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# The good, the bad, and the less than ideal in clinical supervision: a qualitative meta-analysis of supervisee experiences

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## ABSTRACT

With qualitative studies increasingly published on different aspects of supervision, this qualitative meta-analysis synthesized existing qualitative research and explored what aspects therapy trainees find helpful and unhelpful in individual supervision. A sample of 29 studies (755 participants) was selected by conducting a systematic literature search and a critical appraisal process to ensure a suitable level of methodological rigor. Data analysis followed a descriptive and interpretative framework. Results yielded 6 main meta-categories: three in the helpful aspects domain (i) Supervisor establishes a secure learning environment, (ii) Supervisor demonstrates ability to facilitate learning, and (iii) Supervisor demonstrates willingness and ability to acknowledge and negotiate differences; and three in the unhelpful aspects domain (i) Supervisor demonstrates behaviour that lacks sensitivity, accountability, and ethical consideration, (ii) Supervisor fails to create a safe and supportive environment, and (iii) Supervisor demonstrates limitations in the appropriate maintenance and sharing of knowledge and skills. Influenced by the quality of the supervisory alliance, supervision can be helpful, but it may also be experienced as unhelpful and potentially harmful. Issues of power and diversity need to be negotiated in a manner that maintains ethical and professional standards of practice and care. Implications for supervision training, practice, and research are discussed.

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## Introduction

Clinical supervision is well acknowledged as a crucial component in therapy training and practice (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Supervision is intended to communicate the culture and practice of the profession; facilitate supervisees' competency development and professional identity; support supervisees within this process of development; maintain standards of practice and protect client welfare (Creaner, 2014; Falender & Shafranske, 2017). While supervision developed as a natural part of the training and further supporting of therapists, it has also created a substantial research base (Watkins, 2020) that has shaped its provision. Studies indicate that supervision can facilitate supervisees' skill and identity development (Wheeler & Richards, 2007;

Worthen & McNeill, 1996), increase self-efficacy (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001), enhance self-awareness and emotional well-being (Wheeler & Richards, 2007; Wilson, Davies, & Weatherhead, 2016), and increase self-disclosure (Hess et al., 2008; Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010; Singh-Pillay & Cartwright, 2019; Sweeney & Creaner, 2014). It is also suggested that supervision can enhance client outcomes (Park, Ha, Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2019; Wheeler & Richards, 2007), however, evidence remains tentative at present (Watkins, 2020). In contrast, problematic supervision can inhibit supervisees' development, negatively impact on psychological safety and well-being, and potentially undesirably impact supervisees' work. A growing body of research now exists focusing on inadequate and harmful experiences in supervision (e.g. Ellis et al., 2014, 2015; Gray, Ladany, Walker, & Ancis, 2001; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001; Wilson et al., 2016).

Research on clinical supervision is characterized by a diversity of methodologies, and among them an important part is played by designs involving the perspectives of supervisees who share their experience of supervision and its impact on their learning, practice, and also on their well-being (e.g. Watkins, 2020; Wilson et al., 2016). A particularly important research genre is qualitative studies on how supervisees experience supervision, for instance, what supervisees find helpful and unhelpful in supervision (see Callahan & Love, 2020). These studies can expand our learning on what sort of processes are important in the optimal provision of supervision from the perspective of the recipients of supervision (Hill & Knox, 2013). Wilson et al. (2016) conducted a meta-synthesis of trainees-in-training (supervision is also commonly availed of by and recommended for experienced practitioners, although requirements for this varies between countries) and their experiences of supervision. Among the main findings from their study was a recognition that supervision presents a learning opportunity, and that the supervision relationship is a central component to supervisee development, notwithstanding inherent power differentials that need to be negotiated and managed. Experiences that promoted supervisee confidence and professional identity were deemed helpful (e.g. supervisor facilitated supervisees finding their own answers; provided clear feedback). Conversely, unhelpful supervision experiences contributed to, for example, self-doubt, anxiety, and feeling unsafe, which are often not disclosed by the supervisee for fear of being evaluated negatively. The authors concluded that while supervision can positively influence supervisee development, it may potentially have a pernicious impact on supervisee development.

Our study aimed to build on the work of Wilson et al. (2016). Given that one of the authors within the team is specifically focused on supervision research, we were aware of the growing qualitative literature exploring trainees' experiences of supervision since the Wilson et al. meta-synthesis which conducted its articles search in January 2014. Therefore, we were aware that this growing number of pertinent studies would be suggestive of the usefulness of a meta-analytic update. Furthermore, the conceptualization of Wilson et al.'s study was focused on the trainees' experiences of supervision rather than what aspects of supervision they considered helpful and unhelpful. Our focus on the helpful/unhelpful aspects of supervision mirrors the type of conceptualization found in psychotherapy studies (e.g., Timulak & Keogh, 2017). The focus on helpful/unhelpful aspects can be considered a sub-genre of a broader overall "experience" of a phenomenon (here supervision). It offers a particular conceptual lens that focuses on perceived activities of the actors or of the activity itself, in terms of helpful/unhelpful, and

not necessarily on the impact of those activities. Indeed, the undifferentiated conflation of activities and their impacts is what is often characteristic of “experience” focused studies (see Timulak & Keogh review in the context of psychotherapy). We also narrowed our focus to individual supervision specifically [Wilson et al.’s study does not clearly distinguish between different supervision modalities (e.g. it included online, group, and live supervision) and related findings] to retain a coherence of the phenomenon under the investigation.

The aim of a qualitative meta-analysis (QMA) is to present a more comprehensive and conclusive perspective on the phenomenon of investigation (Finfgeld-Connett, 2018). This QMA study aimed to synthesize existing qualitative research and was guided by the following research question “What aspects of individual clinical supervision do supervisees in training find helpful or unhelpful?”

## **Method**

### ***Design***

QMA is a form of secondary data analysis, which in this study, involved extracting and analyzing qualitative findings from existing studies that focused on the helpful and unhelpful aspects of individual clinical supervision that trainees experience. This QMA followed the procedures detailed by Timulak (2009, 2014) and Levitt (2018).

