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ABSTRACT

The Working Alliance Inventory of Supervisory Relationships (WAI-SR) was designed to evaluate the three factors--an agreement on goals, an assignment of tasks, and the development of a bond--of a working alliance between supervisor and trainee as proposed by Bordin (1983). The items for the WAI-SR were drawn from the Working Alliance Inventory and adjusted to reflect the context of the supervisory relationship. Results from practicum students enrolled in school counseling, counseling psychology, and clinical psychology programs indicated that the WAI-SR had adequate reliability. In the future, the WAI-SR may be used to gain a broader understanding of the importance of the supervisory relationship in the development of the counseling student, as well as to define the stages of a single supervisory relationship. The WAI-SR might also be used by a supervisor, throughout the supervisory process, to increase his/her awareness of the current needs of his/her practicum student, and to modify the supervisory process to meet the needs of the student, thus providing a favorable environment for change. (Contains 15 references.) (GCP)

Running Head: DEVELOPMENT OF THE WAI-SR

Examining the Working Alliance in Supervisory Relationships: The Development of the Working Alliance Inventory of Supervisory Relationships

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Abstract

The Working Alliance Inventory of Supervisory Relationships (WAI-SR) was designed to evaluate the three factors - an agreement on goals, an assignment of tasks, and the development of a bond - of a working alliance between supervisor and trainee as proposed by Bordin (1983). The items for the WAI-SR were drawn from the Working Alliance Inventory (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989) and adjusted to reflect the context of the supervisory relationship. Results from practicum students enrolled in school counseling, counseling psychology, and clinical psychology programs indicated that the WAI-SR had adequate reliability. Concurrent and divergent validity was established by comparing the Bond factor from the WAI-SR with the Supervisory Styles Inventory (Friedlander & Ward, 1984) subscales of Attractiveness and Interpersonally Sensitive; the Goals factor with the Evaluation Process within Supervision Inventory (Lehrman-Waterman & Ladany, 2001) subscale of Goal Setting; and the Task factor with the Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Inventory (Olk & Friedlander, 1992) subscale of Role Ambiguity. Further research will help to delineate more clearly the three factors of the WAI-SR. In the future the WAI-SR may be used to gain a broader understanding of the importance of the supervisory relationship in the development of the counseling student, as well as to define the stages of a single supervisory relationship. The WAI-SR might also be used by a supervisor, throughout the supervisory process, to increase his/her awareness of the current needs of his/her practicum student, and to modify the supervisory process to meet the needs of the student, thus providing a favorable environment for change.

The field of psychology has long recognized the importance of supervision as the primary tool in counselor development. Past research has examined factors such as participants' skills (Hill, Charles, & Reed, 1981; Worthington, 1984); trainee's perception of the supervisor (Friedlander & Synder, 1983; Worthington & Roehlke, 1979); supervision settings and tasks (Ward, Friedlander, Schoen, & Klien, 1985); and behavior (Heppner & Roehlke, 1984). However, scant attention has been given to the underlying component of the supervisory relationship (Chen & Berstein, 2000). Holloway (1987) brought forward the importance of the supervisory relationship in her analysis of five major developmental models of supervision. She concluded, "Alternative explanations for trainee change may be that the supervisory relationship itself creates a trainee's initial vulnerability and final independence" (p. 215). In Holloway's (1987) view it is the demands of the relationship that at first intimidate the trainee and then, as the individual becomes accustomed to the requirements, provide a haven to focus on learning the tasks and skills required of the professional.

The proposed measure attempts to focus solely on the underlying relationship within supervision from the standpoint of Bordin's (1983) working alliance model. This model, because of its focus on the strength of the relationship as the force behind change, is an excellent fit with Holloway's (1987) conceptualization that trainee change and professional identity development is the direct result of the environment created by the supervisory relationship.

Working Alliance Model

Bordin's (1976) original work proposed that the strength of the relationship between a client and a therapist had more to do with the effectiveness of the therapy than did the actual

theoretical techniques applied. He called this concept the “working alliance” and identified three salient features – an agreement on goals, an assignment of tasks, and the development of a bond.

