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Reflective supervision and the strategic integrative model in social work supervision

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Abstract. Supervision in the clinical field, including social work, represents a transformative process aimed at enhancing the supervisee's personal and professional development through the acquisition of essential competencies and skills. As a cornerstone of lifelong learning, supervision facilitates continuous growth and adaptation within the professional practice. Literature on clinical supervision identifies two primary categories of models: first-generation models, rooted in psychotherapeutic traditions, and second-generation models, which build upon and expand these foundations. This study introduces a model of supervision tailored to social work, derived from the integrative supervision framework. Central to this model is the supervisee's learning process, which is supported by three key components: the supervision framework, learning factors, and a reflective process involving both supervisor and supervisee in the context of case discussions. The supervisory relationship functions as the cohesive element that binds the model's components. The practical applicability of this integrative supervision model has been validated within the context of an integrative psychotherapy training program, where social workers were effectively trained and supervised. This model highlights the potential for enhanced learning outcomes and professional competency development in social work supervision.

Keywords. clinical supervision, social work, reflexive supervision, supervision models, professional development

Introduction

Supervision has been described as the “cornerstone” of effective social work practice (Laming, 2009). Reflective supervision, in particular, enhances the experiences of social workers by fostering critical thinking and self-awareness. Social workers play a vital role in supporting vulnerable populations, and reflective supervision contributes to improved outcomes for both the social workers' well-being and the service users they support (Morlen et al., 2002). Despite its recognized importance, reflective supervision is often absent in practice, a paradox highlighted by Ravalier (2019).

In the UK, reflective supervision has been incorporated into the professional standards for social workers. It is defined as “protected time with the manager” to discuss and evaluate

job responsibilities and their impact on the social worker (Social Work England, 2020). This practice aims to mitigate stress and reduce the risk of burnout.

Partridge (2010) conceptualized reflective supervision as a transformative process grounded in a reflective cycle that facilitates change and mirrors participatory research methods. While supervision in social work has gained prominence, there remains a need to identify or develop robust supervision models tailored specifically to social work practice. A supervision model serves as a theoretical and methodological framework for effective supervision. In related fields such as psychotherapy and counseling psychology, supervision models are classified into first- and second-generation models. Borrowing and adapting these frameworks can enhance the development of supervision practices in social work.

Models of supervision in first generation therapeutic practice include:

- Therapy-centered supervision (Falender & Shafranske, 2007; Watkins, 2016) oriented towards learning and practicing a specific form of psychotherapy. Interest is placed on identifying common, transtheoretical factors in supervision and developing models of integrative supervision (e.g. Tripartite Integrative Learning Based Model, Watkins jr.).

- Developmental supervision based on the definition and description of competences for professional practice. This includes:

- Stoltenberg's (1987a, 1987b) developmental model of supervision, which cites three developmental levels of therapists during supervision. Thus, Level 1 characterizes the novice supervised therapist as motivated and resourceful to overcome the early anxiety, which he or she faces. Level 2 characterizes the stage in which the supervised therapist begins to focus more and more on the client, on the client's affective and cognitive world, while at the same time acquiring increasing autonomy. Level 3 characterizes the stage in which the supervised therapist, even if he/she remains focused on the client, manages to reflect more and more on the therapeutic process, and has a great sense of autonomy, with a high self-esteem.

- The model of Loganbill, C., Hardy, E., & Delworth, U. (1982), is inspired by developmental psychology, based on four assumptions: the training experience is built on skill formation; the therapist develops in levels and sometimes the processes he goes through become painful, but it is important that he experiences as much as possible. The developmental levels of the therapist have different learning tasks and in order to progress within and between developmental levels, the therapist experiences a sequential succession of experiences and reflections;

- Blocher's (1983) developmental cognitive approach, which emphasizes the importance of creating a learning environment to facilitate the supervisee's learning. As the supervisor designs the learning environment, the main focus is on the supervisee's acquisition of new, more comprehensive schemata for understanding human interactions. Supervision is "psychological education in the fullest and fullest sense of the term. It utilizes psychological content in a systematic manner to change the psychological functioning of the learner" (Blocher, 1983, apud Holloway, 1987).

- Role-centered or social-processing approaches to supervision refer to conceptual meta-models that focus on the learning needs of the therapist and on exercising the most appropriate role of the supervisor according to the needs of the therapist being supervised.

