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Abstract

The present paper aims to make an analysis of the way supervision is perceived in the Romanian professional community working with people in difficulty. Defining supervision includes four dimensions: a professional view, in which supervision is seen as a part of the integration process and professional development; a social support dimension; a third emphasizes learning, supervision as education, teaching; and the last dimension is that of control. In this study we performed a research on professionals involved in supervision: psychologists and social workers. Our findings show that education is the best accepted way of seeing supervision, while that of control is the most rejected one. A huge majority 94.5% of the investigated professionals appreciate the role of supervision. Approximately 50% of the subjects see the supervisor as educator. Professional development and professional learning are seen as the advantages of supervision.

Keywords: supervision; professional development; education; professional burnout; social work.

Introduction

Supervision is an efficient method of learning and continuous training of professionals that work with the human factor in difficulty. *Supervision* supports both the professional development of the supervised and the development of the reflective competences that will help the supervised in the process of analysis and

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introspection of social work. The classic definition of *supervision* has been built by Kadushin (1976: 24) on the three essential functions of supervision: the administrative function, the support function and the educational function. Barker (1995: 371-372) described *supervision* as "an administrative and educational process used in the social assistance agencies in order to help social assistants develop their abilities and ensure qualitative services to their clients". Moreover, as a form of personal and professional support, supervision has been defined as "a process through which a practicing social assistant supports the exercising of personal abilities by another practicing social assistant" (Pettes, 1979: 3).

The term *supervision* represents a combination of two other terms coming from Latin: "super" and "videre". "Super" is "above, over, across, on", while "videre" stands for "to see, to look". Quite a number of conceptual variations regarding *supervision* do exist, according to the nuances in which it is perceived and understood in each field of professional activity. Through this conceptual variety of perception and definition, *supervision* is in full development. It can be developed on the holistic level of socio-human services. In the specialized literature, *supervision* has been understood as an educative process through which professionals have the opportunity to be trained and formed on a continual basis. Robinson (1936: 53) described *supervision* as "an educative process through which a person with proved knowledge assumes the responsibility of instructing people with a lower level of knowledge". In 1993, Shulman defined *supervision* as an educational process offered by an experienced professional (expert) to a less experienced peer, less formed from the same profession or from a related profession. Supervision has been mentioned in specialized literature from the beginning of the practice of specialized social assistance (Brashears, 1995, apud. Cojocaru, 2005). "Supervision, as any human interaction, involves a change, implying a type of specific *professional communication* in the interaction between the supervisor and the supervised" (Muntean, 2007: 104). Not every professional can be a supervisor. The qualities that the supervisor must possess in the relationship with the client are very important for the efficiency of supervision. They are based on the specialized studies of the supervisor, on the communication abilities with the surrounding people (the main instrument in supervision is the word), but also on the personality traits of the supervisor. Some authors perceive the supervisor as a *mediator of conflicts* between social assistants and the agency (Kadushin, 1974; Shulman, 1993; Munson, 1993; Cojocaru, 2005), while other authors see the supervisor as a *representative figure of the organization in connection with the employees* (Munson, 1979: 42; Cojocaru, 2007: 216). "The supervisor creates the space of a language that can allow the supervisor to express himself/herself, to see himself/herself with the eyes of the supervisor and be aware of the central and secondary aspects of his/her professional functioning" (Muntean, 2007: 85).

Supervision is the process of bilateral communication, between the supervisor and the supervised which involves emotion, word, analysis, reflection and attitude.

