

SUPERVISION IN SOCIAL WORK

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ABSTRACT: *Supervision in Social Work has an important and priority role in solving problems, which may arise in complex cases, to ensure the quality and strengthen the skills of the social worker. Supervision by professionals is very important if productive social assistance is desired. Effective supervision helps both front-line social workers and case managers to work to the standards imposed by the profession.*

Keywords: *supervision; social work; profession;*

1. Introduction

"Supervision is the cornerstone of good social work practice and should be seen as functioning effectively at all levels of the organization. [1] (Laming, 2003, 12).

The word "*supervision*" consists of the juxtaposition of two words that come from Latin, namely: "*super*" which is translated as "above", "on", "over", and the word "*videre*" which is translated as "see" Or "to look". These two words were joined to compose the term supervision, which designates the activity of a specialist trained in the field in the efficient organization of work, especially for employees with minimal training or recent graduates in the social fields.

Over time, the term "supervision" has had several meanings such as for example a person from outside the organization but with training in the supervised issue but also the manager of a team. The literature indicates some confusion in the definition of the term "supervision". Kadushin in Supervision in Social Work, for example, talks about three different models of supervision:

- educational supervision, for the supervised persons to increase their professional competence;
- methodological supervision, customer-oriented and focused on how to manage a case;
- administrative supervision, from

managers to team members. [2]

Most specialists in the field have described in the literature "supervision" as an activity of transferring knowledge, skills, and abilities from the supervisor who is a specialist with much practice to a professional with less practice. The whole supervision process includes both theoretical knowledge and practical skills related to the beneficiary and the social protection system.

Supervision is provided to address and resolve a wide variety of issues. It can be offered to beginners or recent graduates of social services but also to professional social workers who want and plan to learn new practices and approaches in the field in which they work.

"There are numerous definitions of supervision. For the purposes of these supervision standards, professional supervision is defined as the relationship between supervisor and supervisee in which the responsibility and accountability for the development of competence, demeanor, and ethical practice take place. The supervisor is responsible for providing direction to the supervisee, who applies social work theory, standardized knowledge, skills, competency, and applicable ethical content in the practice setting. The supervisor and the supervisee both share responsibility for carrying out their role in this collaborative process." [3]

2. Supervision as a support process

Supervision consists in discussing the influence that the work of the social worker can have on personal life but also on the analysis of how he can solve certain resolutions. Supervision is very important for the professional satisfaction of social workers, for their professional progress but also for monitoring, the process of leading institutions that provide social services.

The connection or effective process of supervision supports practicing social workers to evolve both professionally and personally, supervision supporting the way in which the success of social workers is achieved but also the extension of practical processes and the transmission of current information.

In the specialized literature in the field of supervision, four important functions of the supervision process have been described, namely the administrative function, the educational function, the support function, and the mediation function.

- a. The administrative function may be associated with the direction or management of social services. It consists in the implementation of administrative methods that support social workers to streamline the social services provided. Administrative supervision focuses on the rules and protocols of social services and focuses on the training of supervised social workers in both office and field work. This function also has some objectives that it pursues during the supervision process. These objectives relate to ensuring the professional skills of employees, ensuring knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of employees, establishing an adequate amount of work tasks for each employee, ensuring the productive and useful organization of employee time and organizing as often as possible, or whenever the process of assessing the professional performance of supervised social workers is needed.
- b. The educational or training function of supervision allows professional social workers to meditate on their successes for development and continuing education. This determines the supervisor to support the social worker to acquire current knowledge about the ways of evaluating the cases or about the types of innovative cases but also for ascertaining some deontological problems. The objectives pursued by the educational function are extending the training of social workers from a professional point of view, appreciating the knowledge and skills, satisfying the need for continuous training of social workers, knowing the results received after supervision by supervised social workers.
- c. The support or support function aims to reduce the stress of the social worker at work to increase their performance and success. This type of supervision outlines a protective, safe, and confident work environment in which supervised people can develop both professionally and personally. In this position - the supervisor - becomes a resource for supervised social workers. The objectives of this function are to help social workers to produce a safe climate in the social service where they work, to specify innovative procedures and methods of intervention, to think about obstacles in relationships with colleagues or superiors/subordinates and to clarify misunderstandings.
- d. The mediation function consists in the position of the mediator supervisor between the supervised persons such as the social worker and various specialists from other institutions. This function is often limited to informing and presenting the heads of the institutions of the problems expressed by the supervised ones, especially when they

find that they have few possibilities to solve the problems of their clients.

The researcher in the field of social work supervision, Kadushin, mentions in his works three types of supervision starting from the three previously mentioned functions: educational, administrative, and supportive or supportive supervision. They also point out that in the work of the social worker the supervision process has set short- and long-term objectives, different depending on the type of supervision. [4]

Coulshed V. (1990) states that supervision goes through the following stages:

1. Description. This is the stage in which what happened is analyzed. The social worker describes each situation, taking care that the supervisor intervenes as little as possible.

2. Clarification. This stage focuses on "What does this mean?"; it tries to understand the situation as it is perceived by the supervisor.

3. Analysis. At this stage, the social worker is helped to identify those aspects that represent the problem, by providing answers to questions such as: "What happened?", "What did not happen?" "Why?"; "What can we learn from this?" and so on

4. Implementation. The stage in which the ground is prepared for the next step: "What are we doing now?" / "What are we going to do now?" / "What is the next step?".