Holloway (1987) mentioned a sentence that has become famous in the literature, namely, that developmental models of supervision "have become the zeitgeist of thinking and research in supervision".

Second-generation models of supervision (Watkins, 2016) bring to the forefront common transtheoretical factors in psychotherapy (characteristics and change processes of the supervisee and elements of the supervisory relationship). Common characteristics of supervision in second-generation supervision models are (Watkins et al., 2015; Watkins and Scaturro, 2013): the supervisory relationship is highly emotionally charged; education and healing are paramount in the therapeutic setting; supervision provides a cogent and explicable rationale; supervision is participatory, providing peer feedback to the supervising therapist. Significant models of second generation supervision include:

- Wakins, Jr. and Scaturro's (2013) tripartite integrative learning-based model.

It proposes a three-stage structure of supervision, corresponding to the three types of learning, i.e. affective, cognitive and behavioral educational goals.

- Gelso's tripartite model comprises three components (common factors): alliance, transference and countertransference and the ideal relationship with direct application in the supervisory relationship.

- The relational model in psychotherapy extrapolated to psychotherapy supervision of . The change of the supervised therapist occurs in three ways: the formation of a real relationship between the supervisor and the supervised therapist (with the application of professional attachment, the supervised therapist's belonging to a professional community); the generation of expectations on the part of the supervised therapist to actions that facilitate learning (professional improvement, intervention). The change of supervised therapist leads to reduced anxiety, shame, increased self-esteem, skills development.

In order to provide a possible model of supervision in social work, analogical reasoning will be used, particularizing the Strategic Integrative Model in Supervision (Vişcu, 2018) to social work supervision. The mentioned model is a model of supervision that fits into the second generation supervision models, because it articulates common, trans-theoretical factors such as: learning, learning needs of the supervisee, the supervision framework, learning factors, the supervisory relationship; it provides an educational service to the supervisee through individual and group supervision activity and through intervention. Supervision provided through the Integrative Model of Supervision is strategic, provides structure and, after the end of the session, is finalized “didactically” by completing the client's file. The questions of the supervisor and the answers of the supervisee do not remain volatile, the “client/patient file” is not intended to be turned into a bureaucratic tool for the supervisee, its purpose is to clarify the thinking of the supervisee about the case presented and to teach the supervisee to work in an organized way.

A supervising therapist has a file for each client in which all important documents about the client are kept: therapy contract, informed consent, psychotherapeutic status, test sheets, diagnostic sheets, etc.

If a session has been supervised or an issue or problem has been brought to supervision, then the client/patient's file is completed with the relational diagnosis sheet, the supervision sheets (the supervisor's questions and the supervisor's answers are recorded).

2. The strategic integrative model in social work supervision

Specialized practice teachers in undergraduate programs are the primary facilitators of reflective practice in social work, followed by case managers (Ruch, 2007; Wilson, 2013). Social workers who decide to pursue a minimum of two years of psychotherapy training to become autonomous practitioners are required to complete a minimum of two years of supervision, with the hiring of a supervisor accredited by the professional association in the country. From this perspective, social workers, who become psychotherapists, counseling

psychologists, benefit from mandatory professional supervision, with a minimum of 200 hours of supervision (www.copsi.ro), a minimum of 50 hours of individual supervision (www.eaip.com), a minimum of 30 hours of intervention. Each training provider is free to increase the number of hours mentioned for supervision. Social workers who follow an additional professional route to become psychotherapists either work in social organizations or in private practice or both. So, there are training providers for psychotherapy, psychological counseling with accredited training programs in the states, countries where they work. In this direction, supervision has a well-established route, with an emphasis on reflective practice. The supervisors in psychotherapy training providers are psychologists, social workers, theologians, theologians, psycho-pedagogues with competences recognized and accredited by the professional association that coordinates the work of psychologists in the country. But, not all social workers want to become psychotherapists, and the problem is where to find the supervisor if the institution where they work does not have this position specified. Without the existence of support from the employing organization for supervision, the social worker overwhelmed by the enormous workload will be prone to burnout, and if he/she receives supervision the problem is not about being enabled to endure, but about gaining job satisfaction in the workplace. Supervision is not to induce the social worker to willingly burden himself with more cases, but to reach an emotional, physical, mental balance at work.

