive relationship of the supervisory working alliance with supervisory styles (Heppner & Handley, 1981; Ladany, Walker, et al., 2001) and supervisee satisfaction (Cheon et al., 2009; Ladany, Ellis, et al., 1999; Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, et al., 1999; Shaffer & Friedlander, 2017; Sterner, 2009), respectively, was particularly salient.

Thus far, our review of relevant literature has provided support for the first three steps in testing a mediation effect (Frazier et al., 2004): (a) there is a significant relation between the predictor (i.e., supervisory styles) and the outcome (i.e., supervisee satisfaction; see path c in Figure 1); (b) the predictor is related to the mediator (see path a in Figure 1); and (c) the mediator is related to the outcome (see path b in Figure 1). The last step would only be performed with the actual data — examining whether the strength of the relation between the predictor and the outcome is significantly reduced when the mediator is added to the model (Frazier et al., 2004).

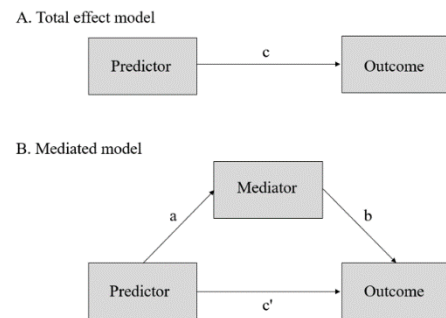
In tandem with the conceptual mediation model, several studies indicated that the supervisory working alliance mediated the relation between supervisor characteristics and supervisee development (e.g., Bambling & King, 2014; Crockett & Hays, 2015; Inman, 2006). For instance, both Inman (2006) and Crockett and Hays (2015) found that the supervisory working alliance mediated the relationship between supervisors' multicultural competence and supervisee satisfaction with supervision. Furthermore, the supervisory working alliance mediates

many of the learning outcomes deemed important for effective supervision, and thus it is imperative to examine supervisor characteristics as related to fostering a strong working alliance and achieving supervision outcome (Bambling & King, 2014). Particularly, some emerging literature documented the mediating role of the working alliance between supervisory styles and supervisee satisfaction (e.g., An et al., 2020; Son & Ellis, 2013). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to further test the hypothesized mediation effect of the supervisory working alliance between supervisory styles and supervisee satisfaction using different measures.

Method

Figure 1

Diagram of Paths Depicting the Total Effect Model and Mediated Model



Note. Predictor = Supervisory Styles; Outcome = Supervisee Satisfaction with Supervision; and Mediator = Supervisory Working Alliance.

Participants and Procedure

Upon the approval of the university institutional review board (IRB), the first author distributed the Qualtrics survey through professional networks such as the Counselor Education and Supervision Network-Listserv (CESNET-L) and American Counseling Association (ACA) Connect. The inclusion criteria included: (a) participants are at least 18 years of age by the time they filled out the survey; and (b) participants are students who are currently enrolled in clinical training or students/practitioners who received supervised clinical training in the past. The data collection spanned over 8 months in 2017–2018. Unfinished data entries (i.e., at least one study instrument was left unanswered) were excluded from further data analysis, leaving 111 valid data points for the current study.

Of the 111 participants, 88 self-identified as female (79.28%) and 23 as male (20.72%). Seventy-one of them fell into the 21–30 age range (63.96%),

