

Restructuring the Resilience of Supervisees During the Early Stages of Supervision: A Case Study Incorporating Play Therapy for Future Implementation

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores the role of clinical supervision in restructuring supervisees' resilience during the early stages of play therapy training. Despite extensive research on client outcomes, limited attention has been given to supervisees' psychological and professional development. This study addresses this gap by examining how supervision contributes to supervisees' behavioural and emotional transformation. A qualitative case study approach was employed, analysing 22 supervision sessions through processed diary transcriptions. Methodological triangulation was applied by integrating qualitative analysis with an artificial intelligence-based instrument, FotoKarakter, to enhance validity and provide additional behavioural insights. The findings reveal a significant transformation in supervisees' personality, shifting from task-oriented to people-oriented characteristics, as illustrated through a U-shaped developmental trajectory. The supervision triangle framework plays a crucial role in facilitating reflective learning, emotional regulation, and professional identity formation. This study contributes to the advancement of play therapy by repositioning supervision as a critical mechanism not only for client outcomes but also for supervisee development. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of structured supervision and the integration of objective measurement tools in strengthening supervisees' resilience and professional competence.



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Introduction

Play therapy is considered one of the most crucial clinical intervention tools because numerous research studies have consistently confirmed its usefulness for improving the emotional and psychological status of children suffering from severe medical and developmental problems (Chauhan et al., 2024; Nilsson et al., 2024; Ramdaniati et al., 2023). Research on developmental psychology shows that children do not develop uniformly but experience varied improvements in their capacities, including cognitive, emotional, and social, at different stages (latest) (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016; Miller, 2022). Hence, it becomes particularly pronounced in children with neurodevelopmental disorders wherein deviations in typical development impact the form and function of play therapy (Elbeltagi et al., 2023; Ray et al., 2022). Therefore, a one-size-fits-all model would not be effective for all children, especially children with significant developmental needs (Chen et al., 2022). Children undergoing medical treatment or hospitalization often experience stress, fear, and uncertainty, which can impact their overall well-being and quality of life, and required supervised sessions (Claridge & J Powell, 2023; Hasanah et al., 2025; Ku et al., 2025).

The supervision guidelines outlined under American Psychiatric Association APA (2013) can significantly impact the field through the identification of essential procedures to ensure excellent supervision. Supervision requirements mainly aim to verify the regulators to ensure healthcare and

psychology clients in training programs are supervised with an emphasis on excellence and dedication (Sinambela et al., 2020). Supervision also facilitates supervisees' competency development and skills enhancement (Millington et al., 2024; Snowdon et al., 2019). Moreover, supervision guides supervisors in improving their skills and evaluating supervisees' needs for professional development (Jaenem & Zulkifli, 2022). The British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) divided supervision guidelines into managerial and clinical supervision (Eastwood, 2021). Managerial supervision covers the entire procedure for supervisees, such as the required placement hours and other administrative requirements (Rothwell et al., 2021). Meanwhile, clinical supervision is a collaborative process involving a less experienced therapist (supervisee) seeking guidance and expertise from an experienced therapist (supervisor) to address any knowledge or skill gaps (Borders, 2023). This process improves clinical performance and the quality of care for clients (Edgar et al., 2023).

The British Association of Play Therapists (BAPT) explained that clinical supervision in play therapy involves a formal partnership between two play therapists (supervisees and supervisors), where supervisors are more proficient in play therapy than supervisees (Snowdon et al., 2019). The supervision triangle during the supervision session is a crucial framework that aids supervisees in comprehending the process better and structuring the content. This framework also functions as a monitoring tool to form a learning resource for supervising (Snowdon et al., 2019). Supervision is a crucial process that evaluates, supports, and develops therapists' skills (Zubala & Hackett, 2020). Additionally, supervision provides a platform to address emotional and professional challenges and promotes best practices and ethics in play therapy (Ray et al., 2022). Therapists can manage and comprehend play therapy dynamics through supervision and enhance their clinical skills and techniques (Rothwell et al., 2021).

Supervisors monitor and support challenges that supervisees may encounter during the therapy session, such as managing client resistance or adapting therapy methods based on the supervisees' needs (Fitriani, 2018; Li & Wang, 2024). These professionals ensure a smooth intervention and improve work quality between the play therapy supervisees and clients by providing guidance, feedback, and support (Rothwell et al., 2021). Play therapy supervision is crucial as the process offers constructive feedback for professional development (Born & Baker, 2022; Rothwell et al., 2021). Consequently, supervisees can identify strengths and areas for improvement, gather insights into play therapy techniques, and deepen their understanding of supervisees' response to therapy (Bradley & Becker, 2021; Lis-Ron et al., 2024; Wong et al., 2023).