Supervision in itself has a reflexive component and cannot be delineated from reflexive practice, at least in psychology. The explanation of the attachment of the word “reflexive” in social work supervision possibly emphasizes drawing attention to the social worker's crowding, a silent cry for help of searching for resources within the social worker and in the supervision relationship, when it seems that at work there are no resources to move forward. Supervision is a “helping” relationship assumed on the basis of a supervision contract with a “senior professional” who will, after a period of time, give the go-ahead to the supervisee to enter the gate of professional autonomy. Supervision bears the imprint of pedagogy (Bernard & Goodyear, 2017), it is also a learning activity, including reflective learning from a practice that cannot be anything other than reflective. We are talking about learning based on adult learning principles (Knowles, 1984). Supervision in social work, like supervision in clinical psychology, psychotherapy and medicine, has the characteristic of permanence; those who work with people need supervision at all times. Supervision is a tool for maintaining “professional lucidity”.

It was mentioned earlier that supervision is adult learning, reflective learning based on adult learning principles. Since supervision (like training or personal development in a therapeutic orientation) is based on a relationship between two adults (supervisor and supervised therapist) and involves learning (of attitudes, goals, dialectical and argumentative skills in communication supervisor-supervised therapist and supervised therapist-client, problem solving, etc.) between two adults, we can consider supervision as an andragogical model of instruction (Vîșcu, 2018).

Andragogy has been defined as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1984).

Adult learning is not similar to learning in children or pupils, therefore adult learning will take into account the particularities (individual and age), forms of adult learning, learning theories, teaching/assessment strategies. Adult learning is an experiential learning which refers to reflexivity.

The differences between the pedagogical model and the andragogical model (specific for adult teaching and learning) are highlighted on six levels (Paloș, Sava, Ungureanu, 2007,

pp. 107-110): learning needs, learner's self-image, previous learning experience, readiness for learning, learning orientation and learning motivation.

The learning needs of the supervised social workers are in fact reflected in the supervision needs expressed at the beginning of the individual or group supervision session. Supervision needs are problems to which the social worker needs solutions. The supervisor provides solutions if the supervision is centered on the administrative function of supervision (Kadushin, 2002), but when supervision needs cover the educational (clinical) and supportive function, then supervision refers to reflexivity as competence and the directive role of the supervisor is diminished. In 2018 in the paper "The strategic integrative model of supervision" we presented supervision from the perspective of the supervisor's learning. The model proposed and applied in the supervision sessions not only with psychologists but also with physicians, social workers, psycho-pedagogues has the concept of learning at its core (Figure 1).

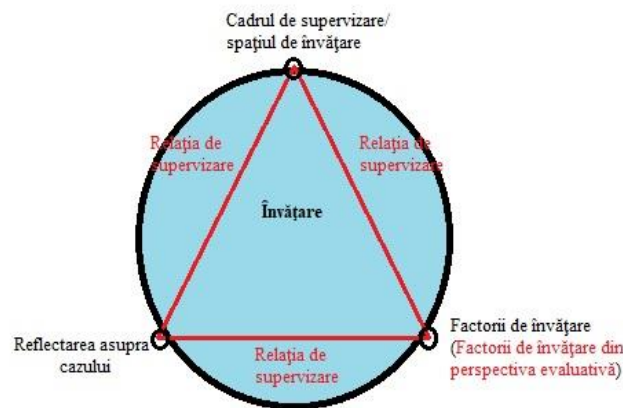


Figure 1. The strategic integrative model of supervision (Vișcu, 2018a)

This model brings it to the fore:

- learning, respecting the principles of adult learning;
- constructivist models of learning in supervision: learning theories proposed by Vîgotsky; Bruner and the Geneva School of Genetic Psychology;
- the supervisory framework/learning space in a systematized approach, under the name of supervisory design (the concept of design engineering being taken from adult education, but we opted for the concept of supervisory design);
- learning factors from an assessment perspective;
- reflection, as a consequence of the cognitive, personal development of the supervised therapist/social worker, both on the case and on the supervisory relationship. The link between supervision design, learning factors and reflection is the supervisory relationship.

The strategic integrative model of supervision is in line with constructivism in learning and has three major objectives:

- promoting self-learning and lifelong learning throughout working life;
- outline the place and role of supervision;

- provide a general supervision framework from a methodological, operational and strategic perspective for the supervisee and supervisor

Within the model, we have defined supervision in a narrow sense: as a formal, systematic, organized learning process, with a flexible curriculum according to the needs and knowledge of the participants, carried out in associations, agencies, universities, leading to a recognized qualification to be an autonomous therapist/ social worker/ professional, and in the broad sense, supervision is interdisciplinary at the interaction of educational sciences (pedagogy, adult education), psychology, sociology (general), andragogy, etc (Vişcu, 2017,2018).

