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Halton, Laura; Soni, Anita

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EXPLORATION OF SUPERVISEES' EXPERIENCES OF A TRANSCULTURAL SUPERVISION ACTIVITY

Abstract

Aims

Regulatory competences for educational psychologists (EPs) state specifications of understanding and acknowledging diversity and transcultural working within practice. This article explores the experiences of four trainee educational psychologists (TEPs) after participating in a Transcultural Supervision activity with their placement supervisors, which aims to promote culturally responsive working.

Method

Supervisees' views were gained through an online questionnaire and analysed using Thematic Analysis. The article explores the supervisee's experience of the transcultural supervision activity and the impact of it on their cultural awareness and power dynamics within a supervisory relationship.

Findings

Four superordinate themes were interpreted in the study, including: engagement, thoughts and feelings, developing cultural awareness and reducing power differential. The paper explores these themes in further detail alongside the subordinate themes constructed, before highlighting implications for educational psychology and supervisory practice.

Limitations

Limitations of the research discussed including the sampling method, method of data collection used and the assumption made by the researcher that each participant has a similar understanding of the definitions of culture and power dynamics, limiting exploration of potentially contrasting discourses in practice.

Conclusions

Overall, the transcultural supervision activity was reported to be beneficial in improving cultural awareness by supervisees and was also perceived as being influential in supporting power dynamics within new supervisory relationships. This complements previous research exploring the views of supervisors and their experience of the transcultural activity and has potential for further use in EP professional training and practice.

Key Words: Transcultural Supervision, Cultural Responsiveness, Cultural Awareness, Educational Psychologists, Trainee Educational Psychologists

EXPLORATION OF SUPERVISEE'S EXPERIENCES OF A TRANSCULTURAL SUPERVISION ACTIVITY

Introduction

Training to be an Educational Psychologist (EP) within England currently consists of a three-year doctorate course, where standards are supported through ongoing supervision that is provided at a minimum of half-an-hour per day of professional practice (British Psychological Society (BPS), 2022). Woods et al. (2015) suggest that supervision for trainee EPs (TEPs) has 'the primary aim of facilitating the supervisee's professional competencies' (p. 86), ensuring that placement practice adheres to ethical and professional standards.

The definition of supervision depends on the theoretical orientation, anticipated function and predicted outcomes of the practice (Kennedy et al., 2018). However, literature commonly depicts a psychological process where 'it is possible to open up thinking to the mind of another with a view to extending knowledge about the self' (BPS, 2017, p. 12). Hawkins & Shohet (2012) also include the improvement of quality of work and relationships within EP practice in their definition of supervision, describing the functions of supervision as to *support*, to *educate* and to *manage*. The assessment of a TEP against BPS (2022) competencies, for example, runs alongside the support of their professional development as a trainee. This highlights how functions of supervision often intertwine and are part of a 'complex, multi-functional concept' (Nolan, 1999, p. 98).

Over the past decade, there has been a growing academic interest in the importance of supervision within educational psychology (Atkinson & Posada, 2019; Fleming & Steen, 2012). Alongside this, there has been 'increasing emphasis on quality assurance' (Gibbs et al., 2016) and a move towards the publication of professional competencies for supervision, both in the UK (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010) and internationally (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010). Although current literature focusing on supervision has been criticised for being "largely descriptive" (Fleming & Steen, 2012, p. 172), studies exploring the views of supervisors (Carrington, 2004) and supervisees (Hill et al., 2015) alike have been able to paint a rich picture of the perceived contributing factors and barriers to effective supervision. One factor in the mutual development of the supervisor and supervisee is collaboration and active engagement by both participants (Hill et al., 2015). Despite the changing function of supervision, it is often perceived as a bi-directional process that should allow for reflection, professional challenge and mutual development. Recent interest in and research on culturally responsive supervision (Soni et al., 2022) has explored supervisors' perspectives on power, giving an opportunity to illuminate supervisees' views.

Power Dynamics

Power is largely understood as a dyadic interaction between two beings, often relating to social economic status (Hall, 2003). In the context of supervision, this supports the view that supervisors often have greater power than the supervisee due to the hierarchical structure of supervision and their extensive training and experience (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Within literature on supervisory relationships, the view that power dynamics are not fixed and are a reflection of 'social reality' that can change over time is evident (Patel, 2012; Wind et al., 2021). This complements research which illuminates the importance of acknowledging and addressing power differentials in relationships, in order to balance out the distribution of power (Cook et al., 2018).

In line with research which suggests that the relationship between a supervisor and supervisee can impact the creation of safe and supportive supervisory environments (Chircop Colerio et al., 2022), this study focuses on the often unconscious role of power between the supervisor and supervisee as a significant factor in the facilitation of culturally safe practice. Patel (2012) highlights the impact that a lack of explicit meaning, as well as the infrequent mention of power relations in research, has on supervision. Patel (2012) proposes that,

> The tacit acceptance and therefore the invisibility of the role of power in supervision can inadvertently lead to a misuse of power relations and often give rise to a supervisory process characterized not by collaboration but by coercion, however subtle and unintentional (p. 108).