### ***Selection of primary studies***

A systematic and comprehensive search of the literature was conducted to locate relevant articles. The search did not contain any date restrictions and all available years were searched on the following electronic databases: PsycARTICLES (from 1812 to 09/03/2019), PsycINFO (from 1812 to 09/03/2019), Scopus (from 1949 to 09/03/2019), and Web of Science (from 1864 to 09/03/2019). A Boolean search was conducted to allow specific keywords to be combined such as (“trainee counsel\*” OR “therap\* training” OR “psycho\* trainee”) AND (“supervis\*” OR “clinical supervision”) AND (“qualitative” OR “interview” OR “phenomenology”) AND (“unhelpful”) OR (“helpful”). Database filters were used where appropriate.

The titles and abstracts of all the studies generated from the literature search were examined by the first author for eligibility according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were included if they were published in a peer-review journal, utilized qualitative research methods to collect and analyse the data, identified aspects of individual clinical supervision (current or retrospective) that supervisees in training find helpful or unhelpful, focused on individual supervision related to therapeutic work with clients, and were available in English. There was no limit to the sample size in the primary study. Studies meeting the criteria were then critically appraised leading to a final sample of 29 studies.

### ***Appraisal of primary studies***

Primary studies were comprehensively reviewed and appraised by the first and second author to determine their appropriateness in addressing the research question and whether they met a suitable level of quality to be considered for the meta-analysis

(Timulak & Creaner, *in press*). The guidelines of Harden et al. (2004) were used to critically appraise the studies and ensure that they met basic methodological standards. A score of 1 was assigned for each of the following elements: presence of an explicit theoretical framework or literature review; a clear description of aims, context, sample, methods of data collection and analysis; attempts made to establish credibility and trustworthiness; and the availability of adequate original data, such as quotes from participants. Studies that scored 4 or above (maximum 7) were included in the review. The score of each study was discussed between the members of the research team to ensure consensus. On average, the studies were given a score of 6 ( $M = 6.27$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ).

### ***Data preparation and analysis***

The research team comprised the first author, a female, who at the time of the study was a Counselling Psychology doctoral trainee and supervisee who had different supervision experiences and a growing interest in the area of clinical supervision. The second author is a female integrative psychotherapist, clinical supervisor, and qualitative researcher, who has a particular interest in supervisor competence development. She conceptualizes supervision as an educational endeavor and learning process. The third author is a male counselling psychologist, with an expertise in qualitative research methods and qualitative meta-analysis specifically, who also has experience of offering supervision.

The first author started the process of data preparation by reviewing the selected articles and extracting all findings reported in each study that focused on aspects of individual clinical supervision that supervisees in training find helpful or unhelpful. In the case of studies utilising mixed-method designs (Ladany, Mori, & Mehr, 2013; Mehr et al., 2010; Walker, Ladany, & Pate-Carolan, 2007), quantitative data were not extracted, but still reviewed to enhance understanding of the qualitative data. In the case of studies exploring the experiences of both supervisors and supervisees (i.e. Fickling, Borders, Mobley, & Wester, 2017; Hanks & Hill, 2015; Reichelt & Skjerve, 2001), only data pertaining to supervisees' experiences were extracted. Primary studies did not, necessarily, systematically differentiate between the aspects (e.g. the supervisor not remembering details of the case) and impacts (e.g. disappointment on the part of the supervisee) of individual supervision that are considered helpful and unhelpful. Thus, data focusing on possible impacts of supervision as reported by supervisees, were also extracted, as this data were considered to enhance understanding of the significance of certain aspects of supervision.

Following the descriptive and interpretative analysis procedures of Elliott and Timulak (2005, 2021), extracted findings were organised into the two domains of investigation outlined in the research question: (1) the helpful aspects and (2) the unhelpful aspects of individual clinical supervision from the perspective of trainees. Primary study findings were divided into meaning units (MUs) that conveyed the meaning on their own. MUs varied as to their length. In some cases, these could be category names used in the original studies, in other instances longer segments, (e.g. sentences or paragraphs describing findings in the original studies or quotes illustrating findings in the original studies). A cross-referencing system was kept that allowed for the tracking of each meaning unit/finding to the original study from which it came. A total of 596 meaning units were obtained with an average of 20 obtained from each study (range: 5–46).

The meaning units were then clustered according to their similarities into meta-analytic categories. The names of the meta-categories were generated so they would capture the meaning of the meaning units (findings from the original studies) in the cluster. The process was iterative with the first author consulting the other team members who audited the work. Additionally, external auditing was also conducted by 3 peer doctoral trainees. One independently audited the appraisal of four primary studies and two peers provided further credibility checks on the data analysis from a selection of the primary studies. Audits and feedback from them were compared to the analysis conducted by the first author and discussed by the first and second author, who adjusted emerging findings by incorporating the feedback (e.g. the meta-category “Supervisor demonstrates availability and interest to supervisee” was originally two separate meta-categories, which were combined to address an overlap between meta-categories). A further perspective was offered by the third author who commented on the final outline. This resulted in refining the titles of some of the meta-categories to ensure that they were more easily understood and meaningful (for example, the original title of “Supervisor focuses too little or too much on personal issues” was changed to “Supervisor lacks a balanced focus on personal issues”). These comments were subsequently reconciled by all three authors.

## Results

This QMA included data from 755 participants with an age range of 23 to 64 across 29 studies [7 of which were also included in the Wilson et al. study (i.e. Ancis & Marshall, 2010; Burkard, Knox, Hess, & Schultz, 2009; Gray et al., 2001; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001; Reichelt & Skjerve, 2001; Worthen & McNeill, 1996; Wulf & Nelson, 2001)]. The current QMA primary studies were published over a 23-year period, between 1996 and 2019. Demographic information and descriptive data pertaining to the participants and the methods were extracted from the 29 studies and considered for any potential influence on findings. These are presented in Table 1. It should be noted that only qualitative data were examined in papers that reported on both quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. Ladany et al., 2013; Mehr et al., 2010; Walker et al., 2007). Nineteen of the 29 studies were conducted in the USA, two each in Canada and South Africa, one each in South Korea, Uganda, Norway, Sweden, Australia, and the Republic of Ireland. The sample comprised trainees from programmes in clinical or counselling psychology, school, educational, and developmental psychology, counselling, and psychotherapy. The majority of participants were female with diversity in race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and physical (e.g. deafness; Hanks & Hill, 2015), and linguistic abilities (e.g. linguistically diverse trainees who were not practicing in their first language; Ho & O'Donovan, 2018).

