THE ROLE OF RESTORATIVE SUPERVISION ON THE COUNSELLOR'S PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL WELLBEING

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of restorative supervision for counsellors working within various settings in Malta. Through the Malta Association for the Counselling Profession, seven established counsellors working locally, took part in individual semi-structured interviews, to share their experiences, thoughts and meanings on their supervision experiences. Particular focus is given to the restorative role in supervision and, this study aimed to delve into how supervision helps counsellors achieve balance in their personal and professional life. This research was also interested to enquire about other self-care strategies adopted by counsellors, apart from supervision. The study presents the impact of the working context on counsellors, both on their personal and professional lives, and the need for regular supervision, to support counsellors both personally and professionally. The results were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as a methodological approach. This led to the emergence of six themes: The working context of the counsellors; the impact of the work environment and casework on the counsellors; the experience of supervision; the restorative function of supervision; the counsellors' self-care and; good practice in counselling and supervision. To conclude, a number of recommendations for further research and implementation are also presented.

Keywords:

Restorative supervision, counselling supervision, supervision in Malta, personal and professional balance, self-care, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACA American Counseling Association

AIPC Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors

BACP British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

CPD Continuing Professional Development

FREC Faculty Research Ethics Committee

IPA Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

MACP Maltese Association for the Counselling Profession

MCouns. Master in Counselling

NSSS National School Support Services

NZAC New Zealand Association of Counsellors'

PAFCA Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia

SfCE Secretariat for Catholic Education

SWB FREC Social Wellbeing Faculty Research Ethics Committee

UREC University Research Ethics Committee

DEDICATION

To my parents, my sister and to Joseph for their endless encouragement and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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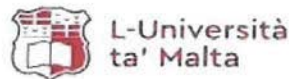
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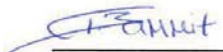
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

I graduated as a social worker in 2009, and supervision was central to my work. Nonetheless, throughout my career as a social worker, I noticed that supervision focused mainly on managing casework. This, despite the fact that we were constantly exposed to challenging and complex situations, that we needed to process as professionals. This approach frustrated me, and I felt it unfair on the professional.

The formative and normative roles of supervision were addressed. The latter functions focus on learning and talking about practice and ethical dilemmas (Proctor, 2011). It is crucial to focus on these tasks during supervision. However, in my experience, the restorative role of supervision (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993), namely, the examination and management of the effects of practice on the person as a helping professional (Rose & Boyce, 1999), was given less emphasis. Indeed, Proctor (2011) refers to these three functions as "the complementary but sometimes contradictory tasks of clinical supervision" (p. 25). Further, she emphasises that during stressful times, the restorative task should "be placed first" (p. 25).

My supervisors were usually allocated following years of experience, rather than because they were trained social-work supervisors. Unfortunately, when I was asked to supervise fellow social workers, I accepted without taking into consideration how serious a task supervision is. I too focused on casework, ignoring the restorative role of supervision. I eventually realised that I lacked the necessary training and skills to be a social-work supervisor.

Many times, while working with crisis situations, I had to resort to my own self-care strategies due to lack of support from the work context. I recall an episode where my colleague and I were on site of a suicide case. We were utterly shocked and upset. This was our first experience of a suicide case, and the frantic screams of one family member upon discovering the tragedy still haunt me to this day.

However, we continued our job, and I remember finishing work and trying to deal with my multitude of emotions on my own. I believe that receiving restorative supervision sessions would have helped me to process this traumatic and dreadful event.

The fervent interest in supervision and self-care was amplified when one of my supervisors during my Master in Counselling course emphasised the professional's self-care. We were reminded and encouraged to adopt self-care strategies. My initial thoughts were, *should this be a part of supervision?*. Indeed, it was, and this approach instilled hope in me. This further encouraged me to explore how supervision affects and helps the counsellor, personally and professionally, achieving a sense of balance.

The Research Question

This research focuses on the experiences of counsellors during counselling supervision. The experiences of individuals are explored through the following research question: *How does restorative counselling supervision help the supervisee's personal and professional well-being?*

Achieving a balance in supervision between the personal and professional aspects of counsellors practising in Malta is the focus of this research, whose research question has further sub-questions which guide my study:

a) What are the experiences of counsellors receiving supervision?

b) What is the meaning of restorative supervision to counsellors?

c) How can counselling supervision help the counsellor while balancing their personal and professional lives?

d) How much do counsellors feel personally supported during supervision, especially when they are going through personal challenges while working with clients?

e) What do counsellors search for in a supervisory relationship?

f) What other self-care practices are used by counsellors?

My Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework is divided in three parts; the theories framing the topic, the underpinnings to the methodology and my standpoint.

Theoretical Framework. The starting point in this research is that counsellors are an important tool in the therapeutic process. At the same time, they are human beings too, and I am thus interested in exploring how counselling supervision can support the counsellor. Particularly, restorative supervision is an important space to help counsellors explore other sources of support. The study is based on the belief that counsellors need to be reminded, supported and encouraged to adopt self-care strategies. My conceptual framework is informed by; Advocacy theory (Payne, 2005), Symbolic Interactionist theory (Mead, 1934, as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000), the Humanistic approach (Rogers, 1957, 1962), Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and Gestalt principle of holism (Corey, 2013).

Advocacy theory. The concept of advocacy has its origins in the legal field, and it usually seeks to represent and argue in favour of clients' views and needs (Payne, 2005). Therefore, this concept is usually linked to clients. Nonetheless, in this research, I am focusing on reaching an understanding of the current practices of supervision, to support the supervision needs of counsellor-participants, and to promote change, if necessary, in current supervision practices

(Dalrymple & Boylan, 2013) for the welfare of counsellors and the profession.

Symbolic interactionist theory. From a sociological perspective, symbolic interactionist theory is concerned with language and meaning (Giddens, 2001). Its founding father is George Herbert Mead, and it usually focuses on small scale interactions, rather than large scale situations (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). Indeed, interviews in this study were conducted with seven participants thereby giving space for in-depth interaction with respondents. Additionally, the interactionist perspective assumes that one understands the meanings which actors give to their activities (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). Similarly, in my study, I want to understand the meanings which counsellor-participants give to supervision and its restorative function.

Humanistic approach. An attitude which will accompany me is the person-centred approach, founded by Carl Rogers (Nelson-Jones, 2000). Through this research, I intend to stand in the counsellor's shoes as the person who gives support to clients. The focus of the person-centred approach is on the positive, self-determined growth potential of human beings (Cooper, O'Hara, Schmid & Bohart, 2013).

I feel that counselling supervision is crucial in helping the supervisee develop both personally and professionally. The working alliance between the supervisor and supervisee is reminiscent of the working relationship between the counsellor and the client. The latter is characterised by Roger's three facilitative conditions, namely, empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1962). Additionally, Westergaard (2013) explains that these conditions are crucial to the supervisee's growth and development. Indeed, Young, Lambie, Hutchinson and Thurston-Dyer (2011) state that the supervisor-supervisee relationship is characterised by empathic understanding, commitment, openness to change, genuineness and respect. Therefore, the supervisor-supervisee relationship parallels the

counsellor-client relationship since warmth, trust, empathy and a non-judgemental attitude are required to promote supervisee (client) growth and development. Therefore, this research is further informed by a Humanistic approach, which focuses on the subjective experience of the client (Corey, 2013) and which is particularly concerned with self-actualisation (Rowan, 1983).

Abraham Maslow was also an important figure in the development of humanistic psychology (Corey, 2013). Maslow is well-known for his hierarchy of needs theory, which includes five levels, one of which is safety needs. Maslow (1954) lists security, stability, protection, freedom from fear, from anxiety and chaos, amongst others, as safety needs. Micallef (2016) carried out a study on the supervision experiences of state-school counsellors in Malta. She explains that Maslow's hierarchy of needs might suggest that counsellors are required to feel psychologically safe and secure, to be productive and feel useful. For counsellors to work well and provide a good service to clients, they need to feel safe. In addition, counsellors need to know whether they are performing well in their job, and how they can improve their performance. Micallef (2016) adds that the aim of supervision is to empower counsellors and enable them to grow both personally and professionally.

Positive psychology. Focusing on the strengths of counsellors is also important in supervision. When my strengths are highlighted in supervision, I feel empowered and encouraged to continue my work with clients. Positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) might be linked to counselling supervision and builds on humanism. It is the study of optimal human functioning, and its focus is on making the lives of people more productive and fulfilling (Magyar-Moe, Owens & Conoley, 2015). It thus focuses on human strengths and potential, an important process that the supervisee can go through during counselling supervision. Positive psychology relates to subjective

experiences. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) state that, "at the individual level, it is about positive individual traits: the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom" (p. 5). I feel that when focusing on the positive qualities of the supervisee, the experience of counselling supervision will help the counsellor to develop both on a professional and personal level.

Gestalt principle of holism. The last guiding principle is the concept of holism from Gestalt therapy theory, founded by Fritz and Laura Perls (Corey, 2013). This focuses on the whole person, and no superior value is placed on the particular aspect of the individual (Corey, 2013). Likewise, I am interested in the counsellor, not only as a worker, but also as a whole person, focusing on both the professional and personal aspects.

Theoretical underpinning of the methodology. The study highlights the restorative function of supervision, the experiences of counsellors in this process, and the meaning they give to it. Willig (2013) explains that phenomenology and social constructionism are approaches to knowledge production. Creswell (2007) claims that social constructionism is often combined with interpretivism. Both focus on the process by which meanings are created. Moreover, Willig (2013) mentions that social constructionism focuses with recognising the various ways of constructing social reality, that are available in a culture. The goal of research is to identify how meanings are formed socially and historically (Creswell, 2007). On the other hand, phenomenology gives importance to how things are experienced by individuals, i.e. the subjective experience (Willig, 2013).

My research is phenomenological because it involves an in-depth examination of the participant's life world (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2007). "Theoretically, phenomenological research is a subcategory of

interpretivism" (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018, p. 35). The research question begs a qualitative interpretivist paradigm. Lazar (2004) explains that for interpretive theorists, the scientific method is not relevant as they want to grasp meaning and its complexities. Therefore, since in my research I will explore the reality of individuals, I am guided by an interpretive epistemology. Interpretivism also aims to understand and explain human reality (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016) observe that the phenomenologist or interpretivist understands social phenomena from the participant's perspective and examines how the world is experienced. Through this research, I will endeavour to give the space to supervisees to talk about their experience in supervision thereby exploring different versions of reality. Approaches for gathering and analysing data within phenomenological research includes semi-structured interviews, the latter being the data collection tool used for this study (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018).

My Standpoint. Apart from the abovementioned personal experiences, through my work, I encounter various colleagues, including other social workers, counsellors, nurses and guidance teachers, who similarly felt overwhelmed in their profession. Some do not receive supervision despite working with clients (Micallef, 2016). Westergaard (2013) also observes that in some professions, the concept of supervision is less common. The professional *has* to receive care as well as give importance to their personal well-being in order to work effectively with clients (Micallef, 2016). In Proctor's (2011) words, "[i]f supervision is not experienced as restorative, the other tasks will not be well done" (p. 25). Therefore, in my research, I also hope to raise further awareness of the importance of supervision in the helping professions.

Conclusion

Following a reflection and discussion of the above concepts, I would like to conclude by affirming my position, that the well-being of

counsellors and other helping professionals is crucial, and these concepts will accompany me during this study. The following chapter focuses on the available literature on counselling supervision. Chapter 3 presents the research design and procedures. In Chapter 4, the key research findings are presented along with a discussion. In the concluding chapter, key findings are summarised, and the limitations of the study are discussed. The dissertation concludes with future recommendations for research and counselling practice.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter provides a brief overview of the available literature on supervision in the helping professions, with a focus on the restorative function of supervision. There is increased interest in the exploration of the role of supervision in the personal and professional life of the counsellor since these aspects are highly interconnected (Kennedy & Black, 2010). Reference will be made to local and international sources, and the literature includes books and articles on supervision in counselling and other helping professions whose objective is to improve other people's lives (Skovholt, Grier & Hanson, 2001).

This chapter starts by presenting the various definitions of the term 'supervision', with additional reference to different codes of ethics. It further includes the benefits and a critique of counselling supervision, as well as a review of supervision in Malta. Subsequently, the various functions of supervision are discussed, and I will specifically delve further into how the counsellor is supported through the restorative function of supervision. Attention will also be given to the impact of counselling on the helping professional. This chapter ends with a focus on the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee, and a brief discussion of supervision and personal therapy.

Conceptualising Supervision

Supervision is described in a myriad of ways. It can indeed be challenging to define due to its structural variety and because it differs among "clinical settings, therapeutic orientations and professional groups" (Bager-Charleson, 2015, p. 5). The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) (2016a) defines supervision as:

A specialised form of professional mentoring provided for practitioners responsible for undertaking challenging work with people. Supervision is provided to ensure standards, enhance quality, advance learning, stimulate creativity; and support the sustainability and resilience of the work being undertaken, (p. 9).

Bryant-Jefferies (2005) maintains that the supervisory relationship is not a therapeutic relationship, but has a strong therapeutic value. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) define supervision as "a joint endeavour" (p. 5) between the supervisee and supervisor. In this relationship, the former attends to their clients and themselves as part of their client-practitioner relationships. This improves the quality of their work and transforms their client relationships. Furthermore, through supervision, supervisees continuously develop themselves, their practice and the wider profession (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012).

The Code of Ethics (2014) of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) defines supervision as a "collaborative and confidential process, based upon informed consent" (p. 11), where counsellors can reflect on the effectiveness of their practice and develop ethical attitudes in their work (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; NZAC Code of Ethics, 2014).

Vallance (2004) explains that supervision is a process involving the supervisee and supervisor. Furthermore, supervision has two important aims, namely, developing the knowledge, awareness and skills of the counsellor, and focusing on the client's well-being and the quality of the therapeutic relationship. Vallance (2004) queries, "[w]hich of the two aims should have primary focus and how can they be achieved?" (p. 559). Rather than focusing on one aspect or the other, we could focus on both as suggested by Kennedy and Black (2010) who explain that the two are interconnected.

Professional Ethical Guidelines. The Maltese Association for the Counselling Profession (MACP) Code of Ethics (2014) obliges counsellors to meet with their supervisors regularly. Grant and Schofield (2007) explain that supervision is viewed as "essential, rather than optional" (p. 4), a notion which however does not seem to be practised by all counselling associations. Comparing international standards for professional supervision, Grant and Schofield (2007)

explain that BACP, and the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PAFCA) necessitate that members receive ongoing supervision. Despite this, counsellors in the United States (American Counseling Association (ACA), 2014) are not obliged to have supervision like in the United Kingdom. There are other professional associations which do not require their members to engage in ongoing supervision, including the Australian Psychological Society in Australia and American Psychological Association (Grant & Schofield, 2007). In Malta, although supervision is enshrined in the law (Counselling Profession Act, 2015), the reality seems to differ among various working contexts.

The Benefits of Supervision. Despite not being mandatory by some professional associations, there are various authors who present several advantages of receiving counselling supervision. Wheeler and Richards (2007) claim that supervision is an essential component of ethical practice and a cornerstone of continuing professional development (CPD). On the other hand, Parcover and Swanson (2013) view supervision as a process involving both the professional and personal development of the supervisee. London and Chester (2000) affirm that supervision is vital in counselling based professions, and it has a positive impact on the client and worker, as well as on the organisation and profession. Indeed, the importance of supervision across the helping professions has been strongly discussed (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Westergaard, 2013; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). Unfortunately, however, there are several professions which do not benefit from supervision. Tatar (2009) makes reference to the teaching profession, and explains that educators have to face certain situations and thus need to play a variety of roles thereby risking burnout.

Cashwell and Dooley (2001) maintain that supervision helps in the growth and maintenance of counselling skills. In their study with African American and Caucasian counsellors, they explain that

supervision is essential for practitioners to develop and enhance their skills. Furthermore, they state that counsellors who receive supervision experience higher levels of self-efficacy. In Ireland, in the field of counselling psychology, clinical supervision is viewed as an essential part of counselling psychology training (Creaner & Timulak, 2016). Grant and Schofield (2007) assert that supervision is an important component of many counselling and psychotherapy training programmes. Furthermore, there is literature on supervision during training and a focus on trainee counsellors; supervisees regard supervision as valuable for learning and practice (Bambling & King; 2014; Grant & Schofield, 2007; Harries & Spong, 2017).

Weiss (2004) and Hawkins and Shohet (2006) claim that consultation and supervision are useful and important. Likewise, Lawson, Hein and Stuart (2009) assert that clinical supervision is effective for the professional growth of counsellors. The supervisor's role includes evaluating the supervisee, teaching counselling skills, and helping the counsellor to develop self-awareness. Furthermore, Grant and Schofield (2007) mention challenging the supervisee as part of the supervision process. Nevertheless, they further maintain that it offers support and motivation. The Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors (AIPC) (2010) explains that counsellors, whether experienced or at the beginning of their profession, will benefit from regular supervision. The counsellor might experience various challenging emotions, such as being undervalued and feeling isolated, especially when there are few counsellors working in an organisation. Therefore, supervision plays an important role in enabling counsellors to function well in such an environment (Winning, 2010). All these authors emphasise the positive aspects of supervision. On the contrary, there are others who criticise the practice.

