

Supervision in Counsellor Education

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Introduction

Counselling education is a dynamic process where theoretical knowledge and practical experiences come together; in this process, supervision stands out as a critical component that supports the professional development of counsellors, maintains ethical standards and ensures the well-being of clients. Supervision in counsellor education is a guidance process carried out to improve the professional skills of counsellor candidates, to learn ethical standards and to gain experience in working with real clients (Borders & Brown, 2022). In this process, an experienced supervisor (usually a graduate level educated and experienced counsellor or therapist) guides the counsellor candidate, provides feedback and supports his/her professional development (Henderson, 2018).

The history of supervision in counselling

Supervision is recognised as a vital process for building a skilled workforce and delivering certain services to a high standard. Its historical roots date back to ancient times when skills and knowledge were passed on through apprenticeship from a more experienced practitioner (Žorga, 2002). The first traces of supervision are found in mythological figures such as Chiron, known for his healing. More systematic documentation of medical supervision begins with the teachings of Hippocrates (Larson, 2017). The first formal examples of supervision date back to the 19th century. In this period, social workers directed voluntary work offering moral cures to the poor. Freud's regular analyses at the Zurich clinic in the early 20th century helped to link supervision with modern psychotherapy (Watkins, 2013). However, it has been suggested that Freud applied indirect therapy through his father in his work on Little Hans, and therefore this work can be considered as counselling rather than supervision (Fisher & Greenberg, 1985).

Since the 1930s, the need for supervision has increased and systematic models have started to be developed. Carl Rogers made this practice more observable and teachable by including the use of recording devices in supervision processes. (Miller & Moyers, 2021). His human-centred approach contributed to making supervision more supportive and interactive. In the 1970s, the structuring of supervision processes gained momentum and researchers such as Bernard and Goodyear defined supervision as an educational process (Watkins, 2012).

The systematic models developed in this period pioneered supervision to become a fundamental component in the field of counselling (Davys & Beddoe, 2020). Nowadays, supervision is used as a fundamental tool to increase the professional competence of counsellors and to ensure the well-being of clients (Campbell, 2013). In the United States, supervision is required by accreditation

organisations such as CACREP, while in Turkey this process is becoming increasingly important (Kalkan & Can, 2019). Especially supervision practices of universities are expected to be generalised (Özyürek et. al., 2021).

Supervision in counselling has a long historical development process and plays a critical role in supporting the professional development of counsellors as well as maintaining ethical standards (Corey et. al., 2020). In the future, supervision is expected to become more systematic, scientific and standardised. (Gonsalvez & McLeod, 2008). This process will make significant contributions to individual and social well-being by increasing the competencies of counsellors.

Main Functions of Supervision

Supervision is a fundamental process that supports the professional development of professionals working in the field of psychological counselling and therapy and strengthens the well-being of clients (Howard, 2008). The functions of this process cover a wide range from professional development to the protection of ethical standards (Davys & Beddoe, 2020). Effective implementation of supervision results in the benefit of both professionals and clients.

Supervision allows therapists to develop their knowledge and skills (Grater, 1985). This process increases professional competence by encouraging the application of new theories and techniques (Falender & Shafranske, 2007). One of the main elements of this function is that therapists in the training process review their practices through case analyses and feedback (Beidas & Kendall, 2010). Supervision helps therapists to act in accordance with professional standards (Falender et al., 2004). In supervision sessions, ethical dilemmas are discussed and solution strategies are developed. This plays a critical role in protecting client rights and ensuring compliance with ethical rules (Corey, et al., 2020). Supervision, which increases the emotional and professional resilience of therapists, is an important tool in stress management and reducing the risk of burnout (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2014). Supporting therapists enables them to be more effective in the therapeutic process (Wu & Levitt, 2022).