Supervision enhances the effectiveness of therapy and the quality of therapeutic interactions and supports the growth of therapists and younger clients (Arsini et al., 2023). Therefore, supervision in play therapy allows supervisors to evaluate and refine supervisees' cases, thus ensuring the techniques used are effective and appropriate to the client's specific needs (Alfonsson et al., 2020; Born & Baker, 2022). Supervision directly contributes to developing the therapist's professional skills, which enhances the quality of therapy outcomes for supervisees (Lis-Ron et al., 2024; Rønnestad et al., 2024). Despite the significance of the relationship between supervisors and supervisees, a lack of studies explored supervisees' change during supervision sessions (Anttila et al., 2024; Evans et al., 2024). Therefore, examining this subject could increase understanding of how supervisees' self-regulatory learning processes impact interpersonal relationships.

This research provides several theoretical contributions. First, it aims to fill the literature gap on effective interventions needed in neurodevelopment stages. It is, therefore, shown that as one advances from childhood to the adolescent stages of neurodevelopment, cognitions will begin establishing these relations to be more complicated, and it is argued that the therapeutic relations shall explain the differences hence even the levels of changes at the behavioural and emotional levels will also not be the same. Second, this research contributes to new knowledge in the child psychology field and play therapy practice in handling the issues, promoting the quality of such interventions by making them more individually effective and suitable to every child.

Despite the growing body of research on play therapy and clinical supervision, limited studies have specifically examined supervisees' psychological and behavioural transformation throughout supervision sessions. Existing literature tends to focus more on client outcomes rather than the developmental trajectory of supervisees themselves.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how supervision processes influence supervisees' resilience, personality development, and professional growth within play therapy practice. By integrating qualitative

analysis and AI-assisted measurement, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of supervisee development during supervision.

Method

Each play therapy supervisor has his or her style and generally functions in more than one role (Hudspeth, 2015). Just as children use toys rather than words to express themselves in play therapy, so too can supervisees use play therapy techniques when words fail to express their experience or understanding of their clients (Pliske, 2022). The case study documented a clinical supervisee’s journey, entailing 22 meetings to fulfil the 100-hour clinical placement session. The supervisee is a middle-aged married female who is highly capable of adapting to the working environment. Nevertheless, she shifted jobs in the pursuit of fulfilling self-satisfaction. The supervisee enrolled in play therapy training, which proceeded seamlessly and progressed, albeit awaiting the development process. Play has been identified as critical in healthy development and growth in children, the 100-hour clinical placement has transformed the supervisee into a holistic individual with a clearer vision and close guidance from the appointed supervisor during the sessions (Bento & Dias, 2017; Nijhof et al., 2018). This journey has also remodelled her into an improved and cheerful individual.

A case study was employed with an emphasis on qualitative research design, approach, method, strategy, and ethics. A qualitative data analysis was developed based on the supervision-processed diary. The triangulation research method also enhances the validity and credibility of the outcomes while mitigating research bias. This strategy is commonly associated with qualitative research (Campbell et al., 2020). Behavioural studies widely employ this strategy (Busetto et al., 2020), which holistically reveals supervisees’ personality change as the entity individual. Scholars who employ this strategy frequently integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study (Adu et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2024). The current study used a processed diary transcription and an AI instrument, FotoKarakter.

Results and Discussion

The supervisor implemented several psychological theories to provide a scientific framework and supplement the supervisee’s comprehension of the client’s emotional or behavioral problems. This process involved analysing the client’s behavioral patterns and identifying factors influencing the client’s emotional well-being (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of supervision activity

Activity/Media	Theory/Supervision
• Talking	- SDQ (Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire) - Process Diary - Supervision Triangle
• Story telling	- Psychoanalysis of Personality Theory by Sigmund Freud
• Talking	
• Talking	- Ecology Theory by Bronfenbrenner
• Drawing	- Children Development Theory by Erik Erikson and Jean Piaget - Fidelity - Wheel of Life - The Concept of Good Enough Mother by Winnicot - Introduction to Filial Play Therapy - The Expanded Hierarchy of Needs by Abraham Maslow - Theory of Fully Functioning Person by Carl Rogers
• Talking	- Developmental Theory by Maria Tecla Montessori - Ecology Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner - LMA (Laban Movement Assessment)
• Talking	- Fight-Flight-Freeze Reaction
• Talking	- COVID-19 Global Pandemic
• Talking	What is: - Communication - Boundaries - Judgement