Constructivist pedagogy has applicability to both students and adults, but as adult learning is different from child learning, adult education is particularly constructivist. From a constructivist perspective, learning is a personal and group process through which reality is learned. In therapy and in the training, personal development and supervision program, we refer to getting to know the reality of the client/social worker.

The constructivist paradigm of learning defines learning as “an active and constructive process, which always takes place in a context, and is therefore situational, multidimensional and systemic. Learning outcomes cannot be predicted, because the processes of reality construction are individual and situational” (Siebert, 2001b, p. 31, apud Paloş, Sava, Ungureanu, 2007, p. 127).

Essentially, in the constructivist view of learning, applicable also to supervision, we have the following landmarks:

- Learning is neither a transmission-assimilation of knowledge nor answers considered as perfect solutions to life's problems. The problems are, in fact, constructions of reality, the acceptance or not of relative truths, the occurrence of errors of interpretation. Knowledge is a personal, group or collective construction. In supervision, a new interpretation of reality is co-constructed with the supervisee; the supervisee acquires a new perspective on the case, on how to act (the administrative function of supervision). Just as the client in therapy discovers that the sum of his or her problems may also be the way in which he or she looks at him or herself, at others and at life, so the social worker/therapist supervisor learns how to reconstruct his or her conception of self and the world, learns that many of his or her beliefs have no correspondence in reality, that many of the truths he or she considered absolute are in fact relative, learns to accept that he or she has been the source of some misinterpretations. A new reality is co-constructed with the supervisor on the basis of the supervisory relationship.

- Learning is a three-phase process: deconstruction, construction and reconstruction.

Deconstruction - the supervisee/social worker discovers in supervision that “the map is not the territory”, that what he/she has perceived does not necessarily coincide with reality. Everyday knowledge is permeated by the majority. In supervision, supervisory needs are often deconstructed. The supervisor through repeated requests to the supervisee to reformulate his/her supervisory needs contributes to the deconstruction of what has been “learned”. One's own reality is different from the other's reality. The reality of the social worker is different from the reality of the supervisee/client (gestalt therapy exercises are useful in this respect: “I see - I feel - I imagine - I act”).

Construction is the process of constructing new meanings and meanings attributed to perceived realities. In the situation of supervising a case with the case manager, the direct supervisor who has the role of a supervisor, the construction in learning is of short duration, the information necessary to resolve the situation is obtained. But, in a training process in a therapeutic orientation that lasts for years or in the period of supervision contracted for at least

two years, from a psychological point of view, change does not occur spontaneously, insights, sudden discoveries, contribute to the creation of new meanings. The construction of learning is a continuous experiential process where reflection plays a special role.

Reconstruction is the process of piecing together the learning from reflective practice, training and supervision. The knowledge gained from the dialogue in supervision will be applied in the field as well as in the interaction with the client (the social worker's private practice). Through the reconstruction of learning, the newly acquired product is discussed with the supervisor (the supervisor in the organization where the social worker works) or in the intervention. Intervention is not a supervision, it involves a regular meeting, based on a calendar of meetings, with colleagues at the same level of competence as the supervisor. There is a meeting coordinator, sometimes appointed at the beginning of the meeting. The case is presented and discussed by the peers, the group coordinator moderates the dialogue and specifies some rules for the conduct of the intervention (when to intervene, feedback is given on the behavior of the supervisor and not on the person, how much time is allocated for giving feedback, etc.). So, in both intervention and supervision the learning of the supervisee is carried out, going through deconstruction, construction and reconstruction of learning, with the mention that the last two (construction and reconstruction of learning are emphasized in supervision).

3. Supervisory framework/supervision area

The application of the strategic integrative model of supervision to the supervision of social workers, from the perspective of the supervision setting/supervision space, involves determining where the supervision will take place: inside or outside the organization where the social worker works. If the supervision takes place in the same organization, the supervisor is from inside.

Supervision within an organization in which the social worker works, bears the imprint:

- organizational climate,
- how social care values are practiced,
- the distribution of power in the organization,
- the power relationship between the social worker and the supervisor, the
- how confidentiality is ensured,
- how the needs of the supervised social worker are perceived,
- and how the functions of supervision are perceived and practiced in the organization, what importance is attached to the well-being of the social worker,
- perception and appreciation of the workload of the social worker, etc.

