



The Relationship between Perceived Level of Synergistic Supervision Received and Key Job Performance Indicators of Midlevel Student Affairs Administrators

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Abstract

Midlevel administrators working at colleges and universities in the United States rated the degree to which they perceived their supervisor to exhibit synergistic supervisory behaviors. They also responded to questions regarding their core self-evaluation and commitment to their supervisors. The results suggest a significant positive correlation exists between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation and between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment. The impact of demographic characteristics on these variables was also examined.

Subject Areas

Education

Keywords

Synergistic Supervision, Midlevel Administrators, Student Affairs, Performance Indicators

1. Introduction

Experts [1] have called supervision the “linchpin of the staffing model” (p. 181) as it has a significant impact on an organization and is one of the more difficult activities to perform. Supervisory activities are said to require a considerable amount of time for most student affairs practitioners and are of great importance [2]. Although job performance is a critical area of focus within higher education institutions, there is a significant lack of research related to supervi-

sion in higher education and more specifically within student affairs [3]. Little research has specifically addressed the connection between supervision received and performance indicators within student affairs [4].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Research on Supervision

Supervision has a significant impact on employee retention and satisfaction [5]. Additionally, increased job performance means a positive impact on many employment-related issues [5] [6] [7] [8] such as employee turnover rates, customer satisfaction, and product development [9] [10]. Core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment are constructs that appear to positively impact job performance in supervisees [11]. Research shows supervisors have a significant impact on employee retention and job satisfaction [5] [7] [12]. Three researchers [13] collected data from a large service-oriented company to examine the effects of bosses on their workers' productivity. They found that good supervisors are significantly better than poor supervisors and stated that replacing a supervisor from the bottom 10% with one from the top 10% was like adding an additional staff member to a team. They also suggested that replacing a bad boss with a good one increased productivity of each subordinate by more than 10%. The increase was attributed to the supervisor teaching better work methods to the staff members being supervised.

In higher education, student affairs' greatest resource is human capital and a large portion of an institution's budget is personnel [1] [14] [15]. Effective supervision can impact staff turnover and increase retention. Supervision is a powerful way to enhance employee personal growth and professional development, and employees have a strong desire to receive quality supervision [16]. In 1998, two researchers [17] examined the nature and characteristics of people who have a significant impact on the professional development of student affairs practitioners. The study found that 55% of those surveyed identified a supervisor as a top personal influence in their career.

2.2. Midlevel Administrators in Student Affairs

Midlevel administrators make up the vast majority of administrative employees and according to researchers [18], "have the greatest potential of any group of administrators to effect collaboration and change in an institution" (p. 4). Midlevel managers may hold various titles within student affairs. Midlevel administrators manage people, money, information, and programs and their work bridges that of the entry-level professional and the senior student affairs officer [19]. They are concerned with their own professional issues and challenges, while also attending to the professional development needs of those they supervise [16] [20].

2.3. Synergistic Supervision and the Synergistic Supervision Scale

Researchers [1] identified a form of supervision they called Synergistic Supervi-

sion. Synergistic supervision emphasizes cooperation between supervisor and supervisee and encourages the impact of working together to exceed the simple combination of efforts [1]. Based on research, they believed this style of supervision had the greatest impact on student affairs work. Synergistic style of supervision has a dual focus on both the organization and the individual, the effort to achieve organizational goals and objectives while also supporting the staff member in achieving personal and professional goals [1].

Four researchers [2] followed the previous work [1] and found that synergistic supervision was associated with discussions of exemplar performance, long-term career goals, inadequate performance, and personal attitudes as well as frequent informal performance appraisals. They [2] used those findings to create the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS). The SSS measures the extent to which a staff member perceives that their supervisor focuses on both the advancement of the institutional mission and goals and their personal and professional advancement as an individual staff member [2]. Twenty two behaviors constitute the scale. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, supervisees rate the frequency of identified behaviors in their current supervisory activities and relationship. The sums of the items are collected to reflect the overall level of perceived synergistic supervision received by the supervisee.