Positionality within a structural hierarchy (Beinart, 2020), traditional constructions of gender roles (Oakley, 2016) and socio-economic status (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012) are examples of some factors which have been identified as affecting power dynamics within supervisory relationships. These factors are further compounded by the complex, multi-layered concept of role power, cultural power and individual power, depending on an individual's social profile (Ryde, 2000).

Weaks (2002) suggests that protective factors of good supervision are equality, safety and challenge and states that supervisory relationships should be equal in power and based on shared values. However, Osborne & Burton (2014) suggest that the existence of power differentials may be due to the function of supervision and the managerial role of a supervisor. For example, a supervisor of a TEP must be two years post qualification (BPS, 2022), suggesting that their experience of ethical and practice procedures is an important feature of professional supervision of trainees.

Nevertheless, the quality of the relationship between a supervisor and supervisee has been highlighted as a key factor in the value of the learning that takes place in supervision (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020). It is proposed that, when able to be personally vulnerable in the supervisory

relationship, supervisees can develop professionally (Starr et al., 2013). When power dynamics have been discussed and addressed between a supervisor and supervisee, research suggests that supervisees feel more able to share information with their supervisor, making the practice more open and honest (McKibben et al., 2018). This is further enhanced when supervisors are open to share and reflect on their own cultures, assumptions and practice with the supervisee (Hird et al., 2001).

Cultural Responsiveness

There are several definitions of culture, however, for the purpose of this article it is defined as 'the different explicit and implicit assumptions and values that influence the behaviour and social artefacts of different groups' (Hawkins & Shohet, 2007, p. 142). Therefore, culture affects ideologies as well as perceptions and reactions to information (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020). Though it is impossible to understand all cultures, it is argued that professionals need to ensure they develop their cultural awareness in order to identify and challenge inequalities between them in society through culturally responsive working (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020). However, whilst cross-cultural knowledge is important for understanding, it is also essential to support change within supervisory relationships in order to facilitate common ground and work beyond our own world views in a transcultural way (Eleftheriadou, 1994) and move to culturally responsive practice.

Similarly, Soheilian et al. (2014) suggest that professional supervision must take into account the supervisee's cultural contexts in order to be deemed competent. Whilst supervision as a practice facilitates the passing of knowledge from one professional generation to the next, through the sharing of lived experience and cultural backgrounds (Quek & Storm, 2012), it is through cultural responsiveness that supervisory participants learn from each other (Burkard et al., 2006). And, as supervisory contexts are influenced by changing discourses in society, it can be argued that the pursuit of culturally responsive practice requires 'constant work and attention' (Tohidian & Quek, 2017, p. 574). There are several models highlighting the stages by which individuals become more transculturally effective (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020).

Moleiro et al's (2018) research explored the cultural diversity competences of clinical psychologists and psychotherapists through the thematic content analysis of semi-structured interviews. Thirty-one participants addressed case conceptualisations of two (out of four) clients, with varying demographics, following a four-minute vignette in which both clients presented the same complaint. The interview responses of the participants were analysed to mostly be within a 'cultural blindness' and 'cultural pre-competence' stage of responsiveness. Though the research was administered in Portugal and may not be representative of the UK, it can be argued that 'we

have more work to do to develop our awareness' of cultures across helping professions generally (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020, p. 119). Through exploration of the cultural factors that may impact relationships between people, it is hoped that participants of supervision will feel *culturally safe* (Kirmayer, 2012).

Eleftheriadou (1998) suggests that it is beneficial for supervisors and supervisees to share their lived experiences early on in a supervisory relationship, in order to identify common ground between cultures. This means a reflection of one's own cultural heritage, as well as an openness to explore cultural assumptions and the supervisory relationship (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020). Although this can induce temporary feelings of vulnerability (Hird et al., 2001), Tohidian and Quek's (2017) meta-analysis of the processes that inform multicultural supervision found that individuals who participate in culturally responsive supervision often feel validated and valued during the process, suggesting positive outcomes for both supervisors and supervisees.

When supervisees are provided space to explore their own values and beliefs within supervision, they are reported to mirror this practice when working with clients (Soheilian et al., 2014). This may be as practitioners feel better equipped to understand and explore their clients' worldviews following development of their own cultural awareness (Tohidian & Quek, 2017). Therefore, it would be anticipated that TEPs' development of their culturally responsive practice may positively impact their work with children and young people. This may be through direct work where cultural beliefs and assumptions are explored with a child and stakeholders, as well as the planning of more tailored approaches to assessment and intervention taking cultural backgrounds into consideration.