The golden rule of supervision, according to Coulshed V., is not to obstruct and inhibit the discussion during the supervision session. Empathetic listening, summarizing at the beginning of the session, broadening the discussion in the middle phase and concluding the session with summarizing and establishing the next steps to be taken leads to an optimal session. [5]

The principles of supervision were first stated by the researcher in the field O'Donoghue K. (professor at Massey

University, New Zealand), and taken over and adapted in Romania by Cojocaru Șt. in 2005. These principles primarily sublimate the need for supervision regardless of seniority, experience or level of training. These principles also state that supervisory work must be encouraged by social service providers and that supervision is aimed at negotiating and providing solutions to conflict resolution.

Supervisors have tried to group the types of supervision according to several characteristics resulting in three types of supervision: depending on the supervisor's relationship with the organization, depending on the form of organization and in terms of the supervised reality. [6]

From the category of the supervisor's relationship with the organization we have internal or continuous supervision and external or provisional supervision. The category related to the form of organization includes individual supervision and group supervision. Individual supervision refers to the supervision of the social worker and his practical activity. Group supervision is carried out following a prior planning, an activity that has as objectives the evaluation of problematic situations and the finding of solutions or the mediation and resolution of conflicts.

The last category concerns appreciative or recognition-focused supervision and classical or problem-centered supervision. In the case of classical supervision, the supervisor's activity focuses on identifying solutions to the problems faced by the supervised social worker, while appreciative supervision focuses on highlighting the qualities held by the supervised social worker to make him more confident in his strengths. own and find the most advantageous solutions to the problems they face.

In the practice of supervision, the forms of the supervision process can also be combined because this can present some advantages but also some disadvantages. If we refer to group supervision, we can say

that some advantages would be those related to the saving of time and money but also the existence of a diverse and complex typology of problems due to the different experiences lived by social workers. This type of supervision can also have disadvantages and here we can mention the lack of confidentiality regarding the issues presented by the social assistance participants but also issues that may be related to the group characteristics.

The conclusion of the supervision, which also includes its results, is an integral part of the professional development process of the supervised social workers. The last part of the supervision should contain discussions about the problems that the supervised social worker may face in the future but also ways to identify the resources that he can use to solve these problems,

The evaluation of the supervision process has several objectives that must be followed very carefully because they refer to the improvement of the social services provided by the social workers to the assisted, beneficiaries of these services and the maintenance of the deontological principles in force. Supervisors need to build the most effective supervisory assessment tool.

3. The supervisor - the hero behind the professionals

The task of the supervisor is to effectively organize and control the activity within the institutions where the professionals in the field of social sciences work. The job of a supervisor is a difficult job, but it offers a lot of satisfaction to those people who are prepared and trained for this mission.

"A supervisor is obliged to deal with problem situations. He must be concerned with getting the best results from employees, react quickly when things go wrong and be able to stay in control. [7]

Professional supervisors must ensure that they are prepared for the supervision activity and that they have the necessary skills and knowledge, so that the supervised person is supported to solve their problems but also to develop as a result of the supervision process.

During the meeting, which took place in Romania in the year of the European Association of National Associations of Supervisors, the minimum standards for the training process necessary for those who want to become supervisors were established.

The minimum standards and qualifications that a supervisor must possess in order to be able to supervise the work of social workers are, first of all, to have a bachelor's degree in Social Work, issued by an accredited institution, to have completed specific postgraduate courses in supervision, to have seniority in the post in accordance with the rules in force, have the necessary experience in the practice of social assistance and not have sanctions for violating the deontological principles of social work.

A good supervision requires first of all the knowledge of the principles of supervision but also the possibility to demonstrate the practical experiences that he has. Supervisors must also know elements of an administrative and organizational nature related to the social institution in which the supervised social worker works.

In Romania at present on the issue of supervision, the Association of Romanian Supervisors occupies the promotion of supervision in Romania both as a discipline and as a professional occupation. The researcher, Muntean A. (2007), says that the first initiative in the process of training the supervisor is the examination and reflection on professional and personal experience. This experience will influence the style of supervision, in the second stage of professional development of the supervisor there is a need for training and direct experience of supervision, which will lead to the structuring of its own philosophy. Therefore, the author argues that the

evolution and generalization of the practice of supervision have determined training requirements, specialization of the supervisor; so, the basic requirement has become that a good social worker, psychologist, psychotherapist or a professional in a certain field cannot become a supervisor without special training in supervision. [8]

"The supervisory relationship is built on trust, confidentiality, support, and empathic experiences. Other qualities inherent in the supervisory relationship include constructive feedback, safety, respect, and self-care" [3].

The supervisor has the obligation to inform the supervised persons about the confidentiality of the information before starting the supervision process and that they will be disclosed only if the legislation in force requires it or if the help of other

specialists in close fields is needed.

In the supervision process, the activity of the supervisor is a complex one and this is done following several roles. Researchers in the field of supervision have identified several roles performed by the supervisor during the supervision process such as: the role of representative, the role of member, the role of specialist, the role of organizer, the role of support, the role of trainer, the role of internal manager, the role of evaluator and the role of transversal manager.

Due to the multitude of roles that a supervisor can have in the supervision process, it is necessary for him to have a consistent training in the supervised field, adequate professional qualities but also a well-defined personality and a vast practical experience.

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