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Abstract

Fieldwork shortages have been noted in the literature for some time. With the ever-changing healthcare system and an increasing number of students in occupational therapy programs, the scarcity of fieldwork placements is dire. Rooted in adult learning principles, the collaborative fieldwork supervision model is one approach to fieldwork education that may alleviate the shortage of placements, while also supporting student learning. This model is designed to have one fieldwork educator supervising two or more students throughout a fieldwork experience. The strengths and challenges of this model are well documented, although it is unclear if the identified challenges are the same or different for those who have and have not used the model. Therefore, a research study was conducted to investigate Level II fieldwork educators' experienced and perceived challenges of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model. Narrative data was gathered from both fieldwork educators who have used the model and those who have not used the model, within the last five years. The researchers investigated two open-ended questions from a nationwide survey disseminated in 2018. Nearly 30% of the study respondents reported having used the model, while 70% reported not using the model. The same five themes emerged from both groups, however, the prevalence and subthemes between the two groups were different. The themes are: 1) considerations at fieldwork site; 2) knowledge, skill, and professionalism of students; 3) client needs and level of comfort; 4) fieldwork educator knowledge and familiarity with model; and 5) culture of fieldwork education. Methods for addressing challenges and implications for occupational therapy education are discussed.

Keywords

Collaborative fieldwork supervision model, Level II fieldwork, occupational therapy, peer-learning

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Level II Fieldwork Educators' Perceived and Experienced Challenges with Using the Collaborative Fieldwork Supervision Model

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ABSTRACT

Fieldwork shortages have been noted in the literature for some time. With the ever-changing healthcare system and an increasing number of students in occupational therapy programs, the scarcity of fieldwork placements is dire. Rooted in adult learning principles, the collaborative fieldwork supervision model is one approach to fieldwork education that may alleviate the shortage of placements, while also supporting student learning. This model is designed to have one fieldwork educator supervising two or more students throughout a fieldwork experience. The strengths and challenges of this model are well documented, although it is unclear if the identified challenges are the same or different for those who have and have not used the model. Therefore, a research study was conducted to investigate Level II fieldwork educators' experienced and perceived challenges of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model. Narrative data was gathered from both fieldwork educators who have used the model and those who have not used the model, within the last five years. The researchers investigated two open-ended questions from a nationwide survey disseminated in 2018. Nearly 30% of the study respondents reported having used the model, while 70% reported not using the model. The same five themes emerged from both groups, however, the prevalence and subthemes between the two groups were different. The themes are: 1) considerations at fieldwork site; 2) knowledge, skill, and professionalism of students; 3) client needs and level of comfort; 4) fieldwork educator knowledge and familiarity with model; and 5) culture of fieldwork education. Methods for addressing challenges and implications for occupational therapy education are discussed.

Introduction

The apprenticeship model is the primary model used for Level II fieldwork supervision in the occupational therapy (OT) profession within the United States (Evenson et al., 2015). The collaborative fieldwork supervision model was introduced to OT fieldwork education as an innovative approach to ready students for the 21st-century healthcare arena (Cohn et al., 2001) as well as a solution to the ongoing fieldwork placement shortages nationally and internationally (Roberts & Simon, 2012; Stutz-Tanenbaum et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2007). Despite being introduced 20 years ago, the model has not gained popularity as an approach for fieldwork education within OT. A recent survey of 382 Level II fieldwork educators found that 30% of respondents have used the model within the past five years, although only 13% of these users identified being extremely familiar with the collaborative fieldwork supervision model, 15% moderately familiar, 19% somewhat familiar, and 17% slightly familiar with the model (Hanson et al., 2019). Identifying and understanding the actual and perceived challenges with the collaborative fieldwork supervision model may lead to the development and implementation of strategies that will inform model utilization.

Background

The collaborative fieldwork supervision model is commonly described in the OT profession as one fieldwork educator supervising two or more students throughout a fieldwork experience (Hanson & Deluliis, 2015; Kinsella & Piersol, 2018; Oldenburg et al., 2020). In other professional literature, similar models and terminologies are presented, including but not limited to, the Collaborative Learning in Practice (CLiP) Model (Health Education England, 2017), Amsterdam Model (Lobo et al., 2014), Dedicated Education Units (DEU; Edgecombe & Bowden, 2014; Miller, 2005), Collaborative Learning Unit (CLU; Callaghan et al., 2009; Loughheed & Ford, 2005), peer assisted learning (PAL; Topping & Ehly, 1998; Williams & Reddy, 2016), and peer coaching model (Claessen, 2004; Ladyshewsky, 2002). All these models have a similar focus on peer learning during practice-based education experiences. Numerous medical and allied health professions have explored the feasibility of this type of student supervision, with most literature representing the professions of nursing, physical therapy, and OT. In addition, limited attention to this model is evident in the professions of pharmacy, dietetics, speech and language, social work, and others (Loewen et al., 2017). Four countries have produced most of the literature on this topic, including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Loewen et al., 2017).

The theoretical assumptions of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model are distinct from that of the traditional 1:1 apprenticeship supervision model. These theoretical differences are of key importance in understanding and accurately implementing this model, thus impacting the outcome of the experience for all those involved. The first distinction is the focus on learning from a peer in comparison to learning from an expert. According to Topping (2005), PAL is the process by which students of a similar level work together collaboratively to build knowledge and skills. Peer assisted learning does not occur automatically during fieldwork placements where two or more students are

paired with one fieldwork educator, instead PAL must be facilitated with intentionality. The implementation of PAL requires knowledge of the learning theories informing a constructivist learning perspective as well as strategies to facilitate collaboration among two or more students. With knowledge and intentional planning, PAL can be optimized, and improved student learning outcomes can be realized (Sevenhuysen et al., 2013).

