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School Counseling Site Supervisors' Lived Experience of Supervision Preparedness

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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by

Erin Augustine

MA, MidAmerica Nazarene University, 2013

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

U.S. counseling programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs mandate specific supervision requirements for counselors-in-training, in all specialty areas. Supervising school counselors-in-training (SCITs) differs due to the unique responsibilities of school counselors, which encompass crisis response, curriculum development, consultation, data management, small group and individual counseling, leadership, and student advocacy. The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of preparedness levels of school counselor site supervisors. Data collection involved semistructured interviews with six participants who had all served or were currently serving as a school counseling site supervisor. The data analysis followed Smith's approach to interpretive phenomenological analysis. Four main themes emerged, along with three subthemes: (a) absence of supervision training and preparedness, with the subtheme of individual preparation; (b) the impact of communication and feedback on supervisee development; (c) the importance of university partnerships; and (d) the purpose of supervision, with the subthemes of building important relationships with students and offering real-world experiences. The study may foster positive social change by providing evidence of best practices for preparing SCITs. School counseling supervisors may be able to use the study findings to better prepare their trainees for their role, which, in turn, may result in stronger school counseling programs and better care of students, potentially yielding higher student success rates.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing family, Ed, Emma, and Brady, who encouraged and supported me throughout this journey, despite all the sacrifices and challenges. I love you all.

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To my husband, Ed: Thank you for being my biggest cheerleader throughout all my academic pursuits. I promise I am done now. I love you. To my daughter, Emma: Your sweet words of encouragement, notes left on my laptop, and overall support have meant so much to me. I am so grateful for you and absolutely love being your mom. I love you. To my son, Brady: Thanks for taking time to ask me about my work. Your presence brings a smile to my face, and I always welcomed those little breaks when you came in to play with the dogs. I love you. To my mom and dad: Thank you for instilling in me the importance of education. Love you both.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The nature of school counseling has undergone change since it became an integral part of U.S. education in the 20th century. Although the beginnings of school counseling can be traced to ancient history, the vocational guidance movement took root in the 20th century (Erford, 2018). Since then, the profession of school counseling has evolved from a vocational guidance focus to a more comprehensive developmental model that is preventative in nature and strives to meet the needs of the whole child. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019), which represents school counseling professionals across the United States, defined the role of the school counselor as "highly educated, professionally certified individuals who help students succeed in school and plan their career" (para. 1). Although ASCA (2019) advocates for school counselors' work to focus on prevention, short-term intervention, and crisis work rather than long-term counseling, there has been an increase in mental health concerns among school-aged youth (Lambie et al., 2019), which has led school counselors to assume more of a counselor role, as opposed to an educator one.

Part of the role ambiguity in school counseling is cause for concern with various job tasks assigned by administrators that sometimes do not relate to school counseling and carry high caseloads, training, and supervision requirements, leading to burnout (Blake, 2020). According to Bardhoshi et al. (2022), factors identified by school counselors experiencing high levels of burnout included misalignment with school counseling best practices and an unsupportive organizational culture, as well as noncounseling duties, high caseloads, and unclear job duties and/or expectations.

Bardhoshi et al.'s findings emphasized the importance of school counselor training and addressing the core dimensions of burnout, which may include being able to manage emotional exhaustion and having access to expanded clinical supervision experiences to combat feelings of incompetence.

The ASCA National Model is where supervision training is supposed to begin for many graduate-level school counseling students (Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007). Fye et al., (2020) explained that the ASCA National Model serves as a framework for school counseling practices; however, many school counselors are not familiar with it. In fact, over half of school counseling site supervisors polled in a study by Studer and Oberman (2006) stated that they were not working in or developing a comprehensive school counseling program. Furthermore, over half of the research participants reported not having any training in supervision. Supporting Studer and Oberman's findings, other researchers have asserted that professional school counselors are seldom prepared to supervise school-counselors-in-training (SCIT; Cigrand & Wood, 2011).

According to Bernard and Goodyear (2019), the role and purpose of supervision in the counseling profession is essential. Components of supervision include supervisee skill development and proficiency, evaluation, maintenance of professional standards, and gatekeeping. Learning is a central tenet within supervision (Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007); each session should be tailored to the individual needs of the supervisee and be flexible to what the supervisee brings to the supervisory session (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019).

The lack of evidence-based, ethically driven supervision training results in site supervisors feeling unprepared and ill equipped to provide effective supervision. This affects the SCIT as they could receive inadequate supervision that does not fully prepare them for their role as a school counselor. Additionally, the lack of sufficient training could affect university internship agreements as a poor supervision experience may cause a school counselor from taking other interns and may impact the overall partnership between the school and the university.

In this chapter, I will provide background information on the importance of school counseling site supervision training and the literature that supports the need for this study. Additionally, I will state the problem and purpose of the study. I will also provide operational definitions in this chapter, the main research question, and the conceptual framework supporting the study. Last, I discuss the assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations of the study.

Background

Supervision training, including models of supervision, has been focused on clinical counseling, missing a vital population, which is school counseling. According to the *ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (ASCA 2022), school counseling practicum or internship site supervisors should have the training and education to provide supervision and regularly attend professional development on the topic of supervision (Section D.b). In addition, the ethical code states that school counselor site supervisors should use a model of supervision that meets several criteria including professional growth, support of best practices and ethical guidelines, performance evaluation and

areas of growth, and case consultation (Section D.c). School counselors are taught the importance of following the recommendations outlined by ASCA, including program implementation based on the national model, as well as following the organization's ethical code.

Current literature suggests that professional school counselors are often not prepared to supervise SCITs (Brown & Carrola, 2022; Cigrand & Wood, 2011; Uellendahl & Tenebaum, 2015). According to Brown and Carrola (2022), school counselor site supervisors have a unique role in helping their interns take their basic skills and counseling theories and transform them into advanced practical applications, which helps to meet the unique needs of inexperienced counseling students. There is an absence of ongoing education and supervision for school counselors, making it challenging to gain additional knowledge about professional development, which is critical in the supervisory role (Gallo, 2013).

School counselors have many demands placed on them throughout their school day, and due to increasing caseloads, finding time for supervision or supervision training can be challenging. According to the ASCA (2016), the recommended student-to-school-counselor-ratio is 250:1. However, during the 2021–2022 school year, in the state of Kansas, the average ratio was 389:1, which is much higher (ASCA, n.d.-c). In some states such as Arizona, Indiana, and Michigan, the ratio was over 600 students per one school counselor. The number of students on a school counselor's caseload significantly affects their workday and does not allow for a lot of, if any, extra time for things like supervising interns. According to Brott et al. (2016), most school counselors do not

receive training on how to provide site supervision of interns while in their graduate

program, or through the school district in which they work. In a 2014 study by Cigrand et

al., nearly half of the participants who were school-based site supervisors reported that

they had not received site supervisor training and that their training came from learning

on the job while supervising a SCIT.

Counseling organizations such as ASCA and American Counseling Association,

as well as the current literature, support the need for knowledgeable and competent

supervisors who use a developmental framework when working with supervisees (Gallo,

2013). Selecting and implementing a model of supervision is critical for an organized,

intentional, and grounded approach to training school counseling students (Murphy &

Kaffenberger, 2007). Moreover, research has shown that most school counselors do not

receive adequate training in site supervision (Brott et al., 2016). Quality supervision of

school counseling practicum and internship students is critical if they are to be prepared

to meet the challenges of 21st-century schools (Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007). There is

a lack of research focused on understanding the role of a supervision model in school

counseling site supervision, and due to this gap in the literature, school counselor site

supervisors are not receiving evidence-based and ethical training prior to stepping into

the supervisory role.

Problem Statement

The 2016 Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational

Programs (CACREP) Standards state that site supervisors should have a minimum of 2

years of professional counseling experience, as well as "relevant training in counseling

supervision" (Section 3.P.5). The ASCA Ethical Standards (2022) similarly state that school counseling field supervisors should "have the education and training to provide clinical supervision and regularly pursue continuing education activities on both counseling and supervision topics and skills" (Section D.b., p. 9). Despite these standards, many school counselors do not receive training on supervision (Brown & Carrola, 2022; Stuckey, 2020), although many would like more supervision (Gallo, 2013). The lack of evidence-based, ethically driven supervision training could result in site supervisors feeling unprepared and ill equipped to provide effective supervision (Brown & Carrola, 2022). This lack of training affects the SCIT as they could receive inadequate supervision that does not fully prepare them for the role of a school counselor. Additionally, this could affect university internship agreements as a poor supervision experience may cause a school counselor not to take on other interns, which could affect the overall partnership between the school and the university.

Supervision models such as the integrated developmental model and the discrimination model both focus on the guiding principle that at various stages of the counselor-in-training's development, different approaches are required to help them develop in their practice (Brott et al., 2016). Although these two supervision models are directed toward clinical mental health counselors, their aim can be applied to the work of school counselors and their delivery of services. Furthermore, school counselors work in three specific domains: academic, career, and social/emotional. Therefore, school counseling supervisors need to move from supervision appropriate for a particular level of development in one domain to supervision appropriate for a different level of

development in another domain, often within the same supervision session (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). Proper supervision training, including the use of a supervision model in school counselor site supervision, is important, yet there is a lack of evidence to suggest that it is being done.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic, phenomenological study was to understand the preparedness levels of school counseling site supervisors, specifically to explore the training received on supervision models, to serve as a school counselor site supervisor. For this study, school counselor site supervisors were state-licensed school counselors who had spent a minimum of 2 years in the role of school counselor and who were actively providing supervision to a supervisee in their practicum or internship semesters or have previously served as a school counseling site supervisor. Through an evaluative format over time, the supervisory relationship strives to improve professional performance by monitoring the supervisee's quality of work, as well as performing key gatekeeping functions to the profession (Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007). This detailed understanding may increase the knowledge of what barriers exist for school counselor site supervisors to be successful at supervising from the lens of a supervision model with their school counselor supervisees and meet the CACREP and ASCA ethical standards for site supervisors.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of supervision preparedness among school counseling site supervisors?

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for the Study

Hermeneutic phenomenology was the conceptual framework. The aim of phenomenology, first developed by German philosopher Edmund Husserl, is to understand how individuals or groups describe and experience phenomena (Beck, 2019). Phenomenologists explore the meaning, essence, and structure of these experiences (Patton, 2015). When trying to understand a phenomenon, Husserl asserted that nothing should be assumed or taken for granted (Peoples, 2021). A concern for Husserl was epistemology, the study of knowledge, because he contended that an individual's experience is the basis of all knowledge (Beck, 2019). As an approach to studying lived experiences, he introduced phenomenological reduction, epoché, and bracketing (Dibley et al., 2020). Bracketing is the process of withholding judgment to focus on the phenomenon, leading to a deeper and more authentic understanding (Peoples, 2021).

The validity of Husserlian phenomenology has been scrutinized, specifically the idea of making meaning without preconceived ideas (Dibley et al., 2020). A student of Husserl, Martin Heidegger, advocated the idea of being in the world, which is an ontological view, which differed from Husserl's epistemological view, the idea of being of the world (Patton, 2015). The concept of Dasien, or "being there," is part of hermeneutic phenomenology (Beck, 2019; Peoples, 2021). This concept acknowledges the researcher's interaction with the study through the hermeneutic circle (Beck, 2019; Peoples, 2021). The hermeneutic circle, a key idea of Heidegger, states that individuals are unable to remove themselves from their own preunderstanding of their social situations (Beck. 2019; Dibley et al., 2020).

To analyze the data, I used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), which is one of many extensions of phenomenology (Patton, 2015). The ethos of IPA focuses on the analytics (Smith et al., 2021) and offers a practical application that is highly structured when exploring lived experience (Patton, 2015). The inductive and iterative cycle of IPA analysis involves drawing upon several strategies that have been described as collaborative, personal, intuitive, difficult, creative, intense, and conceptually demanding (Smith et al., 2021). Although the lived experience of the participant, along with their meaning making, is the primary concern of IPA, in the end, the results are how the analyst makes sense of the participant's meaning making, which is the double hermeneutic (Smith et al., 2021).

Additionally, I used social cognitive learning theory to further understand the level of supervision preparedness among school counseling site supervisors. Specifically, I used the theory to explore the ways in which school counseling site supervisors have learned and feel prepared to provide supervision to school counseling practicum or internship students, in the absence of formal, evidence-based training. The focus of phenomenology is to gain a deeper understanding of an individual's personal experience (Beck, 2019). Social cognitive learning theory (SCLT) provides a framework to understand how people learn from others and integrate the observed behaviors (Bandura, 2023). According to Bandura (1971), in the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others. What people learn through observing the actions and behaviors of others is heavily influenced by their distinct personal experiences (Bandura, 2023). In SCLT, the

acquisition of knowledge is influenced by factors such as attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1971). In the supervisory relationship, an important part of the learning process comes from the supervisee observing the behavior of the supervisor (Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015; Wilder et al., 2022). This learning process is consistent with SCLT, which highlights people's capacity to learn quickly through observation (Bandura, 2023).

According to Brown et al. (2017), self-efficacy is an important component of site supervision. Bandura (2001, as cited Brown et al., 2017) described the concept of self-efficacy as critical to human behavior because unless individuals believe that they can produce optimal results through their actions they have low incentive to act. Reflective thinking is encouraged in phenomenology (Beck, 2019), which is complimented by SCLT cognitive processes such as observation and imitation, attention and retention, motor reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 2023). Focusing on the role of an individual's experience, I used this theory to explore the process of observational learning outlined in SCLT, specifically how school counseling site supervisors acquire the knowledge and skills to feel prepared for supervision, in the absence of any formal training.

Nature of the Study

For this qualitative study, I used a hermeneutic phenomenological research design. The goal of the study was to understand the levels of supervision preparedness among school counseling site supervisors working with an SCIT during their practicum or internship experience. Existing literature indicates that training on supervision and the

use of supervision models is not being done (Brown & Carrola, 2022; Fall & Sutton, 2004; Page et al., 2001, Shechtman & Wirzberger, 1999). Additionally, most models and theories of counseling focus on community mental health but fail to acknowledge the unique responsibilities of SCITs (Magnuson et al., 2004). The measure of a competent school counselor includes many things such as being able to represent and meet the multiple and diverse needs of their students, respond to crisis situations, design and teach the curriculum in the areas of career, academic, and social-emotional, act as consultants and advocates, and gather and analyze data from their comprehensive program (Magnuson et al., 2004). A competent supervisor needs to be able to assess each of these areas through the lens of a developmental model, yet research shows that this type of training is not being done (Brott et al., 2016; Gallo, 2013; Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015).

