

Student experiences and reflections on rotations with co-supervision



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Introduction

In genetic counseling graduate education, a co-supervision rotation is two or more supervisors acting in unison to facilitate a rotation for a single student. Two separate studies were conducted to evaluate the effects of co-supervision on genetic counseling graduate students and those of their supervisors. This abstract will review the student perception of co-supervision for a genetic counseling rotation.

Methods

An anonymous survey was created which included 9 multiple-choice and 1 open-ended question. A student survey link was sent to program directors, which was then distributed to students from 2021-2024 graduate classes who had at least one co-supervision rotation at institutions across the country.

Results

Twenty-eight responses were collected from the student focused survey. There was a 100% response rate for all questions. Data revealed that 79% of students either preferred co-supervision or had no preference regarding number of supervisors. 75% of respondents indicated they learned more in co-supervision led rotations. All respondents noted at least one benefit from co-supervision, with 96% of respondents highlighting they benefited most from observing multiple counseling styles and techniques during one rotation. Almost half of respondents (47%) noted a higher level of overall mentorship and increased flexibility in rotation planning. When questioned about potential negative impacts of co-supervision, 75% of student respondents stated that they received inconsistent or discrepant feedback from their supervisory group. Half of students reported that receiving discrepant feedback resulted in increased stress or anxiety. Additionally, 53% of students reported this inconsistency led to confused expectations during their rotation. A minority of respondents (32%) believed their evaluations were overly dependent on the opinions of a singular supervisor.

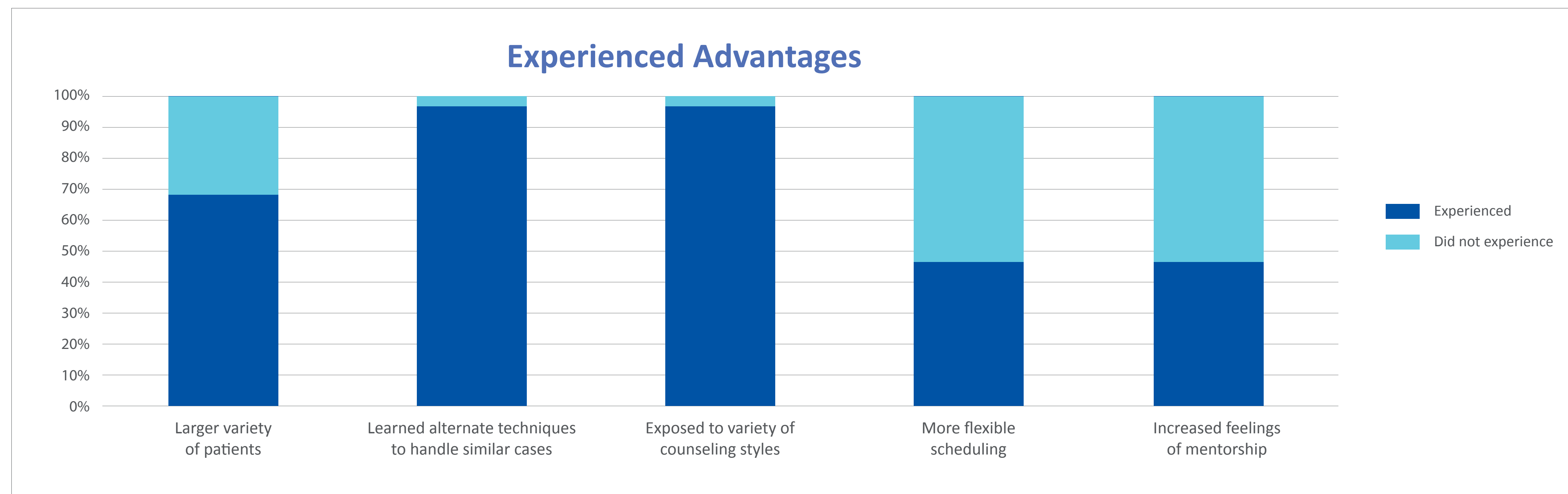


Figure 1. Student-experienced advantages of co-supervision.