Transcultural Supervision

Hawkins & Shohet (2012) introduced the term transcultural supervision for practice, endeavouring to illuminate the cultures of participants within professional supervision and develop their awareness of cultural differences and sensitivity towards inequities in society (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020). Thus, individuals are supported in developing their cultural responsiveness and, as practitioners, have opportunity to reflect on their own values, belief systems and cultural assumptions and how this may influence their practice. The transcultural supervision activity encourages the exploration of more readily discussed cultural factors, such as race and gender, as well as less commonly broached factors, such as spirituality and sexual orientation (Soheilian et al., 2014). Through such exploration, supervisors and supervisees are supported to work beyond their own world views (Eleftheriadou, 1998). Table 1 conceptualises Hawkins & Shohet's (2012) stages of a transcultural supervision activity:

Table 1

Hawkins & Shohet's (2012) stages of a Transcultural Supervision Activity

Stage	Description
1	Person 1 will share information that they interpret as important to their cultural background to Person 2.
2	After listening to Person 1, Person 2 will recount and reflect on the information shared.
3	Person 1 will clarify any misinterpretations and add further information as desired.
4	Person 2 will reflect upon the shared information and how it relates to the supervisory relationship.
5	Person 2 will share information about their cultural background as roles are reversed and stages 1-4 are repeated.
6	Person 1 and Person 2 will then discuss similarities and differences between their cultures and any considerations for future supervisory practice.

Study Rationale and Research Questions

This study aims to add to the limited knowledge of culturally responsive supervision within educational psychology (Soni et al., 2022), by exploring the impact of participating in a transcultural supervision activity in developing cultural awareness and responsiveness and power dynamics within supervisory relationships. Therefore, the research questions are:

1. What are the supervisee's experiences of the transcultural supervision activity?
2. What is the impact of the transcultural supervision activity on the supervisee's general cultural awareness?
3. How does the transcultural supervision activity impact power dynamics within the supervisory relationship?

Methodology

The small-scale project aims to explore varying interpretations of an event in order to understand meaning of the social phenomena: culture and power. Thus, adopting a subjective epistemology and interpretivist theoretical perspective.

Participants

Convenience sampling was employed to recruit participants for this study, following the researcher's delivery of training of transcultural supervision to EPs and TEPs within one, northwest

LA. All of the TEPs within the LA were invited to, and subsequently volunteered to, participate in the research. In total, four female, white British TEPs (one second year TEP and three third year TEPs from across three universities) took part in the study. They had been supervised by their respective supervisors, all of whom had been qualified EPs for more than two years, for between four and sixteen months.

Ethical issues

Participants were provided with information detailing the purpose and aims of the study, their right to withdraw from the research and information regarding confidentiality (BPS, 2021; BERA, 2018). Pseudonyms were also used to ensure confidentiality. The authors were not involved in the supervision of the participants.

Research Process

Following a 3-hour training session on transcultural supervision by the researchers, participants and their placement supervisors were invited to complete a transcultural supervision activity within their usual supervision schedule. To facilitate discussion around culture, they were provided with a visual infographic of the stages of transcultural supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012) as well as Burnham's (2012) Social GGRRAAACCEEESSS model (gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, culture, class/caste, education, employment, ethnicity, spirituality, sexuality and sexual orientation), which had been shared and modelled by the researchers, and practised by all EPs and TEPs during the training session. Participants and their supervisors completed the activity within the timeframe of one supervision session and in line with their agreed weekly supervision schedule.

After their engagement, TEPs' views of the activity were individually collected via an online survey tool. To minimise the researcher's influence on participants' responses and encourage individual reflection, an anonymous survey was considered to be most suitable for the purpose of the small-scale study. It involved twelve open-ended, qualitative questions, including an adaptation of the seven questions within an interview schedule used in previous transcultural supervision research (Soni et al., 2022).

Data Analysis

In line with an interpretive ontology, participant data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The method of analysis recognises the subjectivity of the researcher as their interpretation of data is based on previous knowledge and assumptions. Given the philosophical underpinnings of this study, a six-stage framework of analysis was adopted to allow for interpretation of participant views through an inductive approach of data analysis. The stages were:

familiarisation with the data; initial coding; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing a report.

Trustworthiness

Interpretivist research, such as this small-scale study, assumes that reality is constructed and cannot be objectively measured. Instead, the trustworthiness of research and the transference of outcomes from one context to another is considered (Schwartz-Shea, 2012). By creating a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of contextual information, such as participant information and method description, other researchers are able to confidently compare the outcomes with their context due to the transparency of the research design, analysis and interpretations shared.

Analysis and Discussion

The findings of the data collected is shared in relation to each corresponding research question, using thematic maps to depict superordinate and subordinate themes. Below, the key themes within each research question will be discussed, followed by key implications for EP practice.

Research Question 1: What are the supervisee's experiences of the transcultural supervision activity?