18 in the 31–40 range (16.22%), 13 in the 41–50 range (11.71%), 7 in the 51–60 range (6.31%), and 2 in the 61–70 range (1.80%). The sample was predominantly White ($n = 95$; 85.59%), followed by 8 Asian (7.21%), 5 Black or African American (4.50%), 1 American Indian and Alaska Native (0.90%), 1 with two or more races (0.90%), and 1 indicating “not listed here” (0.90%). Supervisee lengths of counseling experience varied drastically, with 43 indicating 1 year or less (38.74%), 19 between 1–2 years (17.12%), 13 between 2–3 years (11.71%), and 36 longer than 3 years (32.43%). The sample was mainly comprised of 53 master’s-level students (47.75%) and 46 doctoral-level students (41.44%), while others identified themselves as post-master’s or post-doctoral practitioners or other. The most frequently selected specialty areas included: clinical mental health counseling ($n = 52$; 46.85%), school counseling ($n = 42$; 37.84%), and counselor education and supervision ($n = 26$; 23.42%). Notably, many participants indicated more than one training or practice level and specialty area.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire. The Demographic Questionnaire was constructed by the first author and was used to collect the primary demographic information of participants. It includes the gender, age, race/ethnicity, training/practicing level, length of counseling-related work experience, and training or specialty area.

Supervisory Styles Inventory (SSI; Friedlander & Ward, 1984). The SSI was used to measure participants’ perceived supervisory styles — attractive, interpersonally sensitive, and task-oriented. It has 33 items: 7 for the attractive subscale, 8 for the interpersonally sensitive subscale, 10 for the task-oriented subscale, and 8 filler items. On a Likert scale from 1 (*not very*) to 7 (*very*), a supervisee can indicate their perceptions of a supervisor for each of the descriptors. A sample item for the attractive style is “friendly;” a sample for interpersonally sensitive is “intuitive;” and a sample for task-oriented is “structured.”

Friedlander and Ward (1984) conducted a series of studies (N s varying from 105 to 202) to develop and validate the SSI with diverse samples, including

both supervisors (e.g., doctoral-level psychologists, professional staff supervisors at college or university counseling centers), and supervisees (e.g., doctoral trainees in counseling psychology or clinical psychology, master’s students in counselor education or social work, psychiatry residents). However, our sample was mainly comprised of counselor trainees at both master’s levels and doctoral levels and we only collected supervisees’ perceptions of their supervisors’ styles in our study. According to Friedlander and Ward (1984), the Cronbach’s alphas of the entire scale and three subscales ranged from .76 to .93. In addition, the item-scale correlations ranged from .70 to .88 for the attractive subscale, from .51 to .82 for the interpersonally sensitive subscale, and from .38 to .76 for the task-oriented subscale. The test-retest reliability of the entire scale ($N = 32$) was .92, and was .94, .91, and .78 for the attractive, interpersonally sensitive, and task-oriented subscales, respectively. To assess the convergent validity of the SSI, Friedlander and Ward (1984) computed the intercorrelations of the three SSI subscales and Stenack and Dye’s (1982) supervisor roles items (i.e., consultant, counselor, and teacher), which evidenced moderate to high positive relationships ($p_s < .001$), with one exception. The Cronbach’s alphas of SSI as a whole and the three supervisory styles were $\alpha_{SSI} = .96$, $\alpha_{attractive} = .96$, $\alpha_{interpersonally\ sensitive} = .94$, and $\alpha_{task-oriented} = .92$ in the current study. In view of Ladany, Marotta, et al.’s (2001) finding that most trainees preferred supervisors who were moderately high on all three supervisory styles, with a mixture of styles and a more flexible supervisory approach, we focus on supervisory styles as a composite score in our study.

Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory (SWAI; Efstation et al., 1990). The SWAI-Supervisee Form was used to measure supervisees’ perceptions about the working alliance in supervision. It was validated on 178 trainees (interns in professional psychology internship programs and advanced practicum students in counseling and clinical psychology training programs) who were being supervised in an internship or practicum setting at the time of their study, with beginning practicum supervisees not included. However, we included participants at both practicum and internship training levels as well as counseling practitioners in our

study. This supervisee form has 19 items with two subscales — rapport (12 items) and client focus (7 items). Along a 7-point Likert scale, a supervisee can indicate the extent to which the activity described by the item represents their supervisor (1 = *almost never* and 7 = *almost always*). A sample item for rapport is “I feel comfortable working with my supervisor;” and a sample for client focus is “In supervision, my supervisor places a high priority on our understanding the client’s perspective.”