A Critique of Counselling Supervision. Ladany, Mori and Mehr (2013) observe that there is literature which evidences that supervision

can at times be detrimental or problematic. Indeed, Gray, Ladany, Walker and Ancis (2001) argue that negative supervision experiences have an impact on the supervisory relationship, process and work with clients. Furthermore, Mehr, Ladany and Caskie (2010) identify the issue of non-disclosure in supervision, which may occur due to disagreements or negative reactions towards the supervisor, as well as attraction to one's supervisor.

Moreover, Feltham (2000) raises questions about ongoing mandatory supervision to obtain clarity and evidence about supervision and client outcomes. In fact, BACP (2016b) cites Reiser and Milne (2014), who argue that supervision ensures safe and effective practice. However, it is difficult to determine its impact on client outcomes. Vallance (2004) counterargues this by suggesting that supervision benefits clients indirectly as it enables the development of ethical practice. One must additionally keep in mind that the counsellor is primarily responsible for the work with clients. Therefore, "this ethical requirement amounts to ensuring that the counsellor has access to a constructive resource" (Bond, 2000, p. 181).

Feltham and Dryden (1994) make an interesting observation, noting that some counsellors have little understanding of supervision prior to receiving it, hence the importance of exploring the understanding of novice supervisees of supervision. Moreover, Micallef (2016) accentuates that issues pertaining to supervision and self-care in counsellor training might need to be given greater importance during counsellor formation thereby enabling them to understand better the concept of supervision.

Various Forms of Supervision. Supervision varies between clinical settings, professional groups and therapeutic approaches (Bager-Charleson, 2015). Carroll (1996) lists different types of supervision, including managerial, group, consultative and organisational supervision. Additionally, supervision takes place with individuals, pairs,

or in groups (Webb & Wheeler, 1998). Most participants in this research study receive individual supervision between one supervisor and one supervisee (Carroll, 1996). Furthermore, there are research-participants who follow group supervision, peer supervision and online supervision.

Models of Supervision. There are various models of counselling supervision. These include the developmental, integrative and psychotherapy-based models (Micallef, 2016). Hawkins and Shohet (2012), also present their own model of supervision which they refer to as the, seven-eyed model of supervision. This model concentrates on seven areas: the content of the session; the interventions used by supervisee's with clients; the relationship between client and counsellor; the supervisee's subjective experiences; the supervisory relationship; the supervisor's own processes and; the wider context which may influence clients (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012).

Supervision in Malta

Locally, research on supervision is still developing. In her study, Pace (2016) focused on the experiences of Maltese trainee counsellors, and her participants deemed supervision essential for support, helping them to be more confident (Pace, 2016; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). As already highlighted in Chapter 1, Micallef (2016) conducted a study on the supervision experience of state-school counsellors. In my research, I am interested in investigating supervision experiences among counsellors hailing from different fields. Locally, there is other inspirational work on counselling supervision (Mifsud, 2008) which presents the experiences of supervisors living in a small society. In Mifsud's (2008) study, the main themes included supervisors feeling exposed while trying to maintain boundaries and confidentiality, and the challenging issue of multiple roles and relationships on a small island such as Malta. Furthermore, Cole (2003) carried out a doctoral study on the supervision experience of supervisors and supervisees in social work.

The focus of this research is on the restorative function of supervision. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy to observe that currently, there is a lack of counsellor supervisors in Malta (Cauchi, Falzon, Micallef & Sammut, 2017). Article 21 of the Counselling Profession Act (2015) states that an individual can practise counselling and be supervised by a supervisor who is in a counselling related profession up to 2020, provided that the supervisor has adequate experience in supervision of counsellors. To address this, the Department of Counselling offered a course on supervision (Micallef, 2016) in October 2017 for qualified counsellors who aspire to become counselling supervisors. A contextual factor to consider is that most people in Malta are familiar with each other (Mifsud, 2008). Therefore, due to our small island context with a population totalling just over 450,000 (Cauchi et al., 2017), counsellors may have multiple relationships and dual roles with those with whom they have professional contact (Kreider, 2014; Osborn, 2012).

Despite the existence of research which highlights the importance of supervision, there are still counsellors who do not receive adequate supervision, even locally. Many counsellors continue to receive supervision even when they finish their training (Grant & Schofield, 2007); however, Micallef's (2016) study demonstrates that there are several state-school counsellors who do not receive supervision and are actually in breach of the law (Counselling Profession Act, 2015). In fact, Hawkins and Shohet (2006) argue that in some professions, supervision is ignored following qualification. According to Micallef (2016), in Malta, there is still no formal structure of supervision for state-school counsellors working for the National School Support Services (NSSS), and so far, supervision is still absent in this setting. Indeed, counsellors who work in this setting have either paid for their own supervision, or do not attend supervision altogether. Since supervision is not provided, peer supervision was then encouraged with state-school counsellors (Cauchi et al., 2017).

On the other hand, there exists a rather different system for counsellors who work in church schools and fall under the auspices of the Secretariat for Catholic Education (SfCE). As a trainee counsellor myself employed by this latter entity, the counsellor and trainee counsellor can attend supervision with a counselling supervisor of their choice, or a supervisor whose career is related to the counselling profession (Counselling Profession Act, 2015). Following approval from management, expenses are funded by the agency, that is, SfCE, which finances two hours of monthly individual supervision (Appendix A).

The Functions of Supervision

In counselling supervision, the supervisee has the opportunity "to allow the emotional disturbance to be felt within the safer setting of the supervisory relationship, where it can be survived, reflected upon and learnt from" (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012, p. 4). Micallef (2016) points out that local counselling supervision does not merely address prevention of stress and burnout since supervision has other functions.

Davys and Beddoe (2010) explain that different models of supervision identify three main roles in supervision. They refer to Pettes (1967), who labels the functions of supervision as "administration, teaching and helping" (p. 25). Inskipp and Proctor (1993) call the functions of supervision 'normative', 'formative' and 'restorative'. The three roles of supervision can be described in the following manner:

a) The formative role could also be referred to as the educative function, whose focus is on the professional's skills, theoretical knowledge and personal features as a professional;
b) The normative or managerial role puts an emphasis on ensuring that the work done with clients is appropriate, ethical and abides by norms and laws;
c) The supportive or restorative role explores the effects of practice on the counsellor. It also focuses on supporting and, at times,

challenging counsellors on how personal issues might impact the work with clients (Bager-Charleson, 2015; Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; Inskipp & Proctor, 1993).

With regard to discussing personal issues in supervision, Bang and Park (2009) examined supervision experiences of Korean supervisors, noting that supervisees' personal issues should be one of the main tasks in supervision. Webb and Wheeler (1998) also refer to Baudry (1993) who suggests that the supervisee's pathology is allowed and is an important component of supervision. Undoubtedly, others do not support the notion that support is a function of supervision (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997).

Caring professionals who are in pain or distress through their work with clients need to be aware of how they are affected and how to work through their feelings or reactions. If caring professionals do not attend to their emotions, they might be at risk of burnout (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). Therefore, apart from helping counsellors in their work with clients, supervision has the important function of supporting the worker. Feltham and Dryden (1994) define 'support' as being available and accepting. In fact, according to ACA (1990), one of the roles of the supervisor is to present to the supervisee the appropriate limits of addressing their personal issues in supervision. The supervisee is helped to identify the issue and see the associated clinical implications. Furthermore, supervision works to reduce any harmful effects in the supervisee's clinical work (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012).

Keeping in mind the functions of supervision, Bager-Charleson (2015) also asks whether supervision is helping one to reflect since reflection is essential for good practice. It helps the counsellor to review what went well in a session or what could have been done in a different way (Wright & Bolton, 2012). Reflecting is an important key capacity of good practice which is supported and further developed in supervision. Being a good supervisee, involves engaging in reflective

practice, not only during supervision, but also during one's working week (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). Counsellors are required to engage in constant reflective decision making due to complex ethical dilemmas (Lazovsky, 2008). Carroll (2010) observes that the medium of learning in supervision is reflection, emphasising the importance of critical reflection, where supervisees engage in "honest consideration and investigation of their work" (p. 6). The following section will discuss the role of restorative supervision, which is the focus of this research.

The Restorative Role of Supervision

The restorative function can be referred to in other such terms as the 'helping' or 'supportive' function. Kadushin and Harkness (2014), mention 'support' as one of the main components of supervision. Morrison (2001) further refers to it as "personal support" (p. 29). Additionally, Hawkins and Shohet (2006) include "a counsellor giving support" (p. 52) as one of the functions in the supervisory role. Nevertheless, they caution that the terms 'supportive' or 'restorative' might portray the supervisee as "needy or dysfunctional" (p. 16). Henceforth, they present thinking in terms of self-renewal:

> To connote the process of connecting ourselves to our inner source, the place from which our energy, creativity and compassion for others flows; and to refer to the resources that maintain us from without; our family, relationships, colleagues, learning, physical exercise and beliefs. (p. 16)

A supportive experience in supervision helps supervisees to feel more confident while reducing anxiety (O'Donovan, Halford & Walters, 2011). In their definition of the restorative task of supervision, Inskipp and Proctor (1993) explain that in supervision, there is a space for releasing emotions, renewing principles and creativity. Proctor (2011) emphasises the importance of the restorative task in supervision, and if this is not experienced in supervision, it would be difficult to perform other tasks. For their part, Rose and Boyce (1999) explain that

the supportive or restorative function is an opportunity where one can examine the effects of practice on the helping professional.

Bager-Charleson (2015) maintains that self-care is an essential aspect of being trustworthy and having self-respect. BACP (2016c) describes the principle of self-respect as essential to promote further self-knowledge, integrity and care for self. Indeed, Hawkins and Shohet (2006) explain that in their experience, supervision is an essential component of self-care, and it is important for the helper's well-being, an observation which is also echoed by Wright and Bolton (2012). Salloum, Kondrat, Johnco and Olson (2015) recommend self-care as a restorative or protective way against the negative effects of working with people who experience trauma. Since one of the aims of this dissertation is to examine the counsellor's well-being, there is an interest in how supervision helps counsellors when they face such situations.

Cashwell and Dooley (2001) suggest that clinical supervision can help school counsellors gain insight into personal issues which may arise when working with crisis situations. Furthermore, counsellors need to be helped by supervisors to acknowledge their fears and work with them. M. Smith (2003) conducted a qualitative study with 10 counsellors working in the setting of bereavement and drug and alcohol abuse. His participants reported fearing losing control and feeling overwhelmed, as well as being physically or sexually assaulted. Furthermore, the counsellors feared the disapproval of supervisors or other seniors (M. Smith, 2003). Bager-Charleson (2015) explains that restorative needs involve having support and, at times, being challenged constructively about how personal issues might affect the work with clients.

On the other hand, other authors have identified supervisory functions which might not necessarily focus on the personal support of the worker. Indeed, Hughes and Pengelly (1997) define the following

functions of supervision, namely, managing service delivery, facilitating the professional development of the supervisee, and focusing on the practitioner's work. Davys and Beddoe (2010) observe that Hughes and Pengelly's (1997) model excludes support as a function of supervision since they view support in supervision as benefitting the worker's needs rather than focusing on promoting a better service. According to Davys and Beddoe (2010), support is important in supervision; however, contrary to other authors (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014), they do not consider it a function. At the same time, balance needs to be achieved. According to Lizzio, Wilson and Que (2009), too little support can generate anxiety in the worker, whereas too much support might mean that other issues which are related to work, competence and performance are overlooked. Indeed, Webb and Wheeler (1998) refer to the British Association for Counselling (1988), emphasising that the aim of supervision is to make sure that the counsellor is addressing the client's needs.

Other authors have a different perspective and fully support the role of restoration in supervision. They believe that one of the aims of supervision is the restorative function, where the supervisee's personal and professional well-being is supported (O'Donovan et al., 2011). Indeed, balancing one's personal and professional life is a challenge, albeit crucial for burnout prevention (Skovholt et al., 2001). It has to be acknowledged that counsellors have regular contact with clients in crisis situations involving suicide, life-threatening illness, bereavement, and cases involving sexual assault or physical violence. Counsellors have to assess, respond ethically and ensure safety issues. Despite dealing with these situations, counsellors themselves may experience physical and psychological stress reactions (Dupre, Echterling, Meixner, Anderson & Kielty, 2014).

Skovholt et al. (2001) further emphasise the importance of self-care, and that this concept might be given less attention even in counsellor training. Counsellors dedicate most of the time learning about the "other-care" (p. 167), that is, how to take care of others, while self-care is given less emphasis. Indeed, Skovholt et al. (2001) maintain that "balancing self-care and other-care seems like a universal struggle for those in the helping professions" (p. 168).

Grant and Schofield (2007) observe that research with trainee counsellors demonstrates that trainees value support and direction during supervision, whereas more experienced professionals give importance to supervisors who focus on personal issues that have an impact on therapy and their work with clients. Davys and Beddoe (2010) refer to a 2009 study by Bradley and Hojer on social work supervision in England and Sweden, which concludes that despite both countries addressing the various functions of supervision, each country gave importance to a different function. In England, the managerial role was given more emphasis, whereas Sweden focused more on the supportive role.

The Impact of the Professional Aspect on the Counsellor

Counsellors "work in a rapidly changing world where their case loads are frequently large, the nature of cases being presented is becoming increasingly complex, and the organisations in which they work are changing" (McMahon & Patton, 2000, p. 339). Hawkins and Shohet (2012) observe that helping professionals are prone to stress at some time in their careers. Wright and Bolton (2012) note that one can easily ponder on counselling sessions, even triggering stress symptoms.

Bonanno (2012) explains that exposure to challenging situations, traumatic experiences and distress has an impact on the psychological well-being of the counsellor. Råbu, Moltu, Binder and McLeod (2016) caution that being a therapist can be stressful and has an effect on personal relationships. The various emotional and

psychological states have been defined as countertransference, burnout, emotional contagion, compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress and vicarious traumatisation, concepts which the helping professions often encounter (Bonanno, 2012; Evans & Payne, 2008; Råbu et al., 2016).

Pines, Aronson and Kafry (1981) define burnout as that moment of realisation that a person cannot help vulnerable people and that they have nothing left to give. It manifests itself as physical and emotional exhaustion, and occurs due to recurrent pressures and prolonged intense involvement with people (Maslach, 2003; Pines et al., 1981). Therefore, supervision helps counsellors to acquire professional attitudes, ensure ethical practice, focus on the welfare of clients, while helping counsellors to learn about themselves and reflect on their practice (Falender, Shafranske & Ofek, 2014; Micallef, 2016).

Hawkins and Shohet (2006) acknowledge that most people in the helping professions at times experience moments of stress during their careers. A person might be stressed for various reasons, ranging from the work done with clients, to aspects of the organisation. These stressors force counsellors to be less effective in their work with clients. Gnilka, Chang and Dew (2012) conducted a study with 232 counsellor supervisees on perceived stress, coping resources, the working alliance with clients and supervisory working alliance. Participants' ethnicity included Caucasian, African American, Hispanic and Asian-Pacific Islander. It transpired that supervisee stress has a negative impact on the working alliance. In other words, the more the supervisee perceives their life as stressful, the less able they are in forming and maintaining therapeutically beneficial relationships with clients (Gnilka et al., 2012). Furthermore, the root causes of stress become intertwined with the counsellor's personality as well as those stressors in their personal life outside work (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012).

Unfortunately, therapists tend to neglect their own self-care needs when focusing on their clients' needs (Figley, 2002). Most ethical guidelines for caring professions can apply to counsellors as well, and "everything relevant to clients' well-being is also relevant to practitioners" (Wright & Bolton, 2012, p. 186). Evans and Payne (2008) argue that professionals may be unwilling to talk openly and acknowledge problems. One might fear being perceived as needing help and maybe unfit to help others. The authors are in favour of creating workplace cultures that consider stress as acceptable and 'normal', and encourage professionals to speak up and take care of themselves.

In situations of high levels of burnout and secondary traumatic stress, there is more possibility of staff turnover, as well as detrimental effects for individual workers (Salloum et al., 2015). According to Newell and Nelson-Gardell (2014), students are more vulnerable to these conditions since, during their initial phases of placements, they lack professional practice experience. Naturally, this also has an impact on clients. In fact, Micallef (2016) identifies novice counsellors as a group at risk of experiencing excessive stress that can lead to burnout.

Stebnicki (2007) uses the term "empathy fatigue" (p. 318) that occurs when the counsellor's personal wounds are regularly touched upon because of clients' life stories. Empathy fatigue leads to emotional, mental, physical and occupational exhaustion. Therefore, supervision might be a means for the counsellor to address such problems and gain insight into these personal issues when addressing crisis situations (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001). The latter study is conducted in the context of school counsellors, but can be applied to counsellors working in other settings who are exposed to diverse life stories.

There are various warning signs of stress symptoms, including insomnia, drinking, overeating, or avoidance of clients or colleagues (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). Barnett and Molzon (2014) explain that in addition to work, helping professionals must also address and deal with many challenges in their personal lives, such as, relationships, financial and health issues. Arguably, a qualitative study by Kennedy and Black (2010) with six nationality professional counsellors suggests that being a professional counsellor has positive effects on the lives of counsellors as it can influence many aspects of their personal lives.