Figure 1

Thematic Map for Research Question 1
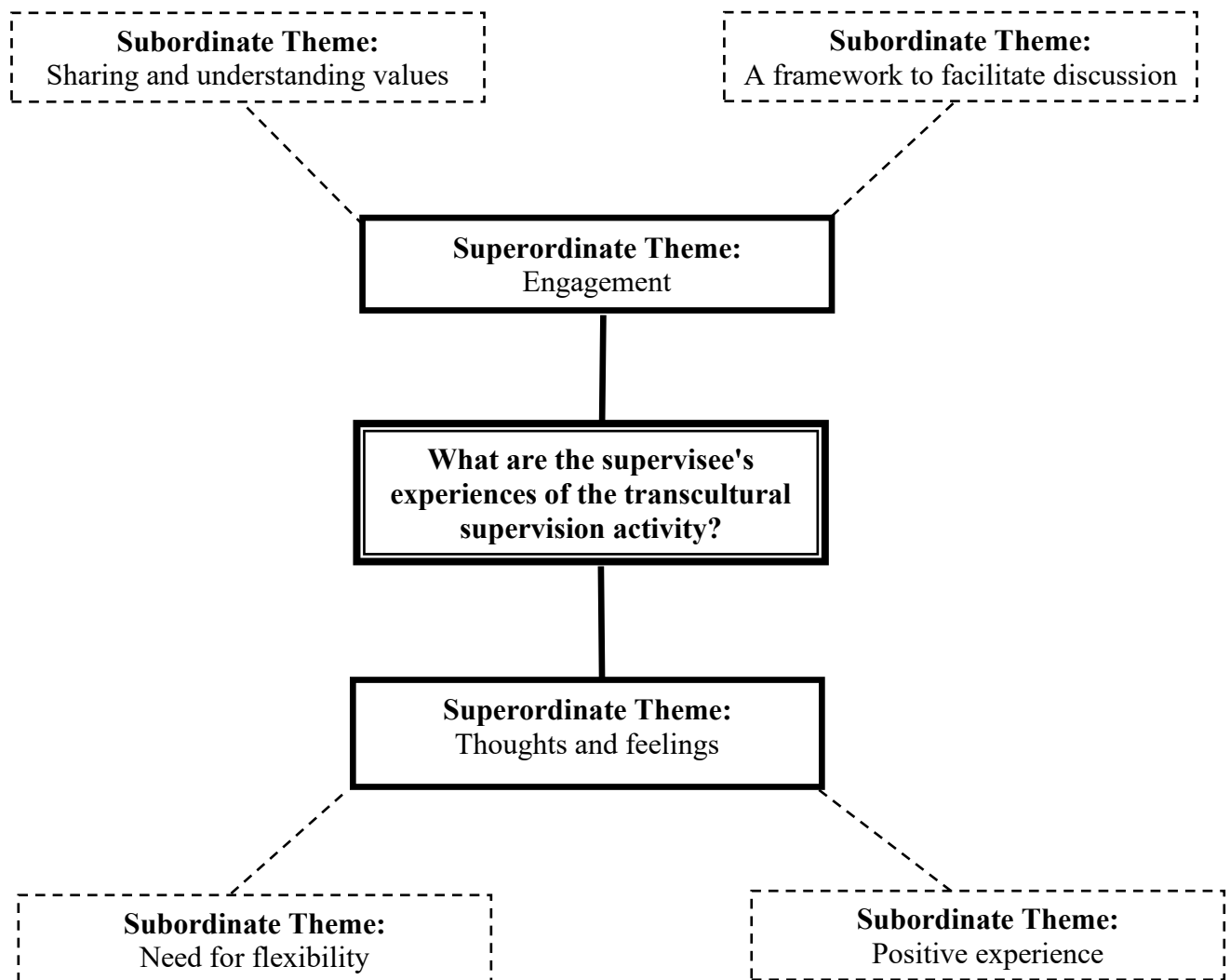
Superordinate Theme: Engagement

Contrary to some feelings of vulnerability and apprehension prior to the transcultural supervision activity, as described by two participants within their reflections, all supervisees reported finding it a positive, useful experience. This echoes similar experiences reported by supervising EPs (Soni et al., 2022). The supervisees highlighted an increase in their feelings of a greater knowledge of their supervisors' backgrounds following the transcultural supervision activity. Similarities in experience are reflected in the following subordinate themes: '*Sharing and Understanding Values'* and a '*Framework to Facilitate Discussion'*.

Subordinate Theme: Sharing and Understanding Values

Within their feedback, the supervisees universally expressed how the transcultural supervision activity enabled them to share and discuss personal values with their supervisor. Several supervisees shared that they had "*little knowledge*" of their supervisor's "*previous experiences prior to the supervision [activity]*" (Jamie). However, the views collected highlight the perceived benefit of supervisees sharing cultural exploration through a joint process where "*balance in the supervisee and supervisor contributions*" (Debra) are made. One supervisee reflected that this led to a greater connection and understanding of values within the supervisory relationship:

> "*I think we realised the similarities in our backgrounds and our values. Although we come from different cultures there were many similarities in what we hold as important and how we understand the world we live in*" (Maria)