Although the selected studies could have a wider focus beyond what aspects supervisees in training find helpful and unhelpful, the authors focused on those parts of the primary studies that related to the helpful and unhelpful aspects of supervision. While all the primary studies focused on experiences, events, or processes in supervision, the research questions of some of the primary studies focused on more specific elements within supervision, such as: conflict ( $n = 1$ ), multicultural/cross-culturalism ( $n = 4$ ), nondisclosure ( $n = 4$ ), supervisor self-disclosure ( $n = 1$ ), boundary crossings ( $n = 1$ ), relational dynamics within the context of deafness ( $n = 1$ ), race ( $n = 2$ ), gender ( $n = 1$ ), and sexual

Table 1. Characteristics of Studies Included in the Meta-analysis.

| Study                                                    | N     | Age (years)          | Ethnicity/Race/Nationality                                                                                               | Gender             | Location    | Data collection and data analysis method                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ancis and Marshall (2010)                                | 4     | Range: 27–41         | 3 European American; 1 Asian American.                                                                                   | 2 male; 2 female.  | USA         | Semi-structured interviews; Demographic questionnaire. Grounded theory                                          |
| Bang and Goodyear (2014)                                 | 12    | Mean: 36.42          | 12 Korean.                                                                                                               | 3 male; 9 female.  | South Korea | Unstructured interviews; Demographic questionnaire. Grounded theory                                             |
| Burkard et al. (2006)                                    | 26    | Range: 24–48         | 13 European American; 6 African American; 6 Asian American; 1 Latina.                                                    | All female.        | USA         | Semi-structured interviews; Demographic questionnaire. CQR                                                      |
| Burkard et al. (2009)                                    | 17    | Range: 24–49         | 16 European American; 1 Native American.                                                                                 | 10 male; 7 female. | USA         | Semi-structured interviews; Demographic questionnaire. CQR                                                      |
| Chui, McGann, Ziemer, Hoffman, and Stahl (2018)          | 12    | Range: 25–33         | 9 White; 1 Latina; 2 Black.                                                                                              | 9 female; 3 male.  | USA         | Semi-structured interviews. CQR                                                                                 |
| Constantine and Sue (2007)                               | 10    | Range: 25–38         | 8 African American; 1 West Indian American; 1 Black Dominican American.                                                  | 8 female; 2 male.  | USA         | Semi-structured interviews. IPA                                                                                 |
| Fickling et al. (2017)                                   | 31    | Mean: 29.1           | 17 Caucasian; 5 African American; 1 Asian/Pacific Islander; 1 Hispanic; 7 undisclosed                                    | 28 female; 3 male. | USA         | Forms completed after each supervision session to identify the most un/helpful session events. Content analysis |
| Gazzola and Theriault (2007)                             | 10    | Range: 24–47         | Not stated.                                                                                                              | 9 female; 1 male.  | Canada      | Semi-structured interviews. CQR (variant)                                                                       |
| Gray et al. (2001)                                       | 13    | Range: 23–29         | 12 White; 1 person of color.                                                                                             | 10 female; 3 male. | USA         | Semi-structured interviews; Supervisory Satisfaction Questionnaire. CQR                                         |
| Hall, Kasujia, and Oakes (2015)                          | 12    | Not stated.          | Not stated.                                                                                                              | 8 female; 4 male.  | Uganda      | Focus group Thematic analysis.                                                                                  |
| Hanks and Hill (2015)                                    | 1 (3) | Mid-20s to late 50s. | Caucasian.                                                                                                               | 1 female.          | USA         | Participant journaling; Interviews; Memo writing Descriptive Case study Grounded theory techniques              |
| Hess et al. (2008)                                       | 14    | Range: 27–38         | 10 European American/White (non-Latino); 2 African American; 2 Asian American.                                           | 11 female; 3 male. | USA         | Semi-structured interviews; The Supervisory Style Inventory; The Supervisory Satisfaction Questionnaire. CQR    |
| Ho and O'Donovan (2018)                                  | 14    | Range: 23–48         | From: 1 Australia; 2 Fiji; 2 China; 2 Singapore; 1 Taiwan; 1 Argentina; 1 Columbia; 1 Iran; 1 Israel; 1 Slovakia; 1 USA. | 12 female; 2 male. | Australia   | Semi-structured interviews; Self-report questionnaires. Thematic analysis                                       |
| Jernigan, Green, Helms, Perez-Gualdron, and Henze (2010) | 6     | Not stated.          | 2 Asian; 2 Black; 2 Latina                                                                                               | 5 female; 1 male   | USA         | Semi-structured survey. Content analysis                                                                        |