In previous studies on school counselor supervision, researchers have acknowledged the disparity between school counseling-specific supervision models and clinical supervision models (Stuckey, 2020; Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015; Wilder et al., 2022). In this study, I focused on the lived experience of perceived preparedness for school counseling site supervisors. Sloan and Bowe (2014) stated that the preference in hermeneutic phenomenology is for the context of the phenomenon to dictate how data are analyzed instead of a more formalized approach. When attempting to understand individuals' lived experience and define its meaning, researchers must be able to read transcripts and uncover emergent themes (Sloan & Bowe, 2014; van Manen, 1997). van Manen (2016) described hermeneutic phenomenology as both a descriptive methodology,

as well as an interpretive methodology, explaining the importance of the researcher's ability to capture the language of an individual's lived experience. Hermeneutic phenomenology is an interpretive process. This can be difficult, making the phenomenological view of experience complex (Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

van Manen emphasized language, such as the interview text, as a source of data for hermeneutic phenomenology (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Furthermore, the researcher participates in the "hermeneutic circle," "between part of the text and the whole of the text, to establish truth by discovering phenomena and interpreting them" (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 1296). As a former school counselor, now counselor educator, I had my own experiences and biases related to the study topic, which is why the use of hermeneutic, phenomenological methodology was necessary. Sloan and Bowe (2014) stated that reflexivity is common in a hermeneutic, phenomenological approach, where the researcher can "allow his or her background, prior knowledge and experience of the research subject to influence the process of data gathering and analysis" (p. 1298). A hermeneutic phenomenological approach allowed me to place importance on the context of supervision preparedness for school counseling site supervisors, which is a large part of the uniqueness of the study. I engaged in reflexive journaling to ensure that my own biases were considered and set aside so they did not influence the lens through which I conceptualized the participants' experiences.

Exploring the preparedness levels of school counseling site supervisors may lead to the development of a supervision program or plan to help fill this gap. Not only are school counseling specific models and training critical to the development of SCITs, but

their use also helps to strengthen the professional identity of school counselors. With the ongoing issue of role ambiguity for school counselors over educator or counselor first, prioritizing effective training on and delivery of clinical supervision for school counselors is critical (Brott et al., 2016). The findings of this study may be beneficial to state and national school counselor associations, school districts, and counselor education programs as they support school counselor development and training for continued student success.

Definitions

School counseling supervisors: "Individuals who have a background and have held their certification in school counseling for at least 2 years, who infuse knowledge of supervision models specific to school counseling, ethics, social justice, professional development, leadership, advocacy, and other professional roles such as gatekeeping" (ASCA, 2021, para. 3).

School counseling supervisees: Master's level school counseling students who are enrolled in a CACREP-accredited program and who are in their practicum or internship semesters (ASCA, 2021; CACREP, 2016).

School counseling supervision: "An intensive, interpersonally focused, individual or small-group intervention delivered by a more senior member of the profession to a junior member to facilitate continued professional growth" (Bernard & Goodyear, 2021, para. 4; see also ASCA, 2021).

Supervision models: Models that "provide a conceptual framework for supervisors, and as such help make sure supervision is cohesive and guide supervisors

toward providing supervision that addresses their supervisees' needs" (Bernard & Goodyear, 2021, p. 19).

Assumptions

The first assumption was that the participants would each have their own individual and unique experiences and would honestly report those lived experiences. There was no guarantee that participants would have a shared, similar experience regarding their level of preparedness for becoming school counseling site supervisors and that their responses would be valuable sources of information. The second assumption was that the participant's experiences were subjective and shaped by social, cultural, and historical contexts. Everyone would have attended their own graduate-level school counseling program, which offered unique practicum and internship experiences, and had been hired in different buildings and districts that approach professional development differently. The third assumption was that school counseling site supervisors would trust my intentions to conduct this study and that spending time to build a trusting relationship with participants along with a nonjudgmental approach would help facilitate higher levels of self-disclosure. Finally, I assumed that the use of a qualitative design would provide rich data that highlighted the participants' lived experiences with site supervision preparedness. The findings of qualitative research are not generalizable to larger populations but can offer rich and in-depth understandings of the study phenomenon. Awareness of my assumptions was necessary to ensure that no biases were present as these could have influenced the data analysis. Additionally, I engaged in reflexive journaling to increase my awareness of any biases in the research.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was to learn from the perspectives of school counseling site supervisors on their level of supervision preparedness so that counselor educators and school districts may understand how to better prepare these individuals with ethical, evidence-based training. The exploration of these lived experiences may help to address the gap on ethical, evidence-based school counseling site supervision training. Additionally, there is limited research on the use of supervision models specific to school counseling, and the school-counseling-specific models that do exist have not been replicated enough in the literature to become a well-known practice within the profession (Wilder et al., 2022). By conducting this study, I hoped to provide evidence that either supports an existing model or highlights an entirely new model that is relevant and applicable to the school counselor's role.

To gain rich information from each participant's unique experience, I conducted individual, semistructured interviews. Therefore, I chose to do a qualitative study to learn in-depth information about the lived experiences of preparedness among school counselor site supervisors. I also selected SCLT as the theoretical framework because there is a dearth of literature on supervision preparedness through this theoretical lens. Although I am not able to generalize the findings of this study across all school counseling site supervisors, taking steps such as reaching data saturation and searching for confirming evidence may improve the overall quality of my research, including transferability (Beck, 2019).

Limitations

Limitations exist with any research study. According to Peoples (2021), limitations are methodological weaknesses over which the researcher has no control. Furthermore, they may influence the results of the study and should be addressed. Within phenomenological studies, common limitations include small sample sizes, time limitations, and bias in the participant sample (Peoples, 2021). I recruited a sample of six individuals and achieved saturation, discovering that none of the participants received formal training to prepare as a site supervisor. Furthermore, all six participants found individual ways in which they prepared for supervision.

Due to the nature of this study being hermeneutic phenomenology, which is considered an interpretive study, the researcher must start with acknowledging their own personal experience related to the study (Beck, 2019). According to van Manen (2016), "it is better to make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories" (p. 45). These could lead to researcher bias, which is another limitation. To address these limitations, I used reflexive journaling to help eliminate any bias, improving both the credibility and authenticity of the study

Significance

The landscape of public schools within the United States is changing, and the needs of students continue to rise. School counselors play a critical role in supporting student needs in the areas of social/emotional, academics, and career development. Providing quality supervision training to school counseling supervisees is imperative to their professional growth in being able to respond to the growing number of student

needs. Supervision provides a basis for one's professional standards and helps the student counselor develop and maintain clinical skills appropriate for school counseling (Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007). Furthermore, selecting and implementing a model of supervision is critical for an organized, intentional, and grounded approach to training school counseling students.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the supervision-preparedness levels among school counseling site supervisors because there is a gap in the literature on how the school counseling profession, specifically counselor educators, can provide ethical, evidence-based training in graduate programs. Preparing school counselors for site supervision is a required component of CACREP-accredited graduate-level programs and is included in the ASCA Ethical Code (Stuckey, 2020; Wilder et al., 2022). Despite these requirements, there is a gap in the literature on the lived experiences of preparedness levels of school counselor site supervisors. School counselors and counselor educators have an ethical obligation to provide evidence-based training to ensure that site supervisors are prepared for the supervision of SCIT to best prepare them for their future role as school counselor. In Chapter 2, I will review the current literature on school counselor site supervision, including the use of school counseling-specific supervision models, emphasizing the gap in the literature that supported the need for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Mental health needs among school-aged youth in the United States are increasing, with approximately 13%-20% of youth receiving a mental health diagnosis (Lambie et al., 2019). This increased need for mental health services in schools may create a challenge for school counselors who lack expertise or continuing education in this area. One of the ways in which school counselors can obtain this type of continuing education or training is through regular clinical supervision. The lack of evidence-based, ethically driven supervision training has adverse effects on site supervision, including site supervisors feeling unprepared and ill-equipped to provide effective supervision (Brown & Carrola, 2022; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Swank & Tyson, 2012). This impacts the SCIT as they could receive inadequate supervision that does not fully prepare them for the role as school counselor. While it may not be represented in recent literature, this could impact university internship agreements as a poor supervision experience may cause a school counselor from taking other interns and impact the overall partnership between the school and university (Shiveley & Poetter, 2002). To address the gap in the professional literature on school counselor site supervisors' perceived preparedness I provided a summary of the current literature as it relates to this topic. I described the literature search strategy employed, including a list of databases and key search terms used. The literature review is separated into key topics that include the role of the school counselor, the role of the site supervisor, school counseling site supervision, and supervision models.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature sources for this hermeneutic phenomenological study consisted of textbooks and peer-reviewed-journal articles. I searched the following databases and search engines within Walden University Library: PsychINFO, PschARTICLES, EBSCOhost, SAGE Journals, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, and Google Scholar. I used the following search terms, both individual and in combination: *school counselor*, *school counselor identity*, *supervision*, *site supervision*, *supervision models*, *counselor supervision*, *supervision ethics*, *counselor education*, *practicum supervision*, *student counselors*, *intern*, *ethics*, *best practice*, *school counselor identity*, *identity*, *role*, *ASCA*, and *CACREP*.

Results from the exhaustive literature search yielded valuable information on the topic of school counseling site supervision. Interestingly, there exists a myriad of evidence in the school counseling literature related to the evolution of the role of the school counselor, specifically the identity of the school counselor and whether it is predominantly focused on being an educator or counselor in real time (Betters-Bubon et al., 2021; DeKruyf et al., 2013; Lambie et al., 2019; Levy & Lemberger-Truelove, 2020). Along with that, professional terminology and best practices have transformed over time with the title shifting away from "guidance counselor" to "professional school counselor" and then "school counselor." Practices have shifted, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, that require more attention be paid to students' mental health challenges. Challenges remain in school counselor identity and understanding key responsibilities in the school counselor's role. For example, the shift from using the term

"professional school counselor" to "school counselor" was an ASCA-led movement that became the official language of the profession with the release of the updated "National Model for School Counseling" and the "Mindsets and Behaviors" in 2013 (Erford, 2018). It was prompted by conversations around nurses and social workers not finding it necessary to call themselves "professional nurses" or "professional social workers." School counselors questioned why they needed to include "professional" in their job title.

This movement changed the way school counselors introduced themselves, but the confusion over their role continued to plague the profession (Blake, 2020; Erford, 2018). This may be especially true in school counselor education programs where professional identity development is paramount to successfully passing curriculum but may not be represented out in the field. Through adequate site supervision, SCITs may have the role reinforced in their work, but without it, they may experience role ambiguity (Gibson et al., 2012). Role ambiguity can be described as "vague, incomplete, or inconsistent information or expectations regarding role responsibilities, how these responsibilities should be met, and how they will be evaluated," (Blake, 2020, p. 317). Role ambiguity has many consequences including low job satisfaction, higher burnout in the profession, and adversely affecting students' educational experiences (Bardhoshi et al., 2022; Blake, 2020). Professional identity and supervision are directly linked as so many things are transmitted through the supervision process, including attitude, knowledge, and skills of the profession (DeKruyf et al., 2013). Therefore, school counseling site supervisors play a key role in bridging the gap between program curriculum and real-world roles.

There is limited research that includes an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of school counselor site supervisors and their perceived preparedness to be the catalyst for role integration between graduate program expectations and becoming a practicing school counselor. There are a handful of articles published in the literature on supervision models specific to school counseling, but none of these studies have been replicated or adopted for use as a best practice according to the literature (Brott et al., 2016; Lambie & Sias, 2009; Luke & Bernard, 2006; Miserentino & Hannon, 2022; Wood & Rayle, 2006). Additionally, there is a similar study on school counseling site supervisors' perceived preparedness (Wambu & Myers, 2019), along with another dissertation (Stuckey, 2020), where both used a quantitative approach. Having conducted a recent, thorough search of the literature, I concluded that there is limited relevant research that provides an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of school counseling site supervisors about their perceived levels of supervision preparedness.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks provide stability and guide the research process, making the case for the relevancy and significance of how the design appropriately and rigorously answers the research question (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). For this study, hermeneutic phenomenology was the conceptual framework. Phenomenology, a philosophical tradition, was first developed by Edmund H. Husserl, a German philosopher, also known as the father of the philosophy of phenomenology (Beck, 2019; Dibley et al., 2020; Patton, 2015). The goal of phenomenology is to understand how people describe and experience things using their senses (Dibley et al, 2020; Patton,

2015). Phenomenologists explore the "meaning, structure, and essence" (p. 98) of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals or groups (Patton, 2015). Husserl asserted that individuals' understanding begins from their basic sensory experiences but that they must be able to interpret and describe that experience, which is the essence of meaning making (Beck, 2019; Patton, 2015). Furthermore, Dibley et al. (2020) explained that within a phenomenological view, multiple realities exist for groups of people who share the same experience.

Epistemology was a concern of Husserl, and he believed that experience was the foundation of all knowledge (Beck, 2019; Dibley et al., 2020). As an approach to the lived experience, Husserl suggested the use of three interchangeable entities known as phenomenological reduction, epoché, and bracketing (Dibley et al., 2020). Bracketing is the process in which the researcher withholds their judgment to focus on the phenomenon (Peoples, 2021). Dibley et al. (2020) explained that using these three things, the researcher sets aside their own understanding, opinion, and prejudice, and focuses solely on a deeper, more genuine understanding of the phenomenon (Dibley et al., 2020).

The validity of Husserlian phenomenology has been brought into question, specifically around the idea of making meaning of a specific phenomenon without any preconceived ideas (Dibley et al., 2020). Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, held an ontological view and believed more in the idea of being in the world, compared to Husserl, who believed in being of the world (Beck, 2019; Patton, 2015). Within hermeneutic phenomenology, there exists Dasien, or 'being there,' which allows the researcher to interact within the study through the hermeneutic circle (Beck, 2019;

Peoples, 2021). There is a place for the researcher's prior knowledge and through the

hermeneutic circle, going back and forth between questioning and our prior knowledge,

we begin to understand the deeper meaning of the lived experience (Beck, 2019; Dibley

et al., 2020). This was a key idea of Heidegger's perspective that states there is a pre-

existing understanding of our social situations in which we are unable to remove

ourselves (Dibley et al., 2020). He believed we cannot detach from it and therefore felt it

an important part of hermeneutic phenomenology (Beck, 2019; Dibley et al., 2020).

Therefore, Heideggerian hermeneutic design is the most appropriate fit for this study. In

interpretive phenomenology, also known as hermeneutic phenomenology, bracketing is

not part of the process for the researcher.