Subordinate Theme: A Framework to Facilitate Discussion

Three supervisees explicitly stated that they liked the structure of the activity, with reflections made on the practicalities of the activity as well as its facilitation of "*discussions that wouldn't usually be had*" (Hannah) within a supervisory relationship. One supervisee questioned if conversations about culture would have happened "*without having the framework to follow*" (Maria). Therefore, it may be argued that the engagement of both participants encourages mutual learning and reflection, which aligns with the regulatory and moral duties of an EP (BPS, 2017; HCPC, 2015), as well as moving towards more culturally responsive ways of working. Protected time, to reflect on information shared, appears to have aided a better understanding between the supervisees and their supervisors:

> "*I found out some of my supervisor's values, something which would have taken longer in a more natural context, i.e., without the specific instructions to do this in a structured way*" (Jamie)

The reflective stages of the transcultural supervision activity enabled supervisees to feel "*very listened to*" (Hannah) and provided opportunity to "*feedback and clarify what we had understood*" (Maria). Opportunities for improvement of the framework were also highlighted with the suggestion of scheduled opportunities for revisiting and reflection at a later date. This adaptation to protect psychological thinking around the transcultural supervision activity echoes suggestions made in previous research (Soni et al., 2022). Arguably, without the protected time for supervisees, the professional experience of supervisors in making links between lived experiences and psychological theory may steer the conversation and implicitly effect the power dynamics within the activity.

Superordinate Theme: Thoughts and Feelings

Several of the supervisees shared how they experienced a range of thoughts and feelings before, during and following the transcultural supervision activity. The responses have been interpreted into two subordinate themes: '*Need for Flexibility'* and '*Positive Experience'*.

Subordinate Theme: Need for Flexibility

For two supervisees, the transcultural supervision activity was perceived to create a temporary feeling of vulnerability. One comment shared that overall, the transcultural supervision activity was an:

> "*interesting and useful experience, all be it a little uncomfortable / vulnerable (although this reflects me as a person and the way I use supervision more than the supervision activity*)" (Hannah)

With a distinction being made between the activity and the approach to supervision itself, it may be interpreted that the transcultural supervision activity requires flexibility in views of the purpose and views of supervision. Though the structure was regarded as a positive factor of the activity, the ability to work flexibly within the framework itself was also highlighted as a factor in the promotion of personal security. This supports the view that the transcultural supervision activity needs to be both structured but adaptable to the needs of the supervisees (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). In encouraging autonomy of the participants in the activity, by allowing them to select the aspects of culture that they want to discuss using the Social GGRRAAACCEEESSS model (Burnham, 2012), initial feelings of vulnerability may decrease. In turn, helping create a safe space, which is important for both participants (Tohidian & Quek, 2017).

Subordinate Theme: Positive Experience

The most common feedback from the questionnaire was that the transcultural supervision activity was a positive experience. Though two supervisees indicated that they were feeling less positive about the activity prior to engaging in it, both commented that they found the experience "*really useful*" and "*interesting*".

Research Question 2: What is the impact of the transcultural supervision activity on the supervisee's general cultural awareness?

Figure 2

Thematic Map for Research Question 2
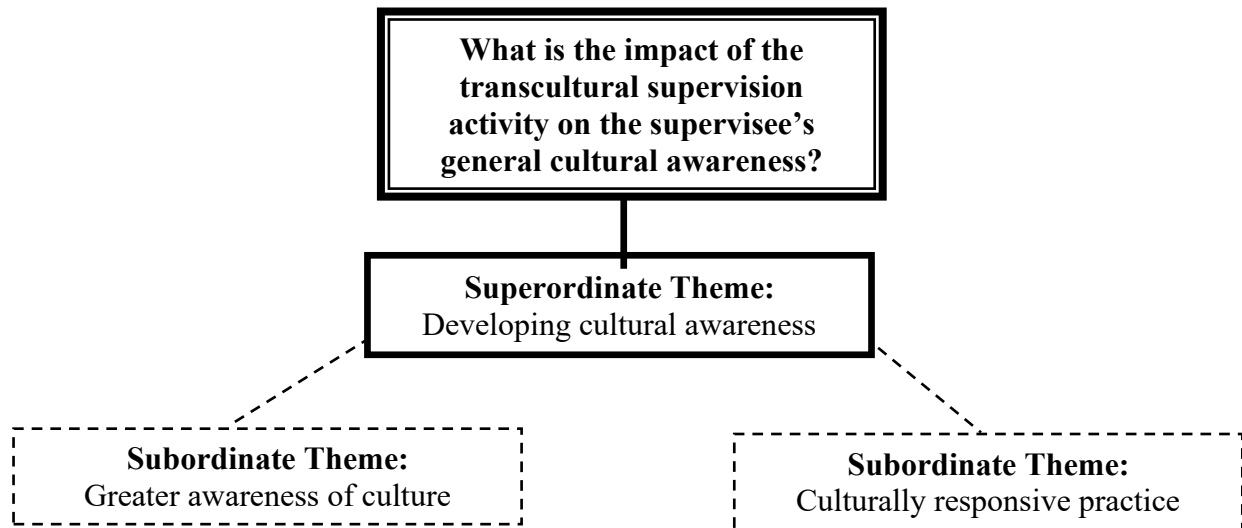
Superordinate Theme: Developing Cultural Awareness

In support of findings by Soni et al., (2022), the supervisees had a greater awareness of their supervisors' cultural backgrounds following participation in the transcultural supervision activity. Their feedback is reflected in the following subordinate themes: *'Improved Cultural Awareness'* and *'Culturally Responsive Practice'*.