Bonanno (2012) claims that effective supervision is important to diminish the potential for distress among helping professionals. It is helpful if supervisors monitor the stress level of supervisees and their coping resources (Gnilka et al., 2012). Referring once again to stressors, Baker (2003, as cited in Barnett and Molzon, 2014) explains that if these stressors are not tackled, they could develop in burnout and professional competence problems. In fact, the terms 'burnout' and 'compassion fatigue', amongst others, are frequently encountered concepts when discussing professional stress (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; Smullens, 2012). Howard (2008) further mentions that work-related stress and professional burnout have become more recognised in health literature and professional fields. Hawkins and Shohet (2000) point out that many times, competent workers doubt their capabilities in their work due to the absorption of client disturbance. Apart from learning and self-awareness, supervision is an important area of taking care of oneself. However, as aforementioned, Hawkins and Shohet (2000) add that, unfortunately, this is not offered in some professions (Westergaard, 2013).

In times of stress, supervision can be crucial, and the supervisory role does not merely consist in simply reassuring the worker, but also allowing the emotional disturbance to be safely felt in the supervisory relationship (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000).

The Relationship between Supervisor and Supervisee

In her study, Pace (2016) suggests that trainee counsellors should have the opportunity to choose their supervisor. In fact, Bager-Charleson (2015) highlights the importance for the supervisee to feel comfortable and calm with the supervisor since during supervision, client-related issues are brought up, as well as others pertaining to one's personal and professional development. Furthermore, it is crucial that one is honest and open with the supervisor to enable the latter to have an insight into how the work is being carried out (Bager-Charleson, 2015; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). While emphasising the relationship with the supervisor, Webb and Wheeler (1998) further accentuate that the supervision process depends on the ability of counsellors to disclose with their supervisor anything related to their relationship with the client.

Falender et al. (2014) explain that the supervisor's personal characteristics are important for a strong relationship between supervisor and supervisee. These include showing warmth and care, genuineness, empathy, transparency, respect and a non-judgemental attitude (Bambling & King, 2014; Weaks, 2002). Pearson (2004) further mentions availability and approachability as important supervisor qualities. The (ACA) (1990) Standards for Counseling Supervisors, maintain that sensitivity towards the counsellor's personal and professional needs is an important quality for an effective supervisor.

Bager-Charleson (2015) explains that a good supervisor helps the supervisee put "feelings into words and to explore, challenge and use them more effectively in both work and life in general" (p. 7). Furthermore, Hawkins and Shohet (2012) believe that a good supervisor has to:

a) Be flexible between theoretical concepts, interventions and methods;

b) Have a multi-perspectival view and see the same situation from various angles;

c) Be able to work from a transcultural perspective;

d) Be knowledgeable about the profession and orientation in which they supervise;

e) Be open to learning from the supervisee;

f) Be sensitive;

g) Handle power suitably;

h) Have sense of humour, humility and patience.

Nonetheless, even the supervisor might experience certain challenges (Kemer, Borders & Yel, 2017). It is noteworthy to observe that the responsibility they have for the work of supervisees will vary according to the counsellor's employment context. Therefore, if one works in an agency or organisation, the person is accountable to the management of that agency or organisation. On the other hand, in a private practice setting, the practitioner takes full responsibility of their work (King & Wheeler, 1999).

Sometimes, supervisors might be seen in a position of authority due to the power differences inherent in the supervisory relationship (Murphy & Wright, 2005). The differences between supervisor and supervisee derive from multiple sources, including the knowledge and professional status of the supervisor. On the other hand, the supervisee looks up to the supervisor for support and guidance (De Stefano, Hutman & Gazzola, 2017; Murphy & Wright, 2005). Van Ooijen and Spencer (2017) point out that supervision training is helpful to supervisees, to be aware of the power dynamic and the need for contracting in supervision.

Borders, Welfare, Sackett and Cashwell (2017) explain that feedback is important in supervision; however, they present a research about the difficulties which supervisors may experience when giving critical feedback. At first, supervisors might fear negative reactions

from supervisees following feedback. Moreover, they themselves might feel insecure and doubt their capacity for assessing supervisees. Evans and Payne (2008) suggest that supervisors could focus more on self-care and challenge supervisees who are taking on too much. Feltham and Dryden (1994) further mention negative effects on the helping professional, irrespective of their experience. Stressful factors for the counsellor include working alone in private practice, the effects on family life, or the dynamics within an organisation. The authors explain that supervisors can observe the effects of stress on the supervisee and help them to address these issues. Gnilka et al. (2012) suggest that supervisors can invite supervisees to discuss and focus on their coping resources, including how their family relationships influence their work with clients. If the supervisee has a lack of family social support, they may be helped to create personal development plans and be assigned lighter clinical responsibilities. Furthermore, Borders et al. (2014) recommend that the supervisor provides "a balance of challenging and supportive feedback appropriate to the counselor's developmental level, experience, and client needs." (p. 34).

In her article about compassion fatigue education, Merriman (2015) suggests that supervisors should educate interns on compassion fatigue and discuss issues related to symptoms and risk factors. In addition, tackling stress management techniques and quality of self-care will help in the personal and professional development of interns. Barnett and Molzon (2014) further assert that self-care and the promotion of wellness is an issue related to supervision. Moreover, a qualitative research project with line managers in the United Kingdom highlights the need for supervision in the helping professions (Westergaard, 2013). Harries and Spong (2017) underline the need for attention in supervision to be given not only to the client-counsellor relationship, but also to other factors, such as, the counsellor as part of a system, including the working environment, which can have an

impact on the counsellor's supervision needs. Harries and Spong's (2017) study was conducted with British counsellors working in secondary schools.

Supervision and Personal Therapy

Current practice keeps supervision and therapy separate (Webb & Wheeler, 1998). In their study with 12 twelve Canadian supervisors, Thériault and Gazzola (2017) found that most supervisors acknowledge personal difficulties and redirect supervisees to other resources.

However, Bager-Charleson (2015) affirms that although supervision is not therapy, "neither it is 'reporting back' to a boss or a manager" (p. 10). During supervision, the professional's personal issues might also emerge, which might need to be acknowledged and support provided. Feltham and Dryden (1994) argue that there may be client situations or stressful life events that impinge on the professional aspect of the counsellor. Such issues might emerge during supervision, and following moments of direct countertransference, it is important that the supervisor determines to what extent the personal material of the supervisee is to be addressed. Therefore, supervision might be required to guide professionals to work through their personal issues, while providing a space for supervisees to voice their concerns (Gerald & Gerald, 2011). Feltham and Dryden (1994) remark that counsellors can become fatigued, but personal therapy is not "the universal panacea for all such ills" (p. 117). They further observe that counsellors may at times need to be reminded to take a holiday and maintain a balance in their lifestyle.

Conclusion

Presenting literature on counselling supervision has been rather challenging due to the ample research on the subject matter. I am additionally aware that I did not offer literature on the different models and formats of supervision as very succinctly described by

Micallef (2016). The aim in this chapter was rather to look briefly at the definition of supervision by various sources, its benefits, and take into consideration its challenges and difficulties. This helped me to develop an understanding of supervision in general and to formulate the questions for the interviews. The next chapter presents the rationale behind the methodology used for this research.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter presents the study's research design and process, starting with the aims and objectives. Furthermore, an in-depth rationale will be given for choosing qualitative research and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Ethical considerations, trustworthiness and a concluding reflexive comment will also be provided in this chapter.

The Research Question – Aims and Objectives

As already mentioned in Chapter 1, the following research question was explored in this research study: *How does restorative counselling supervision help the supervisee's personal and professional well-being?* The desired outcomes (or general intentions) of the research are the following:

a) To study the impact of counselling supervision;
b) To understand the meaning of the restorative function of supervision for practicing counsellors;
c) To explore how supervision helps professionals personally and professionally;
d) To raise awareness of supervision amongst other helping professions;
e) To understand the needs of counsellors when receiving counselling supervision;
f) To identify any possible recommendations to enable counselling supervision to be more fruitful and beneficial to the counsellor;
g) To highlight the importance of self-care and support for the counsellor's well-being;
h) To advocate the well-being of counsellors and other helping professionals, with the aim of raising awareness of the risks of burnout.

Applying Qualitative Research

In this study, I wanted to explore the experience of counsellors during supervision, and how supervision helps them personally and professionally. Therefore, a qualitative methodology was deemed most appropriate for this research, namely, IPA. J. A. Smith (2004) observes an increase in the use of qualitative methodology in psychology. Indeed, qualitative research examines people in specific situations (Taylor et al., 2016).

This research study begs a qualitative methodology as opposed to a quantitative approach due to the latter's detached and objective approach to data collection (McLeod, 1999), which is not the aim of this study. In this research, a qualitative approach enables me to focus on meaning and quality of experience (Pietkiewicz & J. A. Smith, 2012). Taylor et al. (2016) explain that qualitative research is inductive, and is thus concerned with exploration of meanings where one does not require prior identification of the relevant factors (Yardley & Bishop, 2008). On the other hand, in the deductive method, the researcher begins with a theory, and then derives hypotheses from it for testing (Rubin & Babbie, 2011).

McLeod (2001) explains that qualitative research enables the experience of different participants to be heard. In addition, it privileges the voice of the client or worker (McLeod, 2015). Despite being appropriate for my research, the qualitative approach has its downside. The data gathered is rather subjective, and my presence during the interview process might have had an impact on participants' responses (McLeod, 2001). Furthermore, the research has a small sample size which some may regard as a limitation as it is difficult to generalise to the whole population (Tracy, 2013). The aim of this research is not to make generalisations, but to attempt to delve into the meanings of human experiences since qualitative research values quality over quantity (Rubin & Babbie, 2011; Tracy,

2013). The rationale for selecting IPA in my qualitative research as opposed to any other qualitative approach is provided hereinafter.

My Epistemological Position

The main theoretical perspectives in the field of social science are positivism and phenomenology (Taylor et al., 2016). The goal of the former is to produce objective knowledge (McLeod, 2003; Willig, 2013), and positivist thinkers are satisfied with the identification of cause-effect explanations (McLeod, 2003). The positivist approach has been opposed by proponents of interpretive or hermeneutic ways of carrying out research (McLeod 2003), the latter being the approaches adopted for this research. Lazar (2004) maintains that for interpretive theorists, the scientific method is irrelevant. Indeed, this research focuses on the reality of individuals and is hence guided by an interpretive epistemology, which fits the research question. As aforementioned in Chapter 1, the phenomenologist or interpretivist examines and understands social phenomena from the participant's perspective since the important reality is how people perceive it (Lazar, 2004; Taylor et al., 2016).

This research aims to give supervisees the space to talk about their individual experience in supervision. The approach is phenomenological because it contains an in-depth examination of the participant's life world (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2007). I was not interested in a social constructivist paradigm because the researcher looks for the wide complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories (Creswell, 2007). On the other hand, I preferred narrowing meanings into themes and subthemes as I feel that it fits more my personality, while helping me to be more organised. I wanted to find out how counsellors experience the restorative aspect in supervision, hence the selection of the phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach varies "from descriptive to interpretative varieties (Willig, 2013, p. 72). Descriptive

phenomenology is based on Husserl's work and is interested in how things appear (Wilson, 2015). On the other hand, Heidegger advocates for the interpretation of experience (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar & Dowling, 2016).

The ontological position of interpretivism is relativism, which focuses on the diversity of interpretations (Willig, 2013). In this study, the experiences of diverse individuals are explored. The relativist position maintains that there are versions of reality, but no one reality (Lazar, 2004). Indeed, the experience of supervision differs among participants.

Rationale for Using IPA

The research question necessitated a qualitative approach as the study examines personal lived experience in detail, the meaning of the experience to the participants, and how they make sense of that experience (J. A. Smith, 2011). I wanted to study the meaning that participants give to their experience of counselling supervision. Furthermore, I was curious about their understanding of 'restorative' supervision. Indeed, one of the research questions in the interview guide specifically asked participants about their understanding of the term, 'restorative', yielding a variety of responses.

Earlier on, I also made reference to the concept of giving a voice to participants (Gerald & Gerald, 2011; McLeod, 2015). I wanted to achieve this by asking counsellors what can be done in general for counselling supervision to be beneficial to the counsellor. In this study, my aim is not to study specific services, but to understand the meaning which counsellors give to supervision, namely, focusing on the reality of counsellors who are in the field receiving supervision. Naturally, counsellors referred to their agencies which gave further knowledge to the study. Undoubtedly, names of agencies will not be divulged to retain anonymity of the research-participants.

Willig (2013) expounds that the goal of phenomenology is to generate knowledge of the subjective experience of research-participants, which is the purpose of the study, hence the decision to adopt IPA. This research aims to access the world of participants, and in these interviews, every effort was made to maintain neutral questions and pay attention to how they were asked as well as paralanguage cues. Nevertheless, my own experiences of supervision, views and beliefs are brought into the research process. Therefore, reflexivity is an important process in research. According to Etherington (2016), reflexivity involves being aware of our personal responses and our ability to make choices of how to use them.

Since I was interested in the experience of every individual participant, I could have further opted for grounded theory, which is often viewed as the main alternative approach for those who are considering IPA. However, I am not interested in generating new theoretical accounts, which is what grounded theory researchers seek to achieve (Creswell, 2007; J. A. Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Presenting IPA

The objective of IPA is not to test hypotheses, but it rather aims to capture and explore meanings (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). J. A. Smith (2004) maintains that there are three main fundamentals to IPA, namely, "[i]t represents an epistemological position, offers a set of guidelines for conducting research, and describes a corpus of empirical research" (p. 3).

Eatough and J. A. Smith (2008) explain that IPA has a long and short history. As a qualitative research approach, IPA was first articulated in the mid-1990s. Nonetheless, it is associated with older theoretical underpinnings in phenomenology and hermeneutics. The aim of IPA is to explore thoroughly how participants make sense of their personal world and the meanings they give to these experiences (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2007). Additionally, the researcher has an active

role in IPA in an endeavour to get close to the participant's personal world (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2007). J. A. Smith (2004) points out that IPA is phenomenological as it focuses on people's perceptions of objects and events. At the same time, IPA gives importance to the analyst who makes sense of that personal experience. It is thus linked with interpretative or hermeneutics, which will be discussed further below.

There are also common misconceptions about IPA, including that it is a "simply descriptive methodology" (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006, p. 102). However, several authors affirm that IPA has a phenomenological and interpretative requirement (Eatough & J. A. Smith, 2008; Larkin et al., 2006; J. A. Smith, 2011). The former requirement is to understand and "give voice to the concerns of participants" (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 102), which leads to a focus on participants' experiences of a specific event, process or relationship. Consequently, the interpretative requirement contextualises and makes sense of these concerns (Larkin et al., 2006).

IPA has its theoretical roots in phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (J. A. Smith, 2011). For their part, Larkin and Thompson (2012) maintain that idiography and hermeneutics are important "conceptual touchstones" (p. 102) for IPA.

Phenomenology. The origins of phenomenology are attributed to Husserl (Moran, 2000; Willig, 2013). It is interested in the world as it is experienced by humans within their context (Willig, 2013). Willig (2013) explains that in phenomenological research, the aim is to stand in the shoes of the research-participant and look at the world through their eyes. Indeed, many times, we learn about the importance of empathy and standing in the client's shoes. In my research, I would like to understand the situation from the counsellor's perspective as the person who gives support to clients.

Idiography. IPA is idiographic since it focuses on the particular as opposed to the universal thereby understanding meaning in the life

of an individual (Eatough & J. A. Smith, 2008). This gives researchers the opportunity to analyse each case individually and thoroughly. The "lived experience" (Reid et al., 2005, p. 20) of the participant is brought together with the researcher's subjective and interpretative elements (Reid et al., 2005).

Hermeneutics. IPA seeks to explore how persons make sense of what is happening to them. Therefore, hermeneutics, developed by Heidegger and an important element of his work (Moran, 2000), is the study and theory of interpretation. It also aids in the analysis of research-participants' statements (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, J. A. Smith and Osborn (2007) observe that double hermeneutics are at play when participants try to make sense of their world, and concurrently, researchers try to make sense of participants trying to make sense of their world. IPA is therefore connected to hermeneutics and theories of interpretation (J. A. Smith, 2004).

J. A. Smith (2004) explains that researchers adopting IPA use techniques which permit "unanticipated topics or themes to emerge during analysis" (p. 6). The aim is not to confirm or negate hypotheses as the focus is on developing further research questions to gather extensive data. Indeed, while devising the questions for the interviews, I was cautious in maintaining a neutral stance and thus refrained from using directive questions. To ensure to achieve this, the questions were checked by my supervisor. This relates to issues of trustworthiness and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McLeod, 2001) which are discussed below.

The Research Process

The research process includes contacting MACP, which was the gatekeeper (Tracy, 2013), the Social Wellbeing Faculty Research Ethics Committee (SWB FREC) and University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) ethical clearance process, as well as developing an interview

guide, recruiting participants, the data collection phase and data analysis.

Contact with MACP and the Ethical Clearance Process. MACP was contacted when the UREC form was being filled during the ethical approval stage. I enquired whether my request to counsellors who are MACP members could be distributed if and when UREC approved my proposal. MACP gave me provisional acceptance to disseminate (Appendix B). Once the ethics proposal was accepted by both FREC and UREC (Appendix C), MACP was accordingly informed and asked to forward the information letter and consent form to its members (Appendices D-F).