Supervision implies both the transposition of the supervisor in his/her own action with aim to confront, outlook and analyses them, as well as perceiving the actions of others. Supervision prevents routine in the professionals' own profession and, at the same time, it prevents professional exhaustion. "The essence of supervision is constituted by the training the supervised and facilitation of the training experience and professional progress in this field in which specialized knowledge and human competences closely intertwine in what we call professional competences" (Fleming & Steen, apud. Muntean & Sagebiel, 2007:117). In the specialized literature, professional supervision has been understood as a type of coaching and, according to several authors (Badiali, 1998:958; Vail, 2003:13) an increasing tendency of acceptance of the terms of supervisor and coaching and supervisor and coach as synonymous, equal terms actually exists. Bernard and Goodyear (1992:6) present the simultaneous purposes of supervision that refer to the efficiency of professional functioning of the supervised through the decentralization and acknowledgement of projections on the one hand, and monitoring the quality of the professional services offered by the supervised to the clients, on the other hand. Supervision is perceived and understood in a different way in the ranks of educational, medical and social services, however "despite the theoretical and practical differences, we will take into consideration the final purpose of any supervision: that of improving and maintaining quality of the professional support offered to people in need, through continuous professional development and avoiding professional exhaustion of those who intervene" (Muntean, 2007:104). In the specialized literature, one can find the 16 principles of supervision presented by O'Donoghue (apud. Cojocaru, 2005; Cojocaru, 2010) which certify the advantages of the process of supervision in offering social and medical services. The principles of supervision are: 1) All experts from social services need supervision; 2) Supervision is an encouraging activity recognized by the organization; 3) Supervision means sharing responsibilities; 4) Supervision overturns the pyramidal organisational hierarchy; 5) Supervision is based on negotiation and offers solutions to solving conflicts; 6) Supervision is permanent; 7) Supervision promotes reflective critics, competence, empowerment and responsibility; 8) Supervision is one of the most important and strong professional relationships; 9) The supervisor supports social assistances to offer clients qualitative services; 10) The supervisor supports social assistants to maintain high professional standards; 11) Supervision is one of the most important activities within social services, both for the organisation and for the beneficiaries of the services; 12) Supervision aims to ensure that social assistants know their roles and responsibilities; 13) Supervision follows the support of social assistants in order to reach the performance objectives; 14) Supervision assists in the identification and management of stress belonging to the social assistant, generated by the roles that he/she has to fulfill; 15) The supervisor makes sure that the social assistant has the necessary resources in order to conduct his/her activity and to efficiently administrate these resources; 16) Supervision is based on the methods of educating adults.

The need for supervision is one of the most important professional needs in education, social assistance, psychology and medicine. The need for supervision is based on the need of reflection of the professional on himself/herself and the work they performed with the human factor in difficulty. Is a *need* for supervision really perceived and felt by the professionals from the social and medical fields in Romania?! To this question, rarely uttered, mostly just conjured in thought, the answers given differ according to the field activity, person, time, age, historical background, the direct beneficiaries with which they have to work, but also the degree of experience and understanding of supervision. After the 1989 Revolution, in many institutions *supervision* was either not known or was seen and perceived only through its control and surveillance side (Cojocaru, 2004). This does not surprise us! In 1989, Romanians did not understand very well the term *supervision* because the dictionary did not have an entry for it. The 1958 Dictionary of the Modern Romanian language defined, however, only the term *surveillance*. *The need for supervision* of professionals is in a permanent relationship with their mentality. The mentality one has on something or someone makes one believe or doubt in that something or someone, makes one love or hate that something or someone. Due to the mentality inherited from the communist era, professionals perceived *supervision* as a method of control, surveillance, modern monitoring – a fact that made them reject supervision as a practice from the start. On a second note, professionals had great fear of expressing their feelings, thoughts and words in front of other because they did not trust people. This fear, whether acknow-ledged or not, made them not feel the need of being supervised by someone else in order for them not to be controlled, persecuted and/or lose their jobs in the end.

However, in 2004, a new legislative framework emerged in Romania, signi-ficant of the field of child and family information, which imposes *supervision* (for the first time in the history of Romanian social services) through the minimal Standards, mandatory for the functioning of child services and for his/her family. Since then, "*supervision* of human resources" appears as a minimal Standard mandatory for the professionals from the Romanian social services. Furthermore, *supervision* has been also included in the professional standards of social assistants and psychologists as an obligation for them and as an element of guarantee of the quality of these direct services that they offer to the clients. *The right for supervision* of the experts that work directly with the child and his/her family has been recognized and regulated through Order no. 288 from 2006 for the approval of the mandatory minimal Standards regarding case management in the field of child rights protection. This *right for supervision* is a right of the professional that work with the human factor in difficulty, of asking and receiving professional support to help them overcome professional problems and handling professional stress, inherent to these fields of activity. A major problem in Romania remains: the applicability of the legislative framework in social services. Even if *super-vision* is stipulated as a mandatory work method for the experts from social

services, it still is not a practice in the national social field. In 2005, in Romania, at the level of social services from the county government structures and from the NGOs which offer medical, psychological and social services, a research has been undertaken by university professor PhD Ana Muntean regarding *supervision* and *the need for* supervision. From the results of the research (Muntean, 2007: 128-129), we can notice that 88% of respondents from the NGOs have affirmed the acute *need for* supervision, as compared to 72% of the colleagues from the government services, with can bring us to the conclusion that *supervision* is more valued as a practice in the services offered by the private NGOs than by government services.