Supervision outside of an organization in which the social worker works refers to the liberalization of supervision, and possibly a solution for the social worker. An external supervisor has the task to inform himself in the dialogue with the social worker about the characteristics of the organization, about the "fingerprints" presented above, in order to get an overview of the workplace of the supervisor, the pressures constantly exerted at the workplace. The supervision group in this situation is a support group, the confidentiality of the supervisor is not tested, the supervisor feels more free from organizational constraints. The social worker also has the possibility to work in private practice and the supervisor is only from outside, chosen on the basis of a supervision contract.

Supervision space does not only refer to the choice of the place of supervision, internal or external to the workplace, but also to the management of supervision, ensuring the planning, organization, coordination, conduct and evaluation of supervisory activity:

- scheduling - supervision will be carried out, regardless of its individual or group form, on the basis of a schedule, with the date, day, time, location known in advance by the supervised social worker. The supervised social worker is informed of the number of hours to be accumulated by the end of the supervision period, what conditions he/she has to fulfill in order to become autonomous.

- organization - each supervision meeting implies that the supervisor is interested in: the needs of the supervisees at the beginning of the meeting, the topics to be addressed, providing at the end of the meeting some support materials or bibliographical recommendations, presentation and description of the content of the client's file from the supervision perspective. The Client File is the collection of the documentation of the supervised case. For the supervised social worker with competences in psychotherapy, psychological counseling, the client file includes: the psychological services contract, the status of the supervised session, the presentation of the recording of the session or of the work sequence brought under supervision, the relational diagnosis sheet, and at the end of the supervision, the supervised social worker will fill in the supervision sheets. In the work Tools of the supervised therapist (2018) all the documents necessary for the supervision of a case from a psychotherapeutic perspective are presented.

- Coordination, management and evaluation of supervision. The three concepts emphasize their impact on the supervisory relationship and the implications of the power of the supervisor, the implications of ethics in supervision. The supervisory relationship tends to become a mutual supervisee-supervisee relationship, but it is precisely the supervisor's evaluation activity that draws attention to the power gap between supervisor and supervisee. The reduction of this power gap is achieved by clearly specifying the criteria to be met by the supervisee at the end of the supervision period. The supervisor's power is an ethical requirement for the supervisor to be permanently self-monitored in order to avoid abuses of power, parallel relationships (engaging the supervisor in multiple relationships with the supervisee).

4. Learning Factors from an assessment perspective

The learning factors that influence the success of supervision are internal and external. Internal factors include biological factors (age, gender, sleep, intellectual biorhythm, neurodynamic mechanisms of learning); psychological factors (mental processes involved in learning, motivation, aptitudes, learning style, level of culture). External factors of learning include: socio-organizational factors, social factors, cultural factors.

The main factors influencing learning in supervision are also common factors in supervision (Vișcu, Popescu, 2017):

- a) supervisor's style - is formed and developed over time, as a consequence of the accumulation of information, practice of inclusive pedagogical skills. Supervision has a pedagogical component, and the supervisor's style is a "tool" of supervision adapted to the learning conditions, the age of the supervisor, the values and particularities of the environment where the supervisor works.

- b) the style of the supervising therapist/social worker - is formed as information is acquired, practice is accumulated. The style of the therapist/social worker is the consequence of formal, informal and self-education.

c) the immediate and broader context of the work of the supervisor, the supervisee, the client - the supervisor and the supervisee engage in a process of deciphering the meanings of the experience of the actors engaged in supervision: the supervised social worker, the client of the supervisee and the content of the supervisory relationship. Supervision is a reflexive space of constructing new meanings due to the awareness of contextual factors in the social worker's work and in the client's environment, knowledge of social work theory, the theory of therapeutic orientation (when supervising the social worker therapist, and many other variables).

d) supervisory, relational and learning needs of the supervisee. The supervision needs mentioned by the supervisee are an expression of what he/she considers to be a problem in the supervisee's work in the 'here and now', but also an expression of personal problems. The supervision needs are also learning needs of the supervisee (requests for study materials, techniques and methods of case intervention);

e) learning styles of the supervisor. Kolb (1971) suggested a learning cycle necessary for effective learning. Applying Kolb's learning cycle to supervision we delineate:

- concrete experience - case conceptualization at the beginning of the supervision session;

- the reflection and observation stage of this process - reflecting on the impasse and reflective observation, supported by feedback from the supervisor;

- building relevant abstract concepts from which hypotheses are derived - the observations obtained are discussed and linked with psychotherapeutic theory, diagnosis and developmental theory to outline a new hypothesis or several working hypotheses;

- applying the hypotheses in practice - testing the hypothesis or hypotheses obtained in the next or future sessions with the client, in effective case management;

- educating the supervising therapist, assessment and monitoring in supervision.