• Talking	- The Implementation of Good Enough Mother
• Drawings	- Positive Thinking - Types of Personality
• Talking	- Axline Principle
• Puppet	- Attachment - Faith or Energy?
• Talking	- Panic Attack
• Game	- The Impact of Fight-Flight-Freeze
• Talking	- Trust the Process
• Talking	- Filial Play - Boundaries - Bonding - Metaphor - Self Esteem
• Sand Therapy	- Sand Therapy
• Talking	- Metaphor
• Talking	- Metaphor
• Drawings	- Boundaries
• Talking	- Self-Boundaries
• Talking	- Wrapping
• Metaphor	- Boundaries - Self-care
• Talking	- Self-care - Healing
• Talking	- Boundaries - Time management
• Talking	- Music
• Music	- Toy - Communication - Bonding
• Talking	- Metaphor
• LandPlay	- Land-play
• Talking	- Boundaries - Mind-full
• Talking	- Flashback - Mind-full

Table 1 explains that talking is the main medium during the supervision session. This approach makes the supervision sessions with a person-centred approach an appropriate platform for monitoring, guiding, and ensuring supervisees improve their skills. Person-centred therapy is a non-directive, client-centred, or Rogerian therapy pioneered by Carl Rogers in the early 1940s. This form of psychotherapy is based on the idea that people are inherently motivated towards achieving positive psychological functioning. Supervisees are the experts in their lives and lead the general direction of therapy, while supervisors assume a non-directive role. This activity assesses person-centred therapy and outlines the role of the interprofessional team in improving the care of supervisees (Krikorian, 2023).

Supervisors mutually respect and trust supervisees to establish and build a relationship and strength through the presence of supervisors as a temporary support towards supervisees' mental development. Supervisions are conducted in the playroom through offline or online media, allowing supervisees to explore based on clients' progress.

This experience encouraged supervisees to enhance creativity and imagination, release tension, seek answers, and manage the client's issue independently while ensuring proper supervision is implemented. Supervisors act as supervisees' monitors in resolving the client's issues and life demands while providing them space to feel the presence of the Good Enough Mother figure (Hutman et al., 2023; Newland & Crnic, 2017; Nida et al., 2024). The Virginia Axline theory is the primary basis for conducting this

supervision. In every session, supervisors are required to implement unconditional positive regard to not judge (no judgment), not direct (non-directive), and not interpret (no interpretation). This ensures the entire supervision process is natural and occurs seamlessly without asking or helping (trust the process).

Figure 1 summarises the transcription of the process diary. Each supervision session was designed to support the play therapist’s development through gradual training, such as SDQ, mindfulness, and boundaries. This briefing aims to strengthen the play therapist’s theoretical and practical foundations when entering more complex stages.

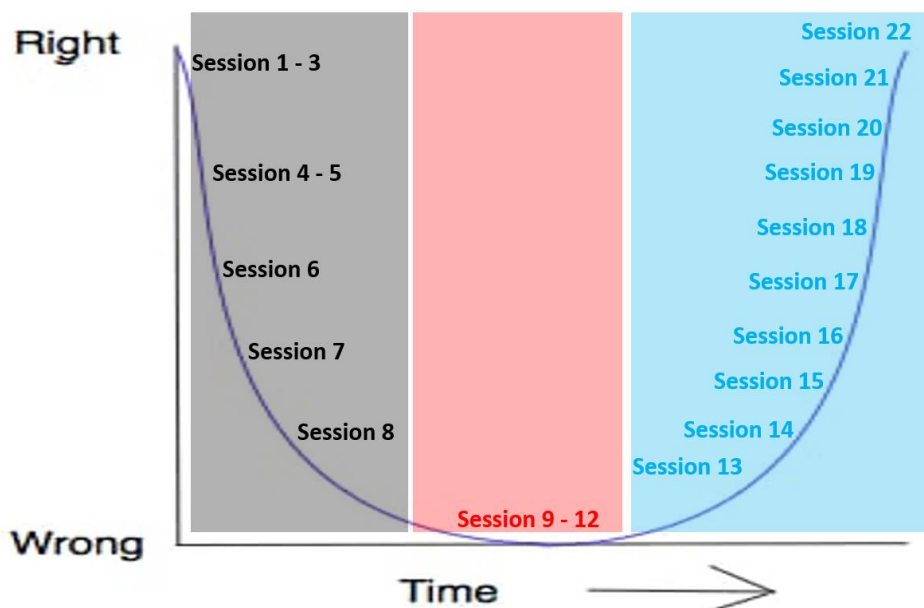


Figure 1. U-Shape behaviour development curve

A structured activity was employed based on the U-shape behaviour development curve (Osher et al., 2020). A U-shaped curve in a cognitive-developmental trajectory involves a three-step process: good performance followed by poor performance, then good performance again. U-shaped curves have been analysed in various cognitive-developmental and learning contexts (Carlucci & Case, 2013).