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

| Study                                              | N        | Age (years)   | Ethnicity/Race/Nationality                                                                                                                                                      | Gender                             | Location     | Data collection and data analysis method                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Knox, Edwards, Hess, and Hill (2011)               | 12       | Range: 24–51  | 10 White/European American; 2 Other.                                                                                                                                            | 2 male; 10 female.                 | USA          | Semi-structured interviews; Demographic questionnaire. CQR                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Kozlowski et al. (2014)                            | 11       | Range: 25–32  | 7 Caucasian; 1 Caucasian-Pakistani; 1 Russian-Jewish; 1 White Middle Eastern; 1 Filipino-American.                                                                              | 1 male; 10 female.                 | USA          | Semi-structured interviews; Demographic questionnaire. CQR                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Ladany et al. (2013)                               | 128      | Average: 35.4 | 109 European American/White; 8 Hispanic/Latino; 5 African American/Black; 3 Asian American/Pacific Islander; 2 Other; 1 did not specify.                                        | 27 male; 100 female; 1 unknown     | USA          | The Supervisor Evaluation of Supervisor Form was used to collect qualitative data. Mixed-method design. Discovery-oriented analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data                                                                   |
| Ladany et al. (1997)                               | 13       | Range: 27–39  | 10 White; 2 Latina; 1 Middle Eastern.                                                                                                                                           | 5 male; 8 female.                  | USA          | Semi-structured interviews. CQR                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Larsson Sköld, Aluan, Norberg, and Carlsson (2018) | 6        | Range: 34–64  | Not stated.                                                                                                                                                                     | 1 male; 5 female                   | Sweden       | Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Mehr et al. (2010)                                 | 204      | Average 29.35 | 181 European-American/White; 2 African-American/Black; 2 American Indian or Alaskan Native; 7 Asian American or Pacific Islander; 5 Hispanic/Latino(A); 4 Other; 3 Unspecified. | 28 male; 172 female; 4 unspecified | USA          | Supervisee Nondisclosure Survey; Trainee Disclosure Scale; Working Alliance Inventory/Supervision-short; Trainee Anxiety Scale; Demographic questionnaire. Mixed-method design. Discovery-oriented method used to analyse the qualitative data |
| Nel and Fouche (2017)                              | 4        | Range: 24–39  | Not stated.                                                                                                                                                                     | 1 male; 3 female.                  | South Africa | Participant journals; Semi-structured interviews. IPA                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Nelson and Friedlander (2001)                      | 13       | Range: 29–52  | 11 White; 1 Chicano/a; 1 Asian American.                                                                                                                                        | 4 male; 9 female.                  | USA          | Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Inventory; Supervisory Styles Inventory; Semi-structured interviews. Discourse analysis with open and axial coding procedures                                                                                 |
| Reichelt and Skjerve (2001)                        | 18 dyads | Not stated.   | Not stated.                                                                                                                                                                     | Not stated.                        | Norway       | Interpersonal process recall; Semi-structured interviews. Grounded theory                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Singh-Pillay and Cartwright (2019)                 | 8        | Stated as 43  | 4 White; 4 African.                                                                                                                                                             | 3 male; 5 female.                  | South Africa | Semi-structured interviews. IPA                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Sweeney and Creaner (2014)                         | 6        | Range: 28–55  | Not stated.                                                                                                                                                                     | 3 male; 3 female.                  | Ireland      | Semi-structured interviews. CQR                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

| Study                           | N   | Age (years)                            | Ethnicity/Race/Nationality                                                                                                        | Gender             | Location | Data collection and data analysis method                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Walker et al. (2007)            | 111 | Averaging:31                           | 91 White; 9 African-American; 4 Asian; 3 Biracial; 3 Latina; 1 Other.                                                             | All female.        | USA      | Gender-related Events Survey; Working Alliance Inventory-trainee version; Trainee Disclosure Scale; Demographic questionnaire. Mixed-method design. Discovery-oriented-exploratory approach used to analyse qualitative data |
| Wong, Wong, and Ishiyama (2013) | 25  | Average: 32 for females; 37 for males. | 13 Chinese-Canadian; 4 Indo-Canadian; 3 First Nations; 2 Japanese-Canadian; 1 Afro-Canadian; 1 Korean-Canadian; 1 Latin-Canadian. | 6 male; 19 female. | Canada   | Interviews. Critical incident technique                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Worthen and McNeill (1996)      | 8   | Range: 23–54                           | 8 European-American.                                                                                                              | 4 male; 4 female.  | USA      | Interviews. Phenomenological Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Wuif and Nelson (2001)          | 6   | Range: 29–33                           | Not stated.                                                                                                                       | 3 male; 3 female.  | USA      | Semi-standardized interviews. Phenomenological Analysis and Grounded Theory                                                                                                                                                  |

orientation ( $n = 2$ ). Three studies contributed towards data pertaining to the helpful aspects only, five towards the unhelpful aspects only, and the remainder contributed to both helpful and unhelpful aspects to some degree. Seven studies were retrospective in nature.

The majority of studies ( $n = 24$ ) used individual interviews (semi-structured or unstructured) as the main method of data collection. One study used participant journals alongside the interviews, and another additionally used memo writing by the researcher. One study used interpersonal process recall alongside the interviews. One study used focus groups. One study asked supervisees to complete forms after each supervision session to identify the most un/helpful session events. Three studies used self-report questionnaires/forms.

The method of analysis utilized in the primary studies varied from more descriptive (e.g. Consensual Qualitative Research – CQR) to more interpretative (e.g. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis – IPA) approaches. Ten studies employed CQR or a variation of it. Four studies reported using IPA, or some form of phenomenological analysis. Grounded theory, thematic analysis, and discovery-oriented analysis were each used by three studies. Two studies used some form of content analysis. One study used descriptive case study and grounded theory techniques. One study used discourse analysis with coding procedures, another used critical incident technique, and one drew on both phenomenological and grounded theory. All studies performed credibility checks, and all utilized a method of data analysis that recognizes the importance of context and respecting the participants' reality.

## **Main results**

The QMA findings (see [Tables 2 and 3](#)) are grouped into 2 domains: (1) the helpful aspects and (2) the unhelpful aspects of individual clinical supervision, each consisting of 3 main meta-categories. Twenty-three of the primary studies contained findings referring to helpful aspects and 26 of the included studies contained findings referring to aspects that trainees find unhelpful within clinical supervision.

### ***The helpful aspects of individual clinical supervision***

Three of the 6 main meta-categories yielded by the meta-analysis fall under the helpful aspects domain (see [Table 2](#)): (1) Supervisor establishes a secure learning environment, (2) Supervisor demonstrates ability to facilitate learning, and (3) Supervisor demonstrates willingness and ability to acknowledge and negotiate differences. In [Table 2](#) we provide a cross-reference to all studies that contributed to each meta-category. Here we offer a short account with an example of a quote for each main meta-category.

*Supervisor Establishes a Secure Learning Environment* main meta-category is based on findings reported in 20 out of 23 meta-analysed studies and refers to aspects that supervisees report as helping them to feel psychologically safe and supported within supervision. It includes 4 meta-categories: (1) Supervisor is open, empathic, respectfully challenging, and provides a holding space (16/23), (2) Supervisor demonstrates availability and interest to supervisee (8/23), (3) Supervisor's style, orientation, background, or interests match supervisee's (4/23), and (4) Supervisee is provided with clear expectations for supervision (2/23). One participant commented that their supervisor " ... was very