Gilbert, Evans (2011) have identified two learning styles of the supervisor (apud, Vișcu, Popescu, 2017), which also apply to the social worker supervisor:

- convergent style - where the supervisor first engages in an abstract discussion of the relevant theory, and then develops an intervention plan for the case. The intervention plan may also be the result of the work of an interdisciplinary team;

- divergent style - the supervisor narrates the impasse and the supervisor asks for a description of the supervisor's experience from multiple perspectives, including the client's. It broadens the understanding of the supervisee through empathizing, role-playing exercises (the supervisor plays the role of the supervisee and the supervisee plays the role of the client). This provides new options for material for observation and reflects on new possibilities for intervention.

f. the continuing professional development of the supervisor is a lifelong process;

g. the assessment and monitoring of the supervisee during the period of supervision starts from the very beginning of the supervision by specifying the assessment criteria, the tasks to be accomplished during the supervision. The assessment criteria are known to the supervisee and thus prevent undesirable abuse of power by the supervisor. The supervisee has specified tasks to be completed by the end of the supervision, the completion of which provides the possibility of becoming an autonomous practitioner. Non-fulfilment of tasks entails the extension of the supervision contract or the signing of another contract with another supervisor.

5. Reflection in social work supervision

In their study titled "A Rapid Review of Reflective Supervision in Social Work", Ravalier, Wegrzynek, Mitchell, McGowan, McFadden, and Bald (2023) identified a lack of

specificity in the conceptualization of reflective supervision. Their research, which systematically reviewed definitions and approaches to supervision in social work, highlighted significant inconsistencies in how reflective supervision is defined and applied within the field. The authors' literature review distinguished between two related but distinct concepts: "reflective practice" and "reflective supervision." While reflective practice primarily focuses on the individual social worker's self-awareness and critical thinking in their professional activities, reflective supervision extends this concept by emphasizing the dynamic interaction between the social worker and the supervisor during the supervisory process. These two terms describe processes with unique characteristics and implications for professional development.

Reflective supervision, in particular, was noted for its reliance on reflective learning as a core component, especially in the context of social worker training. This approach fosters critical engagement with practice, enhances professional competencies, and supports the development of a collaborative and constructive supervisory relationship. By integrating reflective learning, reflective supervision plays a vital role in the preparation and ongoing development of social work practitioners.

Reflection in supervision involves thinking about something and thinking about how to think about something. In other words, through reflection we have access to metagândire, we detach from the "here and now" and we look, think, analyze on the "here and now", through "there and now" and "there and then" (Vişcu, 2018a). Developing and utilizing reflection assists the therapist and supervisor in making new meaning in therapist-client, therapist-supervisor and supervisor-client interactions.

Reflection is a competence that is formed and practiced in practice, and it is our conception that supervision is aimed at the acquisition of competence in the social service specialist. The training of competent specialists requires competence standards on the basis of which the initial and continuing training of specialists is to be carried out. This entails appropriate training curricula, including in supervision. The training of supervisors also needs to be carried out on the basis of competence standards or schemes. Vişcu, Cădariu, Watkins (2023) have developed a figure of the competencies of the supervisor in psychotherapy and have proposed a training program for supervisors. In this program, the concept of cross-cutting competencies of intellectual, methodological, personal and social, and communication is brought to the forefront. These areas of competence are common to the professions, from which the profession-specific competences are derived.

In the competence schema proposed by the authors for the clinical supervisor, including psychotherapy, reflection is:

- a competence at the interface of the four cross-cutting competence domains of intellectual, methodological, personal and social and communication
- an intellectual component as it involves analytical and critical thinking;
- a methodological component because through it we gain access to the "evidence of the case", through the analysis of the lived experience we gain access to the unseen and unspoken aspects of the therapist-client, therapist-supervisor and supervisor-client relationship;
- a personal and social competence because it brings the experiences of living 'something' into the awareness of the therapist, client and supervisor. Experiences are characterized by an "awareness of something" and have a character called intentionality (Husserl).