For the data analysis, I used IPA as the qualitative research approach for

examining how individuals make sense of their life experiences. The aim of IPA is to

engage with people's reflections on the significance of what is happening; underlying

IPA is the view that human beings are sense-making individuals (Smith et al., 2021). In

order to do this well, Smith et al. (2021) outlined seven steps for IPA data analysis,

starting with the first case, which include (a) reading and rereading, (b) exploratory note-

taking, (c) constructing experiential statements, (d) searching for connections across

experiential statements, (e) naming the personal experiential themes and consolidating

and organizing them in a table, (f) continuing the individual analysis of other cases, and

(g) working with personal experiential themes to develop group work experiential themes

across cases.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's SCLT was the theoretical framework for this study. Both SCLT and phenomenology focus on the individual's subjective lived experience (Bandura, 1971, 2023; Beck, 2019). I was interested in exploring the perceived preparedness levels of school counseling site supervisors, which could relate to their own learning through observation and imitation. There are two tenets of SCLT that this study was focused on, modeling and self-efficacy. A finding of Bandura stated that through the observation of others' behaviors, known as modeling, an individual can learn and experience subsequent behavior change (Bandura, 2023; Kress et al., 2020). Not only does modeling have an impact on behavior, but it can also change our thoughts about our abilities, which improves our self-efficacy (Bandura, 2023; Kress et al., 2020). Self-efficacy is shown to impact how people think, feel, find motivation, and behave. A SCIT may observe their site supervisor navigate through a challenging task, which according to social learning theory, can reduce fears and build a belief system around our own efforts to perform that same task (Kress et al., 2020).

This theory has significant relevance to a qualitative study on the lived experiences of school counseling site supervisors, as it shed light on the cognitive process and social interactions that share their behavior and beliefs in the absence of formal training. The theory states that individuals not only learn through their own direct experiences but also by observing, a process that is also known as observational learning (Bandura 1971, 2023). Within observational learning, individuals observe role models or peers and gain knowledge, skills, and attitudes through modeling their behavior (Bandura

1971, 2023). As it pertains to school counseling site supervisors this supports the idea that their experiences and behaviors may be influenced by observing and mirror the practices of other supervisors within the school setting.

Another element of SCLT is self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a task or behavior (Bandura, 1971, 2023). With the area of site supervision, self-efficacy is a critical component (Brown et al., 2017). According to Schunk (2012), self-efficacy influences behaviors and environments, which, in turn, affect self-efficacy. Things such as goals and achievements are outcomes of behaviors that self-efficacy has influenced, and in turn, feedback from teachers and social comparison with peers are examples of input from the environment (Schunk, 2012). Bandura (1971) explained the concept of self-efficacy as crucial to an individual's functioning because without the belief that they can find success through their actions, they will have little incentive to act. Through understanding the cognitive processes, social interactions, and environmental influences that are present in the lived experiences of school counseling site supervisors, through the lens of Bandura's SCLT, researchers may be able to better understand their professional development, challenges, and successes. Additionally, with this knowledge, we may be able to inform the development of training programs and support systems that impact the effectiveness of school counseling site supervision.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

The Evolution of School Counseling

According to Erford (2018), to gain insight into past mistakes and identify future opportunities, having historical knowledge of the school counseling profession is essential. Two of the earliest events in school counseling history date back to 1895, when George Merrill developed the first systematic vocational guidance program, and in 1898, when Jesse B. Davis began working as a counselor at Central High School in Detroit (Erford, 2018; Herr, 2013). While these were important contributions to the beginning of vocational guidance, it was Frank Parsons, a trained civil engineer and lawyer from Massachusetts, that focused his work on strengthening industrial education and created vocational guidance (Erford, 2018; Herr, 2013). According to Erford (2019), there was criticism of the schools for their exclusive focus on "book" work, rather than expanding the education scope to include industrial education. Dynamics of the Industrial Revolution, including the number of children working in factories, raised major concerns with child labor laws, and consequently opened opportunities for both social and educational reform (Erford, 2018; Herr, 2013).

For early school counselors, their role was focused on vocational guidance, helping with the school-to-work transition, recognizing that these early days focused on helping White, well-to-do, able-bodied men and not women or people of color (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2021). Erford (2018) stated that early in the 20th century, along with the emphasis of vocational guidance shaping the role of school counselor, there were five additional areas that also had an influence: student personnel administration,

psychologists, personnel work in industry, social work, and mental health and psychiatry. Gysbers (n.d.), Herr (2013), and Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2021) have further outlined the transformation of school counseling in the 20th century. In the 1920s, shaped by the mental hygiene, psychometric, and child study movements, there was a shift in school counseling from vocational guidance to counseling for personal adjustment. By the 1940s and 1950s, school counseling training saw a significant increase due to federal legislation, such as the Vocational Education Act of 1946 and the National Defense Education Act of 1958. In 1951, four organizations focused on school-based vocational guidance merged together: the American Personnel and Guidance Association, National Association of Guidance and Counselor, The Student Personnel Association for Teacher Education, and the National Vocational Guidance Association. Then, in 1952, ASCA was established as a division of the American Personnel and Guidance Association.

Elementary school counselors emerged in the 1960s, with the National Defense Education Act being amended to distinguish elementary separate from secondary school counseling (Gysbers, n.d.; Herr, 2013, Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2021). At the tail end of the 20th century and into the 21st century, states began to adopt state models of school counseling, defining roles and sorting through terminology, including whether to call is guidance counseling or school counseling (Gysbers, n.d.; Herr, 2013, Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2021). Again, in the 21st century, the debate continued where the school counselor should focus their efforts, including educational, career, or mental health. Some writers of these state models urged the adoption of an approach that emphasized all three: academic, career and social/emotional, and emphasize the importance of data to

guide the needs of each school counseling program (Gysbers, n.d.; Herr, 2013, Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2021).

School counseling programs were widely developed and implemented in large part due to the ASCA National Model, which was published in 2003 (Gysbers, n.d.; Herr, 2013, Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2021). Currently, school counselors are practicing according to the fourth edition, published in 2019. This framework includes four areas that include define, manage, deliver, and assess (ASCA, 2019). The purpose of this framework is to act as a guide for school counselors as they are responsible for the development and delivery of curriculum in the areas of career, academic, and social emotional development (ASCA, 2019). While the ASCA National Model (2019) includes counseling as one of the activities and strategies used in school counseling (Levy & Truelove, 2021), nowhere in this model does it address supervision, nor does ASCA define the supervisor's role in its school counselor role statement (ASCA, 2021). This lack of mention or support for supervision aligns more with education and not counseling, whereas in counseling the process of supervision is essential to new counselors' development (Levy & Truelove, 2021; Wilder et al., 2022). According to Gysbers (n.d.), the literature clearly points to an urgency around accountability, emphasizing the need for evaluation of programs to ensure effectiveness and improve the work of school counselors across the country, which includes who we are as a profession. Legislation mandating school counselors is not consistent across states, potentially making the role vulnerable to being omitted. This may cause school counselors to take on additional responsibilities, not necessarily aligned with the role. This role inconsistency

could lead to school counselors being thought of as disposable, or not as valuable as other roles in the school (ASCA*,* n.d.-a).

Issues of Professional Identity in School Counseling

There are several factors that should be considered for why the supervision of school counselors is challenging, one being role ambiguity, where many school counselors operate under poorly defined counseling roles (Baker et al., 2021; Blake, 2020; Magnuson et al., 2004). According to Blake (2020) role ambiguity is described as vague, incomplete, or inconsistent information or expectations about one's responsibilities, how they will be met and evaluated. Furthermore, the issue of role ambiguity can adversely affect a school counselor's ability to enhance a students' social and academic outcomes, as well as parents' perceptions of the school counselor's credibility and competence (Baker et al., 2021; Blake, 2020).

Throughout the evolution of school counseling, there have been role changes, shifting from vocational counselor to guidance counselor (Baker et al., 2021; Gysbers, 2010), and then towards more of a clinical counseling emphasis (Baker et al., 2021; DeKruyf et al., 2013). The issue of identity started in the 1960s and 1970s, with the debate over the school counselor's role being more psychological or more educational (Gysbers, 2010.). Studer and Oberman (2021) stated that a "major goal of ASCA is to have all professional school counselors speak with one voice regarding the definition of school counseling and to perform tasks that are consistent to the mission of the organization that represents school counselors in all settings." (p. 5). The ambiguous language is problematic as it lacks detail on what the "definition" of school counseling is.

According to Blake (2020), some of the reasons for role ambiguity include an unclear job description, the overlap of other similar professions, being supervised by administrators unfamiliar with the role of school counselor, evaluations that do not reflect the work of the school counselor, and conflict between their roles as counselor and educator. This is problematic as it leads to poor boundaries at work, where school counselors are asked to do an overwhelming amount of non-counseling duties that take away time they need to be working directly with students (Blake, 2020). Some examples of non-counselor or inappropriate duties for school counselors include building a master schedule, managing paperwork and data entry, test coordination, carrying out disciplinary actions, or assigning consequences (ASCA, 2019), including the use of corporal punishment in schools, which is still legal in 19 states in our country (Gershoff et al., 2019).

According to Blake (2020), when expectations of the job do not match the reality, when there is a lack of information to be effective at the job, or when there are multiple people to report to is when role ambiguity occurs. Statements made by ASCA about the role of the school counselor lack important detail and contribute to role confusion. ASCA (2019) clearly stated that school counselors are educators, but they also noted that an appropriate duty is to provide short-term counseling to students, both individual and small group. Further, in a position statement on the role of the school counselor as it relates to academic development, ASCA (2023) said that school counselors are "certified/licensed educators who improve student success for ALL students" by "aligning their school counseling program with the vision, mission, and goals of the school and district, emphasizing academic achievement" (Rationale section, para. 1).

Where ASCA aligns more with the educator side of the school counselor's identity, CACREP, the accrediting body of many counselor education programs, including school counselor education programs, align more with the counselor side of the identity. This is evident in many of the CACREP school counseling standards, including the school counselor's responsibility to student mental health, including knowing the characteristics, warning signs, and risk factors of students struggling with mental health issues and behavior disorders, knowing common medications that affect students' learning, behavior and mood, and signs and symptoms of substance use/abuse by students and/or family members living in the home (CACREP, 2016). Blake (2020) referred to school counselors as trained mental health professionals, and when the daily. Responsibilities of a school counselor are examined, much of their day is spent responding to students' mental health and behavioral issues. DeKruyf et al. (2013) also explained the importance of school counselors having a broad, multifaceted identity to meet the mental health needs of students.

Levy and Lemberger-Truelove (2020) argue that in clinical mental health counseling, the main concern is symptom reduction and that those professionals' work is based in philosophic theory. School counselors want the same thing for their students, symptom reduction that allows for learning and overall success in academics, social/emotional development, and postsecondary pursuits (ASCA, 2019). In addition, school counselors are also trained to use a theoretical approach in their work with students (CACREP, 2016), however, it may look different due to the lack of time they have to spend one-on-one with students (Blake, 2020). There are numerous reasons why

it is Important to clarify the school counselor's role to include mental health professional including the large number of students who have unmet mental health needs, the number of unmet referrals, and the link between the mental health professional role and the social-emotional dynamics that impact student achievement (DeKruyf et al., 2013).

Burnout Among School Counselors

DeKruyf et al. (2013) explained that the school counseling profession moved away from asking "What do school counselors do?" to "How have students benefited because of what school counselors do?" (p. 3). Both questions share a common theme that still does not have a clear answer. The confusion around what the specific job requirements are and the long list of job duties has been linked to burnout among novice school counselors (Bardoshi et al., 2022). Furthermore, Bardoshi et al. (2022) explained that while school counseling can be a meaningful occupation, it is demanding, leaving novice school counselors susceptible to constant emotional and interpersonal job stress and poorly affects their personal lives and wellness. New school counselors just entering the field who have not been adequately prepared, or have little to no support, may experience burnout and low job satisfaction, resulting in an early exit from the profession (Fye et al., 2020). There is a restorative function that supervision can facilitate through expressing and meeting the supervisee's needs to help them avoid burnout (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Bardoshi et al. (2022) found that the biggest theme across participants was support from their professional network such as colleagues and other counselors, as well as mentors and supervisors. Additionally, there were consistent responses about a

misalignment with their role and best practice, including non-counselor duties, high caseloads, and unclear job expectations (Bardoshi et al., 2022).

Current Legislation Related to Licensure of School Counselors

In consideration of the school counselor identity, it is important to note that some states, including Kansas and Missouri, do not require an individual to hold a teaching license prior to pursuing a graduate degree in school counseling. Kansas introduced a program called Parallel Pathways in the early 2000s that eliminated the requirement of having a teaching license and 5 years of experience. This was referred to as a "Direct Entry School Counselor" and required two additional courses over two semesters in student teaching (KSDE, n.d.). In February 2023, the Kansas State Board of Education adopted proposed amendments to teacher licensure regulations that included the "deletion of the requirement for a professional-level teaching license to qualify for a school counselor license" (Bush, n.d., para. 8). Also worth noting are the events of 2020, including the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in new pedagogical and mental health demands, the discourse surrounding various local and national elections that include legislation that could negatively impact public education, and new attention around racial and gender equity – which are all things that a school counselor's work is a part of navigating it in a way that is understandable and supportive (Levy & Lemberger-Truelove, 2021).

At the start of the 2017–2018 school year, officials in the Nebraska Department of Education changed their requirements for school counselors to no longer require 2 years of teaching to obtain a school counseling endorsement in the state (Hauserman, 2017).

Instead, they offered two pathways to school counselor licensure: (a) bachelor's degree in education plus a master's degree in school counseling or (b) a bachelor's degree in another field and the completion of an additional 12 semester hr of education-related coursework in areas of classroom management, lesson plan design, and differentiated instructional strategies (Hauserman, 2017). Missouri is another state that does not require an individual to possess a bachelor's degree in education from a state-approved teacher preparation program; rather, officials require additional coursework in classroom management, instruction, and teaching diverse learners. Some additional states that also do not require prior teaching experience or teaching certification to apply to a school counseling graduate program include Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, and Missouri (ASCA, n.d.-b).

The Role of Supervision in Shaping Professional Identity

Concerns over leadership and supervision of school counselors' dates back over 50 years (Gysbers, 2010). Becoming a competent supervisor requires more than mere experience (Merlin & Brendel, 2016, Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Stevens et al., 1997; Vidlack, 2002). According to Bernard and Goodyear (2019), to be a competent counseling supervisor, formal training is imperative. The gaps that exist in where and how this supervision training is obtained and verified continues to be an issue within the counseling profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). A 2015 study by Uellendahl and Tenebaum found that 41% of their respondents felt their counselor education programs do not prepare them at all for the role of the school counseling site supervisor (Wambu &

Myers, 2019). Two entities that have helped promote awareness around supervision training are state regulatory boards and professional associations.