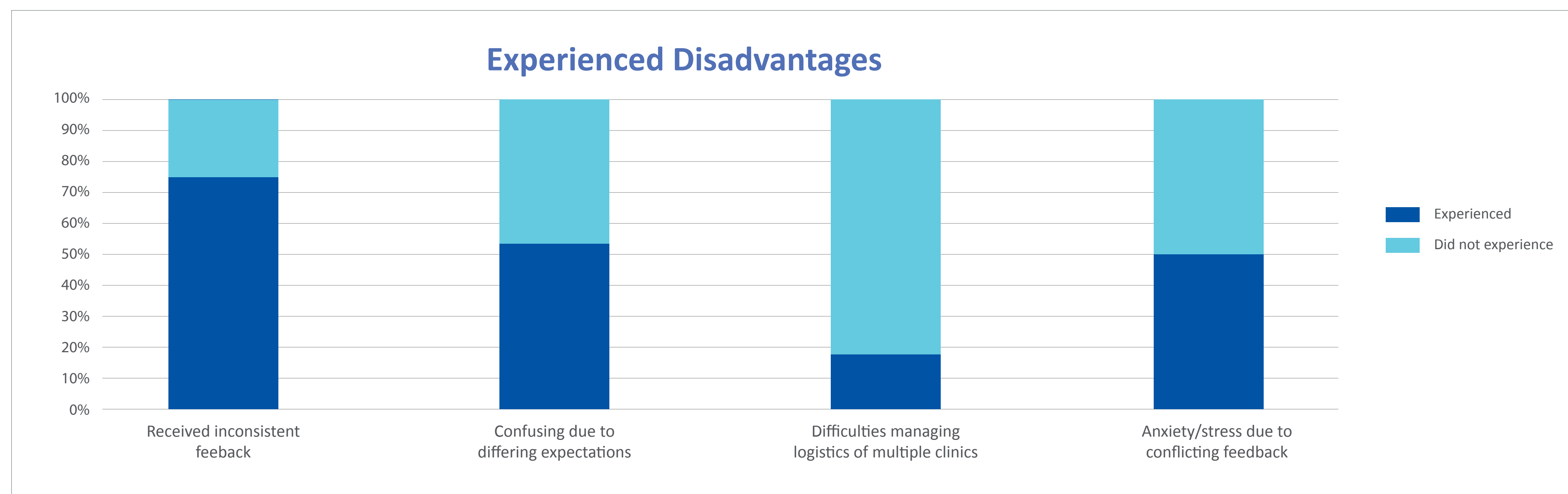


Figure 2. Student-experienced disadvantages of co-supervision.

Conclusions

Many advantages of co-supervision were noted, and manifested most often when clear communication and organization was present. Three themes emerged regarding the impact of co-supervision on student’s experiences: exposure, organization, and equity.

Increased exposure to various supervisors led to increased education on counseling techniques. One student commented that, “I received great feedback and learned different counseling styles, which I found beneficial.” Another noted, “I believe working with a single supervisor allows you to adapt to their preferences...having more than one supervisor allows you to receive feedback from multiple sources and grow.”

Responses included suggestions that co-supervision rotations should be organized through a primary supervisor to facilitate more cohesive communication. Students who reported negative experiences often attributed this to the lack of clarity on the roles of each supervisor and the way in which feedback and evaluations were being handled. While having the perspective of multiple supervisors was seen as advantageous, students felt that the feedback of each supervisor was not always weighed equally during evaluations. “I think there can be a real benefit to working with multiple supervisors...that being said, it does depend on a lot of the quality and cohesiveness of the supervisors.” Another student commented: “I did not feel like my progress was being tracked clearly...my growth was not being seen.”

Co-supervision can be a beneficial method for conducting student rotations, most notably due to exposure to multiple genetic counseling styles. However, cohesion between supervisors and adequate structure were seen as vital to ensure an effective experience for the student. An ideal supervisory group will provide the student with clear communication and delineation of responsibilities amongst the group, along with consistent goals established with the student and balanced feedback by all supervisors. Thoughtful and thorough planning can lead to a student receiving the maximum benefits of co-supervision while minimizing risk for disadvantages.