The second distinction is the emphasis on adult learning principles. Students in professional programs are assumed to be adult self-directed learners who can use previous knowledge and experiences to apply and integrate new learning (Knowles, 1980). Students who participate in the collaborative fieldwork supervision model must be self-directed and take an active role in their learning within their peer group. The role of the fieldwork educator is not to direct the student learning, rather to facilitate the learning experience. In contrast, the apprenticeship model focuses on the fieldwork educator as an expert and the student as an apprentice. The apprenticeship model emphasizes the student gaining competence throughout the fieldwork by observing and modeling what is completed by the fieldwork educator, which may result in students assuming a more passive role in their learning (Thomas et al., 2005).

Like all fieldwork supervision models, the collaborative fieldwork supervision model has strengths and challenges. Across the interdisciplinary literature strengths include increased student independence, increased student confidence, quicker achievement of clinical competence, enhanced student collaboration and support, increased student learning opportunities, improved ability of students to provide and respond to feedback, decreased student anxiety, and decreased direct supervision by fieldwork educators (Briffa & Porter, 2013; Carey et al., 2018; Flood et al., 2010; Hill et al., 2020; Kinsella & Piersol, 2018; Loewen et al., 2017; O'Connor et al., 2012; Price & Whiteside, 2016; Reidlinger et al., 2017; Sevenhuysen et al., 2013; Sevenhuysen et al., 2015; Sevenhuysen et al., 2017; Tai et al., 2016). Users of this model often identify these strengths when all stakeholders, including the fieldwork educator and students, are prepared to engage in this type of learning experience, understand the model's theoretical assumptions, and know the expectations for each role they assume throughout the fieldwork experience (Hanson & Deluliis, 2015; Kinsella & Piersol, 2018; Price & Whiteside, 2016).

Challenges to the implementation of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model have been identified as increased preparation and administrative workload, need for sufficient client contact, reduced 1:1 supervision and feedback from fieldwork educators, limited workspace, and dynamics of peer-to-peer learning (Alpine et al., 2019; Briffa & Porter, 2013; Kinsella & Piersol, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2012; Price & Whiteside, 2016; Reidlinger et al., 2017; Sevenhuysen et al., 2015). The most significant barrier appears to be a lack of understanding and familiarity with applying this model (Bartholomai & Fitzgerald, 2007; Hanson & Deluliis, 2015).

The existing research describing the challenges of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model has primarily focused on small sample sizes of individuals who have used the model and are primarily descriptive in nature. There are no studies comparing challenges experienced by those who have used the model to the challenges perceived by those who have not used the model. By understanding the similarities and differences between these two groups, academicians and fieldwork educators will be able to develop and implement strategies, supports, and resources to better facilitate its use. Therefore, the purpose of this research study was to investigate the challenges reported by fieldwork educators who have used the collaborative fieldwork supervision model during Level II fieldwork and the perceived challenges reported by those who have not used the model. Similarities and differences regarding the identified challenges by model users and non-users are explored.

Methods

The researchers received approval from their respective university's institutional review boards to conduct this study. A survey was created to better understand fieldwork educators' experiences and perceptions about the collaborative fieldwork supervision model. This article shares the outcomes of the third phase of a four-part study. The first phase of the study analyzed the quantitative data from the survey, which led to the creation of the *Collaborative Fieldwork Supervision Tool* and *The Collaborative Fieldwork Supervision Process Model* (Hanson et al., 2019). The second phase of the study identified factors affecting the perceived value and use of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model (in review). The third phase is to explore the narrative data obtained from two of the survey's open-ended questions using a thematic analysis approach. The final and fourth phase will explore both quantitative and qualitative data to identify supports that fieldwork educators would find valuable when using the collaborative fieldwork supervision model.

Survey Creation

The survey's creation was informed by literature regarding the collaborative fieldwork supervision model, PAL, and fieldwork supervision. Additionally, the authors' work experience in the academic fieldwork coordinator (AFWC) role for more than a combined 80 years was critical to item creation in the lived experience of educating, developing, and supporting collaborative fieldwork programs.

Using an online software program, Qualtrics, the following four categories were used to construct the original 38 questions in the survey: demographics, beliefs about the benefits and challenges of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model, ease of use of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model strategies, and collaborative fieldwork supervision model supports. A pilot survey was conducted to better inform the researchers of the readability and comprehension of the survey. A total of seven OT practitioners completed the pilot survey and provided feedback to the researchers. Five of the pilot survey respondents had used the collaborative fieldwork supervision model and two had not. Based on the feedback received, the survey was modified to direct specific questions to those who had and had not used the collaborative fieldwork supervision model and categorize the survey questions into smaller sections.

The final survey consisted of Likert scale, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions. The number of questions and content included within each question set may be seen in Table 1. At the beginning of the survey, all respondents were given a definition of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model to ensure there was a consistent use of terminology and clear definition of the concept. Respondents were asked to self-identify if they had ever used the collaborative fieldwork supervision model to supervise Level II fieldwork students. Those who marked “no” were asked 25 questions and were classified as model ‘non-users’, whereas those who had marked “yes” were asked a total of 30 questions and were classified as model ‘users’. The response time to complete the survey was approximately 15 minutes, and the survey remained open for data collection for four months.