The underlying purpose of all therapy is to help facilitate a change in the client. This change may focus on different aspects of the client depending on the theoretical orientation – change in behavior in behavioral therapy, versus a change in perception of self in humanistic therapy – but change in the individual is the ultimate objective, even though this aim is not always agreeable or comfortable for the client to embrace. There may be outside environmental factors (financial difficulties, unsafe living environment) which are more pressing concerns and need to be alleviated before internal, psychic change can occur. Intense personal change may also be a frightening proposal which threatens a client’s view of self to such an extent that attempts to facilitate such change will be rejected. In both cases effective therapy results when the therapist and client collaborate on the amount and goals of change (Bordin, 1983).

Therapy consists of theoretically driven techniques applied by the therapist to the client, but it is the client who chooses how much effort and attention to devote to the tasks he/she is given. Bordin (1983) believed that the usefulness of a task in furthering the goals of change is directly related to the ability of the counselor to link the task to the client’s view of his/her problems and his/her desire to change. If a counselor can make vividly clear to a client why the completion of a task will facilitate his/her reaching the change goal, the client will be more likely to engage fully in the task.

The bond that a counselor develops with his/her client colors the goal agreement and task accomplishment processes. If a client does not believe that a counselor can help him/her, setting change goals becomes a very difficult assignment. If a client does not trust a counselor the client will never engage in tasks designed to reveal deep personal issues. It is the bond of trust, liking,

and a sense of being cared about which allows the client to feel secure in setting goals and engaging in meaningful tasks (Bordin, 1983).

Bordin (1976) first proposed the concept of the working alliance in reference to therapists and clients, yet he clearly felt that the theory could expand beyond that original therapeutic context. “The concept of the working alliance would seem to be applicable in the relation between student and teacher, between community action group and leader, and, with only slight extension, between child and parent” (p. 252). Four years later Bordin (1983) proposed a working alliance based model of supervision.

Working Alliance Model of Supervision

Bordin (1983) believed that to apply an extension of the working alliance model to the supervisory relationship was appropriate since supervision at its core is a change process. Nevertheless for the concept to fit the new context the three features of the working alliance – bonds, goals, and tasks – needed to be transformed to be applicable to the supervisory environment.

Goals

Bordin (1983) generated an eight-item list of goals which the trainee may hold: (a) mastery of specific skills, (b) enlarging one’s understanding of clients, (c) enlarging one’s awareness of process issues, (d) increasing awareness of self and impact on process, (e) overcoming personal and intellectual obstacles toward learning and mastery, (f) deepening one’s understanding of concepts and theory, (g) provides a stimulus to research, (h) maintenance of standards of service.

Items one through seven are change goals which address the professional development of the trainee through mastery of skills, expansion of theoretical knowledge, increased awareness of

self and the counseling process, and a deepening of empathic abilities. The eighth goal addresses the continuance of the agreement on the goals to be pursued in supervision.

Tasks

Bordin (1983) listed several tasks related to supervision which he believed would serve to accomplish the goals set by supervisors and supervisees. Examples of such tasks include, reviews of taped sessions and case presentations

Bond

Bordin (1983) considered the bond between the supervisor and the trainee to fall somewhere between the relationship of a teacher and a student and that of a therapist and a client. The supervisor serves as an instructor who educates by demonstrating certain therapeutic techniques. However, as personal issues arise for the trainee which interfere with his/her learning process and ability to function as an effective counselor, the supervisor may play the role of a therapist as well. The supervisory role combines the teaching and evaluative aspects of the teacher position with the helping, personal insight orientation of the counselor.

Working Alliance Inventory

Ten years after Bordin's (1976) proposal of the working alliance model, Horvath and Greenberg (1989) attempted to design a paper-and-pencil instrument to measure the factors of goals, tasks, and bond. The authors describes their approach as an effort to "develop a measure that not only captures outcome variables but has a clearly articulated relation with a specific body of theory, which in turn clearly explicates the relation of the theoretical constructs to the counseling process" (p. 225).