The authors [2] tested the SSS for internal consistency reliability by calculating a Cronbach's alpha co-efficient and an alpha co-efficient of 0.94 was found. Correlations were found for the item totals ranging between 0.44 and 0.75. The authors found the Pearson product-moment correlation between the Index of Organizational Reaction [21] and Synergistic Supervision Scale was 0.91 ($n = 275$, $p < 0.001$) and between the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire [22] and Synergistic Supervision Scale was 0.64 ($n = 275$, $p < 0.001$) indicating the validity of their instrument. Since the creation of the Synergistic Supervision Scale, researchers within student affairs have continued to examine synergistic supervision [5] [6] [7] [8] [12] [23].

This study, taken from dissertation research [4], furthers the literature in synergistic supervision and begins a discussion of its relationship to key performance indicators: core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment.

2.4. Core Self-Evaluation and the Core Self-Evaluation Scale

Core self-evaluation theory originated with [24], who believed that fundamental appraisals, identified as core evaluations, affected the assessments of certain situations. Researchers [11] expanded on this notion arguing that core evaluations of self were the most fundamental evaluations that individuals hold and that these appraisals of self, impact all other beliefs and include the evaluations about their capabilities, competence, and self-worth. They identified four dispositional traits as part of the core evaluation of self: self-esteem, self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control [11].

Core self-evaluation has been linked to a variety of important outcomes such

as job satisfaction, engagement, popularity, and job performance within employees [25]. Core self-evaluation and its importance to supervision was not directly measured until researchers [26] developed the Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES). The creators of the CSES compared the data collected using their instrument to data collected using four separate instruments that measured each of the four core traits (self-esteem, self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control). The authors also collected data on several outcome measures such as job satisfaction and performance. Strong internal consistencies, with alpha coefficients greater than 0.80 were reported, test-retest reliability of 0.81 demonstrated good stability, and convergent and discriminant validity was displayed in strong correlations with the four core traits [26] [27]. Additionally, the CSES showed empirical validity in correlating with job satisfaction and performance [26].

The CSES uses a 5-point Likert-type scale to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements. The 12 statements address the composite personality traits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability and the sum score of the items represents the overall value the individual has of themselves.

2.5. Supervisor-Related Commitment and the Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale

While the research results vary, there appears to be a large association between commitment and performance when individual bases of commitment were distinguished [28]. Specifically, factor analysis suggested that both identification and internalization commitment to a supervisor has been shown to be positively related to job performance ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$) [28] [29]. In essence, one's connection to a supervisor often provides useful information regarding the employee's performance [28]. To examine employee commitment to a supervisor, four researchers [28] developed the Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale (SRCS). The instrument consists of nine statements that examine two separate dimensions: identification with a supervisor and internalization of similar values with that supervisor. Responses are obtained using a 7-point Likert-type scale. Validity and reliability of the SRCS instrument is supported by research [29] [30]. The coefficient alpha was .85 for supervisor-related commitment based on identification and .89 based on internalization [29].

In summary, there are a large number of midlevel administrators on college campuses around the country and a significant amount of time is spent supervising these individuals [31]. Both the supervisory relationship and midlevel professionals can have a significant impact on an organization. In recent years, several studies have examined synergistic supervision [2] [5] [8] [12] [23] and midlevel administrators [6] [7] in higher education. However, there is little to no research that examines the relationship between synergistic supervision and key performance indicators. This study examines the connection between synergistic supervision and the key performance indicators of core self-evaluation and su-

supervisor-related commitment within midlevel administrators who work in student affairs.

3. Research Questions

This study examined the relationship between synergistic supervision and job performance indicators (core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment) with midlevel administrators in student affairs. The following questions were examined:

Question 1: To what extent are the 22 behaviors associated with synergistic supervision perceived to be practiced by the supervisors of midlevel student affairs administrators? 1A) To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors? 1B) To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors?

Question 2: What is the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and core self-evaluation? 2A) To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation? 2B) To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation?

Question 3: What is the relationship between the perceived level synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and supervisor-related commitment? 3A) To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment? 3B) To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment?

4. Methodology

4.1. Population and Sample Identification

The population was midlevel student affairs administrators who were members of Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) [32]. The organization provided a list of 2510 individuals. The lead researcher reviewed the list to ensure potential participants were working for a college or university within the United States and were midlevel supervisors. A total of 194 names were removed from the list; leaving 2316 individuals to be contacted.