Table 1

Number of Questions and Content Included Within Each Question Set

Type of Question	Content of Question	Number of Questions for Non-Users	Number of Questions for Users
Multiple Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic data 	12	12
Likert Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General familiarity and beliefs about the model • Academic supports that are or may be valued • *Familiarity with the associated teaching and learning strategies of the model 	7	12
Open-Ended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Challenges and supports experienced by model users • **Challenges and supports perceived by model non-users • Additional feedback about the model that were not addressed in the survey 	6	6

*Only model users received questions related to this content.

** Only model non-users received questions related to this content.

Survey Sample

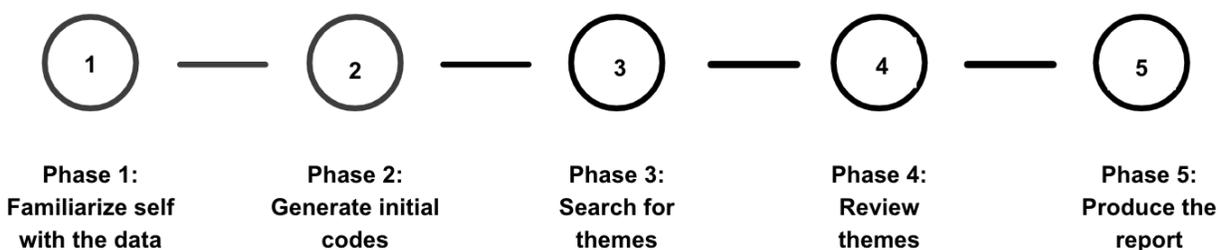
An email providing an overview of the study and the survey was distributed to the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Academic Fieldwork and Capstone Coordinator Listserv in April 2018. AFWCs and Capstone Coordinators from accredited OT and OTA academic programs are included in the listserv. At that time, there were 418 accredited OT and OTA programs, with a distribution of 5% doctoral programs, 42% master's program, and 53% associate programs. Through the email, the researchers asked the listserv recipients to forward the survey to OT practitioners who served as Level II fieldwork educators for their corresponding program over the past five years.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was used to understand the large number of responses received from the survey's open-ended questions. To complete the thematic analysis, the researchers followed the five phases recommended by Nowell et al. (2017), which are outlined in Figure 1. Two of the researchers independently read and reread the data from the two open-ended questions applicable to this phase of the study to familiarize themselves with it. Individually, the two researchers created initial codes and generated themes based on those codes. Throughout the analysis process, the two researchers met with each other to discuss their findings. The meetings involved the researchers reviewing the codes and themes they developed, discussing the similarities and differences between the codes and themes, and then clearly establishing and defining the meaning of each one. Following discussion and definition of the codes and themes, each researcher went back to the data for another review of analysis. This process allowed for investigator triangulation (Carter et al., 2014). After the researchers refined their codes and themes, they reviewed the findings with the larger research team to support the trustworthiness of the data. Collectively, the research team finalized the codes and themes that were produced in the research report.

Figure 1

Phases to Complete Thematic Analysis as Suggested by Nowell et al. (2017)



Reliability of the Data

Reliability of the data analysis was achieved through the creation of an audit trail to document the analysis process from raw data to final creation of codes and themes. Using a secure shared file between the researchers, the following items were used throughout the analysis process to create the audit trail: original survey, raw survey data, documentation of the evolving codes and themes, and researcher meeting notes. Dependability of the results was achieved by the researchers following the five phases recommended by Nowell et al. (2017). In particular, the researchers independently developed the codes and themes and then collaboratively decided on the final ones. The researchers were unable to complete member checking for this study since the survey was anonymous.

Results

A total of 382 fieldwork educators completed the survey in full. A total of 113 respondents (29.58%) reported using the collaborative fieldwork supervision model and 269 (70.42%) reported not using the model. About half (47%) of the study respondents were from the Midwest. Nearly all (90%) were employed full time and 95% identified as an occupational therapist. The average years of practice experience was 15.70 (SD 10.72). There were no significant differences in demographic data (i.e., degree, number of practice settings, years of experience in OT and being a fieldwork educator, and number of students supervised per year) between model users and non-users.

The data analysis included responses that were clear and distinctly answered the open-ended questions. These responses ranged from a couple of words to a paragraph. Not all survey respondents provided an answer to the open-ended questions or answered it with a clear response. Out of the 113 model users who completed the survey, 103 answered the following open-ended question, "Identify challenges you experienced while utilizing the collaborative fieldwork supervision model." Ninety-eight of these responses were included in the data analysis. Out of the 269 model non-users, 226 answered the following open-ended question, "Identify challenges you experience which prevents you from utilizing the collaborative fieldwork supervision model". Two hundred fourteen of these responses were included in the data analysis.

The following five themes emerged from both model users and non-users:

- 1) considerations at fieldwork site;
- 2) knowledge, skills and professionalism of students;
- 3) client needs and level of comfort;
- 4) fieldwork educator knowledge and familiarity with model; and
- 5) culture of fieldwork education (see Table 2).