According to Efstation et al. (1990), the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were .90 for rapport and .77 for client focus ($N = 178$). In addition, the item-scale correlations ranged from .44 to .77 for rapport, and from .37 to .53 for client focus. Efstation et al. (1990) used the SSI to estimate the convergent and divergent validity of the SWAI. Specifically, the client focus subscale from the SWAI-Supervisee Form was moderately correlated with the task-oriented subscale in the SSI ($r = .52$), but was weakly correlated with their attractive subscale ($r = .04$) and the interpersonally sensitive subscale ($r = .21$). The rapport subscale in the SWAI-Supervisee Form exhibited moderately high correlations with the attractive and interpersonally sensitive subscales in the SSI, but showed low correlation ($r < .00$) with the task-oriented subscale. The Cronbach’s alphas of the entire SWAI and the two subscales were $\alpha_{\text{SWAI}} = .96$, $\alpha_{\text{rapport}} = .96$, and $\alpha_{\text{client focus}} = .91$ in the present study.

Supervisory Satisfaction Questionnaire (SSQ; Ladany et al., 1996). The SSQ was used to measure supervisees’ satisfaction with various aspects of their supervision. It has eight items in total, with no subscales. It was slightly modified from the Client Satisfaction Questionnaire (Larsen et al., 1979), which had internal consistency estimates ranging from .84 to .93 and was found to be related to client’s and therapist’s ratings of improvement and a lower client dropout rate (Nguyen et al., 1983). Ladany et al.’s (1996) sample was comprised of 108 therapists-in-training mainly in counseling psychology and clinical psychology programs and they were primarily doctoral-level or master’s-level students. Our sample resembled Ladany et al.’s (1996) in terms of the training levels of participants, but our participants were mostly counselors-in-training. The SSQ has a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *low* and 4 =

high). A sample item from this scale is “How would you rate the quality of supervision you have received?” The internal consistency of both Ladany et al.’s (1996) sample and ours was $\alpha_{\text{SSQ}} = .96$.

Research Design and Data Analysis

In view of the interrelations among supervisory styles, the supervisory working alliance, and supervisee satisfaction as evidenced by the extant literature, coupled with the literature supporting the supervisory working alliance as a mediator between supervisory styles and supervisee satisfaction, we proposed and tested a mediation analysis model where the predictor variable, mediator variable, and outcome variable include supervisee perceptions about supervisory styles, the supervisory working alliance, and supervisee satisfaction with supervision, respectively. Based on the scatterplot of the values of the residuals against the values of the outcome predicted by our model, we made the linearity and homoscedasticity assumptions and we used the histograms to spot normality (Field, 2013). Since participants independently worked on these instruments, we assumed that the errors in our model were not related to one another.

The a priori power analysis based on Cohen et al.’s (2003) method indicated that, with the desired power of .80 and a Type I error of .05, the required minimum sample size to detect the mediated effect would be 110, assuming $f = .27$ (a medium to large effect size). Our sample size ($N = 111$) met this requirement. There were 15 missing values scattered across the three measures (SSI, SWAI, and SSQ), which accounted for 0.23% of the total 6,660 responses. We used multiple imputation (MI; Schafer, 1999) to replace these values missing at random (MAR) in SPSS. We then used Hayes’s PROCESS v3.4 to perform the mediation analysis where the four conditions of mediation were tested (Figure 1): (a) the predictor variable significantly predicted the outcome variable in model A (path c); (b) the predictor significantly predicted the mediator in model B (path a); (c) the mediator significantly predicted the outcome variable in model B (path b); and (d) the predictor variable predicted the outcome variable less strongly in model B (path c’) than in model A (path c; Field, 2013).

