



Genetic Counseling Students' Perceptions: Does Supervisory Training Affect Students' Perceived Competence of their Supervisors?

Sara Malka Cohen¹; Ashley Mills, MS, CGC¹; Nancy Frye, PhD¹
1 Long Island University, Post

ABSTRACT

Clinical supervision of genetic counseling students is one of the integral methods for teaching, training and ensuring competent entry-level genetic counselors. Genetic counselors need to be effective in their role because of the large impact clinical supervisors play in their students' training. However, qualified genetic counselors are not guaranteed to be competent clinical supervisors due to the different skill set required for both counseling and supervision. Therefore, supervisor training enables genetic counselors to adapt to the skills needed for successful supervision.

There is a strong positive correlation between supervision training and supervisors' perceived competence in their supervision skills. However, knowing what affects students' perceptions of their genetic counseling supervisors is essential to understand the student-supervisor relationship and thus the potential for successful learning, as students' perceptions affect motivation and behavior.

This study, which is the first to focus on student perspectives of clinical supervision, explores the relationship between prior student knowledge of supervision training and perceived competence in supervisory skills. Data was collected by survey and analyzed using an independent t-test of the modified Perceived Perioperative Competence Scale (Cronbach's alpha=0.926). Students who knew their supervisor had training had a higher level of perceived competence ($M = 83.69$, $SD = 8.86$) than students whose supervisors did not have training ($M = 80.34$, $SD = 10.82$), $p = 0.047$. This exploration of the significance of supervision training is another step in the process of creating, and perhaps even mandating, supervision training in the field of genetic counseling. This in turn can improve the chance of an increasingly effective supervisor-student relationship and the creation of competent novice genetic counselors.

BACKGROUND

Clinical supervision of genetic counseling students is one of the integral methods for teaching and ensuring genetic counseling students become competent in the practiced-based competencies outlined by the Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling. Genetic counselors need to be effective supervisors because of the large impact clinical supervisors play in their students' training.

Supervisor training may be a good method for aiding genetic counselors in learning the skills needed for successful supervision and has been shown to have a strong positive correlation with supervisors' perceived competence and confidence in their supervision skills. However, having competent supervisors is not enough to create positive and effective supervisor-student relationships. Students also need to feel confident in their supervisor's supervisory skills (Kelly, 2007). Because supervision training has been shown to have a positive effect on supervisor self-confidence, this study will explore the relationship between students' knowledge of whether the genetic counselor had supervisory training and their perceived competence in their supervisor's skills.

OBJECTIVES

- Explore the relationship between students' knowledge of whether the genetic counselor had supervisory training and students' perceived competence in their supervisor's skills.
- Explore the relationship between students' knowledge of years of experience their supervisor had and students' perceived competence in their supervisor's skills

METHODS

First and second year genetic counseling graduate students completed an online survey. Participants were randomly assigned one of four scenarios in which genetic counseling supervisors had differing years of clinical experience (one or five years) and either had or had not participated in supervisor training. Participants were asked to rate 22 statements regarding the likelihood of their supervisor engaging in certain behaviors as well as participant preference for a particular supervisor. Finally, participants were asked to rate, in order of importance, the factors influencing their perceptions of current or future supervisors and their genetic counseling graduate programs. Demographic information was collected. A modified version of the Perceived Perioperative Competence Scale (PPCS) was used to assess participants' perceived competence in their assigned supervisors. The modified PPCS was analyzed via an independent t-test, while the remaining data was analyzed via frequencies and percentages.