**Table 2. Domain 1: The Helpful Aspects of Individual Clinical Supervision.**

| Main meta-category                                                                       | Meta-category                                                                                                 | Primary studies contributing to meta-category                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Supervisor establishes a secure learning environment                                     | Supervisor is open, empathic, respectfully challenging, and provides a holding space.                         | Ancis and Marshall (2010); Burkard et al. (2006); Burkard et al. (2009); Chui et al. (2018); Gazzola and Theriault (2007); Gray et al. (2001); Hall et al. (2015); Hess et al. (2008); Ladany et al. (1997); Ladany et al. (2013); Nel and Fouche (2017); Reichelt and Skjerve (2001); Sweeney and Creaner (2014); Wong et al. (2013); Worthen and McNeill (1996); Wulf and Nelson (2001). 16 out of 23 studies contributed to this meta-category; 16/23. |
|                                                                                          | Supervisor demonstrates availability and interest to supervisee.                                              | Fickling et al. (2017); Gazzola and Theriault (2007); Hall et al. (2015); Ladany et al. (2013); Nel and Fouche (2017); Wong et al. (2013); Worthen and McNeill (1996); Wulf and Nelson (2001). 8/23.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                                                                          | Supervisor's style, orientation, background, or interests match those of supervisee.                          | Hanks and Hill (2015); Knox et al. (2011); Nelson and Friedlander (2001); Wong et al. (2013). 4/23.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                                                          | Supervisee is provided with clear expectations for supervision.                                               | Hall et al. (2015); Sweeney and Creaner (2014). 2/23.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Supervisor demonstrates ability to facilitate learning                                   | Supervisor shares knowledge and feedback that is clear, timely, and balanced.                                 | Burkard et al. (2006); Chui et al. (2018); Fickling et al. (2017); Gazzola and Theriault (2007); Gray et al. (2001); Hall et al. (2015); Hanks and Hill (2015); Hess et al. (2008); Ladany et al. (2013); Nel and Fouche (2017); Reichelt and Skjerve (2001); Wong et al. (2013); Worthen and McNeill (1996); Wulf and Nelson (2001). 14/23.                                                                                                              |
|                                                                                          | Supervisor provides scaffolding and encourages supervisee autonomy.                                           | Chui et al. (2018); Gazzola and Theriault (2007); Ladany et al. (2013); Nel and Fouche (2017); Reichelt and Skjerve (2001); Wong et al. (2013). 6/23.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Supervisor demonstrates willingness and ability to acknowledge and negotiate differences | Supervisor demonstrates competency, sensitivity and responsiveness regarding issues of culture and diversity. | Ancis and Marshall (2010); Burkard et al. (2006); Burkard et al. (2009); Chui et al. (2018); Gazzola and Theriault (2007); Hanks and Hill (2015); Ho and O'Donovan (2018); Jernigan et al. (2010); Walker et al. (2007); Wong et al. (2013). 10/23.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                                                          | Supervisor demonstrates humility.                                                                             | Chui et al. (2018); Gray et al. (2001); Hall et al. (2015). 3/23.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

Note. 23 out of the 29 meta-analysed studies contributed to the helpful aspects domain.

*accepting of me, and she communicated that in a way that encouraged me to take risks and to ask awkward questions. My supervisor was patient and understanding ...*" (Ancis & Marshall, 2010, p. 282).

*Supervisor Demonstrates Ability to Facilitate Learning* main meta-category is based on findings reported in 14 out of 23 meta-analysed studies and refers to supervisors' ability to share knowledge and skills in a way that is appropriate to the supervisee's stage of learning and development. It includes 2 meta-categories: (1) Supervisor shares knowledge and feedback that is clear, timely, and balanced (14/23), and (2) Supervisor provides scaffolding and encourages supervisee autonomy (6/23). A participant commented that their supervisor "provided concrete examples of potential intervention strategies" (Ladany et al., 2013, p.35).

*Supervisor Demonstrates Willingness and Ability to Acknowledge and Negotiate Differences* main meta-category is based on findings reported in 12 out of 23 meta-analysed studies and refers to supervisors' willingness and ability to consider difference and remain open and humble when engaging in discussions about it. It includes 2 meta-categories: (1) Supervisor demonstrates competency, sensitivity, and responsiveness regarding issues of culture and diversity (10/23), and (2) Supervisor demonstrates humility (3/23). Multiculturally competent supervisors were described as affirming, non-pathologizing, and not oversimplifying issues of diversity. As noted by a participant: *"My supervisor here not only has a positive personality but is also culturally competent. She doesn't pretend to be the expert, she'll ask the questions or request more information and trust me ... so she's very culturally competent and I think that's very important as well, to be open and want to learn, to invite that* (Hanks & Hill, 2015, p.305).

*Supervisee Recognizes Self-Responsibility to be Open to Learning and Growing* is a novel finding within the meta-analysed studies and refers to the shared responsibility that supervisees hold within supervision. This meta-category, although not included in the main meta-categories, is noteworthy and is based on findings reported in 2 out of 23 meta-analysed studies. Participants reported how remaining open to supervision is helpful for learning and growing. This includes being patient and tolerating ambiguity, giving oneself permission to be a learner, being aware of one's needs, and articulating these if needs are not being met. A participant articulated, *"I think being able to receive feedback is really important. That's really important on the supervisee's part and to take initiative if things aren't feeling right ... take the initiative to say so, to speak up"* (Gazzola & Theriault, 2007, p. 199).

### ***Impact of the helpful aspects***

Not all of the primary studies differentiated between the aspects of supervision that participants found helpful and their impact. Some of the reported impacts in the primary studies included feeling understood, validated, supported and cared for, and able to let one's guard down. This can, reportedly, strengthen the supervisory relationship, increase supervisee disclosure, increase regard for the supervisor, and increase supervisee confidence. Supervisees have also reported perceiving supervision as enhancing their self-awareness and self-acceptance through reflective practice, and increased development of skills and motivation for clinical work. This impacted on supervisees feeling more connected with themselves and clients.

### ***The unhelpful aspects of individual clinical supervision***

Three of the 6 main meta-categories yielded by the QMA fall under the unhelpful aspects domain (see [Table 3](#) for cross-reference to the primary studies): (1) Supervisor demonstrates behaviour that lacks sensitivity, accountability, and ethical consideration, (2) Supervisor fails to create a safe and supportive environment, and (3) Supervisor demonstrates limitations in the appropriate maintenance and sharing of knowledge and skills.