4.2. Instrumentation

Appropriate permissions were obtained from the respective authors to use the three instruments: Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) [2]; Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES) [26]; and Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale (SRCS) [28].

4.3. Data Collection

Prior to initiating the research, the authors addressed the ethical issues of participant confidentiality, informed consent processes and secured IRB approval. The lead researcher then sent an e-mail to each of potential participants. The e-mail explained the study's purpose, described participation incentives (30 randomly selected participants would each receive a \$10 Amazon gift certificate), asked participants to access and complete the online survey via a link, and suggested the estimated time to complete the survey. Accessing the survey included accessing the informed consent page and confidentiality statement. The online survey included demographics questions, the SSS, the CSES, and the SRCS. Demographic items included gender, geographic area of employment, years reporting to supervisor, supervisor's position level, institution type, and functional area of employment. At the completion of the survey, participants provided their name and e-mail address if they wished to participate in the drawing. This information was not connected to the actual data submitted. A reminder e-mail was sent 8 days later to participants who had not completed the survey. The survey site was closed 16 days after the first email. Data was collected using the Campus Labs Baseline program.

4.4. Variables and Data Analysis

Synergistic supervision was most often used as the independent variable, with scores on the SSS being used to operationalize the variable in most research questions. The dependent variable changed based on the question. Research Question 2 used the scores on the CSES as the dependent variable to examine the relationship between core self-evaluation and synergistic supervision. Research Question 3 used scores on the SRCS as the dependent variable to examine the relationship between supervisor-related commitment and synergistic supervision. All questions featured certain demographic characteristics as an independent variable and examined how the characteristics were associated with scores on the SSS, CSES, and SRCS.

The data was reviewed to ensure accuracy and missing data. Before data analysis began, applicable items were reverse coded as instructed by authors of the three scales. Descriptive statistics and frequency counts were calculated to verify that all means and standard deviations seemed realistic. Descriptive statistics included measures of central tendency, variability, and position and were run to test the skewness for each variable. Results indicated skewness for the independent variable, scores on the SSS. Therefore, the Spearman rho statistic was used.

For Question 1, the means for each of the 22 behaviors were examined and a mean score of 4 or above suggested that the behavior was perceived to be practiced at a meaningful rate. For Question 2, Pearson correlation coefficients of the means of the composite scores of the SSS and CSES were computed to determine if a relationship existed between the two variables. Since direction of correlations was unknown, a two-tailed test was completed with statistical significance indi-

cated at $p < 0.05$. For Question 3, Pearson correlation coefficients of the means of the composite scores of the SSS and SRCS were computed. As the direction of correlations was unknown, a two-tailed test was used with statistical significance indicated at $p < 0.05$. To answer questions exploring the impact of the demographic characteristics on the relationship between synergistic supervision and performance indicators, the demographic variable was broken down into sub-categories. Correlation coefficients were used to determine if a significant relationship existed and statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) suggested a relationship existed for the sub-category of the identified variable. Alpha coefficients were calculated using the data collected during this study and needed to be positive and greater than .70 to ensure the reliability of the instrument [33].

5. Results

Of the 2316 individuals contacted, 770 responded. Of those, 66 surveys were eliminated. Sixty-four surveys were incomplete and two participants were outliers related to gender. One person identified as transgender another identified as "other." These two surveys were not included in the analysis because a subgroup containing only one person is too small to have statistical significance. The final count was 704 which means a response rate of 30.3%.

5.1. Demographics

The following demographic information was obtained: gender of participant; gender of participant's supervisor; institutional type of employment, institutional size; functional area of responsibility; and number of years reporting to supervisor. A majority of the participants indicated they were female. A majority of the respondents ($N = 405$) reported to work for a female supervisor. See **Table 1**.

Table 1. Gender-descriptive statistics ($N = 704$).

Gender/Perceived gender identity of supervisor	N	%
Female Participants	474	67.3
Male Participants	230	32.7
Participants reporting to female supervisor	405	57.5
Participants reporting to male supervisor	299	42.5

Participants indicated the type of institution where they were employed and a majority indicated a 4-year institution. See **Table 2**.