The triangulation research strategy was adopted to enhance the validity and credibility of the outcomes while minimising research bias. FotoKarakter was utilised to measure personality, character, and emotional or temperamental levels. Hence, this instrument was used as a methodological triangulation to improve the validity and credibility of the results. PowerCharacter highlights that the personality will be transformed once the character is changed. Table 2 demonstrates the gradual personality change of the supervisee, specifically from task-oriented to people-oriented.

Table 2. Personality-character-temperament shift

Personality				
25 February 2018	5	1	2	5
23 December 2021	5	3	3	2
31 December 2022	4	6	1	3
Character				
25 February 2018	4	3	2	5
23 December 2021	6	3	4	2
31 December 2022	6	3	4	2
Temperament				
25 February 2018	4	2	2	5
23 December 2021	5	3	3	2
31 December 2022	4	4	3	2
Gates of Belief Shift				
	Auditory	Visual	Kinesthetics	

25 February 2018	53.0%	20.0%	27.0%
23 December 2021	31.3%	37.5%	31.3%
31 December 2022	12.5%	62.5%	25.0%

Fotokarakter is an AI-based instrument that identifies one’s character, such as emotions, work style and speed, and social skills (Collins et al., 2021; Gligorea et al., 2023). This tool measures character using Power Character. FotoKarakter is a psychological scale that determines the character of a productive aged adult. This instrument is primarily used to evaluate an individual’s character, considering that recognising one’s inner strengths and weaknesses enables personal development (Collins et al., 2021; Darwin et al., 2024). In Figure 2, individuals are separated into task-oriented or people-oriented based on FotoKarakter. In line with Sigmund Freud’s iceberg theory, the Power Character (Figure 3). highlights three responses of an individual, namely personality, character, and temperament. This is because much of a person’s thought is hidden beneath the surface and out of plain sight. Freud likened the three levels of the mind to an iceberg to help explain them, such as conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. We consider awareness to be the tip of the iceberg, made up of the thoughts that are currently dominating our attention. The preconscious is anything that can be retrieved from memory. The unconscious is the third zone of significance. This is where the mechanisms that drive most behavior are found. The most important part of the mind is the part that is hidden from view, much like an iceberg.