Table 2*Coded Words/Phrases That Comprised Each Theme for Model Users and Non-Users*

Model Users (n=98)	Model Non-Users (n=214)
<i>Considerations at Fieldwork Site</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Caseload 2. Physical space/resources 3. Site-specific setting 4. Administration concerns 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Caseload 2. Physical space/resources 3. Specific practice setting 4. Productivity/pace 5. Staff size 6. Billing
<i>Knowledge, Skills and Professionalism of Students</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peers at different skill and knowledge level 2. Different learning styles 3. Professionalism concerns 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peers at different skill and knowledge level 2. Different learning styles 3. Professionalism concerns 4. Too much individual student attention
<i>Client Needs and Level of Comfort</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overwhelming for client 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overwhelming for client 2. Acuity of client 3. Inconsistency with client care
<i>Fieldwork Educator Familiarity and Knowledge with Model</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extra work for educator 2. Time commitment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extra work for educator 2. Time commitment 3. Foundational principles of model
<i>Culture of Fieldwork Education</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An established fieldwork program at the site. 2. Stigma about the model (students and colleagues) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An established fieldwork program at the site. 2. Not allowed to use model 3. Preference for apprenticeship model/ assumption it is superior 4. Not having the opportunity or being asked to use the collaborative model

Considerations at Fieldwork Site

For model users and non-users, this theme includes data related to the fieldwork site's physical and social environment and the associated logistics of having more than one student at a time. This was the most reported perceived challenge identified by model non-users (n=187/214) and the third most reported challenge experienced by model users (n=28/98).

Within this theme, the most prominent sub-theme for model users was associated with the therapists' caseload (n=11). Fieldwork educators often reported not having enough clients or not being able to distribute the workload between two students. One quote succinctly illustrated this challenge: "It becomes difficult to give each student a full caseload if there are too many of them [students] here." Approximately one quarter (n=50) of the model non-users identified caseload as a concern, either having a low caseload or not having enough clients for each student to have a full, independent caseload.

Another sub-theme reported as a challenge by both model users (n=6) and non-users (n=84) relates to the physical space and available resources at the fieldwork site. This was the most prominent sub-theme for model non-users. The concerns noted by both groups were not having enough computers or desk space for everyone, having a crowded clinic, and the overall availability of resources.

Being in a specific practice setting was only mentioned once by a model user (n=1) who said, "this did not work in the mental health setting." Model non-users reported this concern slightly more often (n=16), stating "difficult setting" or "specialized setting." Additionally, a model non-user reported "attempting to educate two students in a difficult, fast-paced environment would be challenging and limiting."

Model non-users (n=48) reported additional perceived challenges related to administration, including productivity demands, the support and number of available staff, and billing regulations that mandate specific student supervision requirements for reimbursement of services. One model non-user stated, "our administration is currently looking at our department's productivity daily - too much pressure currently to have multiple students with this model at this time." Only one model user reported a challenge with their administration accepting this form of supervision, but also went on to say, "it has worked out beautifully, and administration has become supportive."

Knowledge, Skills and Professionalism of Students

This theme encompasses evaluating if a student is an entry-level practitioner, how students learn, and students' professional behaviors during their fieldwork rotation. This theme was the most reported challenge experienced by model users (n=53/98) with a little over half experiencing this challenge, whereas this was the third most perceived challenge identified by model non-users (n=60/214).

A sub-theme experienced by model users (n=40) and perceived by non-users (n=21) was students' different learning styles, and pace of their learning and abilities. This was highlighted by one model user reporting, "one student was more of a thinker, and the other student was more of a doer" and another one reported "each student has different needs and styles." A model user also reported as challenging having "two students at very different levels," and another reported "students performing at a different level of independence." A model non-user perceived a challenge as, "concern for varying abilities or if you were to get multiple students that each need extra time."

Another sub-theme that emerged by both model users (n=14) and model non-users (n=6) was a concern with students' professionalism. These challenges included professionalism between the student peers and/or with the fieldwork educator. One model user reported "poor professional behaviors of one [student] negatively impacting the other [student's] professional behaviors." One model non-user identified a perceived concern as "student personal conflicts" and "professional issues with students," while another cited "concerns about student interpersonal challenges" and "competitiveness."

Model non-users (n=18) identified additional perceived challenges with students related to being able to demonstrate entry level skills as a practitioner, such as becoming independent thinkers, independently managing a full caseload, and receiving adequate hands-on experiences. For example, a model non-user reported "the student doesn't become an independent thinker and develop treatment planning skills plus manage everything needed for a full caseload." Another perceived challenge by model non-users (n=14) was students not receiving the individualized attention needed to be successful. Model non-users also perceived challenges with meeting both students' learning needs due to less time for individualized support and feedback. One stated it was "difficult to give each student time and help when your attention is divided."

Client Needs and Level of Comfort

This theme encompasses how the use of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model may impact the client and or their caregiver(s). This theme was one of the least reported from the model users (n=9/98), and the fourth most perceived challenge reported by model non-users (n=57/214).

Approximately half of the model users (n=4) who experienced this challenge and model non-users (n=24) who perceived this as a challenge identified that having more than one student working with a client and or caregiver(s) at a time was "overwhelming." One model non-user reported "families I work with are hesitant to allow me to bring in just one student, so I feel they would not like if I were to bring more than one student into their home to work with their infant."

Model users and non-users reported additional challenges related to the level of comfort for clients, such as a client becoming distracted or being dissatisfied with therapy when working with more than one student. One model non-user stated "my clients would not like this, so I would NEVER do this to them." An additional challenge reported by both groups included the amount and quality of therapy provided to the client based on their

need. One model user reported the client received “more therapy than is required,” while a model non-user stated “it is not good for patients when students or supervisors are inconsistent in treatment styles, techniques or explanations.”