The quality of the social services from a developed country can be maintained and developed only with suitably qualified specialists. In the context, during the 2004-2005 university years, at the West University of Timisoara, the first programme of postgraduate studies has appeared in Romania, which offers formation in the field of supervision. New programmes of formation in supervision will soon open in the universities of Iasi and Cluj-Napoca. In 2012, these programmes of formation function as MAs with the purpose of efficiently preparing professionals in the field of supervision. Only in recent years have Romanian experts started to be increasingly aware of the fact that *supervision* is a professional support that encourages an efficient, constructive and affirmative *communication* between people from the same field of activity (Cojocaru, 2010). Together with the complexity of social problematic aspects, with the development of psychology and social assistance on various segments, the *need for supervision* has started to be increasingly more acknowledged in the ranks of experts from the socio-medical fields in Romania, as a form of professional support and control at the same time. *The need for supervision* of the experts from the social and medical field has risen proportionally with the complexity of the social and medical problems and of the ever-changing behaviours of clients, but also of the high volume of work. An ever increasing number of experts from the social and medical services start to acutely feel the *need for supervision* from the part of an experienced supervisor with whom he/she can efficiently and openly *communicate* on the cases and from whom he/she can receive professional counseling through the process of supervision.

To the question "*Why do professionals need supervision?*" we aim to answer with a few punctual answers: 1) So that the suffering encountered when working with the client, within the case, does not overcome the threshold of tolerance; 2) To prevent professional exhaustion; 3) To overcome difficult professional situations; 4) To reflect on their own actions; 5) To continuously form in their relationship with the others; 6) To balance professional and private life; 7) To develop abilities and competences; 8) To exchange ideas in the context of the process of supervision; 9) To talk about the relational situations in a personal way; 10) To ask questions in order to make an evaluation of these questions; 11) To prevent

stereotypes of the profession. Currently, in Romania, *supervision* is seen as a condition of professional formation for all the fields of attested professional activity. Moreover, *supervision* is now understood more as an optimizing element of social and medical services offered, than as an element of control, monitoring or coercion. Among the experts from the social and medical services in Romania, we believe that a favourable atmosphere is now present, which is necessary to institute supervision, both on a theoretical and an applicative, practical level.

Methodology

Subjects

The present paper values two lots of professionals from social services i.e. one lot consisting of psychologists while the other consisting of social assistants. Besides these lots, in the initial study, professionals from the educational sphere (educators, kindergarten teachers) and professionals from the medical field (nurses) were also interviewed. The latter two lots mentioned will be the subject of future analyses. The discussed lots in the present study consist of 100 specialists each. The lot of the social assistants included 72% of female professionals, 19% male professionals and 9% refused to declare their sex, with an age average of 33.67 (SD=9.36). As concerns the average number of the years of experience, in the social assistants lot this was 8.25 (SD=6.12). 49% of the people interviewed declared they were married, 45% were not married, 2% were divorced and 4% did not declare their marital status. The lot of psychologists consisted of 15% males and 85% females. The age average of the lot was 28 (SD=7.73). It should be mentioned that 14% of psychologists that have answered the questionnaire did not declare their age. The average number of the years of experience for this lot was 4.72 (SD=4.79) which highlights an important aspect which should be taken into account during further analysis: the psychologists' lot consists of a significant number of individuals who are at the start of their career. The marital status, for the psychologists' lot, is as follows: 21% married, 73% not married and 3% did not declare their marital status.