Parallel processes, isomorphism, act transpositions, power triangles and others are essential points for reflection in supervision. Understanding them, decrypting them with sensitivity on the part of the supervisor, accepting and becoming aware of them as essential points in the professional development of the therapist and the supervisor are key actions of the supervisor-therapist-client relationship (Vișcu, 2018a). Friedlander et al. (1989) described parallel processes as a phenomenon in which “supervisees” unconsciously present themselves to supervisors as their clients have presented themselves to them. The process is amplified when the supervisee adopts the attitudes and behaviors of the therapist in the relationship with the client into the supervision (p. 149, apud. Bernard & Goodyear, 2017, p. 266).

Family therapists have brought to the fore the notion of the interpersonal triangle as a fundamental unit of the supervisory relationship. In supervision, the triangle consists of the client, the supervised therapist and the supervisor: the weakest member of the triangle being the client and the strongest the supervisor (the two very rarely come face-to-face). The dramatic triangle is a point of analysis and reflection for the interpersonal relationships of the supervised therapist and the client. Reflection on the therapeutic relationship and the supervising relationship avoids triangulation. Through reflection, the therapist gains said autonomy and a knowledge of triangulation (Bernard & Goodyear, 2017).

The level of autonomy of the therapist expresses the level of personal and professional development. The more development possibilities the therapist has, the higher the level of autonomy.

Reflecting on the social worker's transference onto the supervisor. In supervision, transference can be (Allphin, 1987): negative (the supervisee views the supervisor as a normative or punitive parent and projects his or her own punitive self-critical evaluations onto the supervisor) and positive (the supervisee idealizes the supervisor, especially in the early stages of supervision).

Supervisory countertransference is “a complex and unavoidable process involving unconscious and exaggerated reactions stemming from an interaction within the supervisory setting, usually related to the supervisor's personal problems or internal conflicts” (Ladany et al., 2000, p. 102).

The reflection of the supervisor on the countertransference towards some therapists is an act of courage and ethics: courage, because the supervisor faces his own powerlessness or personal, professional and ethical shortcomings.

Walker and Gray (2002) identified four sources of supervisor countertransference, also applicable to the supervisor in social work: heavy workload for the supervisor; the supervisor's disappointment that the supervisor would not pay particular attention to his/her work; over-identification with the supervisory role (becoming like a caring parent to the supervisee); pressure put on the supervisee to work harder in order to become a better employee.

Supervisor's inner conflicts may manifest themselves in supervision, e.g. supervisor prefers only some of the supervised therapists; manipulates some situations in supervision or some therapists in expressing dissatisfaction with the organization, training association; is more “understanding” to adjust the affection of the supervised therapists (being in competition with other supervisors); expresses exaggerated expectations from the supervised therapists that cannot be met, leading to aggressiveness from the supervised therapists, deviation from the tasks received in supervision; all from the narcissistic need to be admired (Lower, 1972, apud Bernard & Goodyear, 2017, p. 338).

Supervisor conflicts may also be stimulated when the supervised therapist has higher social status or is better off financially than the supervisor.

In the current review, Wilkins (2017) argued that case management is the only supervision format that has ever been provided in social work, the author based his conclusions on a “selective” review of the literature (p. 4).

Difficulties for achieving reflective supervision in social work would be:

- Frequent legislative changes and often with no procedures, although the legislative framework exists, there are no enforcement procedures;
- Emphasizing administrative tasks and a task-oriented organizational culture (Pitt et al., 2021);
- Supervision sessions that predominantly emphasize the social worker's responsibility to the detriment of self-reflection on his or her own well-being, self-care;
- Lack of supervisory training for social care managers;
- Absence of supervisor training courses, curriculum, trainers of supervisors;
- Poor conceptualization of what constitutes individual and group supervision session management in social work (Wilkins, 2017);
- Challenges of online supervision (Vișcu, Cădariu, Watkins, 2023) etc.

The supervisory relationship is the invisible glue that binds the model presented and is permanently subject to the danger of breaking, if the supervisor will not adequately manage the supervision. The authors' attention has been directed to presenting the model as a benchmark for supervision in social work, and the supervisory relationship is another topic of interest in both counseling/psychotherapy and social work.