Model non-users (n=13) reported additional perceived challenges for the clients they served, including acuity of clients, intensity of the programming provided, and concern for client safety. For example, one model non-user stated an “inpatient setting requires more attention to [patient’s] medical status during therapy,” and another responded, “perceived risk of patient safety issues.”

Fieldwork Educator Familiarity and Knowledge with Model

This theme focused on the direct impact of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model on the fieldwork educator using the model and their own familiarity and knowledge with the model’s principles. This theme was the second most reported challenge by both model users (n=33/98) and non-users (n=97/214).

Sub-themes identified by both groups was the concept of time and additional workload to be a fieldwork educator using the collaborative fieldwork supervision model. Model users (n=16) who experienced this challenge reported the increased amount of time and workload related to lengthening their work hours, to schedule everyone, and not having as much individual time with each student. For model non-users (n=64), perceived challenges also focused on spending extra time to be a fieldwork educator and additional demands. One model non-user reported, “too much extra time and work to take on two students given my already high demanding work requirements”. Model non-users reported the additional workload to supervise more than two students would be overwhelming for the fieldwork educator. For example, one model non-user stated “one student seems enough most times, two would be overwhelming.” Other model users (n=9) found it challenging to provide the supervision needed for two students and reported “relying on colleagues to provide supervision.” Lastly, a few of the model users (n=8) reported extra work and effort on their part to supervise two students. They identified addressing individual student feedback in a timely manner and managing each student’s privacy and performance as a challenge. The following quote summarizes the challenges noted in this theme: “initially....it was definitely more work and time consuming.”

Another challenge identified by model non-users (n=24) in their role as a fieldwork educator was the ability to apply the principles of the model. Perceived challenges identified by non-users included the inability to orient, mentor, evaluate, teach, supervise, and provide feedback to two students rather than one student. Respondents noted the difficulty of tailoring their teaching for one student so that it did not impact the other student. This is illustrated in the following model non-user quote, “providing adequate supervision for each student during treatment”. Lastly, less than ten model non-users identified their lack of familiarity, exposure, and knowledge, as factors influencing their non-use of this model. For example, two stated, “not familiar with it so have not used this model before” and “lack of education regarding managing multiple students at a time”.

Culture of Fieldwork Education

This theme includes remarks related to traditions associated with Level II fieldwork implementation, how fieldwork was viewed or implemented at the site, and/or how fieldwork should be done. Model users (n=9/98) and non-users (n=56/214) reflected their beliefs about fieldwork education and the use of different supervision models.

The beliefs reported by model users about the collaborative fieldwork supervision model ranged from positive to negative. One model user stated, “I have always done collaborative fieldwork experience,” demonstrating support for the model. In contrast, another model user reported a “stigma associated with colleagues” for the use of this model, demonstrating a negative association with this approach. In the middle of the spectrum, one model user reported “the initial challenge was taking the leap to do this. Fear of the unknown.” Other model users reported students having their own beliefs about fieldwork supervision, such as students expecting the apprenticeship model.

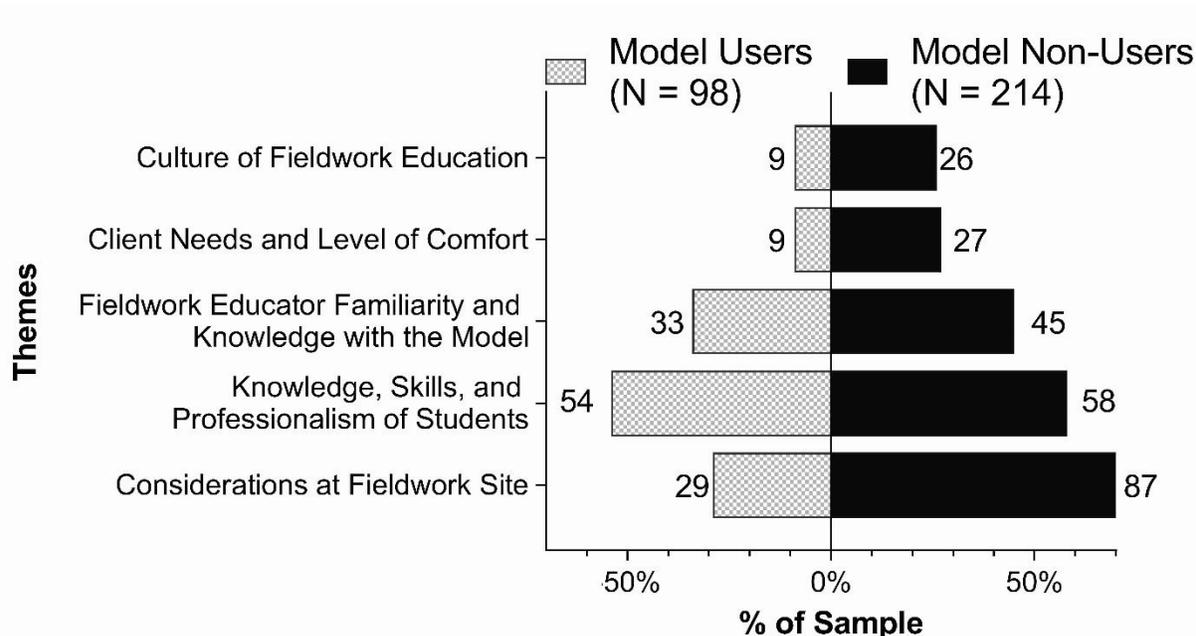
For model non-users, the prevalent tradition of apprenticeship-oriented supervision was strongly evident when fieldwork educators were asked what prevented them from using the collaborative fieldwork supervision model. Several fieldwork educators (n=19) reported they had never had the opportunity to use this model. They reported not being asked or only being assigned one student. One fieldwork educator stated, “OT has not been asked to utilize the collaborative fieldwork supervision model.” Another one remarked “I have never had the opportunity to participate in the collaborative model.”

