



How Do Peers Rate their Supervisors on Emotional and Task Support?

Research Questions

The quality of peer support services in Iowa depends on the quality of peer supervision. Quality supervision is related to more job satisfaction and less burnout among peer support employees (Abraham et al., 2022; Edwards & Solomon, 2023). We examined the types of support peer employees received and whether supervisor support was related to several outcomes, such as their job satisfaction, burnout, and intention to leave their organizations.

Methods

We surveyed all peer support employees in Iowa in 2024. The final sample included 182 employees with lived experience who provided direct support or services to peers. **Table 1** shows that almost three-fourths (73.1%) of peers reported more than one type of lived experience.

Results

Table 2 shows that peer employees gave their supervisors high marks for caring about them and listening to them about client-related issues. Most peer workers agreed or strongly agreed (82.3%) that they had a good relationship with their supervisor. However, some peers gave their supervisors lower ratings on providing useful feedback, setting boundaries, and encouraging them not to take on too much.

Table 3 shows that higher supervisor support scores were related to higher job satisfaction, higher commitment to the peer field and their organization, a higher sense of personal achievement, and lower emotional exhaustion. Lower supervisor support scores were strongly related to greater intention to leave their organizations ($r=-.48, p<.001$).

Recommendations

- Meet with your supervisees and ask them to give you feedback on the items in Table 2.
- Our peer supervisor [focus group results](#) showed that organizations need to reduce supervisor workload so that they have time to provide quality supervision.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (N=182)		
	Number	Percent
Lived Experience		
I have a substance use challenge.	99	54.4
I have a mental health challenge.	161	88.5
I am a parent with a child with a mental health challenge.	105	57.7
More than One Type of Lived Experience	133	73.1
I provide direct support or services to ...		
People with a mental health or substance use challenge	151	83.0
Parents of a child with a behavioral health challenge	31	17.0
I work in a peer-run organization or program.*		
No	85	46.7
Not sure	24	13.2
Yes	73	40.1
My supervisor has lived experience.		
No	47	26.3
Not sure	43	24.0
Yes	85	47.5
I do not have a supervisor	4	2.2
*Peer-run programs were defined as those in which peers oversee operations and hold leadership positions, and most staff and volunteers identify as peers with lived experience.		

Table 2. Supervisor Support (N=182)									
To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements?	Number	Percents						Mean	Standard Deviation
		Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)		
Supervisor Support									
Cares about me as a person.	175	0.6	2.9	4.0	8.0	24.6	60.0	5.33	1.04
Is available to talk about peers/client-related issues with me.	175	0.6	2.3	4.0	10.9	34.3	48.0	5.20	1.00
Listens when I need to talk about what's going on with peers/clients.	174	0.6	0.6	8.6	10.3	32.2	47.7	5.16	1.02
Helps me process my reactions to peers/clients who are struggling.	175	1.7	1.7	5.7	16.0	27.4	47.4	5.08	1.14
Provides me with enough time to debrief difficult peer/client challenges.	175	1.7	2.3	9.7	9.1	33.1	44.0	5.02	1.19
Shows genuine concern for balancing my work and my family/personal life.	175	1.1	5.1	8.0	10.3	30.9	44.6	4.98	1.23
Offers useful feedback that helps me provide services to peers/clients.	175	1.7	3.4	4.6	18.3	30.9	41.1	4.97	1.17
Helps me set boundaries with peers/clients.	175	2.3	6.9	5.7	15.4	36.0	33.7	4.77	1.29
Encourages me not to take on too much.	175	2.9	5.7	6.9	17.1	34.3	33.1	4.74	1.30
Overall Relationship									
My supervisor has confidence in my ability to handle difficult work situations.	175	5.1	1.1	2.3	7.4	37.1	46.9	5.11	1.25
I have a good relationship with my supervisor.	175	5.1	1.1	3.4	8.0	32.0	50.3	5.11	1.28

Table 3. Relation between Supervisor Support and Outcomes (Correlations)

Outcome	Supervisor Support	Statistical Significance
Job Satisfaction Item	.41	<.001
Commitment to ...		
Peer Support Field Scale	.29	<.001
Organization Scale	.50	<.001
Maslach Burnout Inventory*		
Personal Achievement	.20	.007
Emotional Exhaustion	-.28	<.001
Intent to ...		
Stay Scale	.35	<.001
Leave Scale	-.48	<.001
*Maslach’s burnout inventory includes two subscales: lower personal achievement and higher emotional exhaustion.		

References

- Abraham, K. M., Erickson, P. S., Sata, M. J., & Lewis, S. B. (2022). Job satisfaction and burnout among peer support specialists: The contributions of supervisory mentorship, recovery-oriented workplaces, and role clarity. *Advances in Mental Health, 20*(1), 38-50.
- Edwards, J. P., & Solomon, P. L. (2023). Explaining job satisfaction among mental health peer support workers. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, 46* (3), 223-231.

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