Research instruments

The instrument used in the research was structured in two parts. In the first part, which was built specifically for this research, we constructed variables that measured the knowledge the term of supervision, evaluation of operational "definitions" of supervision, benefits of supervision, the need for supervision and "the supervisor". In the second part, we have used a scale which measures the socio-communicational style (SCS) on two dimensions the assertiveness and

responsiveness (Richmond & McCroskey, 1990). The assertive behaviour implies a sincere and relatively direct expression of one's own feelings and thoughts, but, at the same time, an expression which takes into account the others' feelings (Lange & Jakubowski, 1976; Rimm & Masters, 1979). Thus, assertiveness presumes a support of one's own opinions in a direct, honest manner, in other words "appropriate", so as not to offend the interlocutor. The concept of assertiveness is operationalized in SCS through 10 traits, out of which we can mention: "independent", "strong", "dominant", "willing to make a decision" or "takes action as a leader".

Responsiveness refers to the capacity of the one participating in a communicational interaction of being empathic and warm, of resonating with the needs and desires of the partner's desires. It should be mentioned that this will to transform interpersonal interaction in a "comfortable" one for the one with whom you communicate must not come before one's own opinions. Responsiveness does not involve total concession of control to the one with whom you are interacting (Richmond & McCroskey, 1985; McCroskey & Richmond, 1996). In the sense noticed by SCS, responsiveness is synonymous with: "open to communication", "empathic", "warm", and "friendly". As is the case with the dimension of assertiveness, responsiveness also comprises of 10 attributes. The scale of the socio-communicative style has proved in previous research a high degree of fidelity. Richmond & McCroskey (1990) have reported high Cronbach's alphas coefficients i.e. α=.90 for assertiveness and α=.91 for responsiveness. In a study regarding the correlation of family types with the socio-communicative style in the Chinese culture (Zhang, 2008), α=.82 was reported for the dimension of assertiveness and α=.85 for responsiveness. In the present study, the socio-communicative style was α=.81 for assertiveness α=.80 for responsiveness.

Procedure

The sample group for the present study is a sample group of convenience, consisting of professionals from the socio-professional networks of the authors. The subjects were chosen both directly, through the snowball method (the questionnaire was further distributed by those who received it directly from the authors to their own respective groups of professionals). The questionnaire was self applied, and the forms have been recovered both directly and through email. The data gathering time frame was November 2011 to January 2012.

Research results

Subjective defining and advantages of supervision

The first variable of the research was aimed on the possible operational definitions of supervision. Respondents had to choose between 9 words/expressions that highlight various aspects of supervision. As one can notice in the table below (Table 1), respondents have given values in the superior part of the evaluation scale (1 = "to a very small extent" and 5 = "to a very significant extent"). The high percentages obtained by the variables "to a significant extent" and "to a very significant extent" suggest the fact that the majority of the concepts proposed to evaluation can be found at the level of representation of the interviewed subjects.

Table 1. The definitions of supervision – percentages obtained (Nâ200)

To what extent do you consider that Supervision involves...	To a very small extent	To a small extent	Somewhat	To a significant extent	To a very significant extent
Counselling	4.6%	5.2%	27.8%	45.9%	16.5%
Emotional support	7.6%	11.2%	25.9%	35.0%	20.3%
Professional support	1.0%	4.5%	10.6%	33.8%	50.0%
Problem solving	6.1%	8.6%	28.3%	36.4%	20.7%
Professional development	1.5%	1.5%	18.4%	36.7%	41.8%
Formation	3.0%	7.0%	11.0%	36.5%	42.5%
Control	9.0%	12.0%	19.5%	35.5%	24.0%
Education	1.5%	11.1%	26.8%	36.9%	23.7%
Learning	-	1.5%	23.7%	34.8%	39.9%

In order to see if behind these concepts there is a connection, we have made an exploratory factorial analysis. The analysis was suitable for the data structure that we had because of: (1) the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO=.609) and (2) Bartlett's test of sphericity (c2 (36) = 454.869, p < .01), which indicate a data structure that can be factorized. A Principal Axis Factor (PAF) with a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation of the 9 Likert scale (the concepts that can define supervision) has indicated the fact that the variables can be structured on 4 dimensions/factors (see Table 2) which explains approximately 75% of the variation of the variables considered.