Research-Participants. Inclusion criteria for participation were two, namely, (1) qualified practicing counsellors who are (2) receiving counselling supervision. Five participants made contact following communication from MACP. A further two research-participants were recruited through snowball sampling, also using a gatekeeper (Tracy, 2013). There were no specifications in relation to gender, age or years of experience. This was advantageous since it allowed me to listen to experiences of diverse counselling-participants working in the counselling field. Five participants who made contact work in the educational sector, while the other two participants work for a government organisation. Three of these seven participants have further experience in private practice. Additionally, counsellor-participants benefitted from different types of supervision, namely, individual, peer, online and group supervision.

As outlined in Chapter 2, due to the small population of counsellors in Malta, participants might be at risk of being identified. After discussing this issue with my supervisor, to ensure and protect their anonymity, profile details were kept minimal. There is already the issue that counsellors working in the state system are not receiving supervision (Micallef, 2016), some of whom are seeking private

supervision, and thus facilitating their identification. Therefore, I decided to withhold their age and specific place of work in Table 1 below, which illustrates their profile.

Table 1: Profile of Counsellor-Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Work Setting
Anna	Female	Government Organisation
Grace	Female	Education
Graziella	Female	Education
John	Male	Education
Kristina	Female	Government Organisation
Marija	Female	Education
Sarah	Female	Education

Compiling the Interview Guide. The interview guide was drawn up from the consulted literature and my personal experience. Nonetheless, during the interview process, I asked some basic questions at the beginning, but I proceeded according to the pace of participants, focusing on their views on supervision and how it helps them personally and professionally. The interview guide was prepared in English since participants are all professionals and hence proficient in the English language (Appendix G).

Semi-structured Interviews. Data were collected by means of audio-recordings during individual, semi-structured interviews, which

are considered the most appropriate data collection method in IPA research (Reid et al., 2005; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2007). The phenomenologist seeks an understanding using qualitative methods, which include interviews that produce descriptive data (Taylor et al., 2016). IPA studies are carried out using small sample sizes (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2007). In fact, this research was conducted with seven participants. The adopted sampling technique was nonprobability sampling since the sample was not chosen randomly (Tracy, 2013), but with the intention of obtaining the experience of counsellors in supervision.

Through this research method, the researcher and participant engage in a dialogue since initial questions are modified, while at the same time, the interviewer may ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant replies (Bryman, 2008; Rubin & Babbie, 2011; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2007). In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a set of questions on an interview schedule; however, the order of the questions is less important, allowing participants to talk freely, which is the process that took place in the interviews. There is thus room to develop a rapport with the research participant, and the researcher can probe for interesting areas that arise (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2007). Additionally, the researcher has to be present and fully focused on the interviewee's exchanges. Qualities such as listening, warmth, accurate understanding and genuineness are essential requisites thereby developing a good relationship between the researcher and respondents (Grafanaki, 1996).

Participants were informed that the interviews would be audio-recorded when they were forwarded the information letter and consent form as well as when they made contact. Following the interviews, recordings were transcribed verbatim. While transcribing the audio-recorded interviews, I was careful to remain faithful to the

words of participants and the text. Once the transcriptions were completed, participants were invited to review/edit them.

Data Analysis. In line with IPA procedure, each transcription was read several times, and any initial thoughts which emerged were recorded in writing (J. A. Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999). The process of reading transcriptions was carried out several times. A margin was left on both sides of the transcription to insert my comments while reading. Once the reading process was over, I returned to the beginning of the transcription and used the other margin to write down emerging themes (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2007). Therefore, any personal and initial comments were noted on the left-hand margin of the transcription, while the right-hand side was used for recording the emerging themes as presented in the audit trail (Appendix H). Thus, the emergent themes included participants' own words as well as my thorough interpretations of each interview transcription (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Appendix H presents excerpts from each transcript. This type of audit trail (Larkin & Thompson, 2012) was chosen as opposed to one whole transcript in order to minimise the risk of research-participants being identified, hence protecting their anonymity.

Once the emergent themes were identified, the next step involved making connections between them (J. A. Smith et al., 1999; J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2007). I found it easier printing the list of themes for each participant on individual sheets of paper. In order to form links between the themes, the process necessitated going through the list of themes several times, as well as referring to the original transcription. During this process, I noticed that some themes could be clustered and may be regarded as superordinate concepts (J. A. Smith et al., 1999). After the list of emergent themes was reread several times, I started to form groups of subthemes from the seven interviews. During this part of the analysis, I could interact with the text, while attempting to understand what the participant was saying, and as part of the

process, drawing my interpretations. The subthemes were later grouped under a main heading, or main theme (J. A. Smith et al., 1999).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues need to be taken into consideration while conducting research. They arise at the outset, and remain with the researcher during their interactions with participants, and continue throughout the process of disseminating the research findings (Willig, 2013). As aforementioned, the study was approved by UREC, and recruitment of participants was obtained through MACP (five participants) and snowballing (two participants), always honouring gatekeeping (Tracy, 2013).

The research was conducted in settings agreed upon with the participants, ensuring anonymity and safety. Respondents were invited to choose a convenient date and time. Informed consent was required to carry out the research with professionals (Silverman, 2013; Willig, 2013), and participants were given the option to choose their own pseudonym. Although the interview questions were prepared in English, participants could use the language of their choice, in this case, Maltese or English.

To ensure that participants were not harmed in any way during the process, they were informed about the purpose and aim of the study prior to the interviews. Participation was on a voluntary basis, and the research-participants were free to refrain from answering any questions which made them feel uncomfortable. They could also withdraw from the research at any point without penalty, in which case, their data would be immediately destroyed and thus not used. This was especially important since interviews were conducted with counsellors, and I kept in mind that some might feel uneasy answering or continuing the interviews, especially due to the possibility of meeting again in the future in our line of work. I was therefore aware

that this could create some discomfort. Indeed, special care is taken in the findings chapter to withhold information which could give away their identity. Following the interviews, I ensured that no harm was done by the interview questions. All interviews will be destroyed following the completion and correction of this research study.

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability

Four main qualities are presented in this section to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

McLeod (2001) explains that "credibility checks" (p. 185) have been encouraged in qualitative research. These could be done by forwarding reports to other members to comment on their accuracy. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, I sought feedback and engaged in several discussions with my supervisors, peers and colleagues who work in the helping professions. I am additionally presenting excerpts from the transcriptions of all seven counsellor-participants (Appendix H).

The phenomenon of transferability occurs when readers believe that research findings correspond to something important in their own world (Tracy, 2013). This was achieved by conducting individual intensive interviews to explore the experiences of participants and get closer to their world. Dependability is established when findings could be repeated, and refers to the consistency of the enquiry processes over time. The term dependability is equivalent to reliability (Creswell, 2007). Dependability was achieved through an audit trail which enabled me to maintain an account of the development of the different research phases. The audit trail includes the interview guide, excerpts from transcriptions, together with my notes and emergent themes (Larkin & Thompson, 2012) (Appendices G & H).

A self-reflexive attitude was adopted throughout the research, which is a good technique for establishing confirmability. This helped me to be aware of my own beliefs and how these could impact data collection and interpretation (Shenton, 2004). Measures such as bracketing were kept into consideration thereby preventing their interference with participants' experiences. This method is adopted in qualitative research to suspend one's judgement or beliefs (Laverty, 2003), and lessen the potential effects of preconceptions which may contaminate the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Nevertheless, I acknowledge that it is impossible to suspend all biases, and there were moments during the research when I was displeased, especially when learning about how supervision and support is lacking at the workplace. In fact, Laverty (2003) cites Gadamer (1960/1998) who argues that methods are not totally objective or value free from the user, adding that bracketing is impossible, and any attempts to do so are absurd. To ensure trustworthiness, direct quotations from participants are included in the findings and discussion section to enhance the study's integrity.

Reflexivity – A Concluding Comment

I am aware that in this study, I am an insider researcher because I chose to study a group to which I belong (Unluer, 2012). Furthermore, I shared similar experiences to participants working in the educational sector, especially those with challenges of working within a school setting, particularly isolation and loneliness, which will be described in greater detail in the next chapter. I noticed that at times, I too was associating participants' experiences with my personal life, and this was accompanied with feelings of frustration, which I discussed several times during my own supervision. I was attentive of my role in the research, and endeavoured to listen and be vigilant of my non-verbal language during the interviews, while avoiding any impact that I might have on the research (Lennie & West, 2010). At the same time,

being an insider researcher gave me the advantage of having a greater understanding of the group being studied (Unluer, 2012).

I was additionally aware that since the counselling community in Malta is relatively small, some participants might have been cautious about what to divulge about their supervisor in order to avoid identification or out of loyalty towards their supervisor.

This chapter presented the study's main objectives, the research methodology and design. It aimed to give the reader detailed information about how this research was conducted. In the following chapter, I shall present my findings along with a discussion.

Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, I will present the key findings from the interviews held with counsellor-participants. In this research, to date, none of the participants are qualified counselling supervisors. What's more, it is important to note that my voice will be present throughout the discussion and in the interpretation of data. Personal feelings may also emerge, especially when it comes to school-based counselling, since I work in such a setting. Table 2 presents the themes that were elicited from the data, together with the corresponding subthemes.

Table 2: Themes and Subthemes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1: **The working context of the counsellors**	• The challenges of the working context • Working with other professionals • Ethical issues • Dealing with crises and support from colleagues • Managements' approach to supervision
Theme 2: **The impact of the work environment and casework on the counsellors**	• Physical, psychological, and emotional impact • Personal issues and experiences • Issues of countertransference • Developing fears • Impact on the counsellor's family

Theme 3: **The experience of supervision**	• The benefits and challenges of supervision • Qualities of the supervisor • The relationship between supervisor and supervisee • The sacred space and safety in supervision
Theme 4: **The restorative function in supervision**	• Describing restorative supervision using metaphors • The counsellor's understanding of the term 'restorative' • The experience of restorative supervision • Balancing the personal and professional aspects • Personal therapy and supervision
Theme 5: **The counsellors' self-care**	• Self-care strategies • Support from family and friends • Courses and case management
Theme 6 **Good practice in counselling and supervision**	• Maintaining a personal life and a work life, separately • The needs of supervisees in terms of counselling supervision • Reflection and writing • Further improvements in current supervision

Theme 1: The working context of the counsellors

Harries and Spong (2017) point out that literature on supervising counsellors in organisations, highlights the importance of contextual factors. This was noted in the interviews held. The themes hereunder were recurrent in the interviews, and are to be discussed in the following section:

The challenges of the working context. Participants explained that the number of complex cases have increased (McMahon & Patton, 2000). Grace and Sarah spoke about the challenging casework with minors. This includes issues such as those pertaining to anxiety, self-harming behaviour, substance misuse, suicidal thoughts, and death wishes, amongst others. Moreover, Marija adds that further challenges exist within the system. She explains that there are professionals, such as guidance teachers, who are not provided with adequate training, yet simultaneously work with complex situations. This goes in line with what Hawkins and Shohet (2012) maintained; that of being stressed due to organisational factors. In view of these challenges, which consist of organisational factors and client work, Marija states that supervision "is a way which can help me to overcome them" (huwa mod kif jista' jgħinni negħlibhom). Indeed, being open, and talking about problems, is an important part of self-care for the practitioner (Evans & Payne, 2008). Grace augments, that she must monitor and support guidance teachers, since they have no supervision. Hence, they turn to internal support (Tatar, 2009). Grace further explains that this is time-consuming and overwhelming; an experience which I can personally relate to when I am working with professionals who do not have adequate training and supervision. Likewise, in Micallef's (2016) study, state-school counsellors disclosed about supporting guidance teachers.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) explain that it is crucial for counsellors to be aware of their limitations, and not to take on clients

who are beyond their competence. Alternatively, one can take on such a client if there is good enough supervision. Yet, there are professions where the concept of supervision is less common (Westergaard, 2013).

Working with other professionals. Participants in this study work with various professionals. Grace said that despite the work challenges, she is not alone, as she works with a group of professionals. Similarly, John mentioned that a collaborative approach has slowly been developed between counsellors and other "kindred professions". At the same time, John claims that it is challenging to maintain a working relationship; "because everyone is managing their own caseloads". He further expounds that colleagues might be passing through personal challenges, which inhibit them from entering into a collaborative working relationship with others. To this effect, Sarah points out that even though she works in a team, there are times when she feels alone (Winning, 2010). This, owing to her not being able to share information due to confidentiality issues. In fact, the MACP Code of Ethics (2014) specifies that when information is shared, effort should be made to safeguard the anonymity of clients. Also, where possible, clients are to be consulted, so that they have control over the process. Indeed, ethical issues, was a recurrent theme in this study.

Ethical issues. It was encouraging to see that participants gave due importance to ethical issues. John explains that ethics creates a sense of safety, and it helps him to work in the best way. Meanwhile, Graziella too spoke about the importance of working ethically. However, she fears doing something wrong, and of, unintentionally, harming clients. Hence, understanding the code of ethics is an important task in supervision (Weaks, 2002).

The issue of confidentiality can be challenging to counsellors who work within a school context, and I, myself, join them in this plight. There needs to be a balance between the need for information

sharing, disclosure, and maintaining confidential information (Harries & Spong, 2017). The latter authors further point out, that the supervisors' role is to help and direct counsellors to make an informed judgement about such issues. Especially where counsellors need to break confidentiality upon their clients' disclosure that they are at risk; this can be quite challenging:

Meta jiġu veru *aware* wara li jkunu fetħu, inti tidher qisek, ħa tikser il-kunfidenzjalita'. U mhux kulħadd jifhimha din. Irridu nirrappurtaw lill-pulizija, *child protection, so it is not easy* (Grace).	When they become truly aware after they have opened up, you look like, you are breaching confidentiality. And not everyone understands this. We have to report to the police, child protection, so it is not easy.

This issue leads to another debate on student confidentiality; the duty to report to parents, or other third parties, counter to maintaining student confidentiality, for the best interest of the minor (Lazovsky, 2008). This is one of the reasons why, Barnett and Molzon (2014) point out that it is crucial that supervisors help supervisees develop an approach to tackle ethical issues and decision making.

Dealing with crises and support from colleagues. Unfortunately, literature on crisis supervision has not been sufficiently explored (Dupre et al., 2014). It was surprising to learn from the participants that during times of crises, the first contact person is usually not the supervisor. Instead, contact is done with colleagues and with the workplace, for those who work in an organisation. This is something which I can relate to, and this finding led me to reflect on how I deal with crises situations.

Nevertheless, the participants claimed that they will contact their respective supervisors, if need be. Kristina explained that

although she does not contact her supervisor instantly during a crisis, when contact is eventually made, this is done to ensure that she is moving in the right direction (Grant & Schofield, 2007). In private practice, the situation is different (King & Wheeler, 1999). One cannot contact colleagues or the workplace. In fact, Sarah related a personal experience during her private practice; she was working with an extremely difficult case, and could not reach her supervisor. The participant narrated, "I could do nothing except look after myself".

I felt relieved that Sarah sought to look after herself, and since counsellors deal with crises situations, it is recommended that they receive, "intensive and immediate clinical supervision" to alleviate risks (Dupre et al., 2014, p. 82). However, this is not always possible, and dealing with crises situations can elicit powerful emotions in counsellors including fear, powerlessness, and anger (Dupre et al., 2014). Anna explains that during crises, it is important to create a safe space, and contain the client. She further adds an interesting point, that the counsellor is "not a fire brigade"; which leads me to reflect on our limitations as counsellors. The participant further mentioned the formative role in supervision and conferred that:

> You should have a fire extinguisher in your package as a professional. And if you don't have it, you need to bring it into supervision to build it up (Anna).

Additionally, Dupre et al., (2014) recommend training of knowledge and skills, required in crisis counselling, during the counsellors' formation, and throughout their career.

Managements' approach to supervision. Participants in this study attend supervision, with the regularity, on average, of once or twice a month. However, participants working in state-schools revealed that they had no choice but to find supervision on their

own (Cauchi et al., 2017). This is because, there is still no formal structure of supervision for state-school counsellors (Micallef, 2016). This is both bewildering and disappointing. On the one hand, there is a commitment to promote the client's wellbeing, at the same time, it goes against the respect and care for the counsellor (BACP, 2016a). Pearlman, Saakvitne and Yassen (as cited in Bonanno, 2012) claim that if supervision is not available at the place of work, outside arrangements should be made. This is what participants in this study had to do. Concurrently, respondents envisage the need to increase supervision, due to the complex situations that they are facing (Bonanno, 2012; Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). Hence, further support from the work organisation is crucial for counsellors.

Another challenge is that there are participants who attend supervision outside their working hours. This, despite the fact that supervision is related to their full-time work, where cases are discussed:

Normalment wara x-xogħol, tkun għajjiena, u *supervision*, hija xi ħaġa serja. Irrid nieħu n-*notes*, nipprepara l-każijiet, moħħi jrid ikun frisk. *So*, nispiċċa mmur fil-ħin liberu tiegħi, *which is quite tiring* (Grace).	Normally after work, you are tired, and supervision, it is something serious. I take notes, prepare cases, my mind has to be fresh. So, I end up going during my free time, which is quite tiring.

Likewise, Sarah argued that she must attend just the same; "...because it is better than remaining with problems" (għax aħjar milli tibqa' bil-problemi). Hence, counsellors are left with limited choice in such situations.