Table 2. Institutional type-descriptive statistics ($N = 704$).

Participants' Type of Institution	N	%
4-year public institution	404	57.4
4-year private institution	255	36.2
2-year institution	246	34.9

Institutional enrollment size was also a demographic item. The size of the institution and participant numbers are indicated in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Participants' institutional enrollments-descriptive statistics (N = 704).

Enrollment	N	%
1999 and under	58	8.2
2000 - 4999	118	16.8
5000 - 9999	104	14.8
10,000 - 20,000	178	25.3
Over 20,000	246	34.9

Participants indicated their geographic area of employment. The largest group of participants identified their place of employment in the Mid-Atlantic States. See **Table 4**.

Table 4. Participants' geographic area of employment-descriptive statistics (N = 704).

Geographic Region	N	%
Mid Atlantic (DE, MD, NJ, NY, PA, VA, WV)	150	21.3
Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN)	133	18.9
Midwest (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	109	15.5
Pacific West (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)	99	14.1
New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)	65	9.2
Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)	58	8.2
Heartland (IA, KS, MN, MO, NB, ND, SD)	49	7.0
Mountain West (CO, ID, MT, NV, UT, WY)	41	5.8

Participants were asked about their area of responsibility. No single area accounted for more than 18% and 25% separate areas were identified, with 16 areas having representation from at least 10 participants. See **Table 5**.

Table 5. Participants' functional area of responsibility-descriptive statistics (N = 704).

Functional Area	N	%
Residence Life	126	17.9
Student Activities	96	13.6
Other	85	12.1
General Student Affairs	45	6.4
Multicultural Student Services	38	5.4
Judicial Affairs	34	4.8
Academic Support Services	32	4.5
Advising	31	4.4
Health/Drug and Alcohol Education	26	3.7
Leadership Development	25	3.6

Continued

Assessment/Research	22	3.1
Greek Life	21	3.0
Career Planning/Placement	19	2.7
Orientation	16	2.3
Disabled Student Services	16	2.3
Admissions/Enrollment Management	15	2.1
Student Center/Union	14	2.0
Service Learning	11	1.6
Counseling	6	0.9
LGBT Student Services	5	0.7
Adult Learner Services	4	0.6
International Student Services	4	0.6
Religious Programs	4	0.6
Campus Recreation/Intramural Sports	3	0.4
Commuter Services	3	0.4
Financial Aid	3	0.4

The last demographic item was the number of years participants have reported to their supervisor. A small majority have reported to their supervisor less than 1.5 years. See **Table 6**.

Table 6. Years participants have reported to supervisor-descriptive statistics (N = 704).

Time	N	%
Less than 1.5 years	258	36.6
1.5 - 3.4 years	249	35.4
3.5 - 7.4 years	144	20.4
7.5 or more years	53	7.5

5.2. Results for Research Questions

Question 1: To what extent are the 22 behaviors associated with synergistic supervision perceived to be practiced by the supervisors of midlevel student affairs administrators? Participants rated their supervisor regarding the perceived frequency of synergistic supervision behaviors using a 5-point Likert-type scale (see **Table 7**). The alpha coefficient for the SSS was 0.936.

Table 7. Synergistic supervision scale-descriptive statistics (N = 704).

Question	Mean	SD
My supervisor includes me in a significant way when making decisions that affect my area of responsibilities.	4.16	1.015
My supervisor works with me to gather the information needed to make decisions rather than simply providing me the information he/she feels is important.	3.96	1.049