In contrast, several model non-users (n=22) commented on their preference for the apprenticeship model or shared their perception that the apprenticeship model was superior to the collaborative fieldwork supervision model. Comments supporting this perspective included “I would not rob the student of the 1:1 experience” and “I personally would not ever want it scheduled that way and would decline to take students if it was expected.” Additional comments reflected an “established way of doing things” and the view that this model did not fit within that pattern by model non-users or at their fieldwork site (n=13). For example, one respondent stated it was “not the current model established at our facility.” Further comments that identified an expectation by others to provide fieldwork experiences that allowed for 1:1 supervision such as “administration expectation for style of supervision” and “school district where I work wants one fieldwork student per supervisor.”

The differences and similarities noted between the model users and non-users can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Model Users and Non-Users Response Percentages that Comprise Themes



Discussion

The underutilization of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model in the OT profession within the United States is well documented in the literature (Evenson et al., 2015; Hanson et al., 2019). The results from this study shed light on the challenges experienced by those who have used this supervision model and the perceived challenges reported by those who have not used the model. Notably, both groups identified the same challenges, however, the prevalence and subthemes of each challenge identified by the two groups were different.

Fieldwork educators who have not used the collaborative fieldwork supervision model perceived the greatest challenges to be related to considerations at their fieldwork site. In comparison, fieldwork educators who have used the model, identified this theme as third most prominent, after knowledge, skills and professionalism of students and fieldwork educator familiarity and knowledge with model. Commonalities identified by both model users and non-users related to considerations at their fieldwork site included caseload, physical space, and available resources at the fieldwork site, which are consistent with challenges noted in the literature (Kinsella & Piersol, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2012; Price & Whiteside, 2016). The challenges that have been noted in the literature and from this study findings underscore the sentiment that not all fieldwork sites may be an appropriate placement to implement the collaborative fieldwork supervision model. The AFWC, clinical coordinator, and fieldwork educator should evaluate if the physical space and available resources are sufficient to support more than one student at a time.

The caseload challenge was brought forward by both those who had and had not used the model, which highlights the important point that AFWC and fieldwork educators would benefit from advanced training to understand the foundational concepts of this model more clearly. A common misperception with model use is that each student needs to have a full caseload. However, one of the features of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model is that each student should not have a standard therapist caseload and the student pair should not have double the caseload of the fieldwork educator. In contrast, each student should have enough clients to have hands on experience, to gain and demonstrate competency, and be given other supplemental learning activities that will allow each one to demonstrate the skills needed to be an entry level practitioner (Bartholomai & Fitzgerald, 2007; Hanson & Deluliis, 2015; Kinsella & Piersol, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2012).

Additional challenges that were noted by model non-users included the pace of the fieldwork site, productivity demands, billing requirements, and staff/team challenges. It is important to note that these same concerns were not identified by model users. This difference may be a result of the preparations and considerations made in advance by model users, whereas model non-users may be unaware of the tasks and considerations that are needed prior to commencement of the fieldwork rotation. Advanced preparation for the fieldwork educator and site is another notable feature of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model (Bartholomai & Fitzgerald, 2007; Hanson & Deluliis, 2015; Kinsella & Piersol, 2018; O'Conner et al., 2012; Price & Whiteside, 2016). The AFWC, clinical coordinator, and fieldwork educator should work collaboratively to discuss these items and identify implementation strategies prior to students starting their fieldwork placement.

The differences in subthemes between model users and non-users when reporting challenges at their fieldwork site may exist because model users have a different perception of the value that students add to the fieldwork site and are more willing to work through challenges perceived by non-users as insurmountable (O'Connor et al., 2012). Additionally, model non-users perceived multiple students as reducing overall productivity; however, this assumption and popular myth has been shown to be inaccurate (Ozelie et al., 2015). Providing advanced training for fieldwork educators and site administrators, to include guidelines and strategies for how to best utilize students, outlining how students benefit the organization's mission, and helping fieldwork educators to navigate the administrative logistics, may be key to realizing the benefits of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model for those who have not used it before (Bartholomai & Fitzgerald, 2007; Hanson & Deluliis, 2015; Kinsella & Piersol, 2018; O'Conner et al., 2012; Price & Whiteside, 2016).

The fieldwork educator familiarity and knowledge with model was the second most prominent theme by both model users and non-users. However, the only consistent sub-themes between the two groups were related to the additional time and work required to implement the collaborative fieldwork supervision model. Those who had used the model spoke of the time required for scheduling more than one student as well as finding time for individualized supervision and feedback. These are other examples

of the advance preparation needed for successful implementation of this model. This preparation includes attention to determining appropriate size of caseload, scheduling of clients, scheduling time to provide feedback to individual students and the student pair and maximizing the learning opportunities that might be provided by intra- and interprofessional colleagues at the site. As mentioned by model users from this study, utilizing colleagues for supervision as a strategy for addressing time constraints is a consistent feature of the model (Bartholomai & Fitzgerald, 2007; Kinsella & Piersol, 2018; Price & Whiteside, 2016). The challenges identified by model users are consistent with those identified in the literature and suggest that scheduling and time use, although experienced as challenging, can be creatively addressed by advance preparation. In contrast, model non-users perceived the time challenges to be double that of supervising one student, which was not reported by model users.