Theme 2: The impact of the work environment and casework on the counsellors

Being compassionate and empathic may come at a cost. In the process of viewing "the world from the perspective of the suffering, we suffer" (Figley, 2002, p. 1434). Hawkins and Shohet (2006), mentioned various warning signs of stress symptoms; that were mentioned by the respondents. Simultaneously with these stresses, informants also mentioned that they must deal with challenges occurring in their personal lives.

Physical, psychological and emotional impact. Grace presents the counsellor as a human being, who is also in need of support:

Jiena nemmen *we're human beings, and we need support*. F'*counselling*, aħna *we teach this, and we support our clients*. Allura, anke aħna rridu dak is-*support*, inkella, nikkrollaw.	I believe we're human beings, and we need support. In counselling, we teach this, and we support our clients. So, even we need that support, or else, we collapse.

Physical impact. When sharing their stories on the physical impact of work related stress, Graziella described that when she is stressed, she experiences an increase in food intake (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). Something elaborated by Grace, who also goes through bodily changes: "Physically it begins to show when I am stressed; I eat a lot and put on weight. My body shows [it, too]." John also maintained that apart from the psychological and emotional impact, he is physically unwell, as well. This finding is consistent with Dupre et al. (2014), who point out that counsellors, might experience physical and psychological stress.

Psychological and emotional impact. Participants spoke of the importance of their own psychological well-being. Nevertheless, as Sarah points out, the emotional impact is not visible. To this effect, it

tends to be ignored. Sarah recounted moments when she felt emotionally drained and helpless because of her work (Radeke, 1997, as cited in Griscti, 2016). This might lead to the counsellor's lack of ability to see clients when they are experiencing moments of stress, as various participants noted. Grace said, "Automatically, if I see five children per day, I begin to decrease [the number of cases], so these are signs…I get afraid of burnout." (*Automatically,* jekk nara ħamest itfal kuljum, nibda nnaqqas, *so* dawk ikunu sinjali...nibda nibża' minn *burnout*). Similarly, there is a lack of interest in seeing clients:

Ma tkunx tixtieq tagħmel daqshekk *sessions*...tħossok li m'għandekx *break in between,* tħossok vera *exhausted* […] Toħroġ bil-*leave*, u jkollok aptit ma tersaqx lura terġa', pereżempju. Jista' jitla' *to that extreme* (Marija).	You do not wish to do that many sessions…you feel you do not have a break in between, you feel really exhausted […] You go on leave, and you feel the urge not to return back, for example. It can get to that extreme.

Elaborating on this, Sarah disclosed that when she arrives home from work, she requires time alone, away from others. Adding to this issue, there were moments when she had to carry the weight of a difficult case alone. She could not share the story "with anybody; with no one". Listening to Sarah, got me wondering about the loneliness that the profession brings (Griscti, 2016). Whilst carrying out this research, I recognised that I, too, am experiencing this feeling at my work place. This highlights the importance of supporting counsellors through supervision (Winning, 2010). Sarah, like Grace, also experienced burnout. It resulted in her having to stop seeing clients, for some days. She further describes that there were moments, when she was not eager and keen to do sessions. To this effect, one of the warning signs that Hawkins and Shohet (2006) list in their study is that of avoiding clients in such situations.

Personal issues and experiences. Barnett and Molzon (2014) point out that helping professionals must extend to dealing with challenges in their personal lives. Graziella maintained, that her personal experiences might help her to understand clients more, and to be sensitive towards others. However, she notes that it is crucial to make a distinction between her own personal experiences, and that of her clients.

On the other hand, Grace narrates, "I am a counsellor, but I am also a human being. There were circumstances, where I questioned if I was ready to give counselling". Indeed, participants reported that due to personal losses, they were unable to continue giving a service, for some time. John describes his personal experience involving a family member:

Membru tal-familja tiegħi damet ħafna, ħafna ma tirkupra...Jiena kont qed ngħinha u nieħu ħsiebha. Dil-persuna minflok kienet qiegħda timpruvja, dejjem kienet qed tiżloqli minn idejja…mingħajr ma kont naf; peress li tkun ta' kuljum, ma rrealizzajtx kemm kienet qed taffettwani.	A family member took very, very long to recover…I was helping her and taking care of her. This person instead of improving, was slipping away from me…without me knowing; since this was on a daily basis, I didn't realise how much it was having an impact on me.

John further explained that while this was occurring, several cases involving bereavement were referred to him. This took its toll on him, due to multiple factors, including lack of professionality from the referring agent. At this point, supervision played an important role, as it gave him direction (Grant & Schofield, 2007). Also, the personal issues of the counsellor required attention, as they were leaving an impact on the professional aspect. Nevertheless, there are authors who

disagree with support as a role in supervision (Hughes & Pengelly, 2010).

Issues of countertransference. Griscti (2016) points out, that possibly a great temptation of the counsellor, is the tendency to expect oneself to save others; something which was experienced by Sarah. When working with a child who lost its parent, Sarah felt that she suffered in this case. The participant said, "I needed to care for this boy"; a situation where one might be responding to one's own needs, rather than the needs of the client (Griscti, 2016). The participant explained that supervision, and the objective role of the supervisor, helped her understand that she is not the mother (Gerald & Gerald, 2011). Anna points out the importance of reflexivity in such situations (Bager-Charleson, 2015; Etherington, 2016):

> As a professional, I have to reflect on myself and on my motivation of doing things [...] when you see somebody really suffering, you want to help the person out of the pain, and they put everything to you, that you are the one to solve their pain [and this absolutely cannot occur] (Anna).

Therefore, it is a struggle trying to achieve a balance between our personal issues and the professional aspects.

Developing fears. The participants did not specifically mention issues of anxiety, although M. Smith (2003), argues that the terms 'fear' and 'anxiety' are used interchangeably. I was anticipating, that on a professional level, participants would say that they fear doing something wrong in their work, therefore unintentionally harming clients. However, participants also shared personal fears, which were developed following exposure to specific client groups. Kristina, spoke of a fear which used to have an impact on her personal life. She disclosed that she used to check if there was someone behind her, and clung to her belongings, when she was out. In the study done by M. Smith (2003), counsellors reported the fear of feeling overwhelmed,

and of being assaulted, findings which are present in this study. In relation to other fears, interestingly M. Smith (2003) reports counsellors being afraid of being disapproved or rejected by supervisors. This was not reported in my study.

Impact on the counsellor's family. Various studies have shown the impact on family life (Barnett & Molzon, 2014; Feltham & Dryden, 1994). Griscti (2016), explains that conflict might occur in the family, especially when family members cannot understand what is going on, as counsellors may withdraw from them after a day of work. Indeed, Sarah said "sometimes I go home dizzy, and my husband notices, he tells me: you had a bad day. Thank God, he is sensitive to my days, you know? At times, I [am] dizzy, and cannot stand his noise, the voice of my own children, because I get very tired, and I don't want to meet maybe anybody."

This issue kept resounding in the interviews, and it leads me to wonder about the effect of the job on the family members. For example, although Grace, like Kristina, mentioned that her family was an important source of support, she also specified that she needed time alone. Marija explained the impact on burnout at home:

Tħossok vera *exhausted*...imbagħad anke tħoss l-effett id-dar. Jekk inti tkun *burned out*, imbagħad immur id-dar u tispiċċa taffettwa, forsi ma jkollokx ħin mal-familja, tkun għajjiena, tkun imdejqa.	You feel really exhausted…then you also feel the effect at home. If you are burned out, then you go home and it ends up affecting, maybe you do not have time with the family, you are tired, you are sad.

In these situations, Marija explained that supervision helps the counsellor find a balance in their life, between the professional and personal aspects. As Feltham and Dryden (1994) claim, counsellors need to be constantly reminded to maintain a balanced lifestyle.

Theme 3: The experience of supervision

Generally, participants spoke of their positive experience in supervision. As we have seen in the literature review, supervision helps the counsellor in various ways. Both the positive and challenging experiences of counsellors will be highlighted, together with reference to other supervision settings, mainly peer, group and online supervision (Carroll, 1996; Webb & Wheeler, 1998).

The benefits and challenges of supervision. Since this study focuses on understanding the 'lived experience' of each participant, one might see the wide range of responses when presenting the benefits of supervision (Reid et al., 2005). Kristina sustained how supervision helps her to be more confident:

Inkun iktar kunfidenti bħala *counsellor* u bħala persuna nkun iktar *sure...I'm assured* illi x-xogħol tiegħi qiegħda nagħmlu bl-iktar mod effiċjenti, u ma nista' nagħmel xejn iktar milli qed nagħmel; mhux qed ngħażżaq waħdi. Hemm xi ħadd li jista' jgħinni niġi *aware* ta' ċertu affarijiet, u ggwidata. On a *personal level I feel fulfilled* għax inkun ċerta, jew kważi ċerta, minn dak li jiena nkun qed nagħmel.

I am more confident as a counsellor and as a person I am more sure...I'm assured that I am doing my work in the most efficient way, and that I cannot do anything more than what I am doing; I am not [doing an awful job alone]. There is someone who can help me become aware of certain things, and guided [in my work]. On a personal level I feel fulfilled because as I am certain, or almost certain, about what I am doing.

Reference is also made to the fact that one is not working alone; a common restorative element for the participants.

John used supervision to try to make sense, and understand, specific occurrences. This resonates with the findings of Harries and Spong (2017), who explained that supervision is required to support the counsellor in making sense of their role in the school context. Sarah emphasised the role of teaching in supervision especially when regarding ethics (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). On the other hand, a positive experience for Anna in her current supervision is structure. Furthermore, her supervisor adopts a person-centred approach (Nelson-Jones, 2000), which she identifies as a strength in her current supervision. Supervision also helped participants gain awareness in their work, which is consistent with the writings of Lawson et al. (2009). Marija stated:

Għax meta inti tkun f'sitwazzjoni, inti ma tibdiex tara ġieli x'inhu jiġri, u jkun is-*supervisor,* ġieli, iġibek *aware* tas-sitwazzjoni fiha nnifisha.	Because when you are in a situation, you are not seeing at times what is going on, and the supervisor, at times, brings you aware of the situation itself.

Other benefits include, experiencing normative and formative support (Bager-Charleson, 2015; Inskipp & Proctor, 1993). Sarah experienced the normative role of supervision when she discussed aspects related to her role as a school counsellor. Anna shared her thoughts on the formative function of supervision; "something that invites me to read new research and development, and papers as well, that keeps me on toes. That I find is the formative part of supervision".

Focusing on the other side of the coin, Marija and Kristina expressed feeling alone in their work (Feltham & Dryden, 1994), and supervision is a way of alleviating this feeling, as there is someone they can turn to. Such statements continuously remind me of the concept of isolation during our work (Winning, 2010). This has been identified as a great load for therapists (Griscti, 2016). It was also identified in

Micallef's (2016) study. In private practice, this can be felt more, as counsellors might have no colleagues to turn to.

Another main challenge, is the concept of 'limited time'. Indeed, Sarah and Marija feel the need to increase supervision sessions. At the same time, Marija explains that it would incur further financial expenses. Graziella also outlines time limitations, "there is so much to say, but so little time". Grace adds that, apart from the limited time in supervision, she also uses her own supervision to discuss issues pertaining to others. Since other professionals, such as guidance teachers, do not receive supervision, Grace claims to use this space to forward their issues, too. Certainly, during the supervisory process, a great challenge is to prioritise the material brought to supervision by the supervisee (Clarkson, 1998). In group supervision, the concept of time becomes more challenging (Feltham & Dryden, 1994). Moreover, another matter addressed by Marija is that of not being able to discuss personal issues in a group supervision setting.

Qualities of the supervisor. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) present a list of qualities which are required for one to be a good supervisor, as seen in the literature review. Adding to this list, the participants also mentioned objectivity as an important feature in the supervisor. This is crucial, especially when they are getting emotionally involved in a case. Hence, being aware of emotions would help to prevent a burnout (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

For Marija, the supervisor must be knowledgeable, and suggested that supervisors ought to be specialised in specific fields. Furthermore, she seeks a person-centred approach in supervision. This might help the supervisee to explore the uncomfortable and the uncertain (Bryant-Jefferies, 2005).

Participants also mentioned that they would like their supervisor to challenge them (Grant & Schofield, 2009), however they give different meanings to this. For example, Kristina explained that by

being challenged, she is given the opportunity to grow (Bager-Charleson, 2015). Nonetheless, she prefers this to be done tentatively and sensitively. Likewise, Grace agrees with the equilibrium between challenges and self-growth. She asserts that the supervisor has to be a bit challenging, "because if a person does not challenge you, you are not going to work on the issues which you presented in supervision." Additionally, Grace values the person-centred approach, and searches for congruence and empathy in a supervisor (Weaks, 2002).

Meanwhile, Anna calls the challenging part of supervision as positive. She refers to it as taking the supervisee "a little bit out of the comfort zone and asks a little bit more of what [the supervisee] has already known, […] but within a safe space", where it can be reflected on and learnt from (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012).

The relationship between supervisor and supervisee. The supervisory relationship has a crucial role in determining whether supervision is effective (O'Donovan et al., 2011). Without a doubt, an important characteristic which helps supervisees is trust. This was a common theme in the interviews. Graziella explained that trust is an important feature for her during supervision. She further believes that her supervisor will guide her, and tell her when she should not see specific clients. Furthermore, the below assertion by Graziella positively struck me:

Naħseb importanti ħafna r-relazzjoni ta' bejn il-*counsellor* u s-*supervisor*, bħalma hi importanti, ir-relazzjoni ta' bejn *client* u *counsellor*.	I think it is very important, the relationship between the counsellor and the supervisor, just as it is important, the relationship between client and counsellor.

Relatedly, Anna too identifies trust as an important facet, and having a proper space in supervision is crucial. Nevertheless, she also acknowledges that establishing a supervisory relationship is

challenging, because "it's a new person in your life and you have never worked with that person before." What is more, the participant raises the issue of power in supervision, which should be handled suitably (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012):

> Supervision is a lot about power. When you say, 'my supervisor' you've put him already [above] you, right? So, it's not…It's not perceived as a journey together […] Ideally, it should be like a ship; you have a captain of the ship who knows the seas (Anna).

Grace explains that it is important to feel comfortable with the supervisor. Malta being a small island (Cauchi et al., 2017), the probability of an individual having a dual role (Kreider, 2014; Osborn, 2012), is another important point that was raised to this effect:

F'Malta, hemm *dual roles*, jaf illum mort għas-*supervision* u l-persuna li għażilt huwa s-*supervisor* tiegħi, jaf xahar ieħor, inkunu qed naħdmu flimkien jew fuq xi proġett (Grace).	In Malta, there are dual roles, today you went to supervision and the person I chose is my supervisor, whereas the following month, you may be working together on a project.

Hence, she gives importance to the process of contracting, which was also highlighted by van Ooijen and Spencer (2017). This is a procedure which needs to be tackled on the onset of supervision, and is related to a low anxiety level in the supervisee (O'Donovan et al., 2011; Pearson, 2004). Grace recurrently highlights that for certain processes to occur in supervision, such as that of being challenged, it is essential that the supervisee feels comfortable with the supervisor (Bager-Charleson, 2015):

Li nħossni komda ngħid kollox; ma nħossnix forsi qed nagħmel xi ħaġa ħażina u ma ngħidhiex. Bis-*supervision* jista' xi ħadd jiġbidli l-attenzjoni li qed nagħmel xi ħaġa...li forsi mhix addattata, u b'hekk nista' nevita *malpractice*. L-agħar ħaġa li *counsellor* jista' jiġrilu, naħseb, li tkun qed tagħmel xi ħaġa, mingħalik li qed tagħmel tajjeb, imma fir-realta' qed tagħmel iktar ħsara milli tajjeb (Grace).

That I feel comfortable to say everything; I don't feel maybe that I am doing something wrong and I don't say it. With supervision, someone might bring to my attention that I am doing something…that may not be appropriate, and like that I would avoid malpractice. The worst thing which can happen to a counsellor, I think, that you are doing something, you believe that you are doing it well, but in reality, you are doing more harm than good.

For Sarah, who highlights the importance of trust, choosing a supervisor is a significant issue. Webb and Wheeler (1998), assume that those who choose their own supervisors, anticipate that they would trust, and feel comfortable enough to disclose sensitive issues in supervision.

The sacred space and safety in supervision. As outlined in Chapter 1, Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs suggest that counsellors are required to feel psychologically safe. At times, the term "safety" was not stated directly by participants. Yet the findings might indicate that their experience resonates with the feeling of safety in the space of supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). For instance, Sarah claims that "supervision is peace of mind" (*supervision* huwa serħan tal-moħħ), because she is, "all the time afraid that [she is] not ethical". Hence, supervision gives her that space to feel safer. This goes along with what Hawkins and Shohet (2012) claim, namely that in supervision, the supervisee has a safe setting to put forward emotions.

Anna highlights this importance as having "a proper space in supervision":

> When I am pressed with time, or my supervisor is pressed with time, the space is injured. Then you lose the connection, because the openness is not really there. You go immediately to the thinking, and you forget to connect with the whole self. So, we end up in the more formative part.