In mental health settings, clinical supervision is well supported, but there is a lack of literature of clinical supervision in the school setting. Many state licensure boards require that clinical mental health professionals complete a significant number of clinical hours post-master's degree, ranging between 2,000 and 4,000 hr, that includes required supervision hours. For example, in Kansas, the requirement is 3,000 postgraduate hr, which includes a minimum of one hundred supervision hours, to be completed in no less than 24 months (Kansas Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board, n.d.). In comparison, school counselors have no postgraduate supervision requirements. Often, administrators are providing postgraduate supervision with no counseling experience or training, which limits the development of professional growth (Bledsoe et al., 2019). With staggering student statistics such as 1 in 5 children being diagnosed with a learning or attention disorder (Barto, n.d.), and nearly one third of students experiencing poor mental health, and 22% of students seriously considering attempting suicide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021) school counselor supervision is a critical component of the school counselor's ability to meet the needs of students (Lambie et al., 2019) and protect themselves from burnout (Fye et al., 2020).

Wambu and Myers (2019) found that only 21% of school counseling site supervisors thought that professional organizations were the most important source of information about school counseling supervision. ASCA offers courses through a professional development branch called "ASCA U" in which school counselors can pay

to take the course and become certified in several different areas. None of the courses are on the topic of supervision or address supervision within the course. While their ethical code addresses the importance of supervision training, there is a lack attention from the organization to prioritize the development of school counseling supervisors. This void in professional development from our national organization has major implications for our profession including adversely impacting our professional identity, role ambiguity, and burnout. While many school counselors look to their professional organizations as important sources of information, ASCA (2021) developed a position statement on the topic of supervision that points to the importance of having trained school counselor site supervisors, but points the responsibility to the graduate programs:

> Trained school counseling supervisors provide necessary professional development to assist school counselors and school-counselors-in-training to be well-prepared, skilled and competent practitioners. School counselor supervisors work to obtain professional development in supervision. Graduate programs training school counselors are expected to assist in training site supervisors. (p. 76)

CACREP and ASCA Site Supervision Standards

Both CACREP and ASCA have outlined ethical and accreditation standards for supervision in school counseling and its importance, but both lack the support for clinical supervision among school counselors (Wambu & Myers, 2019). ASCA (2022) identifies fourteen requirements for Practicum/internship site supervisors, including "have the education and training to provide school counseling supervision and regularly pursue

continuing education activities on both counseling and supervision topics and skills"
(D.b, p. 9) and "use a model of supervision that is developmental, ongoing and includes
but is not limited to promoting professional growth, supporting best practices and ethical
practice, assessing supervisee performance and developing plans for improvement, …"
(D.c, p. 9). According to the CACREP standards (2016), there are five qualifications for
site supervisors in Section 3.P that include a master's degree in counseling or related
field, relevant license or certification, a minimum of 2 years of professional experience in
the specialty area the student is studying, knowledge of program expectations,
requirements, and evaluation procedures, and relevant training in counseling supervision.
Often, school counselors receive little exposure to clinical supervision beyond what they
themselves received in their graduate program (Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Stuckey, 2020;
Wambu & Myers, 2019). This leaves a gap between what they received in their programs
and how they then go about providing supervision to other SCITs, beyond the minimal
training required by CACREP and ASCA to become a site supervisor (ASCA, 2019;
CACREP, 2016).

Gatekeeping in Supervision

A major responsibility of supervisors is to be a gatekeeper within the profession,
to ensure that the supervisee shows the necessary level of competence to advance to the
next level of training (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Burgess et al. (2023) states that
clinical supervision acts as a gatekeeping function as it ensures the well-being of students
and stakeholders that school counselors serve. The existing literature focuses more on
mental health counseling, leaving school counseling less defined and not researched as

frequently, resulting in challenges related to inconsistency and ineffectiveness (Burgess et al., 2023; Bledsoe et al., 2019). Site supervisors may find themselves working with a practicum and internship student, despite the disparity in providing supervision to school and mental health counselor-in-training versus (Burgess et al., 2023).

Site Supervision Training

According to Brown and Carrola (2022), school counseling site supervisors have the responsibility to transform supervisees' basic knowledge and skills into practical application to meet the developmental needs of their students. Many school counseling site supervisors feel they have not been properly trained for their role as a site supervisor, resulting in inadequate site supervision of their SCITs (Brown & Carrola, 2022; Fall & Sutton, 2004; Page et al., 2001, Shechtman & Wirzberger, 1999). In a study done by Wambu and Myers (2019), they found that 70% of their participants did not receive supervision training in their counseling programs. Due to the significant impact that school counselors have on the mental health of their students, it is critical to prepare effective school counselors who must be competent and engaged (Bardhoshi et al., 2022).

Previous studies have shown that school counseling supervisors who have been through training are more effective at meeting the needs of their supervisees than those who have not (Merlin & Brendel, 2017). Brott et al. (2016) stated that in determining their role as a supervisor, most school counselors base it upon their own experiences as interns, along with the evaluative supervision they receive from their building administrator. Previous studies reflect that school counselor site supervisors need supervision training, and with that there is an increase in overall self-efficacy, specifically

in teaching (Brott et al., 2016; Fye et al., 2020; Merlin & Brendel, 2017). The training

can be challenging to access outside academia with supervision courses not being offered

until the doctoral level.

Another factor is the lack of school counseling-specific models of supervision.

According to Wood and Rayle (2006), current models of clinical supervision do not

accurately reflect the unique needs of SCITs as they develop as professional school

counselors, such as academic planning, program development and implementation, needs

assessments and data analysis, parent-teacher conferences, delivery of curriculum

through classroom lessons, as well as leadership and advocacy, and post-secondary

planning. Although there are several school counseling specific models presented in the

literature, it is unclear that any have gained significant traction in the field (Widler et al.,

2022).

Importance of Effective Supervision

Both CACREP and ASCA outline the importance of counselor supervision

preparedness, CACREP in their standards (2016) and ASCA in their *Ethical Standards*

(2022). However, both lack specific details about what the training should entail. The

ASCA Ethical Standards (2022), state in Section D.c, that site supervisors should use a

"model of supervision," and then describe the components deemed important, including

development, promoting professional growth, best practices, ethical practices,

assessment, and improvement planning. There have been several school-counseling

specific supervision models developed, however, none have been replicated in the

literature enough to become a best practice in the profession (Brott et al., 2016; Lambie

& Sias, 2009; Luke & Bernard, 2006; Miserentino & Hannon, 2022; Wood & Rayle, 2006). Additionally, the *ASCA Ethical Standards* (2022) state the importance of SCITs be evaluated using a tool grounded in state and national standards, but no such tool exists to assess their competencies (Burgess et al., 2023).

Benefits of effective supervision include strengthening professional identity development, multicultural and social justice competence, and counseling competencies and student functioning (Hilts et al., 2022). Effective site supervision also impacts supervisor self-efficacy. Brown et al. (2017) stated that researchers (DeKruyf & Pehrsson, 2011) found that site supervisors with more than 40 hr of supervision training had higher supervisor self-efficacy than those with fewer hours of training. Existing literature supports the need for supervisor training, and that the training should include models of supervision as they provide an important framework (Brown et al., 2017).

Supervision Models

There are three major categories of clinical supervision models: (a) models grounded in psychotherapy, (b) developmental models, and (c) process models (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). The psychotherapy-based models the lens used in understanding their clinical work was also used in their work as a supervisor (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Some examples include Adlerian, reality, and cognitive-behavioral supervision. The developmental approach, specific to school counseling supervision, focuses on the SCIT's skills growing over time with a range of learning experiences and ongoing supervision (Miserentino & Hannon, 2022). The process models emerged from an emphasis on the educational and relational process of supervision (Bernard & Goodyear,

2019). Several creative models have been proposed by researchers to address the gaps in supervision models that effectively meet the needs of SCITs, including the goals, functions, roles, and systems model, as well as the school counseling supervision model (SCSM), which was built on Bernard's discrimination model (Brown et al., 2017; Hilts et al., 2022; Wood & Rayle, 2006).

The Discrimination Model

Bernard and Goodyear (2019) stated that effective supervisors of counseling and psychotherapy offer theoretically grounded supervision, and these models provide an important framework. The purpose of these models is to guide supervisors as they address the needs of their supervisees, the researchers noted. One of the process models is the discrimination model, which is considered one of the "most accessible models of clinical supervision" (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019, p. 46). It is situation specific, allowing the supervisor's role and focus to change within a session depending on the supervisee's needs (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019).

According to Bernard and Goodyear (2019), the discrimination model includes three focus areas, as well as three roles. The three focus areas are intervention, conceptualization, and personalization, and the three roles are teacher, counselor, and consultant. Within the area of intervention, the supervisor is focused on what the supervisor is doing in the session, including skills being demonstrated and interventions being delivered. In the area of conceptualization, the supervisor is focused on how the supervisee understands what is occurring in the session, along with how meaning making is occurring with clients, as well as understanding the cultural identity of the client. The

last area of focus is personalization, where the supervisor is looking at how the supervisee incorporates a personal style within counseling, while at the same time ensuring the session remains free of personal issue, biases, and countertransference. Within this model, the supervisor establishes a focus area, while also choosing a role that helps accomplish their supervision goals. When the supervisor needs structure, instruction, modeling, or direct feedback, the teacher role is assumed. When the goal is to enhance the supervisor's reflectivity, specifically their inner affective reality, the role of counselor is assumed. Last, when the supervisee needs thoughts or actions challenged or encouragement to trust their insights, the supervisor would take on a more collegial role as the consultant.

The structure of the discrimination model has been described as a "tangible" way to design and deliver supervision services for a particular supervision session (Luke & Bernard, 2006, p. 283). Additionally, this model is among the most researched, and the findings of various studies that have tested this model to date generally support it (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Interview questions (see Appendix A) and content were intentionally developed through the lens of the discrimination model to address these components of supervision.

School Counseling Supervision Model

Another model that assisted in the development of the participant questions was the SCSM, specifically on the topic of supervision expectations. Existing literature tells us that there is a lack of clinical supervision in the school setting (Luke & Bernard, 2006). While it is an important and necessary part of training for school counselors,

establishing a consistent and meaningful presence in the school context has failed (Luke & Bernard, 2006). One of the reasons for this is due to the unique role of the school counselor compared to that of a clinical counselor, and models of supervision being designed to meet the needs of clinical work.

The SCSM is an extension of the discrimination model. The SCSM is based on five premises that include:

a) all four domains of Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (CSCP) are amenable to clinical supervision; b) school counselor supervisors must attend to the supervision of functions outside of individual and group counseling; c) the technical eclecticism of the Discrimination Model is beneficial for working with school counseling supervisees; d) each of the four CSCP domains requires skills that are reflected in the Discrimination Model; and e) the social role postures that are helpful in the supervision of individual counseling are relevant to all CSCP domains. (Luke & Bernard, 2006, p. 286)

The use of this model should serve to balance other models of supervision that focus solely on therapeutic counseling and meet the unique needs of school counseling supervisees. Luke and Bernard (2006) also stated that the use of the SCSM with school counseling supervisees will be advantageous because it is aligned with a school counselors' role, which is something many other supervision models lack.

The Goals, Functions, Roles, and Systems Model

This model will be utilized to develop questions about how to meet the specific needs of school counselors during school counseling supervision. The goals, functions,

roles, and systems model is a school counseling-specific model used during school counseling supervision, specifically with SCIT (Wood & Rayle, 2006). The topic of school counseling-specific supervision has been overlooked in counselor training and preparation programs, in spite of literature that tells us that having such specialized supervision could increase "effectiveness and accountability, improved school counseling skills and understanding of expectations, enhanced professional development, and improved job performance, confidence, and comfort" (Wood & Rayle, 2006, p. 253). This model draws on the work of the working alliance model of supervision (Bordin, 1983) and the discrimination model (Bernard, 1979).

School counselors have struggled to engage in on-going supervision, despite the availability of these supervision models. Additional training could make them more effective site supervisors and could also increase their self-efficacy (Brown et al., 2017). The reasons that they are struggling to engage could be due to the amount of non-counselor duties that they are asked to do, the high number of students on their caseloads (*Student-to-school-counselor ratio 2021-2022*, n.d.), no expectations set by their administrator, no state-mandated areas of professional development such as supervision or intervention, and no additional pay is offered. Being asked to complete non-counselor duties such as paperwork and other administrative tasks is stressful and can lead to burnout (Bardoshi et al., 2022), so school counselors who are feeling this way would likely not seek out training since it would be a task added to their already full schedule.

Summary and Conclusions

In conclusion, the role of the school counselor has evolved over time with the emphasis shifting from vocational guidance educator to school counselor. The debate over the professional identity development and role of school counselors remains. Are we a profession of educators or counselors? Within this duality lies many issues that may impact the effectiveness of the school counselor with regard to providing adequate supervision and training of SCITs. Site supervision is a critical component to the development of SCITs. The important role that site supervisors play in the development of SCITs is complicated by the lack of formal training in supervision models and techniques. There is little research to determine the perceived level of site supervisor preparedness as well as the factors that contribute to the perceived level of preparedness. This study may provide insight into how to better prepare our school counselor site supervisors and also inform professional practices around school counselor professional development offerings, helping to potentially ensure more training opportunities on the topic of supervision at the graduate level, district level, as well as state and national levels. With previous studies on school-counseling-specific supervision models, the need for school counseling supervision training, and one other quantitative study on school counseling supervision preparedness levels, this hermeneutic phenomenological study will explore the lived experiences of preparedness levels among school counseling site supervisors.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the preparedness levels of school counseling site supervisors, specifically to explore the training received on supervision models, to serve as a school counselor site supervisor. Hermeneutic phenomenology as the conceptual framework allowed me to explore perceived preparedness levels in school counseling site supervisors. I used IPA to analyze the data and social cognitive learning theory as the theoretical lens through which I view the data. In this chapter, I provide the specific research plan for the study, including a description of the research design and rationale. Additionally, the chapter includes a discussion of the role of the researcher, methodology, data analysis plan, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

The beginning of any qualitative study includes an interest, problem, or question and ends with an understanding of how people make sense of that, also called meaning making (Beck, 2019; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In this hermeneutic, phenomenological study, I sought to understand the following research question: What are the lived experiences of supervision preparedness among school counseling site supervisors?