Less than ten of the model non-users specifically identified lack of familiarity, exposure or knowledge of the model as impacting their decision to not use the model. However, it was noted that the concerns reported by model non-users communicated a lack of understanding of the theoretical assumptions and processes common to the collaborative fieldwork supervision model. For example, non-users were more likely to identify caseload and supervision concerns that might be addressed by advance preparation prior to the student's arrival, a lack of awareness of the value of peer exchange as a learning mechanism and reported the collaborative fieldwork supervision model as inferior to an apprenticeship approach. This would suggest that model non-users might think that they already know how to use this supervisory approach, but mistakenly perceive this model as individually supervising two students at one time rather than understanding and utilizing the learning process and principles that undermine the approach. This suggests a strong need for educational institutions, AFWCs, and state and national OT associations to provide training and resources to fieldwork educators about this model. The *Collaborative Fieldwork Supervision Tool* and *Collaborative Fieldwork Supervision Process Model* (Hanson et al., 2019) may help facilitate this knowledge translation to fieldwork educators.

Knowledge, skills, and professionalism of students was the third largest perceived challenge for model non-users while it was the most prominent experienced challenge for model users. Consistently, both groups noted that students have different learning styles, therefore having more than one student, especially with diverse learning needs, was challenging. Another notable similarity was concerns about discrepancies between student knowledge and skill sets and different rates of learning. The prevalence of this concern across both groups may be related to lack of intentional placement of students most suitable for this model. As noted by Hanson and Deluliis (2015), an important step for the AFWC to take when placing students at a fieldwork site utilizing the collaborative fieldwork supervision model is to match students who will be a good fit, not only for the fieldwork site but also who will benefit from this model of learning. Students should be selected based on their knowledge, skill set and learning style, and be prepared to

engage in a fieldwork experience with an emphasis on PAL (Hanson & Deluliis, 2015; Kinsella & Piersol, 2018; Price & Whiteside, 2016). Like the apprenticeship model, the collaborative fieldwork supervision model requires fieldwork educators to support each student's strengths and growth areas and modify their teaching style accordingly.

Study findings demonstrate that attention to matching students with similar skill and knowledge level is important for placement success. Attention to interpersonal skills and professionalism in choosing appropriate students for the placement experience also plays a role in student success and may influence non-users of the collaborative fieldwork supervision approach to consider model use. Further, fieldwork educators who use this supervision model are emulating a teaching style that aligns more closely with the current educational pedagogies experienced during didactic coursework, making the student an active participant in constructing their knowledge (Ladyshevsky, 2010; Price & Whiteside, 2016). Selecting and preparing students to engage in this learning experience, in addition to fieldwork educators using teaching strategies that students are familiar with from their academic preparation will foster an easier transition from the classroom to the fieldwork setting.

The client needs and level of comfort was the fourth most common theme reported by both model users and non-users. However, it was reported as an experienced challenge considerably less often by those who had used the model, making this theme a noteworthy discrepancy between the two groups. The two groups did identify that having more than one student in a room may be overwhelming for a client. The additional perceived challenges identified by those who had not used the model were associated with their clients' acuity and safety. They expressed the model as inappropriate to some settings due to medical acuity of the client and concerns for client's safety when receiving services from more than one student. Interestingly, this was not a reported challenge from fieldwork educators who had used this model. Within the literature, the collaborative fieldwork supervision model has been successfully used in a variety of practice settings including acute medical practices (O'Connor et al., 2012; Oldenburg et al., 2020; Rindflesch et al., 2009). Concerns in this area may reflect the fieldwork educator's comfort level with the model's use rather than setting or population characteristics. It is critical that the fieldwork educator has the knowledge and skills to facilitate PAL within the constraints of the practice setting and with the assigned clientele. The AFWC and fieldwork educator should collaboratively determine if this supervisory approach is appropriate for the clients that are treated by the fieldwork educator and the setting where they work. Best practices aligning with this model includes collaboration of the fieldwork educator with the client and student to determine the best approach for each client. Simultaneous treatment of the client by two or more students at one time is not a key feature of this approach but rather, designing experiences that allow for students to grow their clinical skills. For example, the fieldwork educator and one student may be working with one client while the other student participates in an evaluation or treatment session with another health profession colleague (Hanson & Deluliis, 2015).

Lastly, the culture of fieldwork education was discussed by both model users and non-users as a challenge to model implementation. Those who had used the model discussed the challenges of breaking with tradition, the emotional uncertainty of using an approach that might not match the expectations of students or colleagues and the stigma to using a learning model that was different than the apprenticeship approach. A strong respect for the value of tradition was similarly voiced by those who had not used the collaborative fieldwork supervision model, coupled with doubts about the ability of PAL to provide the skills needed by students to be successful in the profession. It is true that the apprenticeship model is the most utilized model of OT fieldwork education in the nation to date and has been consistently applied since the start of the profession (Evenson et al., 2015; Hanson et al., 2019). Relying solely on the utilization of the apprenticeship model alone may not be feasible and sustainable in today's healthcare and educational environments. Within the United States, the factors impacting the use of the apprenticeship model of Level II supervision and the larger culture of fieldwork education in the OT profession have not been explored. Cultural and traditional expectations, as discussed by respondents in this study appear to play a large role in adoption of a new method to support student learning.