Subordinate Theme: Greater Awareness of Culture

When discussing the impact of the transcultural supervision activity on their cultural awareness, several supervisees shared that the supervisory practice enabled a greater awareness and understanding of their supervisor's "*history*" and "*previous experiences*", whilst two supervisees specifically stated that the transcultural supervision activity also "*makes you more aware of your own culture*" (Debra). However, most reflections were about the experience of mutual learning and understanding between the supervisor and supervisee:

> "*What it did do was highlight similarities in the values we share and what we hold as most important which may never have been shared otherwise.*" (Maria)

In both the supervisor and supervisee sharing their cultural backgrounds and assumptions, it was reported that exploration of similarities and differences between participants in the transcultural supervision activity was beneficial. One supervisee anticipated that the activity "*might help to*

avoid misconceptions or unintended 'bad feelings' within the relationships and create and open atmosphere" (Hannah). Through the exploration of similarities and differences in cultures, it is hoped that both participants will move towards a more culturally responsive way of working, where differences are considered, championed and equitable changes are made in practice. An awareness of others' cultures and the impact that this may have on worldviews was noted by the supervisees, and the consideration of this in future practice was espoused.

Nevertheless, though the mutual sharing of information was referenced in all of the questionnaire responses, reflections of the transcultural supervision activity on the development of one's awareness of their own culture was only explicitly stated by two of the four supervisees. Whilst this may be an oversight and could have been explored by a different method of data collection, such as an interview, it may also be indicative of cultural incapacity and blindness (Mason (1993) cited in Hawkins and McMahon (2020)). This is further highlighted by one response which differentiated between transcultural supervision and "non cultural supervision" suggesting that transcultural supervision activities could be a tokenistic practice. Though this was not a common distinction, and therefore was not considered a theme within the analysis, it highlights a potential difference between the stages of cultural responsiveness and sensitivity.

Subordinate Theme: Cultural Responsive Practice

Further reflections were made of how greater cultural awareness "*relates to practice*" (Debra) as an EP at different levels. Firstly, the supervisees espoused to use their developing awareness of cultures to facilitate improved supervisory relationships and culturally responsive ways of working:

> "*[I] reflected on the cultural influences and how this can impact on the supervision process. Culture ultimately influences our perceptions and the way we work/respond to situations*" (Hannah)

In addition to reflections on the impact of cultural awareness on the supervisory relationship, supervisees also noted its application in practice when working with service users:

> "*I think understanding multiple perspectives in a way supports better practice in supervision but as a wider service and our work with schools too. All our interactions should be mindful of context and perspective*" (Jamie)

Whilst the transcultural supervision activity may raise awareness of cultures as socially constructed phenomena, further opportunities for reflection are required in order to promote cultural responsiveness and social action in practice and requires constant work and attention (Tohidian & Quek, 2017). This research argues, therefore, that the transcultural supervision activity may be beneficial as a springboard to shine a spotlight on cultural similarities and differences within

supervision, however, the maintenance and development of cultural responsiveness may require continued discussion in order to move people's understanding from a discrete exercise to recognising that cultural backgrounds and assumptions have an impact on all aspects of work as a T/EP. This impacts perceptions of supervision and in turn the supervisory alliance as a safe space (Chircop Colerio et al., 2022), and indicates a need for explicit discussions of power (Patel, 2012) even if this may be uncomfortable.

Research Question 3: How does the transcultural supervision activity impact power dynamics within the supervisory relationship?