The central phenomenon I explored in this study is supervision preparedness among school counseling site supervisors. To address the research question, I drew from hermeneutic phenomenology. By using the analytical process in IPA with hermeneutic

phenomenology, I was able to listen to the participants make meaning of their perceived preparedness in school counseling site supervision, while also attempting to interpret the meaning, which is referred to as double hermeneutic process (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Everyone's perception of what supervision preparedness looks like and feels like will be unique, which is why a qualitative phenomenological approach is the best fit to capture the lived experiences of each individual site supervisor. While other qualitative approaches, such as grounded theory, would have allowed me to develop theory (concepts, models, ideas) that would come from this data, I would have had to bracket out my presuppositions. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher does not need to bracket, rather they acknowledge and state the assumptions and pre-understandings brought to the study (Dibley, et al., 2020). In IPA, there is a dual focus on both the participant and researcher's meaning making (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

Role of the Researcher

For this research, as prescribed by hermeneutic phenomenology, my role was participant-researcher. The researcher is the instrument in qualitative research (Patton, 2015). Dibley et al. (2020) stated that in hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher brings their own background and pre-understandings, which contributes to the interpretation of data. For this reason, I conducted semistructured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews to elicit rich, detailed, and first-person accounts of the lived experiences of school counseling site supervisors. Without proper consideration of the role of the researcher, the integrity of the study could be compromised. In consideration of this, I was transparent with the participants regarding my interest and relationship to this study

to protect any personal assumptions, beliefs, or biases that could influence the analysis and ultimately the results (Peoples, 2020). I was intentional in the design of my research questions to elicit rich information about this phenomenon and encourage participants to authentically share their experiences.

Positionality

As the primary instrument in this qualitative study (Patton, 2015), it is important to acknowledge positionality, or the close relationship to the phenomenon. I am a licensed school specialist in the state of Kansas, with 6 years of school counseling experience at the elementary level. I am also a Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Kansas, with over 6 years of experience working with kids and adolescents in a private practice setting. For the past 4 years, I have been a full-time counselor educator and supervisor, managing the school counseling track. Additionally, for the past 4 years I have been a doctoral student at Walden University, pursuing my PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision. With all of this in mind, I engaged in reflexive journaling to ensure a lack of bias.

Prior to enrolling in a doctoral program, I had no exposure to supervision training, including supervision models. I have seen how beneficial this information has been in my own faculty supervision with students, specifically the developmental models. Additionally, I have seen gaps in supervision training and am familiar with the scheduling barriers that exist for school counselors to attend a training session, even if offered virtually. Lastly, I have seen adverse student experiences, including interpersonal issues and training deficiencies, as a result of poor site supervision. For these reasons, I

was interested in exploring the lived experiences of perceived preparedness levels for site supervisors.

Participants were practicing school counselors; therefore, it is believed that there was no power differential between us. However, due to my role as counselor educator, there could have been a perceived power differential that could have influenced the dynamics between myself and the participants. In some cases, participants may feel an obligation to align with the researcher's knowledge. Reflexive journaling helped me to reflect on my own biases and assumptions, along with any power dynamics throughout the research process. Additionally, I did not conduct this study at my place of work, nor use any of my students as they are not qualified participants for the study. I offered a $15 gift card as a gift in gratitude of participation at the onset of the interview.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach for this study provided a better understanding of the lived experience of preparedness levels of school counseling site supervisors. This study was open to any school counseling site supervisor who met the operational definition of having "a background [in] and having held their certification in school counseling for at least two years" (ASCA, 2021, para. 3). Data saturation is a critical component of rigor in qualitative research (Beck, 2019). To reach data saturation, I recruited six participants for this study. The goal of saturation means that the characteristics within themes or categories that emerged from analysis are saturated (Beck, 2019).

Purposeful sampling is most common in qualitative research, allowing the researcher to choose participants for specific reasons, such as experience (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Using purposive sampling, I used three listserv platforms, ASCA Scene, KSDE listserv, and CES-net. Additionally, I used social media, such as LinkedIn and Facebook Groups for School Counselors for recruiting. For all these platforms, I developed a flyer (see Appendix B) that was distributed that includes a description of the study, criteria, purpose, along with the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval number. My contact information was included for interested participants to reach out. Additionally, I used snowball sampling to gain participants and reach data saturation. Once I gained interest through emails, I followed up with informed consent, which participants may sign electronically stating, "I consent" and schedule a time for the interview. Interviews were conducted via videoconferencing call, where I captured audio-only recording. I adhered to the inclusion criteria for the study to increase trustworthiness. The exclusion criteria are individuals that had fewer than 2 years of school counseling site supervisor experience and those who had not had a practicum or internship student previously.

Instrumentation

I created a semi structured interview protocol for each 60-min individual interview to explore participant descriptions of their lived experiences with preparedness levels of school counselor site supervision. The semistructured, open-ended interview questions (see Appendix A) align with phenomenology as the conceptual framework and evolve with the study as the participants share their lived experiences and their meaning

making processes (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Additionally, semistructured interview questions were intentionally designed to be process-oriented and exploratory in search of the participant's understandings of their experiences (Smith & Larkin, 2021). My dissertation committee members and IRB personnel reviewed and approved the interview questions and protocol, as well as content validity.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Once I secured IRB approval to start data collection, I began recruiting my participants. Using purposive sampling, I used three listserv platforms, ASCA Scene, KSDE listserv, and CES-net. Additionally, I used social media, such as LinkedIn and Facebook Groups for School Counselors for recruiting. For all these platforms, I developed a flyer to be distributed that included a description of the study, criteria, purpose, along with the IRB approval number. My contact information was also included so that interested participants could reach out to me via phone or email to learn more about the study. During the initial conversation with potential participants, I provide them with an overview of the study, asked screening questions (see Appendix C) to confirm they meet the inclusion criteria, and answered any questions they have regarding the study. For those individuals that fit the inclusion criteria and agree to be interviewed, I provided the informed consent document via email to review. To return the informed consent; they emailed the words "I consent."

After gaining consent, I began data collection by scheduling a one-time, 1-hr, audio-recorded interview with each participant. In accordance with IPA, I anticipated reaching data saturation with six to ten participants (Smith et al., 2021). I offered an in-

person option for the interview, in a reserved-room at a local university, or via Zoom. I utilized my smartphone to record the interview, using the voice memo app.

I followed an interview protocol the day of the interview (see Appendix A for the questions). In accordance with Smith et al. (2021), I asked questions using interviewing skills such as trust and rapport building, nonverbal attending, and asking general warm-up questions so the participant did not feel as though I jumped in too quickly, requiring assistance or feeling uncertainty in their responses (Smith et al., 2021). I made sure to be flexible, taking on the role of active listener, and probing when appropriate to inquire more about the interesting or important things being said (Smith et al., 2021).

At the start of each interview, I offered each participant a $15 gift card to express my gratitude for their time. To audio record the interview content, I used a voice memo app on a device with two-factor authentication. I strived to minimize risk and harm to the participants by maintaining a nonjudgmental demeanor throughout the interview. During the interviews, I did not provide my own personal opinions, or share personal experiences or beliefs on the topic. Strategies that enhance the overall quality of qualitative research are important, and reflexive journaling helps to ensure the research is credible and authentic (Beck, 2019). To elicit in-depth, thoughtful responses, I asked open-ended questions, to ensure the questions I asked were clearly understandable, attended to the responses through minimal encouragers, and probed as appropriate when clarification is necessary (Patton, 2015). To ensure data accuracy, I worked with my dissertation committee members, engage in member checking, and took memo notes following each interview. Because researcher bias exists and cannot be excluded completely, I engaged

in reflexive journaling to mitigate it throughout the process. To protect my data, I backed-up all files to an external flash drive and place one hard copy in a secure location in my office.

In accordance with IPA, I transcribed the first interview before going on to conduct additional interviews to review my guide and interviewing strategies, along with my committee Chair (Smith et al., 2021). After completing all interviews, and transcription, I summarized each interview for each participant to engage in member checking. Summaries of themes were sent to each participant for review and feedback to ensure that I captured their lived experiences accurately. I asked that feedback be given within 10 days of sending the summaries. This was an important step as participants may have wanted to clarify or deepen their responses or offer new observations to enrich the data (Patton, 2015). Lastly, I committed to providing interested participants with the published article stemming from the results of this dissertation.

Data Analysis Plan

IPA data analysis is an iterative and inductive cycle (Smith et al., 2021). For this analysis, I will follow the detailed 7-step process that includes; 1) reading and re-reading beginning with the first case, 2) exploratory noting, 3) constructing experiential statements, 4) searching for connections across experiential statements, 5) naming the personal experiential themes and consolidating and organizing them in a table, 6) continuing the individual analysis of other cases, and 7) working with personal experiential themes to develop group experiential themes across cases (Smith et al. 2021). To begin, I immersed myself in the interview transcript data, reading and re-reading it. I

did this following the first interview, prior to beginning another interview to ensure that the participant's account of their lived experience was captured. Additionally, this helped inform me if there were any changes that needed to be made to my interview approach. As I immersed myself in the data, I kept exploratory notes in the margins of the transcripts, not bracketing my own thoughts and connections being made. By doing this, my hope was that it reduced any anxiety in the analysis and allowed me to remain focused on the data itself (Smith et al., 2021). I kept paper copies of the transcripts for my exploratory notes, even though IPA allows you the option to do this on the computer screen, with notes added in the outside margins (Smith et al., 2021). Notes can be descriptive and focused on various things such as content, meaning, emotion, and linguistics as reported by the participants (Smith et al., 2021). As I re-read transcripts, I used a conceptual approach, questioning the meaning, commenting on similarities and differences, repeated content that appears amplified, and any contradictions that are evident (Smith et al., 2021).

Once that was complete, I began identifying themes in the data. In this step, I ensured my notes felt more stable, unlike the loose and casual notes that I began with (Smith et al., 2021). Utilizing the hermeneutic circle, I went back and forth from the transcript to my notes, continuing to analyze and make connections to the participant's lived experience (Smith et al., 2021). At this point, emergent themes began to arise in the data. Finally, I constructed a pattern of emergent themes, mapped connections, and eliminated data that no longer fit (see Smith et al., 2021). I used the process of clustering to complete this final step that identified the final themes.

The theoretical framework in this study is SCLT, which focuses on new patterns of behavior that can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others Bandura (1971). This theory states that people learn by observing and mimicking the behavior of others and that learning is influenced by factors such as attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1971). I used this theory as a lens through which I explored how school counseling site supervisors acquire the knowledge and skills to feel prepared forsupervision, in the absence of any formal training. I looked through the lens of each component: observation and imitation, attention and retention, motor reproduction, motivation, and cognitive processes.

Issues of Trustworthiness

A thorough review of the literature was performed, to support and show any contradictions in my findings to address issues of trustworthiness in the study (Patton, 2015). I created inclusion and exclusion criteria (see screening questions in Appendix C) to make my sample purposeful and homogeneous to show credibility and dependability (Patton, 2015; Smith et al., 2021). The goal of qualitative research differs from quantitative because the goal is not generalizability, but transferability. IPA studies exceed the validity standards of research that is labeled 'good enough' because of their usefulness and transferability (Smith et al., 2021). My data analysis plan included member checking, which supports confirmability. Reflexivity allows for exploration of one's own experiences and preconceptions as part of the process to further understand the lived experiences of the participants (Smith et al., 2021). Using reflexive journaling, I stated my connection to the study that may contribute to bias and engaged with my

committee members to review my coding procedures and data analysis plan. Lastly, I gained IRB approval of my interview protocol to ensure content validity (Patton, 2015).

Credibility

Credibility is about the truth and confidence of the research findings (Beck, 2019; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). In order to establish credibility in a study the researcher must structure it in a way that attends to the complexity of the research design process (Ravitch & Carl, 2019), which can be achieved through strategies such as triangulation, prolonged engagement, presenting thick description, reflexive journaling, using peer debriefers, and/or development of a coding system and inter-rater reliability (Beck, 2015; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). According to Ravitch and Carl (2019), two questions to consider when looking at the credibility of the study include, "How do I engage with and understand patterns that I see in the data?" and "How do I ensure that my assumptions and biases are challenged as I interpret and make sense of the data?" (p. 171).

I sought credibility in my research study through providing specific methods and procedures for data collection and analysis. I used reflexive journaling to mitigate my biases during the research process, used theoretically driven sampling, used audio-recording and verbatim transcription, reached saturation of data, and engaged in a peer-review and debrief process with the participants (see Beck, 2015; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is about generalizability (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). To achieve transferability in a study, the researcher must use methods such as incorporating thick descriptions and reaching data saturation (Beck, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). I used both methods in this study for transferability. By using these methods, the researcher is helping the reader decide whether the findings support transfer (Beck, 2019). While qualitative research is not designed to generalize to broader populations, my hope is that readers would find the results of the study informative.

Dependability

Dependability speaks to the stability of the research to stand over time (Beck, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Dependability ensures that the researcher intentionally selects the way they collected data and that the method they are using is appropriate for what they are studying (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Through consultation with my supervising committee member, I vetted my research design, looked at limitations, considered the appropriateness of the method, and the level of rigor in my study. Additionally, I used strategies such as careful documentation, triangulation, and member checking to ensure dependability (Beck, 2019).

Confirmability

Confirmability helps to increase the objectivity of the study (Beck, 2019). I addressed this through careful documentation with transcripts, notes, tables built directly from participants' language, with the goal to reduce the likelihood of personal interpretation. I engaged in reflexive journaling to address the possibility of researcher

bias. Through the reflexive journaling, I reflected on the data and emergent themes using both voice memos and journaling.

Ethical Procedures

My goal as a researcher was to ensure the safety, security, and confidentiality of my participants. Before data collection begins, I obtained approval from Walden's IRB. The purpose of the IRB is to "ensure that all Walden University research complies with the university's ethical standards as well as U.S. federal regulations" (Walden University, n.cd., para. 1). My dissertation committee reviewed my study as well, recommending necessary changes and ensuring that I maintained the highest quality and research ethics throughout the study. I thoroughly screened the participants and provided each with the opportunity to review the informed consent form and agree to engage in the study. The informed consent document explained the purpose, benefits, risks, and limitations of participating in the study, along with the time commitment, confidentiality procedures, and voluntary nature of the study. Last, I informed each participant that their data would be housed on a password-protected laptop computer and that any paper files would be housed in a locked file cabinet in my office for a period of 5 years. Per Walden's procedures, I shared how the final study findings will be disseminated to the participant.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a thorough explanation of the research design that I used, including the rationale for the chosen tradition. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological design, I explored the perceived preparedness levels of school counseling site supervisors. I provided an explanation of my role as the researcher,

including an any biases that my exist. I detailed my recruitment procedures, along with my data analysis plan, which will use IPA. Last, I discussed issues of trustworthiness in my study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Within the counseling profession, the role and purpose of supervision is essential (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). While the *ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (2022) state the importance of practicum/internship supervisors having the training and education to provide supervision and regularly engage in professional development on the topic of supervision (Section D.b), current literature suggests that school counselors are often not prepared to supervise SCITs (Brown & Carrola, 2022; Cigrand & Wood, 2011; Uellendahl & Tenebaum, 2015). The absence of evidence-based, ethically driven supervision training has had adverse effects on site supervision, including site supervisors feeling unprepared and ill-equipped to provide effective supervision (Brown & Carrola, 2022; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Swank & Tyson, 2012). This can lead to frustration, low self-efficacy, and/or confusion about professional identity, which ultimately results in early burnout and school counselors leaving the profession (Bardoshi et al., 2022; Tang, 2020; Wilder et al., 2022).