A negative or presumptive bias on the part of model non-users may curtail their interest in learning about or taking a risk to try the collaborative fieldwork supervision model (Baldry et al., 2003; DeClute & Ladyshevsky, 1993; Farrow et al., 2000). It might be that those who use the model are drawn toward change or could be considered "early adopters" of change, whereas those who do not use it are more resistant to change and more attached to tradition. The status of those who support alternative fieldwork supervision models may also influence the readiness of others to use the model. Those identified as "credible opinion leaders," who network successfully with others to establish priorities and support are best positioned to influence organizational change (Fitzgerald et al., 2007, p. 70).

The cultural aspects of fieldwork appear to not only influence fieldwork educators, but also play a role in how AFWCs understand and promote the use of a variety of learning models for students and supervisory models for fieldwork educators during Level II fieldwork. For example, many of the model non-users reported they had never been provided information on the collaborative fieldwork supervision model or even been asked to use it. This would suggest that AFWCs may consciously or unconsciously promote the mainstream culture of apprenticeship style learning rather than support fieldwork educators in finding the model that is a best fit for the fieldwork educator, student, and site. This finding may also indicate a need to advocate for an accreditation standard that requires educational programs to include content on different fieldwork supervision models in entry-level education so as to educate future fieldwork educators on supervision options available to them. Overall, findings from this theme support giving more attention to the study of cultural traditions in Level II fieldwork and to the creation of tools for managing organizational change in the fieldwork environment. Topics might include planning fieldwork in the midst of uncertainty, handling resistance to change, communicating change and promoting the value of change (Jacobs & McCormack, 2019).

Although not reported as a theme for model users, some respondents (n=16) did report having no challenges with using this model. This viewpoint is an important one as it may provide insight in how some fieldwork educators design successful fieldwork experiences and or how they have learned to overcome challenges that others have identified. This finding may result from fieldwork educators or organizations that embed this approach within their established fieldwork program, so it is the standard experience rather than the anomaly. Based on the noted benefits of using this model, fieldwork educators may prefer or see the value added in employing this approach over other models. Lastly, these fieldwork educators may not have experienced challenges due to their own preparation, following the best practices of PAL, and using evidence, such as *The Collaborative Fieldwork Model of Education Blueprint* created by Hanson and Deluliis (2015). Further exploration of experiences by fieldwork educators who have used the model and reported no challenges, would allow others to follow in their footsteps.

Implications for Occupational Therapy Education

Based on the findings of this research study, the authors make the following recommendations to address the challenges identified by both model users and non-users.

- Develop and disseminate education about the collaborative fieldwork supervision model to OT educators, to include AFWC, faculty, and fieldwork educators at the national, state and local level.
- Conduct research on the efficacy of the educational materials created.
- Conduct additional research on the impact of various fieldwork supervision models on student learning.
- Advocate for the inclusion of an accreditation standard that requires OT educational programs to include content on various fieldwork supervision models.
- Utilize the *Collaborative Fieldwork Supervision Tool* and *Collaborative Fieldwork Supervision Process Model* (Hanson et al., 2019) to evaluate readiness of the fieldwork educator, fieldwork site, and students for use of the collaborative supervision model.
- Explore fieldwork educator and faculty/AFWC beliefs and values about fieldwork education and the impact on choice of fieldwork supervisory approaches.

Limitations

There are a few noted limitations with this research study. Using thematic analysis as a research methodology is controversial (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Thorne, 2000), however, the researchers found this approach to be most appropriate due to the volume of narrative data gathered (Nowell et al., 2017). Using an approach with strengths and weaknesses that are not well-grounded in the methodological rigor is a limitation within itself. Every effort was made to reduce researcher bias throughout this study. However, since the researchers have experience as AFWCs and working with fieldwork educators to develop and use the collaborative fieldwork supervision model, it should be noted that this may have subconsciously impacted the data analysis and development of themes. Additionally, having the fieldwork educators self-identify as having not used the model without follow up questions related to choices for model use or non-use may have led to

additional bias by the survey respondents. Lastly, with this survey being anonymous and having such an extensive compiled data set, the investigators were unable to complete a member check of the compiled themes. Although limitations are evident, this study can be a launching pad for future research and the development of continuing education initiatives to support fieldwork education supervision in the OT profession.

Conclusion

The utilization of the collaborative fieldwork supervision model within the OT profession has potential to play a critical role in meeting the educational needs of adult learners as well as meeting the ongoing demands of fieldwork placements. Although the perceived and experienced challenges from fieldwork educators who have used and not used this model were similar, the prevalence of each theme and key differences were varied between the two groups. Both groups identified challenges such as client caseload, supervision time, and space for students but those who had experienced the model were less concerned about these aspects and had in some cases already established solutions for these challenges. Those who had used the model were less concerned with challenges to student learning but gave more attention to the professionalism and personality variables of the student as important to student success, supporting the value of upfront preparation and intentional matching of students most suitable for this type of placement. The concept of culture in fieldwork education was expressed by both model users and non-users and is an underdeveloped area of research within the OT profession. Attention to the influence of organizational change on adoption of novel fieldwork learning models was suggested as a strategy to address the challenges identified. Implications for OT education were highlighted as solutions to address the challenges identified by model users and non-users.

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