Continued

My supervisor criticizes staff members in public. (R)	4.29	0.945
My supervisor makes certain that I am fully knowledgeable about the goals of the division and institution.	3.83	1.079
My supervisor willingly listens to whatever is on my mind, whether it is personal or professional.	4.23	1.013
My supervisor shows interest in promoting my professional or career advancement.	3.87	1.192
My supervisor is personally offended if I question the wisdom of his/her decisions. (R)	3.87	1.143
My supervisor shows that she/he cares about me as a person.	4.08	1.078
My supervisor speaks up for my unit within the institution.	4.09	1.031
My supervisor expects me to fit in with the accepted ways of doing things, in other words, "don't rock the boat". (R)	3.33	1.146
My supervisor has favorites on the staff. (R)	3.19	1.363
My supervisor breaks confidences. (R)	4.15	0.975
My supervisor takes negative evaluations of programs or staff and uses them to make improvements.	3.43	1.002
When faced with a conflict between external constituents (for example parent or donor) and staff members, my supervisor supports external constituents even if they are wrong. (R)	3.84	0.977
My supervisor is open and honest with me about my strengths and weaknesses.	3.73	1.058
If I'm not careful, my supervisor may allow things that aren't my fault to be blamed on me. (R)	4.20	1.022
My supervisor rewards teamwork.	3.50	1.160
When the system gets in the way of accomplishing our goals, my supervisor helps me to devise ways to overcome barriers.	3.46	1.143
My supervisor looks for me to make a mistake. (R)	4.51	0.857
My supervisor and I develop yearly professional development plans that address my weaknesses or blind spots.	3.13	1.341
When problem solving, my supervisor expects staff to present and advocate differing points of view.	3.52	1.097
In conflicts with staff members, my supervisor takes students' sides (even when they are wrong). (R)	4.05	0.986

Response options: 1 = never or almost never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often; 5 = always or almost always. (R) = Reversed items—these items were changed before computations.

The mean for each behavior was examined and a score of 4 or above suggested that the behavior was perceived to be practiced at a meaningful rate. All 22 behaviors received mean scores above 3.0 (sometimes), 17 out of 22 had mean scores above 3.5, and 9 out of 22 had mean scores above 4.0 (often). The overall mean score on the SSS was 84.39 (N = 704), which equates to an average behavior score of 3.84. The median was 87, and mode 97. This finding suggests most of the supervisors were perceived to practice synergistic supervision at considerable frequencies. The 22 behaviors can be divided into 14 positive behaviors

and 8 negative behaviors. Positive behaviors practiced most frequently included: supervisors listening to employees (mean = 4.23) and supervisors including their employees in the decision making process (mean = 4.16). Positive behaviors practiced least frequently included: developing yearly professional development plans (mean = 3.13) and using negative evaluations of programs and staff to make improvements (3.43). Negative behaviors practiced least frequently included: criticizing employees in public (reversed mean = 4.29) and looking for employees to make mistakes (reversed mean = 4.51). Negative behaviors practiced most frequently included: supervisors having favorites on staff (reversed mean = 3.19) and supervisors expecting employees to fit in with accepted norms (3.33).

Question 1A: To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors? The analysis consisted of sorting the respondents into four separate groups based on the length of time the participants had reported to their direct supervisor (see demographic results). The respondents in Group 3 reported the highest mean score, 85.54. Group 1 reported the second highest mean score, 85.09 followed by Group 4 with a mean score of 83.79. The lowest mean score was Group 2, which reported a mean score of 83.06.

Question 1B: To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the perceived levels of the 22 synergistic supervision behaviors? The respondents were sorted into four groups based on the gender make-up of the dyad and the mean scores were reviewed. Group 1-females to female (N = 273); Group 2-females to male (N = 201); Group 3-males to female (N = 132); and Group 4-males to males (N = 98). Mann-Whitney U tests comparing the scores on the SSS examined differences between genders and results indicated higher mean ranks for females but no statistical significance existed. Female supervisors received higher overall mean scores (84.75) on the SSS than male supervisors (83.91). Data also indicated that female administrators provided higher overall mean scores (85.04) for their supervisors than the male administrators provided (83.06) for their supervisors. Results also found that those relationships featuring a male reporting to another male had the lowest reported overall mean score on the SSS (82.15) and those relationships featuring a female reporting to another female had the highest overall mean score on the SSS (85.32).

Regarding the relationship between synergistic supervision and key performance indicators, participants responded to the CSES and the SRCS with the purpose to examine the relationship between synergistic supervision (independent variable) and core self-evaluation and supervisor-related commitment variables (both dependent variables).

Question 2: What is the relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and core self-evaluation? On the CSES, participants rated themselves regarding their composite personality traits of four core evaluations using a 5-point Likert-type scale (see **Table 8**). The alpha coefficient for the CSES was 0.830.