Table 2. The factorial analysis on the concepts that define supervision

To what extent do you consider that Supervision involves...	Factors			
	1	2	3	4
Professional support	.756			
Professional development	.749			
Formation	.568			.401
Counselling		.900		
Emotional support		.674		
Problem solving		.434		
Education			.745	.409
Learning			.671	
Control				.815

The first factor/dimension of defining supervision from the perspective of respondents is the professional dimension. This incorporates the concepts: "professional support", "professional development", "formation". The second factor highlighted by the initial factorial analysis is the dimension of emotional support and incorporates the concepts: "counseling", "emotional support" and "problem solving". The third factor includes the concepts which focus on the formative dimension: "education" and "learning". The last factor is supervision as a form of control over the supervised. In order to check if the sex of the respondents induces differences as regards the inclusion when defining supervision of one or another of the evaluated concepts, we have used the Mann Whitney U test for the independent sample groups. Three of the nine concepts have been perceived differently (they have been evaluated differently) by the female professionals as opposed to the male professionals. Thus, defining supervision as "professional support" is preferred to a more significant extent by the women than the men (U = 1964, z=-2.552, p = 0.011). "Professional development" is the second aspect which was evaluated differently by the female respondents (Mean rank = 98.32) as opposed to the male respondents (Mean rank = 73.82), and this difference is significant U = 1875, z=-2.535, p = 0.011. A difference in perception is also registered when it comes to defining supervision as "formation". For this concept, the Mann Whitney U = 2065, z = -2.212, p = 0.027 test indicates the fact that this difference is significant.

Using the same nonparametric test, we have checked the differences between psychologists and social assistants as regards the definition of supervision. In Table 3 one can notice the significant differences and the concepts on which the former have been registered.

Table 3. The Mann Whitney U test used for testing the differences between psychologists and social assistants when defining supervision

To what extent do you consider that Supervision involves...	Lots	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	P
Professional development	Social assistants (N=100)	90.72	4031.5	-2.078	0.038
	Psychologists (N=100)	106.44			
Learning	Social assistants (N=100)	88.30	3780	-2.960	0.003
	Psychologists (N=100)	110.93			

To capture the respondents' opinion on the benefits supervision a set of 8 "benefits" have been introduced in the questionnaire that were ranked by order of importance that each respondent assigns to them according to the system of representations. For each of these, we have calculated the mean value and a hierarchy of the benefits of supervision have resulted, as they were perceived by respondents. On the first position is "professional development" and "continuous learning and professional formation" with mean values of 2. The next position is occupied by values with a mean value of 3: "ensures the quality of the services for the clients", "teach you how to practice what you know". The third and fourth positions are occupied by less tangible and less quantifiable advantages: "supports you to pursue in your effort" on the third position (Mdn=4) and "emotional support", "prevents professional stress", "prevents professional exhaustion" (Mdn = 5).

The need for supervision and the supervisor's portrait

As regards the self evaluation of the need for supervision, 94.5% of those interviewed declared that they *need* supervision. Although the percentages are high for both sexes, this need for supervision is acutely felt by women (97.5% women as opposed to 82.4% men consider that they need supervision). This difference is significant ($\chi^2(1) = 12842$, p<0,01). The profession (social assistant or psychologist) does not induce modifications in the perception on the need for supervision. In other words, there is no significant difference ($\chi^2(1) = 0.096$, p>0.05) between the lot of social assistants and the lot of psychologists as regards the need for supervision. Supervision is not seen as a routine activity and this is why the majority of those interviewed (43%) have considered that supervision must be conducted when the need for it arises ("as many times as I feel necessary"). The variants that indicated an activity of recurrent supervision with a certain frequency (once a year, once every six months, one every three months,

once a month, once a week) have obtained small percentages, indicating a certain resistance to mandatory supervision, possibly seen as a form of evaluation.

Although a hierarchy of the reasons for which the subjects do not need supervision, the percentage of those who have stated them is so low (5%) that we cannot consider them representative. Regarding the role that the supervisor must play, 37% of subjects have indicated the fact that he/she must be a mentor, 27% prefer a trainer supervisor and 23% consider that the appropriate role must be that of consultant. The smallest percentage was obtained by the variant "evaluator", with only 7.5%. For two of the evaluated roles, significant differences have been noticed between the male and female respondents. A majority of female respondents (41.8%), as opposed to their male colleagues (17.9%) have indicated the role of mentor as being appropriate for the supervisor. The difference noted is significant $\chi^2(1) = 5.766$; p<0.05. The second role in the case of which a significant difference has been noticed between sexes was the one of evaluator. In this case, the male respondents have considered, to a higher proportion (28.6%) than the female respondents (3.9%) that the supervisor must assume this type of role ($\chi^2(1) = 20.152$; p<0.01).