The instrument began as a pool of 91 items split among the three factors, each describing "a feeling, sensation, or attitude in the client's field of awareness that may be present or absent

depending on the strength of one of the components of Bordin's concept of the working alliance" (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989, p. 225). The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (this scale was extended to a 7-point Likert scale after the pilot study). The pool was reduced after ratings of each items' content validity were given by a set of working alliance experts and again reduced after the same process was completed by a group of registered psychologists. Two versions of the Working Alliance Inventory (WAI), one for counselors and one for clients, were constructed from the 36 items which remained in the original item pool. A pilot study was then conducted on the two instruments and an overall reliability estimate of .93 for the client version and .89 for the counselor version was obtained.

Three studies were then conducted using counselors who employed a variety of theoretical frameworks, therapy settings, client populations, and comparison instruments. The authors concluded from the first study that "statistically reliable relations exist between early (third session) working alliance measurements and two out of three client-reported outcome indicators (satisfaction and change)" (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989, p. 227). The results of the second study suggested that there was a reliable relation between the client WAI Task scale and resolution of client conflict. The results of the third study added more support for the previous discovery of a positive relationship between the working alliance as measured by the working alliance inventory and successful therapy outcome. The researchers believed that the WAI was a promising model-grounded tool to measure the underlying relational process of therapy and an effective instrument to assess an early prediction of positive therapeutic outcomes.

Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory

Efstation, Patton, & Kardash (1990) used a synthesis of ideas from social influence theorists including Bordin (1983) to develop a measure of, "a set of identifiable activities or tasks

performed by each participant in the relationship” (p. 323). The focus of the instrument was to measure participants’ perception of each other’s actions and eventually to gauge trainee behavior outcomes.

The Working Alliance Inventory of Supervisory Relationships (WAI-SR) was designed to follow as closely as possible Bordin’s (1983) working alliance model of supervision. The goal for the WAI-SR was to create a measure to examine how a supervisory relationship develops and matures over time given the three factors of goals, tasks, and bond. Once fully developed the instrument may be used to investigate such issues as whether the factors vary in perceived strength by the trainee across the life of a single supervisory relationship; whether the factors vary in perceived strength by the trainee as a result of the number of supervisory relationships; and if a pattern of perceived factor strength emerges which correlates with trainee perception of successful and beneficial supervisory experience. This purpose of this research is to evaluate the use of the contextually adjusted WAI to measure Bordin’s (1983) working alliance model of supervision.

Method

Item Construction

Horvath and Greenberg’s (1989) Working Alliance Inventory (WAI) was used as a starting point for the Working Alliance of Supervisory Relationships (WAI-SR). The WAI was constructed through a content analysis of Bordin’s (1976) descriptions of the dimensions of bond, tasks, and goals, and thus provided a theoretically grounded set of statements. To address Bordin’s (1983) working alliance model of supervision, items from the WAI were rewritten to reflect the supervisor-trainee relationship rather than the counselor-client relationship. Most items underwent slight word substitutions with the most frequent change being to replace the

word “therapy” with the word “supervision.” Item seven, for example, originally stated, “I find what I am doing in therapy confusing (Working Alliance Inventory, Form C, 1984, p. 2).” The adjusted statement seven reads, “I find what I am doing in supervision confusing.” Additionally a small percentage of items were rewritten to reflect a change from the concept of achieving personal change and improvement in therapy, to change and improvement in counseling skills. For example, item sixteen originally stated, “I feel that the things I do in therapy will help me to accomplish the changes I want (Working Alliance Inventory, Form C, 1984, p. 3).” The adjusted statement reads, “I feel that the things I do in supervision will help me improve my counseling skills.” In total, nineteen items were rewritten to reflect the purpose of the study. The revised inventory was dubbed the Working Alliance Inventory of Supervisory Relationships (WAI-SR).

A preliminary study to test content validity of the WAI-SR given the contextual changes made was conducted. Twenty-three of the items were correctly identified by 75% or more of the respondents. An additional nine items were correctly identified by the majority of respondents but did not reach the pre-determined significance cut-off. The theoretical intent of the items seems to remain intact given the contextual changes.