6. Conclusions

The realization of effective supervision that promotes the emotional well-being of both the social worker and the client necessitates the adoption and implementation of well-defined supervision models. These models provide a structured framework for guiding supervisory practices, ensuring consistency, and facilitating professional development. In the field of psychotherapy, supervision models are extensively categorized and applied. Drawing on this established body of knowledge and using analogical reasoning, we have adapted the integrative model of supervision—centered on the learning and development of the supervisee—to the context of social work supervision.

Effective supervision in social work requires the supervisor to possess a unique blend of skills and knowledge. These include professional training in supervisory practices, a solid understanding of adult education principles, and the ability to adopt a constructivist approach to learning. The constructivist perspective emphasizes the active role of the supervisee in co-creating knowledge through reflection, discussion, and practical application, thereby fostering deeper learning and greater autonomy.

Supervision in social work, much like in the clinical field from which it borrows many principles, is inherently reflective. Reflective supervision is essential for enabling the personal and professional growth of both the supervisor and the supervisee. Reflection as a competence allows individuals to critically evaluate their experiences, identify areas for improvement, and consolidate their professional identities. Without this reflective dimension, the supervisory process risks becoming mechanistic and fails to contribute meaningfully to the development of the individuals involved.

The reflective nature of supervision is particularly critical in ensuring that the services provided to clients are of the highest quality. By encouraging supervisors and supervisees to critically analyze their practices and decisions, reflective supervision not only enhances their

skills but also aligns their work with ethical standards and best practices. This, in turn, translates into improved outcomes for clients and contributes positively to the broader societal fabric.

The findings of the study by Ravalier et al. (2023) underscore a critical gap in the conceptualization and application of reflective supervision in social work. The lack of specificity in defining reflective supervision, as highlighted by the reviewed literature, signals the need for a more standardized and operationalized framework to guide both research and practice. Reflective supervision, as distinguished from reflective practice, requires the active participation of both the social worker and the supervisor, emphasizing their dynamic interaction and its impact on professional growth and service quality.

Evidence from Romanian studies offers additional insights into the significance of reflective practices and supervision in the social work profession. Runcan, Goian, and Runcan (2012) demonstrated the essential role of supervision in addressing the socio-communicational styles and needs of social service professionals, highlighting the importance of tailored supervisory approaches. Similarly, Iovu, Goian, and Runcan (2015) revealed the barriers to evidence-based practice among Romanian social workers, emphasizing the role of supervision in overcoming these challenges and fostering professional development.

Reflective learning, a cornerstone of reflective supervision, aligns with findings from Iovu and Runcan (2012), who reported that the attitudes and knowledge of Romanian social workers regarding evidence-based practice are crucial for effective intervention. Supervision serves not only as a tool for skill enhancement but also as a mechanism for integrating research-based knowledge into practice. This is particularly relevant in the context of social work education, where Iovu, Runcan, and Runcan (2015) highlighted the need for improved attitudes and self-efficacy among social work students in research methods and statistics.

Furthermore, the protective role of supervision against burnout has been well-documented. Iosim et al. (2021) identified supervision as a critical factor in preventing burnout among professionals working with vulnerable populations. This finding is supported by Runcan (2013), who emphasized the high risk of burnout in social work and the need for strategies such as reflective supervision to mitigate its effects.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Runcan and Runcan (2020) highlighted the heightened fear and stress experienced by social workers. This underscores the urgent need for reflective supervision to address the emotional and professional challenges faced by practitioners during crises. The importance of authenticity in the supervisory process, as discussed by Runcan (2020), is critical for building trust and fostering resilience among social workers.

Lastly, the role of supervision in enhancing service quality for clients, including those with disabilities, is another important aspect highlighted by Bălău et al. (2020). Their findings suggest that reflective supervision not only supports the professional development of social workers but also ensures more effective and empathetic service delivery.

The integration of reflective supervision into social work practice is vital for addressing professional challenges, improving service quality, and fostering resilience among practitioners. The existing body of literature, including Romanian contributions, reinforces the need for a conceptual and practical framework that defines reflective supervision, emphasizing its role in lifelong learning, evidence-based practice, and emotional well-being. Future research should focus on standardizing reflective supervision models to enhance their applicability and impact across diverse social work contexts.

In conclusion, adopting an integrative and reflective approach to supervision in social work provides a robust foundation for achieving both professional and emotional well-being

among practitioners. This approach not only supports the development of competent social workers but also ensures the delivery of high-quality services that meet the complex needs of clients and society at large. Supervision, therefore, is not just a tool for accountability but a transformative process that enhances the effectiveness and resilience of the social work profession.

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