Anna pointed out that when this occurs, the restorative function in supervision would not take place, and the focus will be on the doing and the performing, overlooking the nurturing role. Indeed, it might be what Hughes and Pengelly (1997) suggest, that of managing service delivery, and focusing on the practitioner's work. Kristina, on the other hand, spoke of her own personal experience in relation to what provides safety:

Ma nixtieqx li s-*supervisor* jagħmel jew tagħmel *assumptions*; dik hija xi ħaġa li jiena ddejjaqni ħafna. Meta xi ħadd jgħidlek, "din donnha qed tagħfaslek xi buttuna", jista' jkun li veru, imma niddejjaq meta *supervisor* tmur għal konklużjonijiet forsi malajr, u li jkun hemm *assumptions* fuqi bħala *counsellor*.	I do not wish that the supervisor makes assumptions; that is something which I do not like. When someone says, "this looks as if it is pushing a button", it might be that it is true, but I do not like it when a supervisor jumps to conclusions, and makes assumptions on me as a counsellor.

Kristina further discloses, "[i]t has an effect. What the supervisor tells you, it affects you". Indeed Falender et al. (2014), mention the importance of a non-judgmental attitude. When the participant affirmed the impact that the supervisor has on what they tell the supervisee, it made me wonder about the issue of power in supervision (Murphy & Wright, 2005), mentioned by Anna. I am pondering on the fact that if supervisees experience the power issue in such depth, they might not feel safe, and subsequently, the restorative process would not be experienced.

John presents a more positive experience. He explains that he is aware that what he tells his supervisor is going to remain confidential (NZAC Code of Ethics, 2014), and this makes him feel safe in a supervision session. Furthermore, he commented on the richness of the supervision space:

> That sacred space, because it is sacred, if it is not there, I think that…I would be poorer because alone, I am only capable at a certain point to reflect.

Once again, the state of being alone is mentioned by another participant. This seems to highlight the importance for counsellors to have someone present in this journey, as the need to belong is very important (Maslow 1954; Winning, 2010).

Theme 4: The restorative function in supervision

Participants were asked about their understanding of restorative supervision. As we shall see, the term 'restorative' has different meanings. There are respondents who described this concept using metaphors, which allows supervisees "their own unique re-telling of the story" (M. E. Smith & Bird, 2014, p. 5). Furthermore, a discussion will be rendered on how a sense of balance is achieved between the personal and professional domains.

Describing restorative supervision using metaphors. The use of metaphors was fascinating and I consider that they truly represented the individual meaning of restorative supervision for these participants.

To start with, Marija described 'restorative' by using the metaphor of a depleted flower in need of water:

To replenish yourself...qisek kważi għandek fjura *depleted*, għandha bżonn l-ilma, u ssaqqiha. U taraha terġa' tibda tibbuildja naqra naqra.	To replenish yourself…as if you almost have a depleted flower, it needs water, and you water it. And you see it beginning to build again, slowly, slowly.

Alternatively, Graziella compared it to a painting which needs to be restored:

Bħal meta jkollok pittura, u toħodha biex tiġi restawrata, il-pittura jerġa' joħorġilha l-kulur.	It's like when you have a painting and you take it for restoration, the colours of the painting begin to show again.

The use of metaphors helped Marija and Graziella to reflect on their transformation during supervision (M. E. Smith & Bird, 2014).

John used the metaphor of a vase:

L-ewwel kelma li tiġini f'moħħi hija '*brokenness*'…li wieħed ikun qisu mfarrak. Niftakar storja fejn bniedem wera vażun sabiħ, qabdu u tefgħu mal-art. Kulħadd stagħġeb. Imbagħad dal-bniedem qabad il-biċċiet u reġa' poġġiehom flimkien; il-vażun baqa' vażun, il-funzjoni tiegħu baqa' l-istess, imma l-ixquq hemm kienu. Hija xi ħaġa li dejjem niftakar fix-xogħol tiegħi u bħala bniedem fil-ħajja personali tiegħi; hemm ammont kbir ta' '*brokenness*' u *healing* hija *life-long*.

The first word that comes to mind is 'brokenness'…when one is like shattered. I remember a story where a person showed a beautiful vase, grabbed it and threw it on the floor. Everyone was astonished. Then this person took the pieces and placed them together; the vase remained a vase, the function remained the same, but the cracks were there. It is something which I always remember in my work and as a human being in my personal life; there is a big amount of 'brokenness' and healing is life-long.

The use of metaphors helped the internal world of the supervisee to be "transformed by the metaphorical storyline that mirrored the therapeutic relationship." (M. E. Smith & Bird, 2014, p. 5).

The counsellor's understanding of the term 'restorative'. There were other interesting meanings of 'restorative' supervision. Sarah claimed the following:

To restore yourself, I mean, fissens li, ma nafx jekk *I'm on the right track*, imma għalija hija li ħa tgħinek...*to help you, to cope, to keep on going*...ma nafx [...] *how to cope with being a counsellor*, xi ħaġa li tgħinek tkompli għaddejja, *to restore yourself, to help you keep on going.*

To restore yourself, I mean in the sense, I do not know if I'm on the right track, but for me it helps you…to help you, to cope, to keep on going…I don't know […] how to cope with being a counsellor, something which helps you to keep on going, to restore yourself, to help you keep on going.

Likewise, Kristina also feels that supervision is there to help her "get back on track". Furthermore, she adds that restorative supervision helps her both on a personal and professional level. She claims that, for one to carry out professional work, these two have to be in line and they need to be cared for (O'Donovan et al., 2011). Differently, for Anna, restorative supervision is restoring inner peace, and helping the supervisee to reflect on self-care. Relating this to my own personal experience, one of my practicum supervisors used to encourage us to reflect on our self-care strategies. This made me feel acknowledged and seen as a person. It also made me more confident to continue my work with clients (Pace, 2016; Wheeler & Richards, 2007).

Grace on the other hand, associates the following terms to restorative supervision, "replacement, investment, teaching, learning, growth". In addition, Grace explained that counsellors', as human beings, also require support or else they collapse. She further adds that our (counsellors') training teaches us to be aware, and to get in touch with our needs. Subsequently we have the psychological strength to ask for help.

The experience of restorative supervision. At some point, participants went through personal challenges that might have had

an impact on the professional aspect (Griscti, 2016). Due to the latter, they were taken up in supervision (Barnett & Molzon, 2014), allowing participants to experience the restorative function, and thus were personally supported (Morrison, 2001).

The concept of the "wounded healer" (Jung 1951, as cited in Wheeler, 2007), highlights the importance of the person in the counselling role (Kennedy & Black, 2010), and it shows the vulnerability of the helping professional (Wheeler, 2007). Grace said that when she passed through a very important loss, she wanted to be sure that she was psychologically ready to see people. Supervision helped Grace in both the personal and professional areas:

Hija *issue* li s-*supervisors* tiegħi kellhom jgħinuni għax *ok*, kont għaddejja minn *bereavement*, *grief, I know that it's a slow process.* Ridt inkun *aware* li dak iż-żmien, kien iebes għalija nieħu *new referrals* fejn inti għandek *clients* għaddejjin mill-istess proċess tiegħek...*so supervision helped me for self-awareness, self-reflection* u stajt nara meta jiena kont lesta nieħu *new referrals* fejn jidħol *bereavement*.

It is an issue that the supervisors had to help me with, because ok, I was passing through bereavement, grief, I know that it's a slow process. I had to be aware that at that time, it was difficult to take new referrals where you have clients passing through your same process...so supervision helped me for self-awareness, self-reflection and I could see when I was ready to take new referrals involving bereavement.

In his account, John explained how supervision provided a restorative role, which is long-term and helps him to feel safe:

I go to the place of work, with my mind more at rest, that I am going to face the same problems, but with a different perspective.

He points out that even the place where supervision is held provides a sense of safety for him, as it is quiet and not in the school. In fact, in their study with school counsellors, Harries and Spong (2017) found that participants talked about the impact of having supervision within the school context. It could be problematic, due to the lack of physical space and interruptions. Indeed, Harries and Spong (2017) further maintain that it is important that the supervisor comprehends the context in which supervisees work at, to understand the inherent challenges and frustrations:

> The supervisor had an inside perspective of the school and the setting which we work in. Since the supervisor was aware of the working environment, it created a lot of safety (John).

The participant mentioned that the supervisor was concerned for his safety, which makes me wonder about the nurturing aspect in supervision. In this situation, it went beyond the supervision session; I will use John's words and refer to it as, "the arm of restoration in supervision, it was a very long reaching arm…it went beyond…what I was presenting in supervision."

Marija too experienced the restorative function in supervision:

Supervision huwa fundamentali fix-xogħol tagħna u tista' ssib spalla. Jekk inti qed iġġorr il-piż waħdek, almenu jkun hemm xi ħadd li taf li tista' tappoġġja naqra fuqu.	Supervision is fundamental in our work and you can find a shoulder. If you are carrying the weight alone, at least there is someone you know you can rest on for a bit.

Anna explained that when she points out this concept to her supervisor, she will experience the restorative function of supervision. Still, she explains that the focus is more on the normative and formative aspect in supervision, "[As it is now] the focus of supervision is more to be correct than to be, nurtured." Whilst listening to this, I felt a

sense of loss and emptiness. This leads me to question whether there is a general expectation to give priority to the practitioner's work (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997). Yet Anna disputes such views, as "restorative practice in supervision should be a cornerstone of counselling." At the same time, she also cautions that "over-rating the therapeutic aspect in the restorative aspect, would do restorative issues an injustice." This highlights the concept that supervision and therapy are to be kept separate, and that a balance needs to be achieved (Lizzio et al., 2009).

Graziella experienced moments when this function was tackled in supervision and mentioned that her supervisor was supportive on a personal level. On the other hand, Kristina and Sarah appear to take a different stance, and prefer to tackle personal issues in personal therapy, as they use supervision to focus more on work. I would argue in favour of keeping supervision and therapy separate (Webb & Wheeler, 1998). Yet, I acknowledge that personal issues might also emerge during supervision (Bager-Charleson, 2015; Cashwell & Dooley, 2001). These need to be acknowledged, especially if they are having an impact on the professional aspect of the counsellor.

Balancing the personal and professional aspects. In the qualitative study by Kennedy and Black (2010), participants reported that because of their training and practice, "their personal life and professional work are seemingly inseparable and interwoven" (Kennedy & Black, p. 430). In my study, John uses the metaphor of marriage and explains that during supervision the personal and professional aspects "get married".

Marija explains that even though the personal and professional are different, there are moments when they are linked, hence restorative supervision helps you to find that balance:

Ma' xi klijenti, tħossok li fis-*session* qed toħroġ ċertu toqol...taraha taffettwak b'mod negattiv, anke tibda tħossok eżempju qed nagħti *disservice* lil dan il-*client*, għax mhux qed nagħtih iktar, mhux qed nagħtih dak li jistħoqqlu. Imbagħad, *supervision*, jittipjalek fuq *issues* personali li trid taħdem fuqhom, allura inti tkun qed tgħaddi minn *personal growth* ukoll, mhux *just professional,* u naraha waħda tillinkja mal-oħra, qisu għandek *ripple effect*.

With some clients, you feel that in the session there is a certain weight…you see it affecting you in a negative manner, even you start feeling for example I am giving a disservice to this client, because I am not giving him more, I am not giving him what he deserves. Then, supervision, tips on personal issues which you need to work on, so you are going through personal growth as well, not just professional, and I see it one links to the other, like you have a ripple effect.

Kristina mentioned that she uses personal therapy to discuss personal issues. Still, I feel that supervision gave her the opportunity to discuss personal challenges she encountered whilst working with clients. She spoke of her experience with clients who passed comments of a personal nature, such as, that she is still young, or does not know what life can put you through. This made the counsellor feel that she is not mature in age. Hence, she discussed this in supervision, which helped her personally and professionally (Proctor, 2011).

Personal therapy and supervision. It is common amongst participants in this study, that apart from supervision they attend personal therapy. Borders et al. (2014) inform that supervisors are to explain to supervisees the suitable parameters of addressing personal issues, and how to act accordingly. In fact, supervisees can be guided to pursue personal issues further in personal therapy:

Jista' jkun li s-*supervisor*, speċjalment jekk tkun *f'group*, ma jkollokx relazzjoni daqshekk, biex inti tiddiskuti ċertu affarijiet personali *on a deeper level*. Tgħidlek jew jgħidlek li jekk tixtieq inti, tiġi *tackled f'personal therapy*. Biex tidħol iktar fiha din, tajjeb li tiddiskutiha *f'personal therapy*. *F'supervision* inħoss li s-*supervisor, she or he, won't have the time to get to know the personal* [issues] *tal-counsellor in such detail* bħalma inti tagħmel meta tkun f'*personal therapy* (Kristina).

It could be that the supervisor, especially in a group, you do not have that much of a relationship, to discuss certain personal things on a deeper level. She or he tells you that if you would like, to tackle it in personal therapy. To go further in-depth, it's good to take it to personal therapy. [In] Supervision I feel that the supervisor, she or he, won't have the time to get to know the personal [issues] of the counsellor in such detail as when you are in personal therapy.

Kristina explained that when "personal emotions and injuries" are evoked due to client work, she mentions it briefly during supervision, to gain further guidance on how to proceed in her work. The participant then tackles personal issues during personal therapy.

This experience was not the same for Grace and Graziella, who dealt with personal issues in supervision. In fact, I think that it is difficult exploring blind spots without any self-disclosure being imparted (Thériault & Gazzola, 2017). John acknowledges that supervision and personal therapy are to be kept separate. At the same time, he mentioned that there are personal aspects which he would like to explore more in supervision, as it would help him professionally.

Theme 5: The counsellors' self-care

Participants had different ways of seeing to their care, and most of them had supervision and personal therapy. I also appreciated that participants mentioned that the concept of self-care was discussed in supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). Furthermore, participants mentioned that having supervision puts their mind at rest.

Self-care strategies. In this section, the participants' rendition of self-care will be discussed; Anna explained that her supervisor specifically asks her about her self-care strategies, which helps her both in personal and professional development (Barnett & Molzon, 2014). Sarah explains that in peer supervision, she has the support of other counsellors, and believes in doing enjoyable things which include walking and swimming. Sarah also mentioned that during counselling sessions with clients, there were times when she resorted to prayer, since there was no one to consult with, and "because you are alone in a session". Marija enjoys spending time with her family and she wishes to increase self-care strategies to reduce burnout, hence valuing the principle of self-respect (BACP, 2016a). Meanwhile, Kristina points out that she enjoys doing tasks which are not related to her work as a counsellor, such as cooking. Furthermore, she does not ponder on work-related issues during her free time. Unfortunately, this is not an option for participants who must attend supervision during their time off work.

Support from family and friends. Participants attend peer or group supervision, helping them to meet other counsellors and share experiences. Sarah, Grace and Kristina also spoke about support from family members which is a strong coping resource (Gnilka et al., 2012):

It's not easy...għax mhux bħal meta għamilt ġurnata fl-uffiċċju u tista' tgħid x'ġaralek; *confidentiality* tkompli anke fil-ħajja personali tiegħek. So, ma nistax nitkellem mar-raġel jew m'ommi fuq x'ġara, x'rajt, xi ġrali l-iskola...imma li jkollok dik il-persuna, jew tnejn, li jistgħu jifhmu x-xogħol tiegħek, *and they are there*, anke jekk ma tgħidilhom xejn*, it's a lot and it's nice* (Grace).

It's not easy...because it's not like you did a day in the office and you can say what happened to you; confidentiality continues even in your personal life. So, I cannot talk with my husband or with my mother about what happened, what I saw, what happened to me in school… but having that person, or two, who can understand your work, and they are there, even if you do not tell them anything, it's a lot and it's nice.

Courses and case management. Marija said that her supervisor cautioned her to be aware of the, "recipe for burnout". In this context, her supervisor guided her on how to manage cases and sessions to reduce burnout, since caseloads are large and complex (McMahon & Patton, 2000). Marija also mentioned that she embarked on a new course, as this helps her be mentally refreshed, and it gives her the opportunity to grow personally and professionally. Anna also attends courses for further personal and professional development and highlights the importance of continuing to learn:

When I don't know certain crises aspects, or certain pathologies that I can't deal with, I have the obligation to take a course in it and increase my knowledge, my package. It's absolutely necessary.

Theme 6: Good practice in counselling and supervision

The last theme presents a discussion on how one can maintain good practice in counselling. Participants also came up with suggestions related to further improvements in their current supervision.

Maintaining a personal life and a work life, separately. Anna explained that finding the right structure to be organised and write things down, helps her not to carry the work around in her personal life. Yet, it is challenging having to carry the sadness and the heaviness of the clients' stories (Griscti, 2016), and sometimes it is not easy to maintain work independently from personal life:

Tinkwieta fuq il-*client*, ovvjament inti trid toħodha *supervision*, għax ma tistax tibqa' tinkwieta fuq il-*client*, għax hemm il-*well-being* tal-*counsellor*. Jekk jiena ħa nibqa' ninkwieta u nġorr il-klijenti, mhux ħa nibqa' effiċjenti bħala *counsellor* (Grace).

You worry about the client, obviously you take it to supervision, because you cannot continue to worry about the client, because there is the well-being of the counsellor. If I continue to worry and carry the clients, I am not going to remain efficient as a counsellor.

Similarly, Graziella mentioned that she tries to maintain a separate personal and work life. Nonetheless, this is challenging (Barnett & Molzon, 2014). Contrary to what Grace expounded, she disclosed that there is also a chance of carrying her home situations with her to work. She gave a realistic example of when her children are unwell. This shows how the personal and professional lives of the counsellor are very much interconnected (Kennedy & Black, 2010).