Supervision offers the opportunity to strengthen therapists' communication skills (Kadieva & Williams, 2023). Working on therapeutic relationship management and effective communication techniques makes therapists' professional interactions more efficient (Thompson, 2015). Supervision sessions provide a learning environment where therapists evaluate their practice through case presentations and receive feedback from supervisors. This process helps therapists to identify their strengths and areas of development (Kilminster & Jolly, 2000). Group supervision allows therapists to learn from different perspectives by sharing experiences with colleagues. This format is valuable for peer support and professional co-operation (Borders, 1991). Supervision enables therapists to realise their professional practices in accordance with the required standards (Milne, 2009). Supervisors assess therapists' accountability and quality of practice through methods such as structure-process-result analysis (Kraus et al., 2011).

Effects of Supervision

Supervision has a critical role in improving client care. Meta-analyses have shown that regular and planned supervision is associated with more favourable outcomes in clinical conditions such as depression (Mor-Barak et al., 2009). The strengthening of the therapeutic alliance and adaptation to the biopsychosocial model are the main reasons for these effects (Gilbert, 2019).

Sources indicate that supervision is effective in increasing therapists' competences, skills and self-confidence (Tan & Chou, 2018). Systematic reviews emphasise that supervision processes are critical for effective training and professional development (Kilminster & Jolly, 2000). Supervision increases client satisfaction by increasing the effectiveness of the therapeutic process and improves the quality of professional practice (Wheeler & Richards, 2007). It also supports the professional performance of therapists by promoting compliance with ethical standards (Pope et al., 1987).

Supervision is an essential component of both client care and therapist development. Effective supervision practices increase the competence of therapists and provide better outcomes for clients. This process is indispensable for maintaining and improving professional standards in counselling and therapy (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). A more systematic and comprehensive implementation of supervision in the future will make significant contributions to the advancement of the field.

Supervision Models

Supervision is carried out with various models to support the professional development of practitioners in the field of psychological counselling and therapy (Davys & Beddoe, 2020). These models determine the structure and functioning of the supervision process. Below, widely accepted supervision models are summarised:

Developmental Models: These models shape the supervision process according to the developmental stages of the counsellor (Holloway, 1987). For example, in the model developed by Stoltenberg and Delworth, supervision strategies are determined according to the experience level of the counsellor (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). The developmental stages of the counsellor affect the content and form of supervision (Stoltenberg et al., 1994).

Psychotherapy Based Models: In this model, psychotherapy theories (psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioural, systemic, etc.) are integrated into supervision processes (Harris & Brockbank, 2011). The psychodynamic supervision model focuses on the analysis of therapeutic processes and the handling of parallel processes (Zetzer et al., 2020). Cognitive and behavioural approaches focus on skill development and learning (Milne & James, 2000).

Social Role Models: In this approach, the relationship between the supervisor and the counsellor and the roles they assume are defined (Johnson, 2007). Supervisors can assume different roles such as educator or mentor. The aim in this model is to provide support appropriate to the needs of the counsellor (Davys & Beddoe, 2020).

Group Supervision Models: Group supervision involves sessions in which more than one

counsellor is present together and led by a supervisor. This format encourages participants to receive feedback from each other and promotes collective learning (Gilbert & Evans, 2000).

Reflective Learning Approaches: In this model, supervision is seen as a reflective practice; therapists engage in reflective dialogues while evaluating their own practice. Analysing and making sense of experiences is at the forefront (Scaife, 2014).

Systems Approaches: System approaches focus on examining dynamic relationships in which many factors interact. In this model developed with Holloway's system, supervision relationships and contextual factors are taken into consideration (Holloway, 2014).

Each of these models offers different strategies and methods to ensure that supervision achieves its purpose. A combination of these models is often used according to the needs of practitioners.

Measuring Supervision

Supervision plays a critical role in fostering the professional development of practitioners in psychological counseling and therapy while safeguarding client well-being (Scaife, 2013). Measuring the competencies of both supervisors and supervisees is essential for ensuring effective supervision experiences. The competence of supervisors is evaluated based on their training in relevant fields, accreditation from recognized programs, and sufficient experience in supervision practice, all of which significantly influence supervision quality (Ladany & Inman, 2012). Additionally, the ability of supervisors to manage the supervision process, including establishing and maintaining supervision contracts, is a crucial aspect of their competence. (Barnett & Molzon, 2014).