Figure 3

Thematic Map for Research Question 3
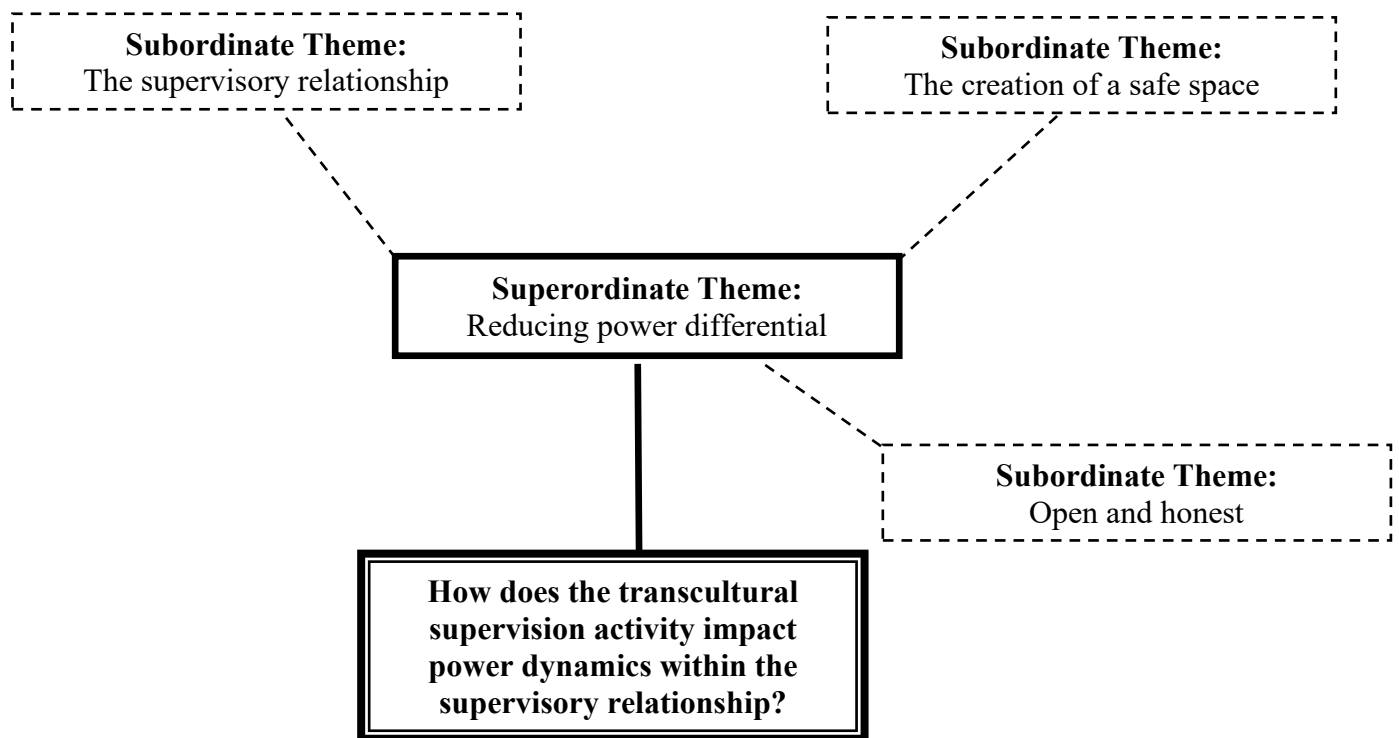
Superordinate Theme: Reducing Power Differential

Although only half of the supervisees felt that their engagement in the transcultural supervision activity led to an increase in their awareness of power dynamics within their supervisory relationship, all supervisees were able to reflect on its impact in relation to current and hypothetical contexts. Their views are collated below into the subordinate themes: '*The Supervisory Relationship*' and '*Creation of a Safe Space*'.

Subordinate Theme: The Supervisory Relationship

Several supervisees shared that they felt the activity may have had more impact on the awareness of power dynamics at the beginning of a supervisory relationship. It was reported that this influence had often been discussed prior to the transcultural supervision activity:

> "*I don't think this will impact the power dynamic between the researcher and my supervisor because at the beginning of my placement my supervisor, the researcher and my placement tutor had a discussion around acknowledging the power dynamic in the relationship. I believe my supervisor facilitates supervision with an awareness of this*" (Debra)

Arguably, this reflects a linear view of power, whereby singular transactions between two people signify hierarchy and are easy to identify (Hall, 2003). In viewing power this way, power dynamics are assumed as a top-down hierarchy from the supervisor to the supervisee. It may be argued, however, that power is ever-present, circulating in each interaction and creating reality through discourse (Burr, 2015). Following this perspective, power dynamics are not fixed (Patel, 2012) and can shift within supervisory relationships.

However, the individual nature of each supervisory relationship was noted as an important factor in the power dynamics within supervision, with two supervisees highlighting, "*I think it depends on who the supervisor is and their position within a service*" (Maria). In order to maximise the awareness of power dynamics within the relationship, the supervisees stated that the transcultural supervision activity should be implemented "*straight away or after a little familiarisation*" (Jamie). One supervisee stated that they think:

> "*The transcultural supervision maybe particularly valuable in forming relationships when this relationship has not already been formed. I've noticed the power dynamics in these relationships are also much more apparent and can imagine how transcultural supervision would level out of these power dynamics*" (Hannah)

Though the supervisees in this research did not reflect on their own power within the activity, responses were made that were indicative of an awareness of flexible power dynamics. The supervisees reported that the transcultural supervision activity would be useful to negotiate roles and facilitate the "levelling out" of hierarchical power dynamics at the beginning of a new relationship. Whilst this supports the view that it is beneficial to explore culture early in new supervisory relationships (Eleftheriadou, 1998), regular reflection on the discrete influence of power may also be beneficial for supervisees in their practice.

Subordinate Theme: The Creation of a Safe Space

Most of the TEPs explicitly expressed the need to have a *"controlled", "safe"* and *"non-judgemental"* environment in which they are supported to develop their understanding of culture without fear of reprisal:

> *"These constructs are our integrity and vulnerabilities, potential blind spots so we need to feel safe enough to explore them, be challenged and challenge ourselves"* (Jamie)

The structure of the transcultural supervision activity was highlighted as a facilitating factor in creating a safe environment, both through initial stages of *"contracting"* (Maria) and the flexibility to choose which cultural aspects are discussed (Hannah).