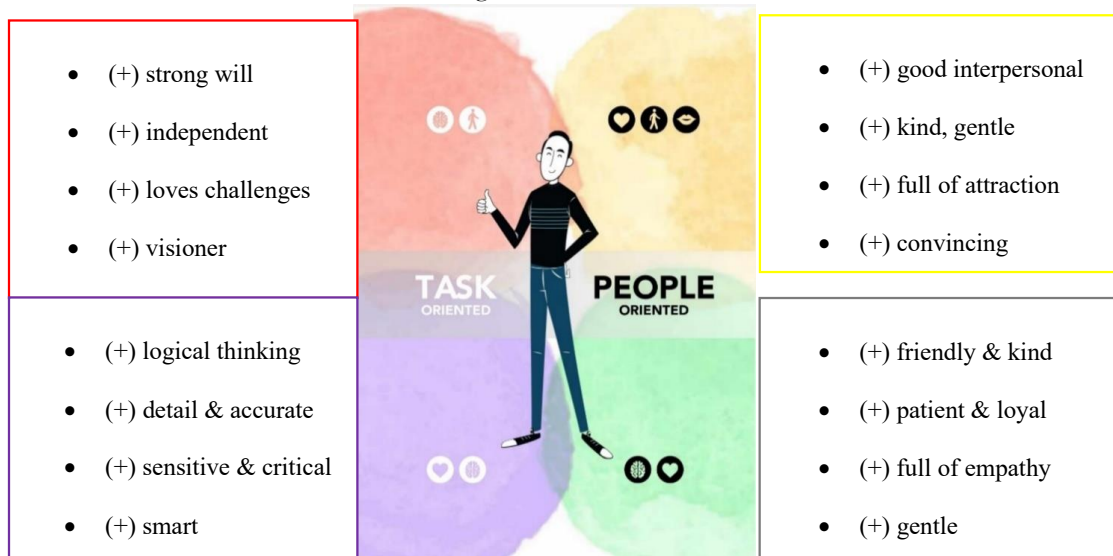


Figure 2. The four-quadrant character of people

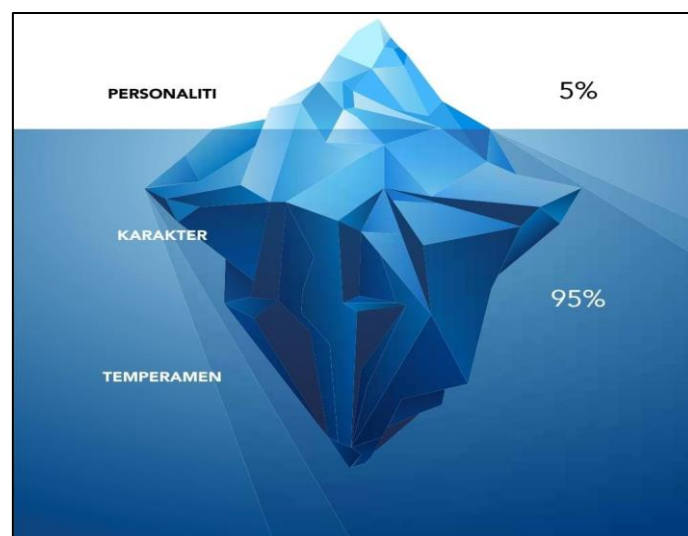


Figure 3. Sigmund Freud’s iceberg theory

The findings of this study align with previous research highlighting the importance of supervision in enhancing professional competence (Rønnestad et al., 2024; Snowdon et al., 2019). However, this study extends existing literature by demonstrating that supervision not only improves technical skills but also significantly reshapes supervisees' personality and emotional resilience.

Unlike prior studies that primarily focus on client outcomes, this research emphasises supervisees as active subjects of transformation. The observed shift from task-oriented to people-oriented characteristics suggests that supervision plays a critical role in developing interpersonal sensitivity and therapeutic empathy.

From a practical perspective, the integration of structured supervision models, such as the supervision triangle, combined with objective measurement tools like FotoKarakter, can enhance supervision effectiveness. This approach enables supervisors to monitor supervisee development more systematically and provide targeted interventions.

Conclusion

The management of supervision sessions in play therapy is critical in ensuring that supervisees perform their duties based on established codes of ethics and professional standards. In this context, supervision serves as a monitoring mechanism to ensure adherence to ethical principles and reform therapeutic practices. Supervision also provides a profound learning and development process for supervisees. These sessions enable supervisees to acquire constructive feedback, explore the challenges in practice, and identify areas that require improvement. Supervision is a vital tool to strengthen supervisees' professionalism, ensure adherence to ethical guidelines, and effectively manage clients based on therapeutic standards.

Supervision sessions significantly affect the development and change of supervisees' character and behaviour. This process involves deep reflection on therapeutic experiences, personal values, and supervisees' interaction with clients. Supervision helps supervisees comprehend the behavioural patterns and attitudes that influence therapeutic practice and the therapeutic relationship. This process enables supervisees to develop greater self-awareness and interpersonal skills and internalise deeper professional values. Additionally, this process positively changes how supervisees interact with clients and manage challenges in their practice. Effective supervision sessions enable supervisees to evaluate and constructively change their behaviour, hence improving their ability to manage clients and supporting their development as more competent and empathic professionals.

The current study suggested that future evaluations of clients incorporate measurement tools, such as the SDQ. Studies are also recommended to focus on the mental resilience of supervisees. Supervisees' mental resilience, which includes coping with pressure, stress, and challenges in their professional practice, is a vital aspect that directly contributes to the effectiveness of their therapeutic interventions. This importance should extend beyond mere narrative reports from supervisors, which are subjective and limited to individual observations. Therefore, the authors proposed using an independent and standardized measurement tool to evaluate supervisees' mental resilience. For instance, psychological tests or validated questionnaires provide more objective data recognised by all parties in the supervision process, either directly by supervisees and supervisors or by educational institutions or professional associations overseeing play therapy. Implementing this measurement tool enables more consistent monitoring of supervisees' progress gradually, thus providing a stronger basis for necessary interventions to enhance their mental well-being.

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