The adequacy of supervision areas is assessed through tools such as standardized supervision scales, like the Effective Supervisor Feedback Scale developed by Meydan et al., (2024), which measures the effectiveness of supervision using Likert-type ratings.

Feedback mechanisms also play an integral role, as they provide valuable insights for both supervisors and supervisees to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Qualitative research methods, including interviews and focus groups, offer a deeper understanding of the supervision process by highlighting participants' lived experiences (Saab et al., 2021). To measure these competencies comprehensively, quantitative methods, such as statistical analyses of survey and scale data, are complemented by qualitative approaches, which provide context-rich insights (DeCato, 2002). Collectively, these processes ensure the professional development of counselors, improve the quality of supervision practices, and uphold the ethical responsibility of protecting client well-being.

Methods Used in the Supervision Process

Supervision is a vital process that enhances the professional development of therapists in psychological counseling and therapy, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to address ethical issues effectively (Vasquez, 1992). A range of methods is employed during supervision to facilitate this development. Case presentations enable therapists to share and evaluate their practical

experiences, with supervisors providing constructive feedback to refine their practices (Davys & Beddoe 2020). Observation allows supervisors to assess therapists' styles and techniques during sessions, offering direct and actionable feedback (Kazemi et al., 2024). Role-playing serves as an experiential tool where therapists practice intervention strategies in simulated scenarios, fostering skill enhancement (Shea & Barney, 2015).

Feedback is a cornerstone of the supervision process, guiding therapists by highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Theoretical training offers therapists insights into new theories, techniques, and ethical practices, contributing to their intellectual growth (Ivey et al., 2011). Group supervision encourages collaborative learning, providing a platform for sharing experiences and gaining diverse perspectives. Reflective dialogues with supervisors help therapists understand their own practices and foster both personal and professional growth (Orchowski et al., 2010). Lastly, self-evaluation empowers therapists to critically assess their work, promoting ethical awareness and resilience (Rawatlal, 2023).

An essential component of supervision is feedback, which plays a critical role in shaping therapists' practices and improving client outcomes. Feedback can take several forms. Immediate feedback, provided during or shortly after a session, allows for real-time evaluation of practices, while delayed feedback, based on session recordings or transcripts, facilitates detailed analysis (North, 2013).

Formative feedback focuses on continuous skill development, whereas summarizing feedback evaluates overall performance at specific intervals. Effective feedback adheres to several principles: it is clear and specific, balances positive reinforcement with constructive critique, emphasizes behaviors rather than personal traits, and is framed as actionable suggestions (Grant, 2023). Various tools and techniques enhance the feedback process. Reviewing session recordings or transcripts provides concrete insights, while structured assessment forms offer systematic evaluations (Arthur & Gfroerer, 2002). Experiential methods, such as role-playing and metaphor usage, make feedback more engaging and impactful (Smith, 2009). Together, these approaches ensure that feedback not only supports therapists' professional growth but also enhances the quality of services provided to clients. By integrating these diverse supervision and feedback methods, the process becomes a robust mechanism for fostering ethical, skilled, and reflective practitioners (Lambert et al., 2001).

Differences Between Online and Face-to-Face Supervision Practices

Supervision is a fundamental process for fostering the professional development of psychological counselors and therapists. This process can be conducted in two primary formats—online and face-to-face—each with distinct characteristics, advantages, and limitations (Stokes, 2023).

Interaction and Communication: Face-to-face supervision allows for direct personal interaction, enabling the observation of body language, tone of voice, and other non-verbal cues that strengthen the emotional connection between supervisor and supervisee (Borders, 2014). In contrast, online supervision relies on digital tools such as video conferencing, where some non-verbal communication

elements may be lost (Cataldo et al., 2023). However, online formats can supplement verbal interactions with written communication and screen-sharing capabilities, providing alternative ways to convey information (Stokes, 2023).