*Supervisor Demonstrates Behaviour that Lacks Sensitivity, Accountability, and Ethical Consideration* main meta-category is based on findings reported in 21 out of 26 meta-analysed studies and refers to supervisor behaviour that is considered unprofessional and unethical. It includes 4 meta-categories: (1) Supervisor demonstrates a lack of sensitivity and competence regarding issues of culture and diversity (10/26), (2) Supervisor lacks investment and involvement in supervision (10/26), (3) Supervisor demonstrates behaviour that is unprofessional, unethical, and irresponsible (9/26), and (4) Supervisor lacks a balanced focus on personal issues (3/26). One supervisee commented that their supervisor “*claimed she’d never had time or anything to deal with [supervisees] ... And so the situation was that, um, she very rarely monitored anything I did*” (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001, p. 387).

*Supervisor Fails to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment* main meta-category is based on findings reported in 19 out of 26 meta-analysed studies and refers to aspects that supervisees report that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe in supervision. It includes 3 meta-categories: (1) Supervisor is inflexible, authoritarian, and dismissive of supervisee (12/26), (2) Supervisor-supervisee conflict due to role ambiguity, dual relationship, personality differences, differences in style, orientation, or approach (11/26), and (3) Supervisor demonstrates a lack of relational support (7/26). One participant articulated the following about their experience:

*When you get a supervisor who maybe sees themselves in a power relation, that’s sometimes very difficult, because you don’t want to disclose! ... and believe me that does happen, so it really affects your professional development and personal development because, as you know, this job is very much intertwining them both ...* (Singh-Pillay & Cartwright, 2019, p.87).

*Supervisor Demonstrates Limitations in the Appropriate Maintenance and Sharing of Knowledge and Skills* main meta-category is based on findings reported in 13 out of 26 meta-analysed studies and refers to supervisor lack of knowledge and skills and/or inability to share that expertise. It includes 2 meta-categories: (1) Supervisor provides inadequate, inconsistent, punitive, or unbalanced feedback and guidance (12/26), and (2) Supervisor demonstrates possessing insufficient or ineffective knowledge and skills (3/26). One participant stated:

*Basically, our supervision would be, This is where you screwed up. Why did you do that? This is what you should have done.’ I don’t think the entire time, and I had him [the supervisor] for a year for supervision twice a week, I don’t think he ever once said anything positive about what I did* (Wulf & Nelson, 2001, p.129).

**Table 3. Domain 2: The Unhelpful Aspects of Individual Clinical Supervision.**

| Main meta-category                                                                                     | Meta-category                                                                                                                                     | Primary studies contributing to meta-category                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Supervisor demonstrates behaviour that lacks sensitivity, accountability, and ethical consideration    | Supervisor demonstrates a lack of sensitivity and competence regarding issues of culture and diversity.                                           | Burkard et al. (2006); Burkard et al. (2009); Constantine and Sue (2007); Ho and O'Donovan (2018); Jernigan et al. (2010); Ladany et al. (2013); Nelson and Friedlander (2001); Walker et al. (2007); Wong et al. (2013); Wulf and Nelson (2001). 10 out of 26 studies contributed to this meta-category; 10/26.          |
|                                                                                                        | Supervisor lacks investment and involvement in supervision.                                                                                       | Bang and Goodyear (2014); Burkard et al. (2009); Gazzola and Theriault (2007); Gray et al. (2001); Hall et al. (2015); Hess et al. (2008); Ladany et al. (2013); Larsson Sköld et al. (2018); Nelson and Friedlander (2001); Wulf and Nelson (2001). 10/26.                                                               |
|                                                                                                        | Supervisor demonstrates behaviour that is unprofessional, unethical, and irresponsible.                                                           | Fickling et al. (2017); Gray et al. (2001); Kozłowski et al. (2014); Ladany et al. (1997); Ladany et al. (2013); Nelson and Friedlander (2001); Singh-Pillay and Cartwright (2019); Wong et al. (2013); Wulf and Nelson (2001). 9/26.                                                                                     |
|                                                                                                        | Supervisor lacks a balanced focus on personal issues.                                                                                             | Bang and Goodyear (2014); Ladany et al. (1997); Sweeney and Creaner (2014). 3/26.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                                                        | Supervisor fails to create a safe and supportive environment                                                                                      | Burkard et al. (2006); Burkard et al. (2009); Gazzola and Theriault (2007); Gray et al. (2001); Hess et al. (2008); Ladany et al. (2013); Larsson Sköld et al. (2018); Nelson and Friedlander (2001); Reichelt and Skjerve (2001); Singh-Pillay and Cartwright (2019); Wong et al. (2013); Wulf and Nelson (2001). 12/26. |
| Supervisor demonstrates limitations in the appropriate maintenance and sharing of knowledge and skills | Supervisor-supervisee conflict due to role ambiguity, dual relationship, personality differences, differences in style, orientation, or approach. | Bang and Goodyear (2014); Gazzola and Theriault (2007); Hanks and Hill (2015); Ho and O'Donovan (2018); Knox et al. (2011); Ladany et al. (2013); Mehr et al. (2010); Nelson and Friedlander (2001); Sweeney and Creaner (2014); Wong et al. (2013); Wulf and Nelson (2001). 11/26.                                       |
|                                                                                                        | Supervisor demonstrates a lack of relational support.                                                                                             | Bang and Goodyear (2014); Burkard et al. (2006); Burkard et al. (2009); Gray et al. (2001); Hall et al. (2015); Hess et al. (2008); Wulf and Nelson (2001). 7/26.                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                                                        | Supervisor provides inadequate, inconsistent, punitive, or unbalanced feedback and guidance.                                                      | Bang and Goodyear (2014); Burkard et al. (2006); Fickling et al. (2017); Gazzola and Theriault (2007); Gray et al. (2001); Hess et al. (2008); Ladany et al. (2013); Larsson Sköld et al. (2018); Reichelt and Skjerve (2001); Wong et al. (2013); Worthen and McNeill (1996); Wulf and Nelson (2001). 12/26.             |
|                                                                                                        | Supervisor demonstrates possessing insufficient or ineffective knowledge and skills.                                                              | Burkard et al. (2009); Ladany et al. (2013); Larsson Sköld et al. (2018). 3/26.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

Note. 26 out of the 29 meta-analysed studies contributed to the unhelpful aspects domain.