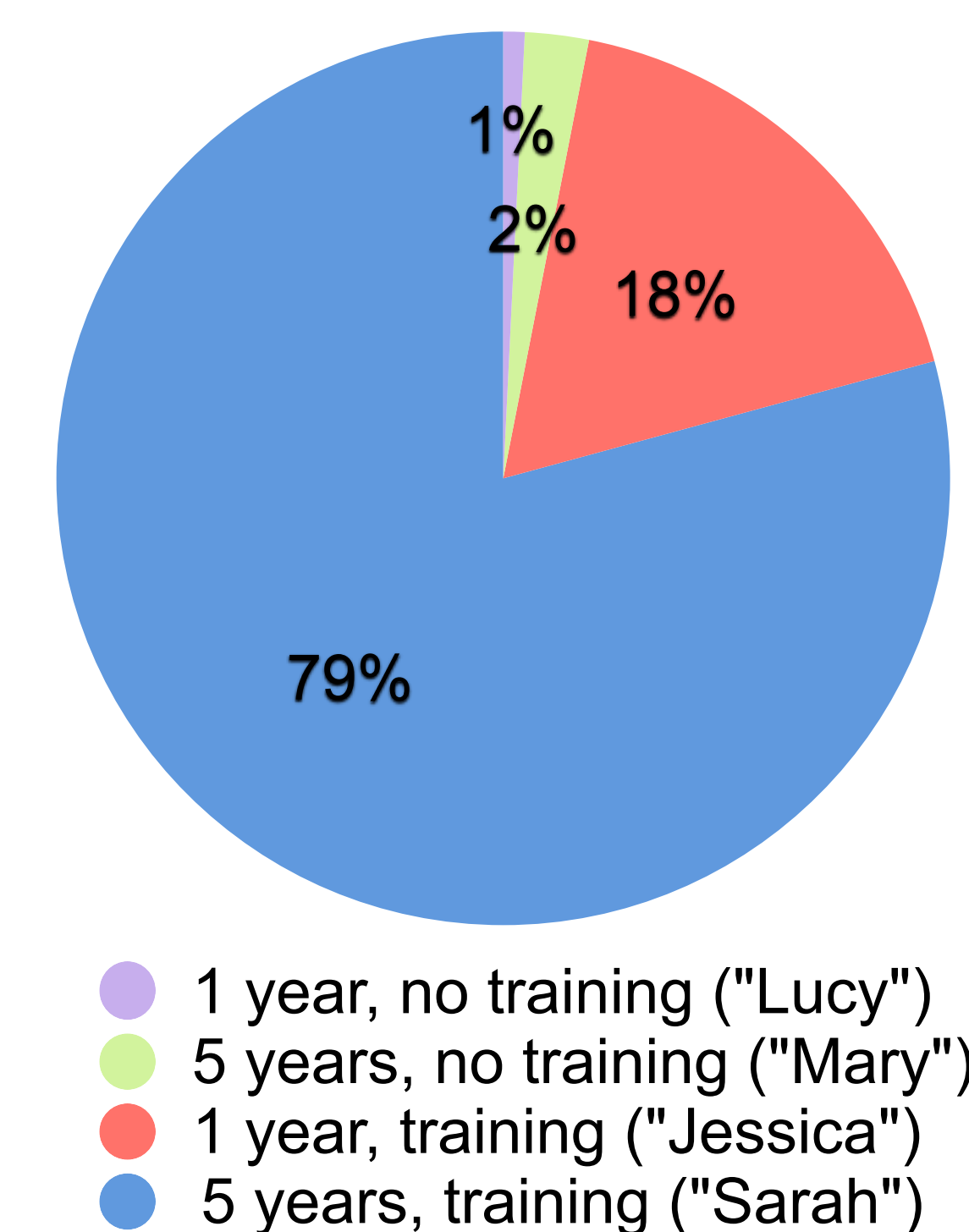
RESULTS

Total Number of Participants	127 (100%)
Gender	
Female	120 (94.5%)
Male	7 (5.5%)
Region of Genetic Counseling Graduate Program	
Northeast (MA, MD, NY, PA)	42 (33.1%)
Central (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI)	42 (33.1%)
Southern (AL, AR, GA, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA)	33 (26.0%)
Western (CA, CO, UT)	10 (7.9%)
Student Year in Graduate Program	
First year	47 (37.0%)
Second year	80 (63.0%)
Race/Ethnicity	
Asian	11 (8.7%)
Black/African American	2 (1.6%)
Hispanic/Latino	2 (1.6%)
White/Caucasian	112 (88.2%)
Age	
Minimum-Maximum	22-48
Mean	25.12