The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic, phenomenological study was to understand the preparedness levels of school counseling site supervisors, who play a critical role in the oversight and supervision of SCITs, specifically to explore the training they received on supervision models prior to becoming a school counselor site supervisor. The study responds to the need for a more detailed understanding of what barriers exist for school counselor site supervisors to be successful at supervision from the lens of a supervision model with their SCIT and meet both the CACREP and ASCA

ethical standards for site supervisors (Gallo, 2013; Wambu & Myers, 2019; Wilder et al.,

2022). I investigated the experiences of school counselor site supervisors, including their

perspective of the supervisory relationship, challenges they have faced providing

supervision, and how they prepared for their role as a site supervisor. The study provided

evidence that can be used to inform the school counseling community about best

practices when preparing to take on a SCIT to ensure proper development is occurring to

better prepare them for the role, in turn, resulting in better care and stronger school

counseling programs yielding higher student success rates.

In this chapter I provide a detailed description of the research process and

procedures that lead to the overarching themes that emerged from the data. Additionally,

I detail the setting, participant demographics and characteristics that were relevant to the

study, a data collection description, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness which

includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability that enhances the

study's rigor, and last I will provide the results of the study.

Setting

Interviews took place in my private home office through virtual Zoom video calls.

Participants participated in their individual school offices, with their doors shut to ensure

privacy. In two of the interviews, participants had to step away to respond to a knock at

their office door before quickly returning to the interview. The virtual interviews allowed

for a broader range of participants from across the United States, and it provided an ease

and convenience for school counselors to participate during or at the conclusion of their

busy workday. All of the interviews for this study occurred over the course of 5 weeks.

Demographics

All participants self-reported demographic information at the beginning of the interview process. Participants were individuals from across the United States, in Kansas, North Carolina, and Wisconsin. Participants were all licensed school counselors who have or are currently serving as site supervisors, at either the elementary or secondary level. Table 1 includes participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Current level (elementary, middle, or high)	Years of experience as a school counselor	No. of supervisees	Gender (male or female)
R01	High	18	10	Female
R02	High	13	3	Male
R03	High	20	5	Female
R04	Elementary	20	5	Female
R05	Elementary	10	3	Female
R06	Middle/high	11	4	Male

Data Collection

Data was collected from six participants over a 5-week time period. All participants graduated from a CACREP-accredited counseling program and had experience in school counseling site supervision, either at the elementary or secondary level. Over the 5 weeks, I used three listserv platforms (ASCA Scene, KSDE listserv, and CES-net) for recruitment, as well as social media sites. Potential participants were sent the informed consent to review and responded that they understood the study by replying with "I consent" to participate. After receiving consent from each participant, I sent a

scheduling email to find a date and time that would be mutually agreeable for the 60-min virtual interview. I conducted all interviews virtually through Zoom; each interview lasted approximately 45 min. Participants could not elaborate on two of the eight questions, which cut the interviews short of the estimated 60-min time frame. Those questions were "Did you use a supervision model?" and "Tell me about your experience using the chosen model." The subquestion for the first question was, "If yes, which supervision model did you utilize?" The subquestions for the second questions were "What did you like?," "What did you dislike?," and "What kind of professional development was observed?" All six participants reported that they did not use a supervision model; therefore, none could tell me about their experience using the chosen model. Participant R06 learned of the discrimination model at the ASCA National Conference breakout session but did not know a lot about it, nor did he use it in supervision.

I began each interview by reviewing the purpose of the study and research question. Additionally, I reviewed informed consent, told each of them that they would get a copy of the published article, and asked if they had any questions or concerns. Using the interview guide with semistructured questions (see Appendix A), I asked all eight open-ended questions, with additional probing questions to gather more information about their experience as a site supervisor. The interviews allowed the participants to share anything they chose to about their experiences that was not shared in their responses to the eight, structured questions. I audio-recorded each Zoom interview using my smartphone, via the voice memo app.

At the conclusion of each interview, I used reflexive journaling to record my thoughts, reflections, or other considerations of the interview process. All interviews were transcribed by hand and then checked for accuracy against the audio recordings. I deleted any identifying information from the interview transcripts, including their names and university or agency affiliation to ensure no one could identify the participants. I stored all of the audio recordings, transcripts, and supporting materials on a password-protected computer.

Data Analysis

I used IPA for my data analysis, which is an iterative and inductive cycle (Beck, 2019; Smith et al., 2021). Furthermore, I followed Smith's stages for IPA as I analyzed the data from my study. At the completion of each interview, I wrote reflections and understandings in a reflexive journal before completing the following interview, which enhances the trustworthiness (Beck, 2019). These reflections that followed each interview helped me refine my interview techniques, ensuring consistency throughout all six interviews, and helped with self-reflection to identify any biases, assumptions or preconceptions that could influence the interview process and analysis. All of this helped create an awareness that contributed to the rigor of the study.

The goal of the first stage of IPA is to establish the participant as the focus of analysis (Smith et al., 2021). I transcribed the interviews by hand using the audio recordings from my smartphone device. According to Smith et al. (2021), the beginning process of analysis can induce the feeling of being overwhelmed by ideas and possible connections. To lower the noise level, the interviews were listened to again using

headphones, as the transcripts were reviewed and I began the personal process of making meaning from participants' narratives (Beck, 2019; Smith et al, 2021). I made a mental shift, adopting the stance of phenomenological reduction, where the researcher positions herself to perceive the written discussion as a phenomenon that was experienced, and not merely events to be interpreted.

In the next phase of analysis, I used exploratory noting to gain more familiarity with the data, which consisted of keeping an open mind and noting anything of interest in the transcript (Smith et al., 2021). To accomplish this, I listened to the audio recordings a third time and re-read the transcripts, enacting the hermeneutic circle. This iterative and circular process of understanding helped me with the vast amount of information from each interview as I sought to interpret individual parts of the transcripts, as they relate to the whole. Each iteration deepens the interpretation, allowing for a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015; Smith et al., 2021). In some cases, I used more descriptive content to encapsulate what the participant was communicating and other times there are key words or phrases that provided an explanation of what the participant said, which are both part of exploratory commenting (Smith et al., 2021). This is an important step, noting anything of interest in the transcript, with the goal to develop a "comprehensive and detailed set of notes and comments on the data" (Smith et al., 2021, p. 78). Some of the key words and phrases that were captured include, "professionalism is important," "observation is important," "constant communication," "focusing on building a solid relationship," and "providing a lot of different experiences." At this stage the researcher might involve personal reflection,

inevitably drawing on their own experience or professional knowledge according to Smith et al. (2021), and as both a counselor educator and supervisor (CES), along with being a CES doctoral student, I found myself drawing on my own experiences within site supervision and my knowledge of supervision models while working with my students in their practicum and internship semesters. Reflexive journaling helped me engage in reflection, discussion, and refinement of my ideas. Using both audio notes and written notes, I recorded thoughts and ideas that I had following each interview. I found myself brainstorming solutions after discovering the lack of training that exists for school counseling site supervisors. Ideas like presenting at both local and national conferences on the topic, partnering with local school districts to train their school counselors, and even publishing a manual that walks school counselor site supervisors through how to provide purposeful, evidence-based supervision with the use of a supervision model.

Experiential statements should connect directly to the participant's experiences (Smith et al., 2021). At this stage, it is important that the researcher make a statement about the analytic work with the goal of producing a more accurate summary of what was important in the transcript notes (Smith et al., 2021). Some examples of the exploratory notes I created are, "personality of the supervisor is important," "wanting to create a good experience for the supervisee is important," "finding different things for the supervisee to observe helped with the annoyance of having them sitting around the counseling office," "a bad supervising experience can prohibit a site from taking future supervisees," and "a shared viewpoint on supervision can be beneficial to the supervisory relationship."

For the next step in the data review process, the researcher begins to link statements together as a way of connecting and building a structure called clustering (Smith et al., 2021). I achieved this by building a spreadsheet with a collection of experiential statements that were color-coded by cluster. I created seven clusters: professionalism, observation/shadowing, communication/feedback, supervision relationships, real-world experiences, comfortableness, and supervision training and preparedness.

In this next step, I used the clusters of the experiential statements from the data to build a table of all the personal experiential themes, which are at the highest-level organization in the table. According to Smith et al. (2021), personal indicates that they are developed from the person whose data is being analyzed, where experience relates directly to the participant's experience, and themes because there is now evidence of analytic properties within the data. I identified and named the personal experiential themes individually, with each transcript before moving onto the next, as outlined in the next step of IPA.

In the last stage of my analysis, I looked for patterns that were the same and/or different across the personal experiential themes. This resulted in the identification of four group experiential themes: (a) site supervisor training and preparedness, (b) communication and feedback challenges, (c) purpose and/or goal of supervision, and (d) university partnership. These themes were identified by conducting a cross-case analysis of the data, highlighting shared and unique traits of the experiences of all my participants.

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I did not find any discrepant data to report.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, I was attentive to enhancing trustworthiness. The standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability help assess the rigor in qualitative research. Therefore, it is important to note I took steps to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability within my data collection and analysis processes.

Credibility

Credibility speaks to the confidence a researcher can have in the truth of the study's findings (Beck, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). To establish credibility, I used various strategies including informed consent, using an interview guide, and reflexive journaling. With the goal of wanting participants to feel comfortable and open to sharing their lived experiences of site supervision preparedness, I created my informed consent document to include information about confidentiality, as well as language that permitted the participants to exit the study at any point. Reflexive journaling helped to establish credibility, allowing me to document my own beliefs, biases, and assumptions through self-reflection. Additionally, it helped provide transparency by focusing on my own influence on data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Beck, 2015; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Through that process I was able to intentionally bracket my own biases in this study. An interview guide was used in each interview to encourage consistency in the discussions. I also engaged in member checks, emailing each

participant the four themes and three subthemes that emerged from this study, soliciting

feedback in the form of questions or comments, to enhance the credibility of my study

findings.

Transferability

Within my research, I sought to understand, and not to generalize to others. The

focus of this study was to explore the experiences of my participants' perceived

preparedness levels in their work as school counselor site supervisors. I addressed

transferability by focusing on rich details, also called thick descriptions, and by adhering

to the same time frame in each of the six semistructured interviews that were conducted

(Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Karl, 2019). Additionally, the nature of semistructured

interviews not only allowed for a consistency due to all participants being asked the same

question, but also allowed for specific and tailored follow-up questions (Patton, 2015;

Ravitch & Karl, 2019). I also adhered to a 45–60-min time frame for all participants.

Throughout data collection and analysis, I monitored the process and noted the point I

reached data saturation and when I noticed common themes between and among the

participants. I documented my observations by keeping comprehensive field notes when

reviewing transcripts and listening to the audio recordings of the interviews.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is about the stability of the data (Beck, 2015;

Ravitch & Karl, 2019), which means there is a degree of consistency. To address

dependability in my study, I consulted with my supervising committee member, I vetted

my research design, looking at limitation and appropriateness of the method, and level of

rigor. Using triangulation of data sources, I compared and analyzed themes with existing research in counselor education and supervision. Lastly, I used member checking and emailed the four themes and three subthemes to all my participants. According to Beck (2015), member checking is of little value in determining validity or achieving reliability. This is an important consideration as I did not hear back from any of my participants with comments or questions on the findings, and do not believe that impacted the validity or reliability of my results.

Confirmability

To increase the objectivity of the study, I addressed confirmability through careful documentation (Beck, 2015). I kept careful documentation with transcripts, notes, tables built directly from participant language, reducing the likelihood for personal interpretation. Lastly, to address the possibility of researcher bias, throughout the process I reflected on the data and emergent themes, using both voice memos and journaling. Reflexive journaling helped me understand my role as researcher, address bias, as well as the research process. Additionally, it assisted in the audit trail for confirmability.

Results

The hermeneutic phenomenological design allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of school counseling site supervisors' lived experience around preparedness. I listened to participants' experiences through in-depth, semistructured interviews. Participants discussed their experience with site supervision, what works in site supervision, what challenges exist in site supervision, their perspective of the

supervisory relationship, the ways in which they prepared to be a site supervisor, and if they utilize a supervision model.

The research question—What are the lived experiences of supervision preparedness among school counseling site supervisors?—underpinned the study, including the data collection and analysis. I identified four emergent themes and three subthemes: (a) absence of supervision training and preparedness, with the subtheme of individual preparation; (b) the impact of communication and feedback on supervisee development; (c) the importance of university partnerships; and (d) the purpose of supervision, with the subthemes of building important relationships with students and offering real-world experiences. Table 2 provides example quotations for each theme and subtheme.