Table 8. Core self-evaluation scale-descriptive statistics (N = 704).

Question	Mean	SD
I am confident I get the success I deserve in life.	3.80	0.859
Sometimes I feel depressed. (R)	3.12	1.204
When I try, I generally succeed.	4.33	0.558
Sometimes when I fail I feel worthless. (R)	3.38	1.159
I complete tasks successfully.	4.38	0.544
Sometime, I do not feel in control of my work. (R)	2.77	1.153
Overall, I am satisfied with myself.	4.12	0.746
I am filled with doubts about my competence. (R)	3.85	1.010
I determine what will happen in my life.	3.91	0.807
I do not feel in control of the success in my career. (R)	3.80	0.996
I am capable of coping with most of my problems.	4.26	0.656
There are times when things look pretty bleak and hopeless to me. (R)	3.94	1.064

Response options: 1 = never or almost never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often; 5 = always or almost always. (R) = Reversed items - these items were changed before computations.

Question 3: What is the relationship between the perceived level synergistic supervision received by midlevel student affairs administrators and supervisor-related commitment? Participants responded to nine statements on the SRCS regarding their direct supervisor using a 7-point Likert-type scale (see **Table 9**). The alpha coefficient was 0.889.

Table 9. Supervisor related commitment scale-descriptive statistics (N = 704).

Question	Mean	SD
When someone criticizes my supervisor, it feels like a personal insult.	3.49	1.819
When I talk about my supervisor, I usually say "we" rather than "they".	4.33	1.786
My supervisor's successes are my successes.	4.51	1.707
When someone praises my supervisor, it feels like a personal compliment.	3.73	1.758
I feel a sense of "ownership" for my supervisor.	4.07	1.867
If the values of my supervisor were different, I would not be as attached to my supervisor.	4.66	1.731
My attachment to my supervisor is primarily based on the similarity of my values and those represented by my supervisor.	4.47	1.773
Since starting my job, my personal values and those of my supervisor have become more similar.	3.84	1.668
The reason I prefer my supervisor to others is because of what he or she stands for, that is, his or her values.	4.52	1.852

Response options: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = slightly disagree; 4 = neutral; 5 = slightly agree; 6 = agree; 7 = strongly agree.

As the data for the scores on the inventories were negatively skewed; Spearman Rho correlation coefficients were used to analyze the data. The analysis

found a positive correlation ($r = 0.314$, $p < 0.01$) between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation. This correlation supports the idea that individuals who perceived their supervisor to practice synergistic supervision were also more likely to score higher on the core self-evaluation scale. The effect size is considered medium or typical [34]. Also, a statistically significant relationship existed between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment. The analysis found a positive correlation ($r = 0.632$, $p < 0.01$) between the two variables. The effect size is considered large or larger than typical [34]. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.399$) indicates that these variables share almost 40% of variance with each other. The results suggest that individuals who perceived their supervisor to practice synergistic supervision were also more likely to score higher on the supervisor-related commitment scale. See **Table 10** and **Table 11**.

Table 10. Statistically significant associations for research Questions 2 and 3.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	(<i>r</i>)	(<i>p</i>)	Effect Size
Synergistic Supervision	Core-Self Evaluation	0.314	<0.01	Medium
Synergistic Supervision	Supervisor Related Commitment	0.632	<0.01	Large

Table 11. Measures of central tendency for the three scales used in the study.

Scale	Mean	Median	Mode	High	Low
Synergistic Supervision Scale	84.39	87	97	30	110
Core Self-Evaluation Scale	45.65	45	45	19	60
Supervisor-Related Commitment Scale	37.61	39	39	9	63

To address the sub questions under Question 2 and 3, the lead researcher used the groupings established for Question 1. Specifically for 2A and 2B, the Spearman Rho correlation coefficients of the mean scores on the SSS and CSES were used. A p value of <0.05 suggested a statistically significant relationship existed between the variables.

Question 2A) To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation? Positive correlations between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation were indicated in all groups (see **Table 12**).

Table 12. Effect sizes (strength of the relationship) of the four timespan groups related to the correlation between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation.