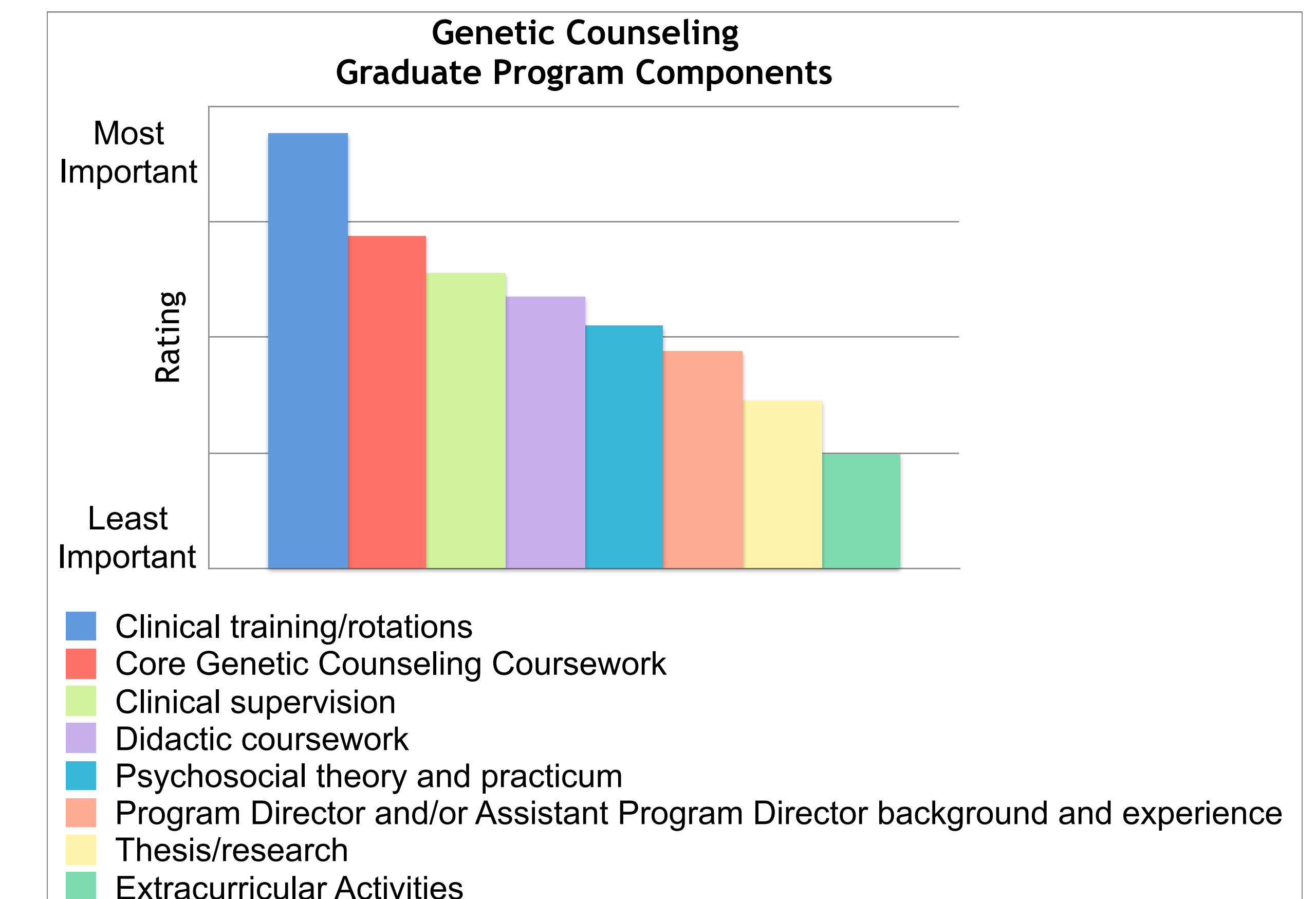
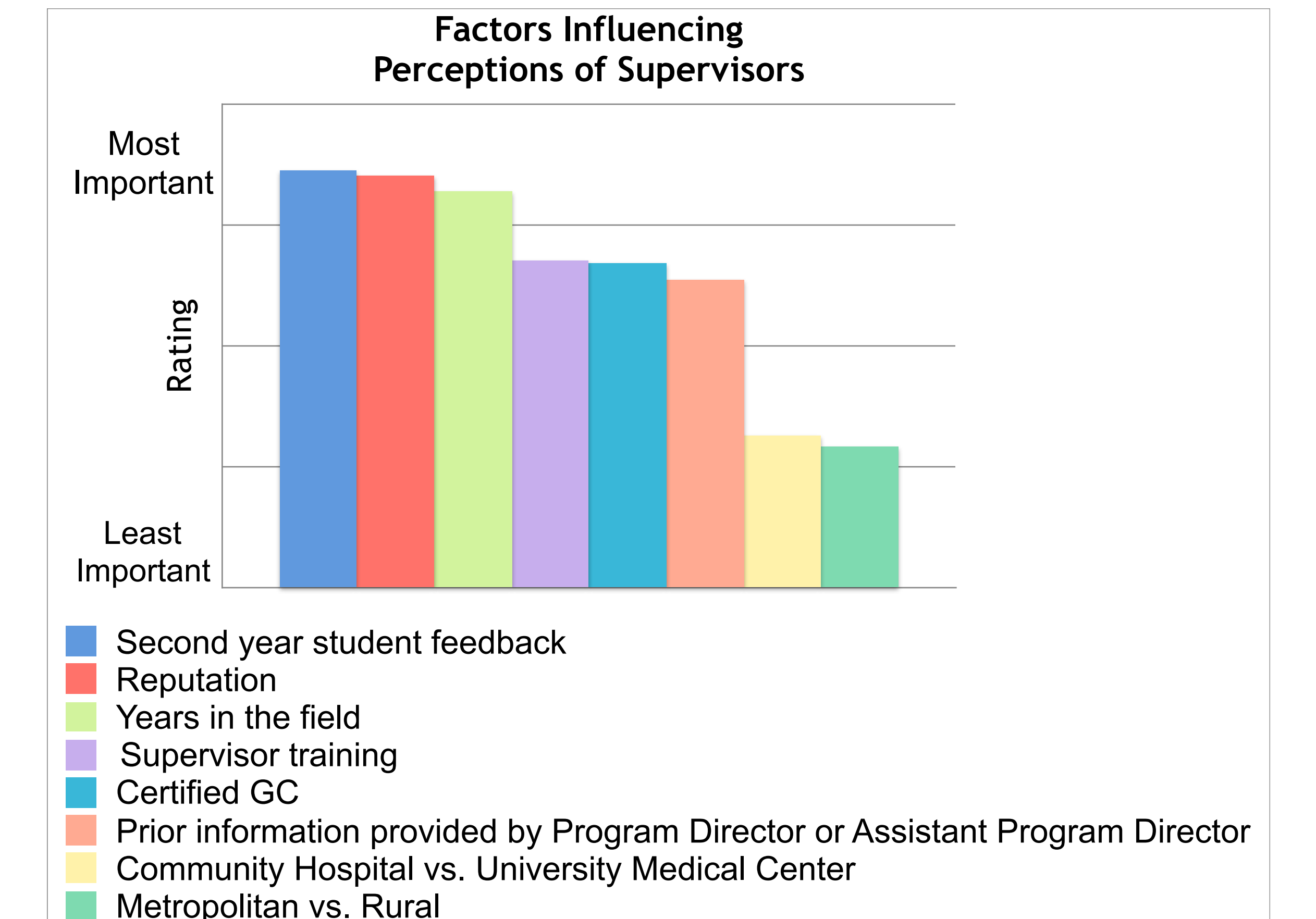
PPCS Score

- Higher perceived competence was experienced by students whose supervisors had training ($M = 83.69$, $SD = 8.86$) versus supervisors without training ($M = 80.34$, $SD = 10.82$), ($p = 0.047$).
- Difference in perceived competence between first and second years was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).
- Perceived competence was not affected by years of clinical genetic counseling experience ($p = 0.209$).

Preferred Genetic Counselor



RESULTS



CONCLUSIONS

This study supported the hypothesis that higher perceived competence was experienced by students whose supervisors had training versus supervisors without training. The results of this study are highly relevant to the exploration and improvement of genetic counseling clinical supervisors. Effective genetic counseling supervisors are essential for students to become competent in the PBCs. Additionally, positive supervisor-student relationships are vital. One way to create positive relationships with effective supervisors would be to require supervisor training. Unlike other factors that influence perceptions of supervisors, the presence or absence of supervisor training can be easily remedied. Further research in this area is needed before supervisor training can be mandated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you Ashley Mills for all your support and guidance during this process. Thank you Dr. Frye for your statistical guidance.