Participants

A total of 53 students from several midwestern universities participated in the current study. Overall, 28 were in counseling psychology, 8 were in adult clinical psychology, 3 in child clinical psychology, 12 in school psychology, and 2 identified as being in other programs. These students indicated they were in a Master’s (29), Doctoral (23), or other program (2). The students ranged in age from 23 to 58 years ($M = 31.06$, $SD = 9.41$), predominantly self-identified as Caucasian (47 Caucasian, 2 African American, 2 Asian or Pacific Islander, 1 American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1 Hispanic), and were predominately female (46 female, 7 male). The most

frequently identified personal theoretical orientation was cognitive-behavioral (16 cognitive-behavioral, 7 cognitive-behavioral/other, 7 eclectic, 5 solution-focused, 3 Rogerian/client-centered, 2 gestalt, 2 psychodynamic, 1 Adlerian, 1 systemic, 2 undecided, 7 unanswered).

Instruments

Evaluation Process Within Supervision Inventory (EPSI; Lehrman-Waterman & Ladany, 2001)

The EPSI is a 21-item scale that provides a measure of students' supervision experiences regarding evaluation. Thirteen items relate to goal setting, while the other eight address feedback. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The validity and reliability of the EPSI has been found to be satisfactory with a Cronbach alpha of .89 (item-scale correlation .29 to .80) for Goal Setting and .69 (item-scale correlation .23 to .54) for Feedback (Lehrman-Waterman & Ladany).

Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Inventory (RCRAI; Olk & Friedlander, 1992)

The RCRAI measures the nature and extent of counselor trainees' experiences with role difficulties in supervision (Olk & Friedlander). There are 29 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. One subscale contains 19 items concerning role ambiguity, and the second subscale of 10 role conflict items. The inventory has been found to be both reliable and valid with a Cronbach alpha of .91 (item-scale correlation .50 to .72) for Role Ambiguity and .89 (item-scale correlation .37 to .77) for Role Conflict (Olk & Friedlander).

Supervisor Style Inventory (SSI; Friedlander & Ward, 1984)

The SSI is a 33-item scale that has participants rate their perceptions of their supervisors' style and behaviors on a 7-point Likert scale. The measure consists of three subscales: Attractive (7 items), Interpersonally Sensitive (8 items), and Task-Oriented (10 items). The scale's developers found the assessment to be reliable and valid. They reported the Cronbach alpha

ranged from .76 to .93 and item-scale correlations of .77 to .80 for Attractive, .51 to .82 for Interpersonally Sensitive, and .38 to .76 for Task-Oriented (Friedlander & Ward).

Procedures

Participants for the current study were discovered in two ways. Some students were approached during practicum classes and asked to participate, while others were contacted at their internship sites and sent packets by mail. All were graduate students from various midwestern universities. Participants were provided with a brief overview of the purpose of the research, consent forms, and a demographics questionnaire in addition to the aforementioned measures.

Results

Data Adjustment

The data was adjusted to replace missing data (due to the small sample size) using the SPSS linear interpolation. One subject was eliminated from the study due to excessive missing data on the WAI-SR instrument while another subject was eliminated because the subject's scores on the Supervisory Styles Inventory (Friedlander & Ward, 1984) indicated an extreme outlier.

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the internal consistency of each of three factors as well as the overall instrument. Alpha coefficients were .91 for the Bond factor, .92 for the Goal factor, .94 for the Task factor, and .97 for the overall instrument.

Item-scale correlations were also obtained for each of the three factors. For the Bond factor the correlations ranged from .24 to .89; for the Goal factor the correlations ranged from .23 to .88; and for the Task factor the correlations ranged from .44 to .90.

Concurrent and Divergent Validity

A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was calculated using all three factors of the WAI-SR and all the subscales of the EPSI, the RCRA, and the SSI. The Bond factor correlated most highly (.80) with the combined subscales of Attractive and Interpersonally Sensitive from the SSI; however, the Bond factor correlated adequately well with each of the subscales alone (Attractive = .76; Interpersonally Sensitive = .73). The Goal factor correlated adequately well (.75) with the Goal Setting subscale of the EPSI, and adequately well (.60) with the Task-Orientated subscale of the SSI. The Task factor correlated well (.84) with the Role Ambiguity subscale from the RCRA. The Task factor did not correlate as well (.54) with the Task-Orientated subscale of the SSI, however it was significant at the .01 level.