Results

Results of the mediation analysis indicated that there was a statistically significant partial mediation effect of supervisory styles on supervisee satisfaction through the supervisory working alliance, $b = .26$, BCa CI [.14, .43]. We used bootstrapping procedures to generate 5,000 bootstrap samples from the original data, which were run with a bias-corrected percentile method. Since the 95% CIs excluded zero, the indirect effect of supervisory styles on supervisee satisfaction was statistically significant. Furthermore, this level of significance was maintained when the two subscales of the supervisory working alliance — rapport ($b = .20$, BCa CI [.09, .33]) and client focus ($b = .17$, BCa CI [.07, .29]) — were independently tested for the mediation effect. Thus, as the total scores of supervisory styles increased, supervisees' perceived strength of the supervisory working alliance increased as well; the supervisory working alliance, in turn, had a significant direct effect on supervisee satisfaction with supervision. These partial mediation effects were also present when the three supervisory styles were independently examined.

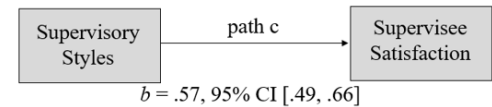
Our results responded to the previously mentioned four conditions. First, supervisory styles significantly predicted supervisee satisfaction ($b = .57$, $p < .0001$); in other words, as supervisees' ratings on supervisory styles increased, their satisfaction with supervision increased as well (path c in Figure 2). Second, supervisory styles significantly predicted the supervisory working alliance ($b = .85$, $p < .0001$); namely, when supervisees rated higher on supervisory styles, their perceived supervisory working alliance was stronger (path a in Figure 2). Third, the supervisory working alliance significantly predicted supervisee satisfaction ($b = .30$, $p < .0001$); alternatively, as supervisees perceived a stronger working alliance with supervisors, their satisfaction with supervision increased as well (path b in Figure 2). Finally, supervisory styles predicted supervisee satisfaction less strongly in the mediated model than in the total model. To be specific, the regression coefficient decreased .25 from the total model ($b = .57$; path c in Figure 2) to the mediated model ($b = .32$, path c' in Figure 2). The statistical significance of this indirect effect was also vali-

dated by a follow-up Sobel test ($p < .0001$). The effect size of the standardized b for the indirect effect was .35, BCa CI [.19, .58], indicating a large effect. The kappa-squared (κ^2) value of .34 also suggested a large effect (Preacher & Kelley, 2011).

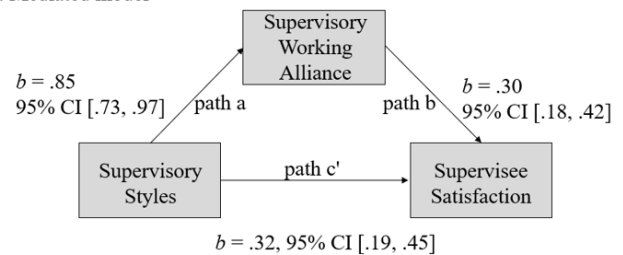
Figure 2

The Total Effect Model and Mediated Model with Path Coefficients

A. Total effect model



B. Mediated model



Note. $N = 111$; CI: confidence interval.

Discussion

In this study, we developed and tested a mediation model exhibiting relationships among supervisory styles, the supervisory working alliance, and supervisee satisfaction with supervision. Although extensive literature supported the positive bivariate correlations among the three (Berger, 2012; Bussey, 2015; Fernando & Hulse-Killacky, 2005; Friedlander & Ward, 1984; Schaaf, 2018), between supervisory styles and the supervisory working alliance (Heppner & Handley, 1981; Ladany, Walker, et al., 2001), and between the supervisory working alliance and supervisee satisfaction (Cheon et al., 2009; Ladany, Ellis, et al., 1999; Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, et al., 1999; Shaffer & Friedlander, 2017; Sterner, 2009), our study revealed an additional layer of complexity of the relationships among them. Our results further confirmed the supervisory working alliance as a significant partial mediator between supervisory styles and supervisee satisfaction (An et al., 2020; Bambling & King, 2014). They also contributed to the emerging evidence suggesting that the supervisory working alliance mediated the relationship between supervisor characteristics and supervisee development (e.g., Crockett & Hays, 2015; Inman, 2006). Since we not

only see supervisee satisfaction as a reflection of their perception of the overall supervision quality but the extent to which supervision meets their needs and facilitates their growth (Ladany, Lehman-Waterman, et al., 1999), we consider supervisee satisfaction an important indicator of supervisee development.