Table 4. The top of the supervisor's traits (N=200)

How I mostly want the supervisor to be is:	Percentage
Competent	45.2%
Open and co-operant	36.2%
A good advisor	9.0%
To know how to encourage me	4.8%
Worthy of respect	3.2%
A good negotiator	1.6%

The ordering of the social, psychological and professional traits that the supervisor must have, from the perspective of the respondents, shows that competence is the most important (Table 4). The second place is occupied by a psycho-communicational trait: openness and cooperation (36.2%). The third place (with a smaller percentage that the first two) is occupied by "A good advisor" (9%). These traits are valid for all the categories of subjects considered, both for the male and female respondents, but also for the professionals from the field of psychology or social assistance.

The socio-communicational style
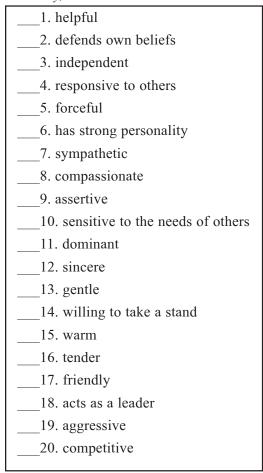
The socio-communicational style measures two dimensions: assertiveness and responsiveness. For each of these dimensions, the scale of the socio-communicational style comprises each 10 personality traits. The respondents from the 2 lots have evaluated the presence of each of the traits from the SCS, in their own communicational behaviour, using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents total

agreement and 5 represents strong disagreement regarding the presence of the respective trait in their own communicational behaviour.

To find out if the value obtained on the dimension of assertiveness by the respondent, we have summed up the values offered by traits 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 14, 18, 19, 20. The other summed traits have offered the value for responsiveness.

Assertiveness-Responsiveness Measure

Directions: The questionnaire below lists twenty personality traits. Please indicate the degree to which you believe each of these traits applies to YOU by marking whether you (5) strongly agree that it applies, (4) agree the it applies, (3) are undecided, (2) disagree that it aplies, or (1) strongly disagree that it applies. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly, record your first impression.

Figure 1. The scale of the socio-communicational style, according to Richmond & McCroskey, 1990

___1. helpful

___2. defends own beliefs

___3. independent

___4. responsive to others

___5. forceful

___6. has strong personality

___7. sympathetic

___8. compassionate

___9. assertive

___10. sensitive to the needs of others

___11. dominant

___12. sincere

___13. gentle

___14. willing to take a stand

___15. warm

___16. tender

___17. friendly

___18. acts as a leader

___19. aggressive

___20. competitive

At this level of the analysis, we wished to compare the average values obtained by the professionals from the fields of social assistance and psychology on the dimensions of assertiveness and responsiveness from the SCS. A significant difference has been noticed between social assistants M=28.53, SD=7.60) and psychologists (M=25.48, SD=6.23) in connection to responsiveness. The difference between the average values is significant t(190)=3.10; p<0.01. It can be stated that, at least in the case of our lots, social assistants are more open, "warm" in their communicational interactions than the psychologists. This difference is strengthened by the difference between the two lots on the scores obtained on the dimension of assertiveness on the SCS. In this case, the psychologists (M=30.04, SD=7.47) are more assertive than the social assistants (M=27.32, SD=6.52). The value of the t test indicates the fact that this difference is significant t(194)=-2.72; p<0,01. Both in the case of assertiveness and of responsiveness, no significant differences have been noted according to the gender variable. In other words, it cannot be stated that the female respondents are more responsive that the male respondents, which invalidates the assertions made by Bem (1974), who associated responsiveness with the female sex (calling it femininity) and assertiveness with the male sex (calling it masculinity). We have tested if there are differences between those who declare that they need supervision as opposed to those who do not find it necessary. We did not notice any significant differences, which leads us to state that the people who identify their need for supervision are not more assertive than the people who declare that they do not manifest such a need (t(198)=1.37; p=0.17).