Table 2

Emergent Themes Related to Supervision Preparedness

Emergent theme	Example quote
Absence of supervision training and preparedness (Theme 1)	"You would think it's such a critical role working with students, their mental health…all that different stuff that goes into our counseling world, that there'd be some kind of formal training. Instead, it's like, okay, I'm breathing, therefore I can be a site supervisor." (Participant R06)
Individual preparation (Subtheme A)	"I thought back to when I was the intern and thought about my experiences with my supervisors." (Participant R05)
The impact of communication and feedback on supervisee development (Theme 2)	"School counselors should have the ability to have tough conversations…however, we are very avoidant of conflict, wanting to keep things peaceful. By glossing over these things, ultimately, we're hurting the kids that these individuals will serve." (Participants R02)
The importance of university partnership	"We (the university and site supervisor) have to be very transparent and honest because we have to be able to trust each other. The partnership in graduating these students, not just the university, but site supervisors being able to say, yes, they are ready." (Participant R01)
Purpose of supervision (Theme 4)	"The purpose [of supervision] is to give the intern a real-world view of what we do as school counselors. As the mentors, who have more experience and knowledge who take that and developmentally break it down to their [supervisee] level." (Participant R06)
Building supportive relationships with students (Subtheme A)	"Developing relationships with the supervisees is one of the reasons I enjoy supervision the most." (Participant R04)
Offering real-world experiences (Subtheme B)	"Providing hands-on experience in an important aspect of the supervisory relationship." (Participant R05)

Theme 1: Absence of Supervision Training and Preparedness

All six participants discussed the absence of supervision training and preparedness, specifically how it impacted their experience with their first supervisee. Participant R01 stated, "That first year I was ready to go, but really, I didn't know what to do. So, they just kind of sat and watched me, and followed me around. It was weird for everybody." Participant R06 questioned their effectiveness with their first intern, stating, "I just pulled things out of the air, hoping that would be enough to get them what they needed. I would give them things I didn't want to do. I felt unprepared, but I did the best I could." These results align with Merlin-Knoblich et al., (2018) who stated, despite professional standards (both CACREP and ASCA), many school counselors are serving as site supervisors without any supervision training. Additionally, site supervisors who had been through training reported improved self-efficacy in their role (Brott et al., 2016; Wilder et al., 2022). Participant R04 discussed two training classes that she had to complete in her state prior to becoming a site supervisor, but upon further discussion, she said this:

> I had to take two classes to become a site supervisor. The first one was a 6-week class, called Clinical Ed Refresher Course that was all online. The class was meant for more of an assistant principal and wasn't geared towards school counseling.

She went on to say that the course content did not help her to become a site supervisor. Participant R03 explained, "I just did it [site supervision] because I was the person nearest to her [supervisee] with the most [school counseling] experience…but I haven't

had any training." Participant R02 discussed his interest in attending a training if one were offered, but also shared in the interview that he had not received any formal training to become a site supervisor.

None of the participants stated that they used a supervision model. All six participants reported not having been trained on a supervision model. Wilder et al. (2022) stated that models of supervision provide a conceptual and theoretical framework for site supervisors, outlining various tasks and roles of supervision. School counseling-specific supervision models take into account the unique roles of school counselors and have the potential to improve the professional identity of school counselors, contributing to the school counseling field as well as benefiting the overall well-being and success of students within the school (Wilder et al., 2022). Participant R04 stated, "It would be nice to have a universal model for supervision in the schools for school counseling." Despite the many models that have been published, not one has gained enough traction within the field to be universally known and utilized. Without formal training in how to provide effective supervision or how to utilize supervision models, all participants created their own unique path to preparedness in the role of site supervisor.

Subtheme A: Individual Preparation

While all six participants discussed the absence of any formal supervision training applicable to school counseling, they all explained what they did on their own to prepare to become a site supervisor. Some drew upon their own experiences to understand how they wanted to provide supervision. Participant R05 explained that while she received no "official formal training," she thought back to when she was a supervisee and the

experiences she had with her supervisors. This aligns with the understanding that a mixed assortment of techniques will be utilized in the absence of supervision training, including knowledge of university requirements, techniques based on their counseling skills, and personal experiences (Merlin Knoblich, 2018). Additionally, when asked about how she prepared for site supervision in the absence of formal training, Participant R03 stated the following: "Reading stuff on my own about qualities of adult and student leadership helped, along with solution-focused counseling that I learned in grad school that has always been my fallback go-to way I approach people."

Participant R01 and R02 both stated that their approach to preparation was about finding what works and doing more of that. If this did not work, they stopped. Participant R01 explained her preparation with her first supervisee, saying, "I was truly just kind of googling anything how to, like counseling supervisor, school counseling experiences…grasping at straws." She told me how quickly she realized that things were not working for her or her student. Participant R01 said,

> I'm just kind of a go-getter…after the first couple weeks with my first intern, I knew this was not working for me and certainly was not serving the student. So, I went back to the drawing board and devised a plan with my whole goal being to serve the student.

Participant R02 stated, "I jump into it [supervision] and then once we start doing those hours of supervision, then I keep realizing what we need to work on next. So, I'm not too prepared, more so adjusting all the time." Participant R03 explained that she approached. her preparation by asking what she would have wanted, which lead her to talking

honestly with her supervisees, providing tips and providing a thorough explanation of everything that she is doing. Communication was another emergent theme that all participants discussed as part of their site supervision preparedness experience.

Theme 2: The Impact of Communication and Feedback on Supervisee Development

According to Brown et al. (2017), research indicates that providing training to site supervisors overseeing interns in mental health settings can lead to substantial improvements in the supervisor's self-efficacy. Bandura (2023) stated that "self-efficacy beliefs, that is, people's beliefs about their capabilities to exert control over the diverse challenges of their lives" (p. 7). This is particularly important in the area of communication, where feedback has a critical impact on the supervisee's development. All six of the participants discussed the challenges of communication and providing feedback to their supervisee. Participant R05 noted an awkwardness that she felt when giving feedback to her first supervisee. Participant R02 explained that being counselors, we should be able to have difficult conversations, "if anyone should have those skills, it should be us." He went onto say, "Sometimes we are very avoidant of conflict and we should be able to speak up and say this is something I need more of or we need to keep working on this." Participant R01 described her early experiences with providing constructive feedback:

> I don't want to be mean, and I felt like if I were being critical, I was being mean. I
> realized that being critical, giving constructive criticism is just that. It's to give
> constructive criticism. I was so afraid to give any type of feedback that indicated

they needed to do something a little differently that I wasn't effective in helping

them correct some of those things.

She went onto explain the importance of providing newer site supervisors the correct

verbiage or ideas on how to provide constructive criticism, but still maintaining the

relationship would be beneficial, since that relationship is so critical to their development.

Participant R05 shared a similar hope, "If there was training that helped teach how to

have those difficult conversations, guidelines to follow, I think that would be great too."

Participant R03 discussed the differences in feedback with supervisees in

practicum versus internship, and the evaluation systems in supervision. She believes that

supervisees in practicum have a harder time listening to feedback than those in internship.

She said, "I try to make sure I talk to them specifically about things…being really

specific." Adding, that with the evaluation systems, "If you have a supervisee that is

under the top number it feels punitive." Participant R05 explained the importance of

providing feedback in a way that doesn't destroy their confidence, "Phrasing things in a

way that is helpful, and doesn't ruin their confidence is important." Evaluations were

discussed a few times with study participants, as they related to the university

partnerships and having a full understanding of expectations for supervision prior to

starting with their supervisee.

Theme 3: The Importance of University Partnership

All six participants discussed the importance of university partnership within

supervision in the areas of communication, expectations, and trust. Participant R02, R03,

and R04 all spoke about wanting more from the university on what the expectations are for supervision. Participant R03 said,

> We should be trained on what are the expectations of the university. It would be nice to have a class on how to supervise them, even troubleshooting. I think we need to learn about how to mentor and what the supervision expectations are.

Participant R02 also discussed how beneficial it would be to have a general understanding of what the university expectations are as it relates to time spent doing various things in the school. Participant R03 shared that she would be interested to get feedback from the university about what they want her to be focused on throughout the semester, even sharing their own preliminary observations of the student with her up to that point. Participants R01 and R02 also shared that sentiment, that knowing the supervisee's strengths and areas of growth up front would be beneficial information. Participant R01 explained, "We need to be honest and transparent with each other, be able to trust each other, because the partnership, not just the university, but the partnership is graduating these students. It's all our responsibilities." Participant R03 discussed how he thinks it would be nice to hear from the university ahead of time on a supervisee's strengths and/or areas of growth, but in the placement process, "they [school districts] assign them [students] wherever they want, so we lose control of being able to foster a good match." He went on to say how important that "right match" is in the supervisory relationship.

Theme 4: The Purpose of Supervision

All six participants described the purpose of supervision when discussing their preparedness levels. There were varying responses on the purpose of supervision, but two subthemes emerged: building relationships and offering real-world experiences.

Subtheme A: Building Supportive Relationships With Students

Five out of the six participants discussed the importance of building supportive relationships with students. Park et al. (2019) stated that previous research has demonstrated that the supervisory relationship impacts the supervision process and outcomes. Furthermore, satisfaction in the supervisory relationship refers to the perception of a supervisor's quality and competency, awareness of a supervisee's behavior, and the level of comfort when expressing one's thoughts (Park et al., 2019). Participant R05 explained:

> It's really important to have that relationship and making sure the supervisee feels comfortable with me so that they are able to ask questions and can stop me if they're not sure about something. I think that's really number one. …I know that during practicum it's very new and fresh for them, and I don't want to overwhelm or stress them out during that experience.

Participant R01 discussed the importance of a supervisor taking on a supervisee stating, "what works in the supervision relationship is making sure that the person who is the supervisor truly wants to be a supervisor." She went onto explain the importance of making the supervisee feel welcomed into the school, being kind, and ultimately serving the student by teaching them and honing their school counseling skills. Participant R02

discussed the importance of making sure the supervisor and supervisee are a good match, which comes with its own set of challenges when the placements are set. He explained that the beliefs around what school counseling is should align. Baker et al. (2021) stated that school counselors are among the limited number of professions still uncertain about their role. When asked what makes the supervisory relationship successful, Participant R02 went onto say, "Having the same viewpoint on what school counseling is can help the overall success of the relationship." Participant R06 learned to prioritize the relationship, stating, "Building the relationship at the very beginning was the most important." Four of the six participants who spoke about the importance of building a good relationship with their supervisee, discussed doing it mainly so their supervisee felt comfortable. Comfortableness in asking questions and advocating for things they felt ready to experience or discussing when they did not feel ready.

Subtheme B: Offering Real-World Experiences

When discussing the purpose of the supervisory relationship, a second subtheme emerged. Five of the participants spoke about the importance of providing real-world experiences. Participant R06 stated, "The purpose of supervision is to give the supervisee real-world experiences, a real-world view of what the role is." Prior to Participant R06 attending the ASCA's national conference and participating in a breakout session on school counseling supervision, this individual discussed how he would give supervisees the leftover job duties, things that he did not have time for nor preferred to do. He gained an awareness of what that practice was doing during his ASCA breakout session, stating that the trainer explained when school counselor site supervisors do that, you are only

showing the supervisee what the role looks like with non-preferred duties, rather than showing them the full experience of what a school counselor's role truly is. Participant R05 shared, "Giving supervisees a range of different things so they can see the wide array of things school counselors do in their day is an important part of their skill development." Supervision provides opportunities for the supervisees to learn new skills that are required to effectively address the needs of all students (Brott et al., 2016; Wilder et al., 2022). Intentionality was a large part of the discussion around providing real-world experiences. Participant R01 shared that shortly after her first supervisee started with her, she realized the lack of structure in the day was not working and felt uncomfortable. Participant R02 and R06 also shared an awkwardness when supervisees did not have things to do.

Observation was an important variable in the discussions of real-world experiences. The five participants who discussed the importance of real-world experiences also stressed the need for observation. Both the supervisee observing the site supervisor, but also the site supervisor observing the supervisee. Participant R06 shared, "Let the supervisee shadow you every step of the way." This helps build self-efficacy so they can eventually do things independently. Participant R03 also shared, "Observe and provide positive feedback so they know they can do this." Participant R05 said, "Observing your intern to make sure they are learning and practicing."

Summary

This chapter highlighted the research process and results of the current study to answer the question, "What are the lived experiences of supervision preparedness among

school counseling site supervisors?" I explained in detail the research process including data collection and analysis. I provided demographics of the participants. The four emergent themes that appeared through the process included absence of supervision training and preparation, communication/feedback experiences and the impact on supervisee development, university partnership, and the purpose of supervision. I also discussed the two subthemes that emerged from the data as well, which included individual preparation and building supportive relationships with SCITs. These themes and subthemes illustrate the lived experiences of supervision preparedness among school counseling site supervisors. In the next chapter, I will explore the interpretation of the emergent themes, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications for future research in school counseling site supervision.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the results of school counselor site supervisors' lived experiences of supervision preparedness through their narratives and will structure the results through Bandura's SCLT. This is a qualitative, hermeneutic, phenomenological study that sought to understand the preparedness levels of school counseling site supervisors, specifically to explore the training received on supervision models, to serve as a school counselor site supervisor. I used IPA for data collection and analysis and interviewed six participants across the United States. All six participants were licensed school counselors who have served or were currently serving as site supervisors. During data collection, I used semistructured interviews, that were audio-recorded, each one hand-transcribed.. The research question for this study was, What are the lived experiences of supervision preparedness among school counseling site supervisors? This study provides a deeper understanding of the essential role of school counseling site supervisors, including how they prepared to become a site supervisor, their successes and struggles within the supervisory relationship, and their perspective of the supervisory relationship in school counseling supervision. Data analysis yielded four themes: (a) absence of supervision training and preparedness, (b) the impact of communication and feedback on supervisee development, (c) the importance of university partnerships,; and (d) the purpose of supervision. This chapter includes an interpretation of the findings, guided by SCLT to describe the lived experiences of supervision preparedness among school counseling site supervisors. Additionally, I will summarize the limitations of this

study, provide recommendations for future research, and explain implications of my
research.

Interpretation of the Findings

Existing literature on school counselor site supervision dates back almost 2
decades and looks at the absence of formal training, a handful of supervision models
specific to school counseling, and the disparity between post-graduate supervision
requirements in the clinical domain compared to school counseling (Brott et al., 2016;
Gallo, 2013; Luke & Bernard, 2006; Studer & Oberman, 2006; Wood & Rayle, 2006).
This hermeneutic study provides insight on participants' perceived preparedness levels of
school counseling site supervisors which could relate to their own learning through
observation and imitation, which are two tenets of SCLT. I examined responses to the
research question: What are the lived experiences of supervision preparedness among
school counseling site supervisors? through the lens of Bandura's SCLT (Bandura, 1971,
2023). From the data collection and analysis, four themes and three subthemes emerged:
(a) absence of supervision training and preparedness, with the subtheme of individual
preparation; (b) the impact of communication and feedback on supervisee development;
(c) the importance of university partnerships; and (d) the purpose of supervision, with the
subthemes of building important relationships with students and offering real-world
experiences.