### ***Impact of the unhelpful aspects***

As a result of the unhelpful aspects mentioned above, participants reported experiencing a range of impacts, with varying degrees of severity. In fourteen studies, supervisees described experiencing negative thoughts and feelings about supervision, the supervisory relationship, their supervisors, and themselves. They reported experiencing cognitive blocking and confusion in reaction to these negative experiences in one study. Participants described behaviourally withdrawing and withholding information in supervision due to a number of issues, including impression management, fear of negative evaluation or disrespect, supervisor appeasement or attraction, poor supervisory alliance, and time constraints (12 studies). They also described experiencing physical and psychological health problems (3 studies), feeling disillusioned with the profession (3 studies), and feeling that their learning in supervision and their therapeutic work with clients had been negatively impacted (8 studies).

Conversely, some of the primary studies reported positive impacts resulting from negative experiences in supervision. Participants described improvements in their clinical work after a negative supervisory event (1 study). They noted increased awareness of the use of self-disclosure (1 study), increased insight about clients and therapy dynamics (2 studies), and increased sensitivity to important clinical issues (1 study). Some supervisees reported increased awareness of supervisors' perspectives and limitations (1 study), with one supervisee reportedly feeling better about herself when her supervisor lost merit after a negative event (1 study). Other supervisees reported that negative experiences in supervision facilitated personal and professional growth and development (5 studies). Additionally, while Kozlowski, Pruitt, DeWalt, and Knox (2014) acknowledge that boundary crossings can create role confusion or develop into boundary violations, they found that, overall, they can be a positive experience for supervisees (particularly when boundaries are clearly discussed and defined), improving their supervisory relationship.

## **Discussion**

The aim of our QMA was to build on and extend the Wilson et al.'s (2016) meta-synthesis that offered a partially overlapping focus (trainees' experiences of supervision while in training vs. our conceptualization of helpful and unhelpful aspects of supervision from the perspective of trainees) in order to inform best practice. The findings of our QMA, which included 29 studies with 755 participants (Wilson et al.'s study included 15 studies with 165 participants), endorsed several of the Wilson et al. (2016) findings and broadly endorse best practice guidelines (e.g. American Psychological Association, 2015). Of prominence in both studies was the importance of the supervisory relationship and the impact of that relationship on supervisee development. Whether supervision is perceived as good, bad, or less than ideal, appears to depend significantly on the quality of the supervisory working alliance (Bordin, 1983). Nonetheless, in some instances, out of a duty of care for clients, supervisors may need to take action that may potentially cause ruptures in the supervisory relationship.

Participants' descriptions of helpful aspects of supervision are frequently associated with feeling psychologically safe and supported enough within the supervisory relationship to be able to be vulnerable and take risks. This appears to relate to supervisors'

demonstration of behaviours that are suggestive of respect, trust, safety, and commitment to supervision. Such supervisors demonstrated availability, consistency, presence, and an active interest in supervisees' personal and professional development. While supervisors' demonstration of such qualities helps with the development of the supervisory alliance, participants also described how similarities in experiences, interests, therapeutic style, and orientation between themselves and their supervisors help with emotional bonding and disclosure (Sweeney & Creaner, 2014). Wilson et al. (2016) similarly note that disagreement on the aims or focus of supervision between supervisors and supervisees may be unhelpful. Participants in our primary studies described finding it helpful to have clear information and support on how supervision can be used effectively. To this end, the use of contracts or learning agreements in supervision are recommended to explicate the boundaries of the supervision relationship, expectations, relative roles and responsibilities, and ways of holding oneself and each other accountable within the supervision relationship (American Psychological Association, 2015; Creaner, 2014). Supervision training should facilitate competency development on how to negotiate, implement, and evaluate such agreements.

Participants in the primary studies appear to be expressing a preference for collaborative rather than authoritarian or laissez-faire styles of supervision. Collaborative supervision is characterized by the supervisor being open and attentive to the supervisee, inviting and empowering the supervisee to participate and share experiences no matter how different they might be from those of the supervisor. Furthermore, non-collaborative styles are related to lower supervisee satisfaction and supervisory working alliance (Rousmaniere & Ellis, 2013). It should be noted that the majority of the studies included in this QMA were from Western countries. Existing literature indicates that supervisees from Western countries, who tend to hold more individualistic values, may expect more of a collaborative relationship than supervisees from more collectivist cultures, who tend towards a more implicit style of communication and tend to view supervisors' teachings as absolutes (Bang & Goodyear, 2014; Rousmaniere & Ellis, 2013).

However, as Wilson et al. (2016) point out, whether a supervisor's approach is assessed as helpful or not "may depend on supervisees' perceptions of their supervisors' intentions" (p. 348). Different supervisees need different things, depending not just on their background and individual cultures, but also on their stage of training and development (e.g. Creaner, 2014). Hence, it is important for supervisors to demonstrate flexibility in their response to supervisees and remain open and willing to understand the impact of their interventions by seeking feedback on how an intervention is being received by a supervisee. In practice, feedback can be sought through different means, including routine check-ins in supervision sessions or the more formal use of supervision measures (see Zhu & Luke, 2021). This can help supervisors consistently monitor the impact of supervision on supervisees and help them establish appropriate supports for their supervisees. The means through which feedback is collected should consider issues related to cultural diversity and power. The standard use of formal measures can also be used to clearly describe and assess elements in supervision that consistently appear to be associated with good supervisory outcomes.

Few of the selected studies within this QMA referred to supervisees' responsibility in the supervisory process. Participants in the studies that do, however, recognize their responsibility to remain open to learning and professional development (Gazzola

& Theriault, 2007; Sweeney & Creaner, 2014). They describe needing to be patient with the learning process and tolerating its ambiguity, allowing themselves to be learners, becoming aware of their needs, and articulating when those learning needs are not being met (Gazzola & Theriault, 2007). Nevertheless, participants frequently described feeling psychologically unsafe and uncomfortable disclosing certain issues, especially if they related to the supervision relationship. It is noted that supervisee disclosure is related to the quality of the supervisory relationship, with a poor relationship associated with less disclosure (e.g. Hess et al., 2008; Sweeney & Creaner, 2014; Wilson et al., 2016). Participants reported fearing the negative consequences of certain disclosures, such as negative evaluation or perceived disrespect by the supervisor. This can be especially the case for supervisees who value a more implicit style of communication, are more sensitive to hierarchy, and are particularly conscious about avoiding conflicts and/or complying with others' expectations (e.g. the South Korean supervisees in Bang & Goodyear, 2014). These findings point to how the power differential within supervision can be further intensified due to historical, cultural, and societal factors that may discourage a supervisee from articulating their needs.