Specifically, when supervisees perceived a mixture of supervisory styles (i.e., higher total scores of the SSI), they were more likely to perceive a strengthened working alliance with their supervisors, which in turn, contributed to a higher level of satisfaction with supervision (indirect or mediation effect). While the direct effect of supervisory styles on supervisee satisfaction was well-documented in the literature (Berger, 2012; Bussey, 2015; Fernando & Hulse-Killacky, 2005; Friedlander & Ward, 1984; Schaaf, 2018), the indirect effect has yet to be extensively studied (An et al., 2020; Bambling & King, 2014). This finding calls for supervisors to be more flexible with their supervisory approaches based on supervisees' personal learning and professional developmental needs (Fernando & Hulse-Killacky, 2005; Li et al., 2018; Li et al., 2019; Li, Duys, & Granello, 2020), given most trainees preferred supervisors who were moderately high on all three supervisory styles (Ladany, Marotta, et al., 2001).

Despite the broad consistency of our findings with the existing literature regarding the positive correlations among the three variables (see Table 1), discrepancies at the subscale level existed. For instance, when we examined the three supervisory styles independently in our study, we found them to be significant predictors of the supervisory working

alliance as well as supervisee satisfaction, respectively. However, in both Fernando and Hulse-Killacky's (2005) and Friedlander and Ward's (1984) studies, the interpersonally sensitive style was the only significant predictor of supervisee satisfaction. In addition, the significance of this prediction altered as the format of supervision (i.e., face-to-face or cyber) varied as well (Bussey, 2015).

Implications for Clinical Supervisors and Counselor Educators

These findings speak to the importance of maintaining a flexible, balanced approach in supervision. Specifically, an approach that includes a mixture of styles (Ladany, Marotta, et al., 2001) is more likely to drive the creation of a trusting working alliance and consequently greater supervisee satisfaction of the supervision experience. Broadly, for supervisees early on in their training, supervisors may first adopt a task-oriented style, offering appropriate levels of structure and guidance to orient them to clinical supervision; as supervisees grow in their internal motivation, autonomy, and self-awareness, supervisors may gradually take on a nondirective consultant's role that is aligned with the attractive style (Li et al., 2018; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). Notably, despite the seemingly clear match of supervisory styles with supervisee developmental levels, supervisory style is a multidimensional entity with varying degrees of attractiveness, interpersonal sensitivity, and task orientation (Friedlander & Ward, 1984) that unfold in varied contexts (Li, Duys, & Vispoel, 2020), such as in cross-cultural supervision (e.g., Li et al., 2018) and in different clinical domains (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010).

Table 1

Bivariate Correlations among the Three Study Variables

Variable	SSI	SWAI	SSQ
SSI			
SWAI	.802****		
SSQ	.788****	.789****	

Note: SSI denotes supervisory styles; SWAI, the supervisory working alliance; and SSQ, supervisee satisfaction with supervision. **** $p < .0001$

As a mediator, the working alliance provides a significant contribution to supervisee satisfaction. Understanding these dynamics is important as supervisors work to build and maintain a positive working relationship with supervisees. Counselor educators are uniquely positioned to help doctoral students who are learning to supervise and site supervisors understand how these dynamics work together to promote a satisfactory experience. This will also help them be more effective at building the necessary trust and resilience required of intellectually and emotionally demanding counseling work. Specifically, counselor educators can encourage doctoral students and site supervisors to implement a role induction (RI) intervention aimed to clarify supervisee and supervisor role expectations and reduce supervisee anxiety (Ellis et al., 2015), and to facilitate an orientation at the beginning of the supervision process to strengthen the working alliance with their supervisees (An et al., 2020). The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) Best Practices in Clinical Supervision Taskforce (2011) also outlined best practices to foster the supervisory working alliance when initiating supervision and managing the supervisory relationship.