The needs of supervisees in terms of counselling supervision.
Participants want a supervisor who can provide guidance (Murphy & Wright, 2005) and gives reassurance that they are working well (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). Participants have their own individual needs, which they have shared in the interviews held. For instance, John explained that apart from expressing himself in supervision, he needs practical tips that help him to move forward in his work. From my personal experience, being equipped with practical tips helps me to get back on track and to face client work with more confidence. Additionally, John claimed that having more time in supervision would enable him to discuss personal issues being raised following contact with clients. Furthermore, participants declared wanting to be challenged; to grow personally and professionally. Indeed, Grant and Schofield (2007), mentioned challenging as part of the supervision process. Still, this must be done constructively (Bager-Charleson, 2015).

Reflection and writing. The importance of reflexivity was highlighted by supervisees (Bager-Charleson, 2015; Carroll, 2010), and writing was mentioned as a technique which is widely used by participants. Indeed, writing "reflectively and reflexively, whether in supervision or not, can offer insight and inspiration and can restore calm" (Wright & Bolton, 2012, pp. 169-170). In fact, participants in the study resorted to writing either before or after a supervision session, or after sessions with clients. From personal experience, the challenge is that of not finding time for reflective practice, since priority is given to client work and to carrying out sessions. This goes against what is claimed by Hawkins and Shohet (2012); that reflective practice must be continued during one's working week. While Marija uses the space of supervision for self-reflexivity, as we have seen, this space is not offered to everyone.

Further improvements in current supervision. As I am conducting this research, the Department of Counselling is running a course on

supervision (Micallef, 2016), which I think is a major achievement for the counselling profession in Malta. Still, John and Marija are apprehensive; they explained that the profession will become "poorer", since counsellors eventually will be required to solely have supervisors who specialise specifically in counselling supervision. John and Marija support the notion that there is richness of learning from different helping professions, and that as counsellors we have always learned to adapt tools from different areas.

Alternatively, participants came up with various suggestions for improvement in supervision. Generally, it was suggested that the employer provides supervision, and that supervisees can avail from this service during working hours, rather than attending in their own personal time. Additionally, Graziella explained that it is important for the supervisor to be aware of the system and working environment (Harries & Spong, 2017). John suggested that an increase in supervision hours would be an added space for counsellors to tackle areas which are usually secondary, since priority is usually given to casework. Marija suggested to also allocate leave off work for burnout prevention. She also argued in favour of more supervision sessions. The down-side to this is that it is costly for supervisees. In relation to the latter, Grace recommended that supervision expenses are shared with the employer. She also advocates for supervisees to choose their supervisor, or at best, given a choice, rather than being allocated a supervisor.

In Micallef's (2016) study, participants did not agree that supervision training forms part of the MCouns. Course, since the course is already intensive (Micallef, 2016). I concur with this, at the same time, I do believe that further training on the roles of supervision and other basic concepts, will help students to use supervision to their utmost.

Conclusion

The key findings were presented and discussed with the literature. I also included personal experiences which I shared with the participants, hence I am aware that my own processes were reflected in this discussion.

Findings generally reflect the literature, and there were also instances where participants spoke of experiences which differ from the existing texts. The main focus was on restorative supervision, while simultaneously aiming to tap into other coping resources. This, since the process of supervision is not a daily occurrence.

I feel that the study presented various challenges which counsellors face, and that support is necessary, especially at this day and age where the complexity of cases is increasing. Counsellors are aware that with more support, not only will they grow personally and professionally, but they will also be more effective in their work with clients.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

In this chapter, I will give a summary of the main findings, the limitations of the research, as well as recommendations for good practice and future research in counselling.

Summary of the Research Findings

This research generated interesting results about the experiences of counsellors in restorative supervision. It was positive to see that there are supervisors who focus on self-care, and who give importance to the restorative function in supervision. It was crucial to interpret results cautiously, as the study was based on a small sample group, in a field where professionals might know each other. Further research is required for generalisability of the findings, something which could not occur within this research (Weaks, 2002).

It was clear that respondents give great importance to supervision, which resonates in Micallef's (2016) findings. The participants in the latter study spoke of the loss that they experienced due to not receiving supervision. This was also felt by the participants in my study who work in state-schools. These went a step further, and took the personal decision to seek supervision privately, to help them both personally and professionally.

The findings were categorised into six themes. Participants forwarded their concerns on the challenges in their work system, and further pointed out that the complexity of cases is increasing, hence the need for more supervision sessions. Moreover, participants explained that they end up supporting other professionals who do not have supervision, such as guidance teachers. Such findings are consistent with Micallef's (2016) study, where participants offered support to guidance teachers, even though the respondents themselves did not feel competent to offer this support, as it requires professional training. Supervisees in my study gave importance to

ethical practice. Concurrently, the crucial concept of confidentiality poses various challenges, especially when working in a school setting where the client is a student and a minor (Lazovsky, 2008). In crises situations, the participants' initial contact is done with work colleagues rather than the supervisor, who is often consulted at a later stage about whether the right course of action was taken. However, the situation is different for professionals working in private practice, as they cannot consult with colleagues. Participants reported the importance of support and understanding from the entity that employs them, about counselling and supervision.

The working context and casework leaves its impact on counsellors, who reported experiencing various stress related symptoms, including those of a physical, emotional and psychological nature. Furthermore, the counsellors in this study reported the impact of their work on their family, which is consistent with the writings of Barnett and Molzon (2014). In fact, personal issues were taken up in supervision by supervisees, which goes against Hughes and Pengelly's (1997) model on the functions of supervision. Moreover, participants also used supervision to discuss issues of countertransference and fears which developed following exposure to specific client situations. Hence, restorative supervision was crucial to achieve a balance between the counsellor's personal and professional well-being, since issues of a personal nature were presented during supervision, to help them work well with clients.

Supervision helped the participants be more confident, to make sense of their experiences, and to feel less alone. The concept of isolation was experienced by the participants, and this was also highlighted in Micallef's (2016) study. The qualities of the supervisor were deemed important for them, and objectivity was consistent

amongst all of the participants. Furthermore, it was pointed out that supervisees would like to be challenged to grow personally and professionally. The supervisory relationship, characterised by trust, is imperative to participants. Informants also spoke about being provided a safe space, which is in line with Hawkins and Shohet (2012). The latter claim that in supervision, there is a safe setting to bring forward emotions. Additionally, being comfortable and having the opportunity to choose one's own supervisor were viewed salient in this research. Nevertheless, an issue that was not identified in Micallef's (2016) study, but was raised in this one, is the issue of power.

The aim of this research was to delve further into the role of restoration in supervision. Participants used a variety of metaphors to describe their understanding of restorative supervision. Different interpretations were given on the meaning of the term 'restorative'. Nonetheless, respondents acknowledge that the role helps them both personally and professionally. Although the personal and professional aspects are different, there are moments when they become entwined (Kennedy & Black, 2010). Supervision further supported participants who were dealing with personal loss; although, resorting to personal therapy was another alternative. Participants provided different meanings when discussing personal issues; they either use supervision or personal therapy.

The findings further show that supervisees discuss self-care in supervision. What is more, apart from supervision and personal therapy, participants shared other self-care strategies. Having a good support network, attending further courses, and managing casework were all strategies which helped in their personal and professional growth, as well as means of prevention for burnout.

Lastly, the findings show the importance of maintaining a separate personal and work life; albeit setting limits proved to be a challenging task. Counsellor-participants tried to engage in a reflective practice. They also discussed what they further require from supervision, which will help them personally. Additionally, they came up with various suggestions for the general improvement of supervision.

Limitations of the Study

Subjectivity might have played an important role in my research. Hence, alternate findings might have been apparent to another researcher. Furthermore, even though every effort was made to represent, as closely as possible, the perspectives of the supervisees, themes and subthemes were presented according to my own interpretation and organisation (Weaks, 2002). I am also aware that I did not present a detailed profile of the participants. This was done to ensure anonymity, as discussed in the ethics section of the methodology chapter. As a result, the reader has limited access to the exact and specific details of the context of participants. In each decision made, I always consulted with my supervisor and discussed issues with my colleagues.

Another limitation found is that, since the community of counsellors is small, certain information might have been left out by the participants so as not to risk being identified, or their supervisors to be recognised. I, too, decided to leave specific information out when presenting findings, to avoid participants being identified. Furthermore, being an 'insider researcher', I could immediately grasp specific experiences shared by participants. In these situations, unknowingly, I might have transmitted 'non-verbals', showed

approval, or otherwise, on what they were saying, which might have had an impact on the research.

Phenomenological research works with texts, and language is the tool by which participants attempt to communicate their experience (Willig, 2013). The same event can be described in various ways by different participants. Hence, in this case, it would be difficult to compare results, as the meaning of content varies between individuals. Furthermore, it may not always be possible for participants to express themselves completely through spoken language such as interviews, which limits full access to their experiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

It would be interesting to conduct a study with more counsellors working in different settings and agencies. Moreover, since this study is done solely with supervisees, it would be fascinating to carry out local research with counselling supervisors and supervisees, in the same study.

It would also be intriguing having studies about other helping professions who work with people and complex cases, but do not receive supervision. These professionals include teachers, guidance teachers, and nurses who are involved in supporting and promoting a person's psychological and emotional well-being (Skovholt et al., 2001).

Participants mentioned the need for supervisors who are specialised in different areas, where they would have the opportunity to consult with supervisors on issues, according to their area of specialisation. This piqued further curiosity in me, and thus might be another area of interest worth delving into.

Another recommendation is to carry out research set to determine the impact of supervision on client outcomes.

Recommendations for Practice and Implementation

I embarked on this research as I believe in the concept of restorative supervision, and its crucial role in supporting the personal and professional aspects of the counsellor. The following recommendations are based on this study; recommendations given by counsellor-participants, together with my own personal experiences in supervision:

1. More awareness about the restorative function of supervision, through the publishing of more articles;

2. Supervision introduced in other working professions where the concept of supervision is still not present;

3. Supervision incorporated more in counselling education, highlighting the benefits and needs of supervision;

4. Further discussion with employers, and people in a managerial level, about the benefits of supervision for counsellors, so that supervision is provided to (all) counsellors;

5. Employers to consider allowing counsellors to attend supervision during their working hours, and not outside of their working hours;

6. The opportunity for counsellors to choose their own supervisors, if supervision is provided by the employer or agency;

7. Increasing the regularity of counselling supervision, considering that the complexity of cases is increasing;

8. Revision of the prospective law, which will limit counsellors to choose counselling supervisors only – this is of concern to counsellor-participants who proposed that they would like to receive supervision from other supervisors in specialised areas;

9. Promoting a culture in the workplace, where workers can feel safe to speak out about the impact of burnout;

10. Encouraging the use of self-care strategies for counsellors and trainee counsellors.

Conclusion

This study was an exciting opportunity to explore the role of restorative supervision; an area which in so far has been overlooked, when considering the lack of local research on this concept. For participants, this research might have been their first experience to delve into the concept of restorative supervision. The study generated findings that challenge how supervision is viewed by certain work organisations. I am hoping that through this research, the importance of supervision is captured, especially on a managerial level across various agencies, who provide counselling services. Furthermore, I trust that counsellors take a more proactive approach to tend to their self-care, as it was pointed out by one of the participants in the interviews, that as counsellors, we are responsible for our own self-care practices.

Whilst the aim of this research was to give a voice to counsellors, this study has also helped me to grow as a researcher, as a counsellor, and as a person. I took the decision to embark on this research as I truly believed in the concept of restorative supervision and self-care for counsellors, and for all those who work in the helping professions. This study showed the counsellors ceaseless commitment and dedication towards their clients, and their endless efforts to provide an effective and ethical service. At the same time, one cannot overlook the various challenging situations dealt with on a day-to-day basis, by counsellors and other helping professionals. This calls for further training for counsellors, together with continuous support. After all, supervision

is a process which counsellors are turning to, for further personal and professional guidance, and encouragement.

This research is also accompanied with a sense of hope; that counsellors are acknowledged as human beings who require support. I feel that this research further highlighted the ongoing crucial support of agencies, entities, and employers, to facilitate the process of supervision for counsellors. Additionally, the study sends out an important message to supervisors on how supervision is esteemed by supervisees. Finally, the research transmits an important note to counsellor supervisees; to engage in ongoing supervision, and allow themselves to be nurtured in its restorative role.

Appendix A – Correspondence with Secretariat for Catholic Education (SfCE)

MALTESE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

Secretariat for Catholic Education

20th March 2018

To whom it may concern

I confirm that the counsellors and trainee counsellors employed by the Secretariat for Catholic Education, are offered two hours of individual supervision per month.

The supervisor is chosen by the trainee counsellor /counsellor and approved by the Service Management. Cost of supervision is funded by the Secretariat for Catholic Education.

Marjoe Abela
Service Manager Student Services Secretariat for Catholic Education 16, The Mall
Floriana FRN 1472
marjoe.abela@maltadiocese.org

Appendix B – Correspondence with Malta Association for the Counselling Profession (MACP)

From: Information MACP <info@macpmalta.org>

Date: 9 March 2017 at 08:45

Subject: Re: Request for Research

To: Tiziana Zammit <tiziana.t.zammit.05@um.edu.mt>

Cc: Jean Kathleen Wright <jean.wright@um.edu.mt>, TIZIANA ZAMMIT <tiziana.zammit@gmail.com>, Silvia Galea <silvia.galea@gmail.com>

Dear Ms. Zammit

We will forward your request to MACP members once you have the necessary FREC and EUREC clearance.

Regards

Mark Pellicano

MACP - secretary

On Thu, Mar 9, 2017 at 6:39 AM, Tiziana Zammit <tiziana.t.zammit.05@um.edu.mt> wrote:

To whom it may concern:

I am currently filling in the UREC form in connection with my Master in Counselling Dissertation proposal. My research intends to explore the experiences of counsellors receiving supervision, and focus will be given to the restorative function of supervision. I am also interested in exploring how supervision can help counsellors whilst juggling both

their professional and personal lives. This research is carried out under the supervision of Profs. Jeannie Wright.

Participants for this study are counsellors who receive counselling supervision and I will be using a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews as the research tool. The number of participants for my study is from six to eight counsellors.

I am querying if you would have any objection to forward my request to counsellors who are MACP members, if and when UREC approves my proposal. At that stage I would send a detailed information letter and the relevant consent form for your perusal.

UREC wants your initial feedback when I hand in the UREC form. Your reply, if positive, will be attached with the UREC form in the appendix section.

Whilst I thank you for your attention, I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Tiziana Zammit (207087M)

C.C. Profs. Jeannie Wright

Appendix C – Acceptance of Proposal Form by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

On 14 June 2017 at 14:30, Charmaine Agius <charmaine.agius@um.edu.mt> wrote:

Reference Number: SWB 078/2017

Dear Ms Tiziana Zammit,

Your ethics proposal with regards to your research entitled *The Role of Restorative Supervision on the Counsellor's Personal and Professional Well-Being* was discussed by UREC.

I am pleased to inform you that UREC has accepted your ethics proposal. Hence, you may now start your research.

Once your documentation is sent back to me from UREC, I will inform you via email so that you are able to pick everything up.

Thanks and regards,

Charmaine

Ms Charmaine Agius

Secretary
Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC)
Faculty for Social Wellbeing
Room 113
Humanities A Building (Laws & Theology)
University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080

Tel: (+356) 2340 2237

Email: charmaine.agius@um.edu.mt

Appendix D – Gatekeeping Request to Disseminate to MACP Members

From: Tiziana Zammit <tiziana.zammit@gmail.com>

Date: 8 October 2017 at 09:23

Subject: Gatekeeping request to disseminate to MACP members

To: Information MACP <info@macpmalta.org>

Cc: Jean Kathleen Wright <jean.wright@um.edu.mt>, Tiziana Zammit <tiziana.t.zammit.05@um.edu.mt>

To whom it may concern:

Good morning.

I am pleased to inform you that I have ethical clearance from UREC to begin my dissertation research entitled, "The role of restorative supervision on the counsellors personal and professional well-being." (Kindly refer to the below email). My supervisor is Profs. Jeannie Wright.

I would appreciate if you were to distribute the attached information letter and consent forms with all the members of MACP, so that willing members could take part in this research.

Should you have any queries, please contact me on 7925 3331, or on tiziana.zammit@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Kind regards,

Tiziana Zammit

I.D. 207087M

Appendix E – Information Letter

INFORMATION LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

Name of researcher: Tiziana Zammit

Title of dissertation: The Role of Restorative Supervision on the Counsellors Personal and Professional Well-being.

I am writing this letter to see whether you, as a counsellor, are interested in taking part in the research I shall be conducting.

Currently, I am reading a Master in Counselling at the University of Malta. As part of the course I must complete a dissertation and the research topic I have chosen is: "The role of restorative supervision on the counsellors personal and professional well-being."

I am looking for counsellors who are receiving supervision who are willing to be individually interviewed and asked about their experience of counselling supervision. Focus will be given to the restorative function of supervision. I am also interested in exploring how supervision can help the counsellor whilst juggling both their professional and personal lives. The interview will last approximately forty-five minutes to an hour and in order to process the data I would need to audio-record these interviews.

As noted in the consent form, kindly note that all names will be kept anonymous and participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the study, in which case their data would not be used and would be destroyed. Furthermore, you will be given the transcript of your interview for you to read and make any changes you see fit.