Theme 1: Absence of Supervision Training and Preparedness

This study provided an exploration into the experiences of the participants' training and preparedness in becoming school counseling site supervisors. All participants noted the absence of any formal training specific to school counseling site supervision that prepared them for the role. Participants shared the importance of providing as many real-life experiences as possible but did not have a solid idea of what that looked like when they first began. This information is in accordance with existing literature on the topic of supervision preparedness and has implications on the professional identity of school counselors (Blake, 2020; Brott et al., 2016; Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015; Wilder et al., 2022). Blake (2020) discussed the issues with role ambiguity because of unclear job descriptions, noncounselor duties, and conflict between the role of counselor and educator. One participant noted that the initial experiences that they were providing to their supervisee did not paint an accurate picture of what the role of school counselor was because they were assigning them the responsibilities they did not want to attend to. Wilder et al. (2022) noted the absence of standardized training for school counselor site supervisors and emphasized the importance of practicum and internships experiences to shaping a practitioner's counselor identity. When school counselor site supervisors do not have a clear understanding of what supervision should look like, specifically in the day-to-day functions of what the supervisee should be observing, further illustrates the ongoing issue of professional identity and the absence of supervision training.

The subtheme of individual preparation emerged as a result of each participant finding their own way to prepare themselves, only after realizing what they had originally planned was not working. Each participant drew from several points of reference when figuring out what site supervision should look like, including internet searches, leadership references, and their own personal experiences. These results are consistent with existing literature, including a study by Cigrand et al. (2014) that found out of 74 school counselors in the United States, 49% reported having not received any site supervision training. Additionally, in the absence of supervision training, site supervisors rely on myriad of techniques, which can be problematic as they are utilizing things that they are familiar with, as opposed to best practices in the field (Brott et al., 2016; Merlin-Knoblich et al., 2018). Bernard and Goodyear (2019) explained that formal training is imperative to becoming a competent counseling supervisor, but where and how the training is obtained and verified continues to be an issue within the profession.

One participant noted the turning point in their school counseling site supervision journey, which was a breakout session offered at the ASCA's national conference. In a study conducted by Wambu and Myers (2019), almost a quarter of the participants thought that professional organizations were the most important source of information about school counseling supervision. Prior to that, in the absence of training, this participant did not know about effective supervision, noting how pivotal that one training session was for their work with supervisees and that since then, he has been unsuccessful at finding any helpful literature on providing site supervision to SCITs. All participants

spoke of the necessity for some type of universal model for supervision in school counseling, and that a how-to training manual would be very beneficial.

When we consider that school counselors spend most of their day responding to the mental health and behavioral needs of students (Blake, 2020), being able to train them in this area is imperative to overall student success. CACREP (2016) school counseling standards include the importance of school counselors being able to respond to student mental health concerns, which includes being familiar with the characteristics, warning signs, and risk factors, along with being trained to use a theoretical approach in their work with students. Providing site supervision training, specific to this area is important to ensure the development of supervisees to meet the ongoing mental health needs of student, impacting the overall academic success of students. Bardhoshi et al., 2022 noted the significant impact that school counselors have on the mental health of their students, it is imperative to prepare effective school counselors who must be competent and engaged.

Theme 2: The Impact of Communication and Feedback on Supervisee Development

SCITs rely upon their site supervisors to bridge theory and practice, making supervision essential in the developmental process (Brown et al., 2017). Providing clear and intentional feedback is an important part of the supervision process and learning experiences (Wilder et al., 2022). According to Bernard and Goodyear (2019), some site supervisors have hesitation in this evaluative portion of their role which was congruent with the findings in this study. The was true for participants specifically around providing verbal feedback and evaluation. All six participants noted a feeling of discomfort when

providing constructive criticism to their supervisees, at least initially. While all participants agreed that feedback is essential in supervision, wanting to see their supervisee grow, they also shared the struggle with how to do that effectively, without damaging the supervisory relationship. Participant R01 expressed the importance of training new site supervisors on how to provide this beneficial feedback, while Participant R05 discussed how helpful it would be to have training around having difficult conversations with supervisees, making sure to navigate well to preserve the relationship, as well as when things get serious enough to engage the university for support.

Theme 3: The Importance of University Partnership

The importance of the university partnership was another theme that emerged in this study. All six participants discussed various things that they would like to see improve in the area of university communication including expectations, as well as transparency between the university and site about the incoming supervisee including strengths and areas of growth, and how the supervisee will be evaluated along with evaluation criterion. Participant R02 stated,

> University communication ahead of time about the supervisee's areas of strength
> and areas of growth would be beneficial to the site supervisor. Also understanding
> the university expectations as it relates to time spent doing various things in the
> school.

Three of the other participants discussed this same thing, emphasizing that along with stated expectations for supervision, that information from the university about the

supervisee's strengths and areas of growth would be beneficial to know prior to the supervisee starting at the site. This is the same sentiment that Wilder et al. (2022) discussed, a noted area for improvement within site supervision is clear communication between the counselor educator and the site supervisor, specifically around expectations of the student. Counselor educators are primarily responsible for initiating and maintaining communication with site supervisors primarily related to program expectations, but there is also a responsibility of site supervisors to intentionally connect with counselor educators as well (Wilder et al., 2022). Aligning expectations and responsibilities will decrease stress, as well as role confusion for the supervisee. Lastly, Participant R02 and R05 discussed the idea of being able to interview the supervisee beforehand to see if the placement would be a good fit. Participant R05 explained that graduate programs lose control at the district level when site supervisors are chosen stating, "There is no consideration given to whether or not it would be a good match because they do not know anything about the supervisee." This can create challenges to building a successful relationship, which is a subtheme that emerged and will be discussed more later.

Time was another factor discussed with participants on the topic of supervision training considerations. Four of the six participants noted the importance of time being a factor to consider when preparing for site supervision. With so much of the school day being consumed with direct services, such as classroom lessons, individual and small group counseling, crisis response, and post-secondary planning, there is little time for other things or to break away from the school setting to attend a training. It is important

to protect school counselors from burnout by being mindful of everything that they balance throughout the school day, acknowledging that the position is demanding and can leave school counselors vulnerable to emotional and interpersonal job stress (Bardoshi et al., 2022). Providing flexible training options like offering it online and being mindful of the duration of the training were discussed. One participant noted that too much training could steer someone away from wanting to be a supervisor.

Theme 4: The Purpose of Supervision

The final theme that emerged in this study was the purpose of supervision. All participants discussed the importance of providing opportunities for observation of real-world experiences, but in a structured and intentional manner. Planning and being intentional about letting the supervisee observe as many different things as they can including working with students with complex problems, classroom lessons, college and career readiness, and individual student planning. One participant stated the purpose of supervision is to serve the supervisee, meeting them where they are at and providing opportunities for learning and growth. Another participant said supervision is shadowing and providing real-world, hands-on experiences.

Consistently, participants discussed the importance of building relationships with supervisees as the foundation of the supervisory relationship. Supervisors have the potential to have great influence on developing SCITs and understanding their purpose is central to the success of the supervisory relationship and the supervisee's experience. When asked, "What works within the supervision relationship?", one of the participants emphasized that the person who is the supervisor truly wants to be a supervisor. A

supervisor who is genuinely invested in the supervision process, as opposed to feeling an obligation to. She discussed the importance of being invested in the training and wanting to provide a good experience for the supervisee, starting with a welcoming environment that feels comfortable. Participant R06 echoed this sentiment saying, "I want to make sure the supervisee feels comfortable with me, so we spend time getting to know each other and growing the relationship in the beginning." This helps to foster an environment that both the supervisor and supervisee can openly communicate, ask questions, observe, try new skills, advocate for learning opportunities, and provide important feedback around strengths as well as growth areas.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of the study was the nature of the study as phenomenological, which demonstrates the potential for researcher bias and can ultimately influence the interpretation of the data. To reduce researcher bias I used strategies such as reflexive journaling and member checking. I also used IPA, following the steps that Smith outlined to ensure an accurate interpretation of the data, and reduce researcher bias. The second limitation is the sample size and the geographical limitations among participants. I interviewed six participants, four were from Kansas and one was from North Carolina and the other from Wisconsin.

Recommendations

The narratives of school counselor site supervisors on their lived experience with supervision preparedness included four main themes and three subthemes. These themes and subthemes could help inform the school counseling community about best practices

when taking on an SCIT to ensure proper development is occurring to better prepare them for the role, in turn, resulting in better care and stronger school counseling programs yielding higher student success rates. Results showed that school counselor site supervisors are not receiving training or are being required to take courses that do not apply to their role, prior to taking on an intern and are left to figure things out on their own. It is important for school counselor site supervisors to be trained as it leads to improved self-efficacy as a supervisor (Brott et al., 2016; Tang, 2020; Wilder et al., 2022).

All six participants had not been trained in site supervision. They all navigated the preparation process on their own either based on their own supervisee experiences, internet searches, or reading books. There was one that was required to take a supervision class not remotely related to school counseling site supervision. This study demonstrates the need for school counselors to be trained in site supervision, which includes supervision models. In a position statement, ASCA (2021) noted that school counselor supervisors should be trained by graduate counseling programs. This, in addition to the importance of university partnerships, which is an emergent theme in this study could inform counseling programs to be more intentional about training and preparing their school counselor site supervisors. This should include communication and feedback between the counselor educators and site supervisors, specifically around evaluation. In a study by Merlin-Knoblich et al. (2018), participants reported the evaluation process as a weakness prior to the supervision training they received. This is consistent with my study findings that participants do not enjoy evaluation and feedback, explaining that it felt

uncomfortable and could be construed as mean. Participants recommended training on how to provide constructive feedback.

Further research is recommended in the area of school counselor site supervision training, specifically on implementation of a supervision model. While many school counseling-specific supervision models have been developed, there is a dearth of literature that discusses implementation of those models, and there is little evidence suggesting that any of them have gained the amount of attention within the profession to become regular practice. Although ASCA has stated the training of site supervisors is the responsibility of the graduate program, my recommendation is that training opportunities are expanded upon, including more breakout sessions on the topic of school counseling site supervision at the ASCA national conference, along with web-based trainings to make it more accessible to school counselors in rural areas.

Implications

Social justice implications are important considerations in the field of school counseling. This study sought a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of supervision preparedness among school counseling site supervisors. Understanding these experiences could help inform the school counseling profession how to better prepare and support our site supervisors, which in turn, could have an impact on developing more competent and confident school counselors, preventing burn out in our profession, and ultimately create strong school counseling programs, positively impacting student success rates.

School counselors today are faced with many challenges, including supporting students with mental health needs as those impact their overall success. This mental health crisis started before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the pandemic exacerbated it (Roush, 2023). According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there is a significant rise in poor mental health with teenage girls, with 15% saying that they had a suicide plan in 2011 and that number rising to 24% in 2021 (Roush, 2023). In a 2021 report, the Office of the Surgeon General declared the youth mental health crisis as an "urgent public health issue" and called upon all institutions serving children to help in the coordinated response (Martin & Umaschi, 2022). Schools are often the best resources for families in a public health crisis (Roush, 2023). This specifically includes school counselors. Training our school counselors to be effective change agents in their school communities is foundational and should be a priority that includes proper training for our site supervisors. With the proper training, school counselors have the potential to feel better equipped to respond to the mental health needs of students, having a positive impact on overall school performance.

Additionally, school counselors play a significant role in college and career planning, providing access to resources and helping to address barriers that exist. In schools with students of lower socioeconomic status, the student-counselor interaction has a great influence on college attendance (Navakovic et al., 2021). Despite this information and professional associations that stress the importance of college and career readiness, there is an increasing amount of research that indicates a lack of preparation of school counselors to support students in college and career readiness, as well as

postsecondary planning (Novakovic et al., 2021). Without proper training, site supervisors could miss valuable teaching opportunities with their SCITs who need to understand what college and career planning looks like in the schools. Ultimately, this could have a great impact on their students, potentially yielding higher numbers of students pursuing college degrees or vocational programs.

School counselors have the potential to have a tremendous impact on student achievement. The profession is responsible for many things, therefore must focus on a variety of efforts including vocational guidance, mental health, post-secondary planning, as well as social justice advocacy and antiracist school counseling (Betters-Bubon et al., 2021). The ongoing identity crisis within the profession continues with the division of the American Counseling Association and ASCA, and their varying definitions of each role, ASCA specifically referring to school counselors as "well-versed in mental health issues" but goes on to say their role is an educator due to their work setting. This role confusion potentially has a larger impact on the profession and could be contributing to the barriers that exist for school counselors to effectively do their job, including high caseloads and non-counselor related job duties. Future research in this area is needed to better understand the role of school counselors and how they spend their time throughout the school day to respond to student needs and support their overall development in career, academic, and social/emotional development. This problem impacts school counselors as they need to know and understand their role to effectively train new school counselors.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic, phenomenological study was to understand the preparedness levels of school counseling site supervisors, specifically to explore the training received on supervision models, to serve as a school counselor site supervisor. I conducted this study so that the results may inform the school counseling community about best practices when preparing to take on a SCIT to ensure proper development is occurring to better prepare them for the role, in turn, resulting in better care and stronger school counseling programs yielding higher student success rates. I recruited and interviewed six participants who had previously served or currently were serving as a school counseling site supervisor. I collected data by conducting semistructured, qualitative interviews. I used IPA, following Smith's steps for data analysis. Four main themes and three subthemes emerged: (a) absence of supervision training and preparedness, with the subtheme of individual preparation; (b) communication and feedback experience and the impact on supervisee development; (c) the importance of university partnerships; and (d) the purpose of supervision, with the subthemes of building important relationships with students and offering real-world experiences.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experience as a school counselor site supervisor.

2. What do you think works in school counseling site supervision?

3. What obstacles have you experienced as a supervisor?

4. What is your perspective of the supervisory relationship?

5. Tell me about the ways in which you prepared to become a school counseling site supervisor.

6. Did you use a supervision model?

   a. If yes, which supervision model did you utilize?

7. Tell me about your experience using the chosen model.

   a. What did you like?

   b. What did you dislike?

   c. What kind of professional development was observed?

8. What else can you tell me about your supervisory experience that we have not already discussed today?

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY: EXPLORING THE PERCEIVED PREPAREDNESS LEVELS OF SCHOOL COUNSELING SITE SUPERVISORS

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived preparedness levels of school counseling site supervisors.

This study seeks volunteers who have or are currently serving as school counselor site supervisors. This means that you have graduated from a CACREP-accredited school counseling program, have been practicing as a state-licensed school counselor for a minimum of two years, and have been or currently are supervising a practicum or internship student enrolled in a CACREP-accredited school counseling program.
This study is being conducted by a researcher named Erin Augustine, who is a doctoral candidate at Walden University.

IRB Approval #:

Interested?
Please email

Appendix C: Screening Questions

1. Are you licensed in your state to practice school counseling?

2. Did you graduate from a CACREP-accredited school counseling program?

3. Have you been a school counselor for at least two years?

4. Have ever served as a school counseling site supervisor?