Conclusions

Supervision of professionals from our national social services is an essential professional intervention, as a practical and efficient way of ensuring high quality in social services. For the professionals from the social services, current social work with the person in difficulty is even more loaded with emotional tension, professional stress, feelings of insecurity and doubt. All these aspects can lead the professional to a feeling of personal or professional dissatisfaction and, sooner or later, he/she can reach professional exhaustion. *The need for supervision* "is born from the supervisor's insecurity, from the need for protection against stress, from the lack of experience and the feeling of great responsibility that works with the human being that needs specialized help" (Muntean, 2007: 117). The Romanian government institution and NGOs are responsible for ensuring quality services to their clients through the supervision of professionals. *Supervision* also constitutes a means of protection against risks, both for professionals and for their clients. Conducting supervision of the professionals from the social services represents a guarantee of the quality of these services. Efficient *supervision* must meet and

intertwine the needs of the supervisors in practical activities, to offer emotional and professional support and, at the same time, to offer practical and concrete help in assisting the supervised so that they can be capable of helping their clients in an efficient and significant way. "In the interventions from the psychological, social and medical fields, which require supervision, the instrument of the intervention is represented by the professional" (Muntean, 2007:108). The need for supervision of the professionals from the social field also appears due to the complexity of the clients' problems and due to their changing behaviour. For the professionals from the social services, supervision is indispensable as a way of continuous learning specifically from experience. An increasing number of professionals from the social services begin to perceive *supervision* as a healthy undertaking, of mental and professional equilibrium, for the professionals and to increase the quality of social services that they offer to their clients in difficulty.

Following our research, conducted on the professionals from the social services that work directly with the client, the following specific conclusions: 1) Supervision has an operational definition that comprises to a great extent the concepts proposed for evaluation. Thus, it can be said that supervision is a vaguely represented term in the thinking of the professionals from the social services, where one can also notice this multidimensionality of its defining; 2) Defining supervision can be realized on 4 dimensions: (a) a professional definition in which supervision is considered to be inherent to the process of integration and professional development; (b) a dimension of emotional support; (c) a dimension of learning, which aims towards supervision as a form of education and learning; (d) and the last dimension is control. It should be mentioned that on this dimension of control high percentages have accumulated in this superior area of the scale (19.5% "somewhat", 35.5% "to a significant extent" and 24% "to a very significant extent") which indicates a stereotype human representation of supervision as a form of evaluation, of control with possible professional repercussions. The dimensions have been identified with the help of an exploratory factorial analysis. The method of extraction used was Principal Axis Factoring. The factors extracted explain 75% of the variation of the variables. The explicative model is adequate to the data: KMO = .609; 3) The advantages of supervision are placed in a hierarchy order from the tangible and pragmatic to the intangible and, thus, more difficult to evaluate. At the pragmatic end of this continuum, two measurable advantages can be found at the level of the supervised: "professional development" and "professional learning and formation". In the area of the vague advantages, one can find aspects such as: "emotional support", "prevents professional stress", "prevents professional exhaustion". For the latter one, the mean values (Mdnâ5) indicate a weaker valuing as advantages of supervision; 4) The roles that the supervision must have with the supervised are registered as a continuum from the paternal role (the mentor role indicated by the 37%) to the one of evaluator (indicated by the 7.5%). The middle variants, which together would sum up to

more percentages (50%) represent the supervisor as an educator, as a person who transfers the necessary knowledge to the professional development and who ensures professional support in key situations. The female respondents consider in a higher proportion than the male respondents that the role of mentor is more appropriate to the supervisor ($\chi^2(1)$=5.766; p<0,05). On the other hand, the men, to a higher extent than the women, also consider that the supervisor can also be an evaluator ($\chi^2(1) = 20.152$; p<0,01); 4) The analysis has revealed the fact that there is no connection between the need for supervision and the socio-communicational style of the respondents. Both the persons that had a high score on the dimension of assertiveness and those who self defined themselves as respondents consider, in equal measure, that they need supervision.

Today, *supervision* is a concept increasingly more used in all the fields of activity: team supervision, elections supervision, student supervision, crisis supervision etc., which makes us understand that supervision has become more and more interesting in any field of activity. The applicative study that focused on the professionals from the social services in Romania certifies the fact that both social assistants and psychologists who work with the human factor in difficulty *need supervision*. Furthermore, the research also highlights the fact that this need has started to be recognized, perceived and acknowledged in a direct and personal way as a professional necessity, increasingly valued and cherished through the advantages that *supervision* brings for the professional, for the institution and, at the same time, for the direct beneficiary, by offering high quality social services.

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