Later you will also be given my results chapter to give me comments as well as a copy of the study when the dissertation is completed.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

Tiziana Zammit

Contact details: tiziana.zammit@gmail.com   Mob: 79253331

Supervisor: Prof. Jean Kathleen Wright

Contacts: jean.wright@um.edu.mt

Appendix F – Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Name of Researcher: Tiziana Zammit (I.D. 207087M)

Mobile No: 79253331

Email: tiziana.zammit@gmail.com

Title of dissertation: The Role of Restorative Supervision on the Counsellors Personal and Professional well-being.

Statement of purpose of the study: I will focus on the experiences of counsellors in counselling supervision. Furthermore, particular attention will be given to the restorative function of supervision. I am also interested in exploring how counselling supervision can support the counsellor whilst juggling both their professional and personal lives.

Methods of data collection: Individual audio-recorded semi-structured interviews.

Use made of the information: For dissertation research purposes only.

With this Consent Form, I, Tiziana Zammit, promise to keep to the following conditions throughout the whole research process. I will abide by the following conditions:

Your real name and identity will not be used at any point in the study and you have the option to choose your own pseudonym.

i.   You are free to withdraw yourself from the study at any point in time and for whatever reason without there being any consequences. In the case that you withdraw, all records and information collected will be destroyed.

ii. There will be no deception in the data collection process of any form.

iii. The interview will be audio-recorded.

iv. You will be given a copy of your transcript, as well as the results chapter, for your feedback and verification,

v. Your audio-recording will be destroyed one year after the research process is complete.

Participant

I _____ agree to these conditions.

(Name of participant)

_____

(Signature of participant)

_____

Date

Researcher

I _____ agree to these conditions.

(Name of participant)

_____

(Signature of participant)

_____

Date

Appendix G – The Interview Guide

1. Briefly describe your role as a counsellor in the setting you work in.

How long have you been working as a counsellor?

How long have you been receiving supervision?

Is supervision paid for by the agency or do you have to pay for it?

Is your supervisor trained as a counsellor or works in similar settings?

2. What are the challenges that you constantly come across in your work as a counsellor?

3. Could you briefly describe your own experiences of support? (might be supervision or other sources of support).

4. What is your understanding of 'restorative' supervision? (no need to give definitions, just mention the first thing which comes to mind when you hear this term).

5. Could you briefly describe your own experiences of counselling supervision?

6. What about the 'restorative' function of supervision?

7. What do you perceive as the strengths of the existing practices of supervision in counselling?

8. What do you perceive as the weaknesses/challenges of the existing practices of supervision in counselling?

9. What opportunities exist within your place of work to receive supervision and support in the way you wish?

10. What obstacles stand in the way of supervision and support being what you would like them to be?

11. How important is counselling supervision to you and why do you think you need it?

12. What effect does supervision or the absence of supervision have on you personally? (Did you experience moments when your personal wounds were touched upon due to client's stories? If yes, how did supervision work for you at the time?).

13. If personal issues emerge during supervision, how are these tackled?

14. What effect does supervision or the absence of supervision have on your personal life?

15. Any warning signs of stress symptoms? How does supervision help in these moments?

16. What effect does supervision or the absence of supervision have on you professionally?

17. In what ways does supervision help you to juggle both your personal and professional life?

18. How important do you think supervision is in your place of work?

19. In times of crises, from whom or from where do you seek help?

20. What are your supervision needs now?

21. How could these needs be met?

22. What do you think needs to be done in general for supervision to be of more support to the counsellor?

23. Do you make use of other self-care strategies?

24. Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix H – Samples from Transcripts

Excerpt from Sarah's Interview

My notes	Transcript	Emergent Themes
Discussing issues of transference and countertransference during supervision. Being open, feeling comfortable to discuss issues.

Supervision taking an objective role. Having a distance. I wanted to reflect content and checking that I was on the same line of thought with the participant.

Being aware that you have to be careful. Distance being provided. Someone seeing from the outside, having an objective role.

Personal issues emerge. | **Participant:** Inħossni kont ħafna *prepared for this job. My issues I dealt with them...*Issa *issues of transference and counter-transference* ħa jkollok.
Researcher: U dawn tiddiskutihom f'supervision?
P: Iva, iva...Dan każ minnhom li kont hekk, qisni nixtieq nieħu l-*client* id-dar miegħi...*Yes, I am very open about it and my supervisor tells me, is it yours or his issue?* Jiġifieri, hemmhekk ikolli d-distakk. Is-*supervisor* tgħidli, tiegħek jew tagħha? U hemmhekk ngħid li rrid noqgħod attenta.
R: Ok, hemmhekk is-*supervisor* ikun *objective*.
P: Eħe, hemm xi ħadd minn barra, u ninduna li s-*supervisor can provide that distance*. Hemm nirrealizza li tiegħi l-problema u mhux tat-tifel. Imma jiena. Hemm xi ħadd iħares minn barra u qed ikollok ċans...tgħinni...tgħinni...*and I do look at myself and say, "Ok this is my issue."* Waħda mill-problemi l-kbar li jkolli hija dejjem...*the want to care, the need*…Pereżempju kelli *session* minnhom kienet tgħidli li m'hemmx għalfejn inkompli iktar *sessions. And I* | Counter-transference

Objectivity of the supervisor Distance from the case

The supervisor who is from the outside |

The supervisor being directive. Struggle for the counsellor. The personal issues of the supervisee.	*wanted to be there. Then it was like, I have to stop. Għax l-issue tiegħek jew tac-child? That you want to know that he is safe, pereżempju.*	Becoming aware of personal feelings/issues The need to be there

Excerpt from Kristina's Interview

My Notes	Transcript	Emergent Themes
Supervision helps in being more confident as a counsellor Being surer; assured that one is working efficiently and that the counsellor cannot do any more than what they are already doing – needing that sense of security. That one is not alone, guided, and becomes aware of certain things. On a personal level, feeling fulfilled.	**Researcher:** Kif taħseb li supervision jista' jgħinek b'mod personali? **Participant:** Li nkun *supervised*, inkun iktar kunfidenti bħala *counsellor* u bħala persuna nkun iktar *sure…I'm assured* illi x-xogħol tiegħi qiegħda nagħmlu bl-iktar mod effiċjenti, bl-iktar mod tajjeb, u ma nista' nagħmel xejn iktar milli qed nagħmel…mhux qed ngħażżaq waħdi. Hemm xi ħadd li jista' jgħinni niġi *aware* ta' ċertu affarijiet, u ggwidata. On a *personal level I feel fulfilled* għax inkun ċerta, jew kważi ċerta, minn dak li jiena nkun qed nagħmel. **R:** Ikun hemm xi ħadd li qed jagħtik *reassurance*… **P:** Eħe u *assistance…support mostly…support* mhux *assistance…support*, li jissapportjani fix-xogħol tiegħi li nkun qed nagħmel mal-*clients*…jiġifieri bħala persuna mbagħad, inkun nista' nippjana l-*way forward* ma' dawk il-*clients* tiegħi…Inkun nista' nfittex u nara bl-liema mod jiena għandi nintervjeni magħhom…u kif kont qed ngħidlek,	Supervision helping on a personal level: confident; being assured. The person is not working alone (isolation) Awareness Guidance Feeling fulfilled Being supported Planning the way forward
Having support in the work with clients, and that one can plan the way forward. Having the necessary guidance. Not feeling stuck. Feeling fulfilled that one is giving my very best to my clients. Maybe placing high		

| expectations on oneself as a counsellor? | inħossni *fulfilled* li kemm jista' jkun, qed nagħti *my very best to my clients.* | Feeling fulfilled |

Excerpt from Anna's Interview

My Notes	Transcript	Emergent Themes
Feeling shy to talk – I think the supervisor must be aware of this, because it will determine how much a supervisee will expose.	**Participant:** When you feel shy to talk about certain things…And that is why it's very good to go to therapy as well when you you feel like…the punitive sensations coming up then, it's something not with your supervisor… **Researcher:** But in therapy?	Disclosure in supervision Feeling comfortable or otherwise
The importance of therapy to deal with personal issues.	**P:** That goes to therapy. And then I find that it is very important that the counsellor goes to therapy as well because certain issues might crop up in supervision, which…would be	The importance of therapy.
But having the space for them to be explored in supervision, because the supervisor can guide you on how to proceed professionally, because s/he is aware of the emotional aspect.	necessary to explore a little bit more, some things where we don't find closure of like residues from adolescence, from childhood, from upbringing, from unresolved relationships...eh unresolved bereavements whatever is there…erm which keep	Issues which emerge in supervision.
They are things which we encounter during our work. They are part of supervision and I think that the supervisor has to be aware that the supervisee is experiencing these	cropping up and we start distorting our lens…and eh…eh our interpersonal issues in general which eh, are of course part of the supervision but not in… P: …must in-depth worked out, in therapy	Personal therapy

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issues, that the personal is being impacted, as this might affect the professional aspect. Ways in which one can take care of self. The restorative aspect being tackled in supervision.	aside…so I think a very big part of restorative aspect is to have, some hours in the year self-care therapy or reflective practices, and I mean also some physical workouts whatever, you know… **R:** Self-care strategies? **P:** …yes, to develop a proper self-care strategy and I think, which would be a good thing in supervision, is the supervisor discusses with you or monitors, what kind of self-care strategies are you implementing?	Taking care of self through therapy and through physical exercise. Self-care strategies: developed and monitored by supervisor.
Restorative - The supervisor checking with you about self-care.		

Excerpt from Grace's Interview

My Notes	Transcript	Emergent Themes
The counsellor as a human being. Being open and discussing with supervisors when it's the right time to see clients again, as this will have an impact on the work with clients.	**Participant**: …*so supervision helped me for self-awareness, self-reflection* u stajt nara meta jiena kont lesta nieħu *new referrals* fejn jidħol *bereavement*. **Researcher:** Iva…allura kien perjodu veru diffiċli, u inti użajt *supervision* biex titkellem fuq affarijiet personal tiegħek.	Self-awareness Self-reflection Guidance
Supervisors helping you in the personal aspect - balancing the personal and the professional.	**P:** Eżattament, għalhekk jiena ftit qabel semmejt kemm hi importantli li tkun komdu jew komda mas-*supervisor*. Għax pereżempju, dak iż-żmien, bdejt inħossni ħafna *helpless* mal-*clients*. Mhux għax *counselling* ma kienx fuq moħħi, imma jiena stess kont qed inħossni	Supervision used to discuss personal issues Feeling comfortable with supervisor
Feeling helpless due to personal issues Being aware and taking care of our own tool – of ourselves	*helpless*. So, ridt inkun *aware* x'kien qed jiġri f'dawn il-*processes*, għax *we are our own tool*. So, jekk mhux ħa nieħdu ħsieb lilna nfusna, mhux ħa nkunu nistgħu nagħmlu *counselling* tajjeb.	Awareness Self-care
The balance between the personal and the professional	**R:** So, *supervision* tużah bħala spazju biex inti tieħu ħsieb lilek innifsek bħala dik it-*tool*, biex tkun tista' taħdem mal-…mal-klijenti.	
Taking care of self, being aware of issues,	**P:** Hekk hu, *we are our own tool*…irridu nieħdu	

| of transference and countertransference. Responsibility on the counsellor to be aware and to take these issues to supervision. | ħsieb lilna nfusna. *Basically*, jekk ma nkunx *aware* tal-*issues* tiegħi, mhux ħa nkun *aware* ta' *transference* u *countertransference*... | The counsellor as the tool

Awareness |
|---|---|---|

Excerpt from John's Interview

My Notes	Transcript	Emergent Themes
The supervisor providing guidance and taking care of the safety of the supervisee. The supervisee feeling less alone. I would feel that that the supervisor is really taking an interest in me as a professional, and I feel safer working, more confident and happier even during work.

The long reaching arm of supervision – providing support on a long-term basis.

The supervisor giving encouragement, showing faith in you.

Being able to relax, knowing that there is this safety which was obtained during supervision. | **Participant**: Dik il-ħaġa tista' tfarrak persuna, b'mod personali u professjonali. Hemmhekk jiena apprezzajt ħafna...*the arm of restoration in supervision, it was a very long reaching arm eh…it went beyond…what I was presenting in supervision... I was presenting this and because my supervisor at that time came into the schools, and was seeing the setting, then she was able to turn around and say listen, in this particular setting, you need this safety guard with you arrange it and by all means, see the child because you are capable of seeing the child but there is the need for this safety…and in fact, because I did listen and, and, I put in that safety guard, I, most probably it helped me to work better as a professional because I was able to relax, I was able to be more* | The restorative function in supervision

Encouraging & believing in the counsellor

Establishing safety

The supportive role of the supervisor |

Knowing that there is someone and that one is not left alone. Indeed, there was help on a practical/physical aspect when the supervisor went on site to understand the situation.	*focused, knowing that…there is somebody there silently supporting.* **Researcher:** Ok. U minħabba s-*supportive role* tas-*supervisor*, inti stajt tirrilassa iktar b'mod personali biex tagħti xogħol professjonali aħjar? **P:** Iva, Iva...	

Excerpt from Graziella's Interview

My Notes	Transcript	Emergent Themes
Focus also on the counsellor as a human being; receiving support on a personal level, the nurturing role of supervision.	**Participant:** ...għalija, *trust* hija importanti ħafna *f'supervision* u kien hemm mumenti fejn is-*supervisor* kienet *supportive* ħafna fuq livell personali wkoll...	Trusting the supervisor Support on a personal level
	Researcher: U kif jgħinek *supervision* meta jkun hemm *personal injuries* isiru iktar evidenti meta inti tkun qed taħdem mal-klijenti?	
Fear of doing something wrong and/or harming clients. Personal experiences might help us to understand clients, naturally keeping our personal experiences in check	**P:** Din tiġrili f'dawk il-każijiet fejn inkun qed nibża' li ħa nagħmel xi ħaġa ħażina. *Personal injuries* jgħinuni biex nifhem iktar dak li l-*client* ikun għaddej minnu u biex inkun iktar sensittiva. Ovvjament li hu tiegħi tiegħi, u huwa separat minn tal-klijent. Hemmhekk is-*supervisor* tgħinni wkoll. Nafda wkoll li s-*supervisor* li ħa tiġbidli l-attenzjoni meta m'għandix nara ċertu klijenti.	Fear Personal injuries; understanding clients Keeping a personal and work life separately
Trusting the supervisor to guide you; maybe also shows the strength of the supervisory relationship.	**R:** Ġieli tesperjenza signs ta' *stress symptoms*? **P:** Iva, *physical symptoms* u nibda niekol iktar. **R:** U tiddiskuti dwar *self-care strategies* f'*supervision*?	Trusting the supervisor Stress symptoms – Physical Impact

Self-care, at the same time one still continues to think about clients.	**P:** Iva...U bħala *self-care* nagħmel il-*crafts*. Ġieli waqt il-*crafts* jiġuni ideat ta' kif dawn l-istess *crafts* nista' nuzahom mat-tfal...	Self-care strategies

Excerpt from Marija's Interview

My Notes	Transcript	Emergent Themes
Some supervisors do not have an understanding of the work context, and its impact (John). It is important that the supervisor is aware of the work context. Supervisors specialised in different areas.	**Participant:** Ġieli ninnota li mhux kull *supervisor*, ikun midħla jew tkun midħla tal-post fejn taħdem, allura n-nuqqas ta' għarfien tad-dinamika tax-xogħol, jaf ma tħossokx mifhuma biżżejjed. Erm...jista' jkun ikollok bżonn *supervisor* differenti għall-*areas* differenti. Eżempju ssib min ikun tajjeb ħafna fejn jidħol f'*administration*, issib min hu tajjeb fejn jidħol *one-to-one* eżempju mat-tfal, issib min imbagħad hu tajjeb mal-kbar u ma jkunx tajjeb mat-tfal, jiġifieri skont in-nies u l-klijentela li għandek. Jaf ikollok bżonn tieħu perspettiva *from a systemic perspective*. Eżempju jkollok bżonn *supervisor* li jkollu *aware*...naqra...*knowledge*...fejn tidħol is-*systemic*...*therapy* jiġifieri...erm...qisek mhux bilfors timxi naraha ma' *supervisor* wieħed. L-importanti mal-istess problema ma tippreżentahiex...ma' *supervisors* differenti għax inti nkella, inti stess ħa titgerfex. Imbagħad titlef il-*purpose* tas-*supervision*. **Researcher:** Allura, ikun hemm *a main supervisor* fejn inti iktar għandek relazzjoni miegħu? **P:** Jiddependi eżempju, jekk jiena naħdem mat-	The supervisors understanding of the working context The need for supervisors specialised in different areas Consulting with different supervisors re specific issues, according to their specialisation.
Tackling the same problem with one supervisor so as not to get confused, although sometimes I personally need a second opinion.		

Being flexible as well	tfal, nippreferi jkolli lil xi ħadd intiż li jkun mat-tfal. Issa imma ġieli jkolli bżonn forsi xi ħadd li jkun...intiż ħafna fuq is-sistema, allura ċertu *areas* fejn tidħol sistema, forsi nsibni tajba iktar jew mifhuma iktar minn *supervisor* ieħor...	

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YEAR AND SEMESTER OF SUBMISSION: **APRIL 2018, SECOND SEMESTER**

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