Length of Supervisory Relationship	(<i>r</i>)	(<i>p</i>)	Effect Size
Under 1.5 years	0.261	<0.01	Medium
1.5 - 3.4 years	0.250	<0.01	Medium
3.5 - 7.4 years	0.439	<0.01	Large
Over 7.5 years	0.395	<0.01	Medium to Large

Question 2B) To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and core self-evaluation? The analysis indicated positive correlations between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation in all groups (see **Table 13**).

Table 13. Effect sizes (strength of the relationship) of the four gender-based dyad groups related to the correlation between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation.

Gender Make-up of the Dyad	(<i>r</i>)	(<i>p</i>)	Effect Size
Female Employee with Female Supervisor	0.288	<0.01	Medium
Female Employee with Male Supervisor	0.297	<0.01	Medium
Male Employee with Female Supervisor	0.356	<0.01	Medium
Male Employee with Male Supervisor	0.469	<0.01	Large

As before, the lead researcher used the groupings established for Question 1 to examine the Questions 3A and 3B. The Spearman Rho correlation coefficients of the mean scores on the SSS and SRCS were used. A *p* value of <0.05 suggested a statistically significant relationship existed between the variables.

3A) To what extent is the length of the supervisory relationship associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment? The analysis indicated large positive correlations between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment in all groups (see **Table 14**).

Table 14. Effect sizes (strength of the relationship) of the four timespan groups related to the correlation between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment.

Length of Supervisory Relationship	(<i>r</i>)	(<i>p</i>)	Effect Size
Under 1.5 years	0.607	<0.01	Large
1.5 - 3.4 years	0.594	<0.01	Large
3.5 - 7.4 years	0.723	<0.01	Very Large
Over 7.5 years	0.639	<0.01	Large

Question 3B) To what extent is the gender make-up of the supervisory dyad associated with the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment? The analysis indicated large positive correlations between the perceived level of synergistic supervision received and supervisor-related commitment (see **Table 15**).

Table 15. Effect sizes (strength of the relationship) of the four gender-based dyad groups related to the correlation between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment.

Gender Make-up of the Dyad	(<i>r</i>)	(<i>p</i>)	Effect Size
Female Employee with Female Supervisor	0.620	<0.01	Large
Female Employee with Male Supervisor	0.622	<0.01	Large
Male Employee with Female Supervisor	0.650	<0.01	Large
Male Employee with Male Supervisor	0.627	<0.01	Large

In summary, the study found that most of the synergistic supervisory behaviors were perceived to be practiced at high frequencies. The overall mean score on the synergistic supervision scale for all 704 participants was 84.39. The supervisory relationships between 3.5 - 7.4 years in length reported the highest overall mean scores (85.54) on the synergistic supervision scale. Additionally, the supervisory relationships consisting of female supervisees and female supervisors reported the highest overall mean scores (85.32) on the synergistic supervision scale.

In addition, the study found that there was a statistically significant relationship between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation. The length of the supervisory relationship was found to influence the relationship between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation such that a relationship was strongest after the employee and supervisor had been together for at least 3.5 years. The gender make-up of the supervisory dyad was found to influence the relationship between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation such that a relationship was stronger for male employees than female employees.

The study also found a statistically significant relationship between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment. The length of the supervisory relationship was found to influence the relationship between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment such that a relationship was strongest after the employee and supervisor had been together for at least 3.5 years. The gender make-up of the supervisory dyad was found to influence the relationship between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment such that a relationship was stronger for male employees than female employees.

6. Discussion

6.1. Key Findings

There are some clear similarities between this study and the original study on the Synergistic Supervision Scale [2] regarding the perceived frequency of behaviors. The four most-frequently perceived behaviors in the original study were the top four most-frequently perceived behaviors in the current study. Likewise, three of the five least frequently perceived behaviors in the original study were among the bottom five in the current study. These similarities support the original work by Saunders and colleagues [2] and provide additional validity for the Synergistic Supervision Scale. The participants surveyed believe they receive supervision that is consistent with the behaviors associated with synergistic supervision. This finding confirms what the original study [2] and other studies [6] [7] [11] found to be true about the perceived levels of synergistic supervision behaviors received.