Several supervisees also considered the timing of the implementation of the activity. Similar to Soni et al (2022), the supervisees questioned whether early exploration of the activity may hamper collaboration if a safe space has not yet been established. Whilst this was also reflected upon by the supervisees in this study, the contracting stage of the transcultural supervision activity, along with the structured framework was highlighted as a protective factor in the creation of a safe environment for TEPs.

Subordinate Theme: Open and Honest

Throughout the data collected, the supervisees alluded to the importance of the engagement of both the supervisor and supervisee within the transcultural supervision activity in improving power differentials. The reciprocal nature of the exercise is reported to have had *"a positive influence on the power dynamic"* (Hannah) and made *"things feel more equalised"* (Jamie). Two supervisees made explicit reference to feeling that the transcultural supervision activity facilitated *"open"* and *"honest"* conversations. Maria noted: *"I think it has reduced any power dynamics that may been potentially there as we found we had a lot in common"* (Maria).

Therefore, the mutual engagement of both the supervisor and supervisee in the collaborative transcultural supervision framework is thought to positively affect the perception of power dynamics within supervision (Hill et al., 2015). Hird et al., (2001) suggests that supervisees are more able to share their experiences when a supervisor is open about their own culture and assumptions. This study proposes that supervisors engagement with reflective conversations may be necessary in order to shift the function of supervision from a managerial to an educative practice (Hawkins & Shohet, 1989, as cited in Nolan, 1999). Through the modelling of open and honest reflection, supervisees may feel less judged within the relationship and therefore more willing to engage.

Limitations, Future Research and Implications for TEP Supervision

There are a number of limitations to the study including the small sample size; highly localised sample; fidelity of approach when delivering the transcultural supervision activity; and the social desirability of responses in the online survey. A further limitation of this study is the assumption made that each participant has a similar understanding of the definitions of culture and power dynamics.

Alternative methods of data collection such as interviews or focus groups may have led to more detailed responses and would be an area to consider in future research. Alongside this, it would be helpful to explore the perceived long-term effects of this developing cultural awareness on professional practice and cultural responsiveness, as well as the impact on power dynamics in new supervisory relationships. For implementation, it would be important to examine the impact of introducing the transcultural activity early in the supervisory relationship and if and when repeated. As this has been found beneficial to TEPs, it would be helpful to research the use of the transcultural supervision activity within inter-professional supervisory relationships.

Findings from this small study have potential to significantly impact the supervisory practice of TEPs and their supervisors. In alignment with previously published literature, the results of this research highlight the importance of the conscious endeavouring of a reciprocal, supervisory relationship. Participants of this study specifically stated that the use of the transcultural supervision activity would be useful when forming new relationships with supervisors. Therefore, this study provides evidence for TEPs, their supervisors and EP professionals at a wider level of a framework to facilitate a better understand each other's backgrounds and cultural assumptions at the beginning of a relationship.

Additionally, professionals are supported in exploring both conscious and unconscious factors that may influence their world view within a safe environment. In support of developing professional competence within the role, this article, along with previous research, highlights the usefulness of the transcultural supervision in developing cultural awareness and the consideration of culturally responsive practice. Therefore, the findings of this study provide a talking point for TEPs and EPs to reconfigure the role of supervision in meeting the needs of supervisees at different levels. Through personal reflection and progression towards cultural responsiveness, practitioners are in a greater position to develop practices that are supportive and beneficial for a range of stakeholders. Thus, making practices more inclusive.

A further implication of this study is on the reflection of transcultural supervision within different supervisory relationships, outside of TEP supervision. In raising the cultural responsiveness of participants within supervision, the impact of cultural assumptions on practice at different

ecological systems levels around a child is made more explicit. Therefore, the exploration of cultural factors on educational practice may be an important consideration for TEPs and EPs within supervisory relationships with stakeholders, such as class teachers and emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs).

Conclusions

In conclusion, this research builds on the findings presented in previous research (Soni et al., 2021: Soni et al., 2022). Supervisees highlighted that engagement in the transcultural supervision activity (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012) is beneficial to promote cultural awareness and level the power dynamics within supervision. Whilst acknowledging it could provoke feelings of discomfort, the participants valued the opportunity the activity presented and highlighted that it provided a framework to facilitate discussion of their values with their supervisor and, in turn, their supervisor's values. Engagement in the activity supported both admitting and attending to the power differential in the supervisory relationship, thereby working towards balancing out the power differential (Cook et al., 2018). In addition, the participants also felt that they had increased their cultural awareness and anticipated that their personal and professional practice would become more culturally responsive. With greater culturally responsive working across the T/EP profession, it is hoped that inequalities within supervisory practices and society more widely can be better identified and challenged (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020).

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