Furthermore, although both supervisors and supervisees share responsibility for the supervision process, the relationship is hierarchical, and in many Western countries, supervisors carry a gate-keeping responsibility (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; Falender et al., 2021). For trainees, supervisors hold substantial influence over their professional identity formation, evaluation of competencies, and their future as professionals. Participants' descriptions of supervisors, disclosing inappropriately, breaching confidentiality, or behaving in ways that are generally considered discriminatory, exploitative, and/or abusive, raise serious ethical, and potentially, legal concerns. Wilson et al. (2016) also noted such concerns regarding supervisors' behaviour and the negative impact this can have on supervisees. The current QMA elaborates on Wilson et al.'s study, noting that in some instances the impact of unhelpful supervision can be harmful. While unhelpful or inadequate supervision may interfere with supervisee professional development and possibly result in harm to supervisees, boundary violations and/or negligence in following the ethical standards of the profession are likely to result in harm or trauma to supervisees. Participants' accounts in this QMA are supported within the literature regarding "harmful" supervision with supervisees reporting feelings of shame, invalidation, rejection, and doubt about their abilities and future in the profession (Ellis et al., 2014; Ellis, Creaner, Hutman, & Timulak, 2015).

As a higher prevalence of unhelpful, and potentially harmful, supervision exists among mixed race and cultural dyads, the current authors are highlighting the need for cultural responsivity in supervision (Hendricks & Cartwright, 2018). Not only is it considered helpful, but it is also ethical and protective of supervisees and clients' wellbeing for supervisors to be aware of the intersections and significance of issues of culture and diversity. This includes an understanding of the impact of power and oppression, and how an individual might oscillate between privileged and oppressed statuses depending on the supervisory and therapeutic contexts (Lee, 2018). Participants reported welcoming invitations from supervisors to discuss such issues. Unfortunately, such discussions appear to be rare, and supervisors are encouraged to take a reflective stance and initiate

discussions about cultural diversity (e.g. gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, language) and power (Falender & Shafranske, 2017; Tohidian & Quek, 2017). As professionals strive to be more inclusive and sensitive to issues of diversity, further research on the unique supervisee needs of minority groups becomes all the more important.

### ***Limitations and future research***

This QMA brought together findings from existing qualitative studies that have in some way explored the helpful and unhelpful aspects of individual supervision from the perspective of trainees availing of individual supervision. While the selected studies were carried out in different countries across 5 continents, they showed a great convergence. Some of that convergence may be an artefact of the method of QMA that favours clustering of similarities which may overlook the nuances of individual studies. The QMA involves further caveats such as that interpretation of supervisee experiences involves a triple hermeneutic, whereby the meta-analysts interpret the participants' accounts colored by the primary researchers' interpretations (Timulak & Creaner, *in press*). We also only included published studies that were written in English. A further limitation stems from our focus on helpful or unhelpful aspects of supervision: some of the primary studies may have had a different focus and thus may have contributed only to a limited extent to the overall results, while the studies with a clear focus matching the focus of the meta-analysis may be represented more in our final account. Additionally, given the variation in sample sizes in the primary studies, the impact of the smaller samples may be conflated in a QMA.

Furthermore, the quality of a QMA is largely contingent on the quality of the primary studies it includes (Timulak, 2009, 2014; Levitt, 2018). From our initial selection and appraisal of primary studies for our QMA, specific methodological issues were evident in the qualitative research on supervision experiences. These issues broadly revolved around a lack of reporting of significant information needed for evaluating and contextualizing the study undertaken. For example, insufficient description of the context of the study, the sample, recruitment procedures, methods of data collection and analysis was apparent to varying degrees in some of the studies. In addition, attempts made to establish credibility and trustworthiness were not always made explicit. Inadequate reporting of original data or not identifying the sources of the verbatim quotes included presented challenges in assessing how participants were represented. These issues are not unique to qualitative supervision research and pertain to qualitative research in general. It is hoped that the relatively recent guidelines and reporting standards for qualitative research (e.g. Levitt et al., 2018) will enhance the quality of reporting in published qualitative studies, including supervision research.

Relatedly, of note in this QMA was that very few of the selected studies reported on supervisor training. Continued research on supervision training for both supervisors and supervisees would be valuable to enhance competence in providing and confidence in using supervision, especially since many of the unhelpful aspects participants highlighted appear to be due to some missing ingredient.

While participants in this meta-analysis held different gender and sexual identities, people who identify as trans\* do not appear to have been explicitly included in any of the primary studies, even those focusing on sexual minority issues. It may suggest that the voices of minority groups are not being adequately represented in the primary studies, a key ethical consideration for future research and a pertinent point for QMA's to highlight should this deficit remain unaddressed in primary studies.

As not all primary studies specified the stage of training in which their experiences had occurred, future research could explore how experiences and accompanying support and learning needs vary for supervisees between the early and later stages of training, and post-qualification. The authors acknowledge that exploring helpful or unhelpful supervision experiences from the perspective of the supervisee does not equate to establishing the effectiveness of supervision. Clearly, the supervisor and client experiences are notably missing. Qualitative studies focusing on supervisor-supervisee dyads, acquirement of supervisees' competencies, and client outcomes would improve our understanding of supervision.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this QMA provides a comprehensive summative perspective on the helpful and unhelpful experiences of supervisees in training. Supervision is seen as a continuous process of negotiation through which both supervisors and supervisees can develop in individual, intercultural, and complementary ways. Supervision can be helpful to supervisees, but it could potentially become harmful to supervisees and their clinical work if ineffective. This depends largely on the quality of the supervisory relationship, but it also strengthens the argument for the need for supervisors to be formally trained and supervised in supervision. This study raises questions about how power and diversity are managed within supervision. It also points out that difference needs to be acknowledged and negotiated in a way that is equitable and respectful of all supervisees' needs. It highlights the need for supervisors to remain open and flexible in their approach, whilst maintaining ethical and professional standards of practice that promote the well-being of supervisees and the welfare of their clients.

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