The three factors of the WAI-SR showed satisfactory divergent validity with various subscales of the EPSI, the RCRA, and the SSI. The Bond factor and the Task-Orientated subscale of the SSI correlated at .40. The Goal factor and the Attractive subscale of the SSI correlated at .57. The Task factor and the Attractive subscale of the SSI correlated at .58. All of the divergent correlations were significant indicating that the three factors of the WAI-SR share some overlap.

Discussion

While supervision is clearly an important part of counselor training, the nature and influence of the relationship between trainee and supervisor is not as clearly understood. Bordin (1983) proposed that the character of the supervisory relationship, expressed as the factors of an agreement on goals, an assignment of tasks, and the development of a bond, was the driving force behind the change process for trainees. The WAI-SR was designed to measure the working alliance between trainees and supervisors.

The Bond factor correlated best with the combined subscales of Attractive and Interpersonally Sensitive from the SSI. The Attractive subscale of the SSI is intended to measure the collegial nature of the supervision, while the Interpersonally Sensitive subscale of the SSI is intended to measure the counseling aspect of supervision (Chen & Bernstein, 2000). This is a clear overlap with Bordin's (1983) conceptualization of the role of the supervisor. He believed that a supervisor served both as a teacher and a counselor to the trainee. The supervisor serves as an instructor who educates by demonstrating certain therapeutic techniques, as well as therapist when personal issues arise for the trainee which interfere with his/her learning process and ability to function as an effective counselor.

The Goal factor correlated adequately well with the Goal Setting subscale of the EPSI. The Goal Setting subscale of the EPSI was intended to measure the mutual creation of measurable and feasible goals for learning (Lehrman-Waterman & Ladany, 2001). This concept fits well with Bordin's (1983) idea that for successful change to occur, goals must be mutually established and clearly linked to the tasks assigned. The Goal factor also correlated adequately with the Task-Orientated subscale of the SSI. The Task-Oriented subscale of the SSI was intended to measure the practical and instructive characteristics of supervision. The correlation may be attributed to the wording of the items on the subscale (goal-oriented; evaluative; structured) which tend to describe the theoretical intent behind the Goal factor. Interestingly the most common complaint of subjects was that supervisors never established or evaluated goals, and they felt this was a deficiency in their experiences.

The Task factor correlated well with the Role Ambiguity subscale from the RCRA. The Role Ambiguity subscale of the RCRA was intended to measure uncertainty about supervisory requirements and how to fulfill those requirements. There is a match between this

conceptualization and Bordin's (1983) proposal that the usefulness of a task is directly related to the link the trainee perceives between the task and how it will facilitate change. If a trainee is unsure of what tasks are expected of him/her and how to complete these tasks, he/she cannot discern how those tasks will assist him/her in achieving learning and change. Although intuitively it would seem that the Task factor should correlate with the Task-Orientated subscale of the SSI, it did not. Again this may be a result of the wording of the items on the subscale which appear to reflect goal issues more than task issues.

The results of the divergent correlations were not as promising as the concurrent correlations. This outcome reveals the overlap that necessarily exists between the three factors of the working alliance. Bordin (1983) believed that for a task to be useful it had to be directly linked to the goal it attempted to fulfill. This essential connection makes it difficult to evaluate the concepts separately. A hint may be found in the fact that the Task-Orientated subscale of the SSI and the Goal Setting subscale of the EPSI did not correlate highly with each other. The task for further research is to determine how this fact can be used to clarify the Task and Bond factors on the WAI-SR.

Clearly the most serious limitation of the current study is the very small sample size. This issue prevented more in-depth analysis (such as factor analysis) from being conducted. Also the results from the divergent correlations are of concern as they indicate an inability of the instrument to differentiate the factors of Task and Goal clearly. Yet the adequate reliability and concurrent validity found indicate that the instrument is worthy of further refinement and study.

The ideal use for the WAI-SR is as a tool to achieve both a broader understanding of the importance of the supervisory relationship in the development of the counseling student, and as an instrument for supervisors to use in providing a favorable environment for change. For

example, the WAI-SR can be used to examine how the factors vary in perceived strength by the trainees across the life of a single supervisory relationship. We also foresee the WAI-SR being used by a supervisor throughout the supervisory process to gain a better understanding of the current needs of his/her practicum student. The supervisor can then modify the supervisory process to meet the needs of the student.

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