Level of Evidence: The effect of supervision on consumer outcomes has the highest level of evidence being tested through an experiment that assigned staff to eight weeks of supervision with a mixed focus, followed by eight weeks of supervision with a client focus. Client outcomes were assessed using measures of generalized contentment, client satisfaction, and goal attainment (Harkness & Hensley, 1991; Harkness, 1997). They found that client-focused supervision has a larger, positive effect on consumer outcomes. Other studies have found that certain types of supervisory behavior, organizational characteristics, and leadership styles influence consumer outcomes. It is important to note that the literature included in this review is not solely related to child welfare. It includes supervision studies in both mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Definitions

Types of Supervision (Harkness & Hensley, 1991; Harkness, 1997):
- Mixed-focus supervision – focuses on administration, training, and clinical consultation.
- Client-focused supervision – focuses on client problems and staff interventions in the context of client outcomes.

Types of Leadership (Corrigan, Lickey, Campion, & Rashid, 2000):
- Transformational leadership – leader’s primary goal is to lead the team to evolving better programs. The leader is charismatic, inspirational, intellectually stimulating, and is considerate of the interests of individual staff members.
- Transactional leadership – leader strives to maintain effective programs through feedback and reinforcement. The leader regularly reinforces staff for accomplishing goals (contingent reward), are vigilant for errors and ready to provide guidance (active management-by-exception), and provide feedback only when differences from the standards are blatantly manifested (passive management-by-exception).
- Laissez Faire Leadership – ineffective, hands off leadership

Current Best Evidence

- **What type of supervision has a positive impact on consumer outcomes?**
  - Client-focused supervision increases (Harkness & Hensley, 1991; Harkness, 1997):
    - Client satisfaction with goal attainment
    - Client satisfaction with worker helpfulness
    - Client satisfaction with worker/client partnership
    - Client generalized contentment
How Supervision Relates to Consumer Outcomes

- **What supervisory behaviors have a positive impact on consumer outcomes?**
  - The supervisory skill of problem solving (Harkness, 1997)
  - Supervisor client centeredness (Ahearn, 1999)
  - Supervisor clarifying behavior (Ahearn, 1999)
  - Supervisor interpersonal skills (Ahearn, 1999)

- **What organizational characteristics have a positive impact on consumer outcomes?**
  - Greater routineness of work (Yoo & Brooks, 2005)
  - Strong agency leadership (Yoo & Brooks, 2005)
  - Supervisor support (Yoo & Brooks, 2005; Littell & Tajima, 2000)
  - Coworker support (Yoo & Brooks, 2005)
  - Support for worker autonomy (Littell & Tajima, 2000)
  - Job clarity (Littell & Tajima, 2000)

- **How do organizational characteristics impact consumer outcomes?**
  - Children who are served by agencies with more positive climates are more likely to (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998):
    - Experience improved psychosocial functioning
    - Receive more comprehensive services
    - Have more continuity in services
    - Have more responsive and available caseworkers
  - Consumers who are served by agencies with a supportive and goal directed environment are more likely to (Moos & Moos, 1998):
    - Feel more involved and supported in treatment.
    - More actively participate in formal treatment and self-help activities.
    - Feel more satisfied with treatment.
    - Have better outcomes at discharge.
    - Participate in aftercare services.

- **How do Leadership Styles Influence Consumer Outcomes?**
  - Programs with higher consumer satisfaction have leaders who (Corrigan et al., 2000):
    - Rate themselves as high in aspiration
    - Frequently use contingent rewards
    - Rank themselves low in passive management-by-exception
    - Rank themselves low in laissez-faire leadership
  - Programs with high consumer quality of life have leaders who are (Corrigan et al., 2000):
    - Charismatic
    - Inspiring
    - Considerate of the interests of individual staff member
Practice Implications

The findings regarding supervision and consumer outcomes imply that certain types of supervision, supervisory behaviors, organizational characteristics, and leadership styles have a positive impact on consumer outcomes:

- **Using client-centered supervision** - Supervisors need to:
  - Ask questions about client problems and staff interventions in the context of client outcomes.
  - Use the language of clients in supervision and practice to test, enact, and evaluate helping strategies in light of consumer outcomes and goals.
  - Keep the focus of supervision on helping clients and solving practice problems.
  - Use individual supervision to monitor workers’ actions to achieve consumer outcomes and goals.

- **Improving organizational climate** – Agencies need to:
  - Provide adequate support and supervision
  - Provide supportive, goal directed, well-structured work environments
  - Develop programs to improve the social climate of the workplace

- **Enhancing agency leadership** – Agencies need:
  - Leaders with high aspirations
  - Leaders who regularly reinforce staff for accomplishing goals
  - Leaders who are charismatic, inspiring, and considerate of the interests of individual staff members.