As an integral contributor to the supervisory working alliance, supervisees can be trained to self-advocate for the elements of supervisory interactions that they need more of to maintain a richer balance and exchange of ideas with their supervisors. Supervisors can elicit and stay open to candid, ongoing feedback from supervisees (ACES Best Practices in Clinical Supervision Taskforce, 2011). For instance, supervisors can invite supervisees to engage in written reflections between supervisory sessions that (a) address their comfort disclosing reactions to their interpersonal dynamics in supervision; (b) identify the specific things the supervisor is doing that feel more supportive and welcoming; (c) make specific requests for structure or agendas; and (d) reflect on their own evaluation of their contributions to the working alliance. The net effect of engaging in these kinds of activities may also promote a higher level of self-reflection and self-evaluation for supervisees (ACES Best Practices in Clinical Supervision Taskforce, 2011), which are critical to supervisees' growth over their professional lifespan. The supervision participants can then track

and reflect on the dynamics of the supervisory relationship over time, noting specifically how the supervisee has grown as a professional and how both team members have helped to enhance supervisee satisfaction.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study is not exempt from limitations. Despite the prevalence of testing mediation effects using cross-sectional data, mediation essentially entails changes over time and the assessment of longitudinal effects (Maxwell & Cole, 2007). As such, the cross-sectional design of the study may have posed biases against mediation parameters, as it did not allow statistical control for the predictor and the outcome at an earlier time, and may incorrectly state the effect of the predictor on the mediator at the same time (Maxwell & Cole, 2007). A longitudinal design based on the same predictor, outcome, and mediator would be beneficial, which allows testing of stability of variables from time to time and inferring of actual causality between variables (Maxwell et al., 2011; Maxwell & Cole, 2007). In addition, the power of the mediation test could have been compromised, given the larger correlation between supervisory styles and the supervisory working alliance ($r = .80$; see Table 1) compared to the cut-off ($r = .60$; Frazier et al., 2004) as well as the detected large effect size of this indirect effect, which calls for a larger sample in future studies.

In our recruitment, we included students and practitioners who received clinical supervision in the past but did not set a time limit for those supervision experiences when they received them. The varying developmental levels of participants and lengths of supervision experiences could have an impact on how the results might be interpreted. As such, the inclusion criteria could be more clearly delineated in future studies. Moreover, response rate for the study could not be calculated, given the online recruitment methods. This limitation seems to reflect the trend in counseling research reported in Poynton et al.'s (2019) systematic review.

As indicated by the literature, supervision is a complex process involving a wide range of mechanisms ranging from supervisee characteristics, supervisory styles, supervisor-supervisee match, supervisory relationship, to supervisee satisfaction and development. Future studies can track how graduate

students' reflective writing and intentional discussion of these dynamics in supervision may further impact and enhance their effects on these beneficial outcomes. Similar variables can be explored and investigated in counselor educators' "supervision of supervision" where similar dynamics may contribute to a working alliance and doctoral student satisfaction of their training in the supervisory role. Based on results from the present study, future efforts may also be made to develop and test multi-level models, to unfold the relations among the different mechanisms, and to inform improvements in supervision practice. Finally, while recent research (e.g., Tarlow et al., 2020) offers evidence that supports the equivalence between in-person supervision and telesupervision, nuances may exist between supervision modalities (e.g., Bussey, 2015), and future research may examine such nuances in relation to supervisory styles and working alliance.

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