Access and Flexibility: Face-to-face supervision requires both parties to be physically present in the same location, which can pose challenges for professionals in rural or remote areas (Borders, 2014). Conversely, online supervision eliminates geographical constraints, allowing participants to engage in the process from any location, thus offering greater flexibility and accessibility (Cataldo et al., 2023)

Technical Challenges: Face-to-face supervision avoids technical issues and benefits from the immediacy of physical presence (Borders, 2014). In contrast, online supervision can be disrupted by problems such as internet connectivity issues or technical malfunctions, potentially interrupting the flow of the supervision process and creating distractions (Stokes, 2023).

Confidentiality and Security: Face-to-face supervision provides a controlled environment where confidentiality concerns are minimal, given the direct interaction between participants (Bengtson & Jensen 2015). In online supervision, however, confidentiality and data security may be compromised if the digital platforms used are not adequately protected. Ensuring the security of personal data is a critical consideration in online practices (Deane et al., 2015).

Effectiveness: Research findings on the comparative effectiveness of online and face-to-face supervision are mixed. Some studies suggest that online supervision can be equally or even more effective due to its flexibility and accessibility (Bender & Werries, 2022; Rowen et al., 2022; Watters & Northey, 2020). while others emphasize the superior depth and relational bond achieved through face-to-face interactions (Beinart & Clohessy, 2017; Borders, 2014). The relative effectiveness of each format often depends on the specific needs and preferences of the practitioners involved.

In conclusion, both online and face-to-face supervision methods have unique strengths and limitations. Practitioners should consider factors such as accessibility, communication preferences, technical infrastructure, and security concerns when choosing the most suitable format. While technological advancements have expanded the reach and feasibility of online supervision, the irreplaceable value of in-person interaction in fostering emotional connections and nuanced communication should not be underestimated. Table 1 gives a comparison of both formats (Beinart & Clohessy, 2017; Bender & Werries, 2022; Bengtson & Jensen 2015; Borders, 2014; Cataldo et al., 2023; Deane et al., 2015; Rowen et al., 2022; Stokes, 2023; Watters & Northey, 2020).

Table 1. *Comparison of Online and Face-to-Face Supervision Practices*

Aspect	Face-to-Face Supervision	Online Supervision
Interaction and Communication	Direct interaction with access to non-verbal cues like body language and tone, fostering emotional connection.	Relies on video conferencing, with limited non-verbal communication. Can use written communication and screen-sharing.
Access and Flexibility	Geographically limited; requires physical presence.	Eliminates geographical constraints, offering greater flexibility.
Technical Challenges	No technical disruptions; immediate physical presence.	Subject to internet and technical issues that may disrupt the process.
Confidentiality and Security	Provides a secure environment with fewer confidentiality concerns.	Potential risks with data security on digital platforms; requires careful handling of personal information.
Effectiveness	Strengthens relational bonds and provides in-depth interaction.	Flexible and accessible, but effectiveness may vary based on individual needs.

Conclusion

Supervision in counseling stands as a cornerstone of professional practice, rooted in a rich historical tradition that has evolved to meet the dynamic needs of the field. From its origins as a structured approach to training and oversight, supervision has expanded its functions to encompass professional development, ethical accountability, and the enhancement of client outcomes. By offering a platform for reflection, skill-building, and guidance, supervision not only supports the personal and professional growth of counselors but also ensures the delivery of competent and ethical services. The effects of effective supervision are profound, fostering resilience, confidence, and the ability to navigate complex clinical scenarios. Measuring supervision through qualitative and quantitative methods further enhances its effectiveness by identifying strengths and areas for improvement, ensuring that it remains a robust and adaptive process.

In today's rapidly changing landscape, the format of supervision—whether online or face-to-face—has become a critical consideration. While online supervision offers unmatched flexibility and accessibility, face-to-face interactions continue to provide irreplaceable depth and relational connection. Both formats have unique advantages, and their integration into practice depends on individual preferences, logistical factors, and technological infrastructure.

In conclusion, the supervision process is an indispensable element of counseling that bridges historical practices with contemporary needs. By adapting its methods to diverse contexts and embracing innovation without compromising the relational core of its practice, supervision continues to serve as a vital mechanism for professional excellence and the advancement of the counseling profession.

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