In addition, the findings of this study support the results of another study [8] that found that synergistic supervision is not exclusive to one gender and the approach can be employed by both female and male supervisors and used with female and male supervisees. Some differences between genders were indicated

in the current study; female participants typically scored their supervisors higher on the SSS and female supervisors received higher overall mean scores on the SSS. The rationale for these outcomes might be based on that males are often identified as goal-oriented, competitive, and focused on outcomes, while females are often identified as team-oriented, nurturing, and focused on relationships. As synergistic supervision is focused on developing relationships, participants may have rated females as displaying the synergistic behaviors simply based on these stereotypical beliefs about gender. This perception may account for some of the difference in scores.

The findings of this study support earlier work [16] [35] regarding the length of the relationship and the developmental needs of midlevel professionals. It is clear from the findings in this study that midlevel administrators benefit from the synergistic approach, but it is unknown if they appreciate or desire such an approach. The findings of the current study might also support the beliefs of other researchers [1] who suggested that supervision is an essential management function that has a significant impact on an organization and the individuals in the organization.

Regarding synergistic supervision and indicators of performance, the results indicate a statistically significant relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation. The increase in core self-evaluation is important for supervision practices as it should lead to improved job satisfaction, employee engagement, and job performance. The results also support the notion that the longer the supervision relationship the stronger the relationship between the two variables to some extent as it revealed that the strongest correlation was for those supervisory dyads that had existed between 3.5 and 7.4 years. Those relationships over 7.5 years saw a small decline in the strength of the correlation. This decline could be due to the smaller N in this group.

Regarding gender, the results indicated that the largest relationship between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation was for dyads consisting of two males and the smallest relationship was for those consisting of two females. The stronger relationships were found for those featuring at least one male employee, either as supervisor or supervisee. These findings support some prior research [36] [37] that suggested there are substantial differences between male and females within the supervisory environment. However, these findings disagree with the work of others [8] [38] that found little to no difference between gender groups in supervisory relationships. The differences between males and females could be attributed beliefs about self-confidence that exist for men and women.

As previously addressed, the increase in supervisor-related commitment is beneficial for employees as well as institutions as it should lead to longevity with the organization, improved attendance, and enhanced job performance [39] [40]. This finding of a positive relationship between the perceived level of synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment supports those in other research [8] regarding the correlation between organizational commitment and synergistic supervision. The current findings also support the outcomes in earli-

er research [7] regarding the role that supervisors can play in helping employees recognize the supportiveness of the organization. Similar to the findings of the relationship between synergistic supervision and core self-evaluation, the current study suggest that of length of the supervisory relationship impacts the correlation between synergistic supervision and supervisor-related commitment. The results indicated the strong correlations between the variables for all for time-span groups, but the largest effect was for those supervisory dyads that had existed between 3.5 and 7.4 years. There was no evidence that the relationship between the variables grew with time.

6.2. Limitations and Delimitations

The Synergistic Supervision Scale measures perceptions not necessarily reality [2] and the perceptions may not be accurate. Ultimately, we cannot assume that high levels of synergistic supervision will lead to increased performance in all cases. Another limitation might be that those who had positive relationships with their supervisor were more likely to participate. A delimitation involves the demographic questions regarding gender. The participants should have been asked about gender identity for themselves and their supervisor. Another delimitation was the elimination of responses from two participants who identified as transgendered. A group this size was considered too small to produce meaningful results.

6.3. Recommendations for Future Research

The impact of synergistic supervision on staff members and the organization as a whole warrants further investigation. A qualitative approach to understanding the impact of synergistic supervision and what staff members expect and desire from their supervisors would add to the literature. A supervisor may demonstrate the synergistic supervision behaviors, but these behaviors may not be appreciated or desired by employee. It could have been beneficial to collect that information to be able to connect the desires of employees with the positive outcomes related to performance. In addition, a study could examine annual staff evaluations or appraisals and levels of perceived synergistic supervision received. Researchers could examine the connection between supervision received and supervision given. It would be interesting to investigate whether there is any consistency between what midlevel administrators receive and the supervision they provide [7]. In essence, do administrators who report receiving synergistic supervision provide synergistic supervision?

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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