Clinical Supervision in Contemporary Organizations

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Overview

○ Clinical supervision in social work: definitions and historical traditions
○ Impact of supervision – empirical results
○ Organizational context
○ Enduring characteristics – empirical findings
○ New approaches

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Clinical supervision in social work: Historical traditions

○ Workers are hired by an agency to do a job and supervisors over-see that the job is done well.
○ Education and support as well as administrative functions
○ Agency accountability and professional development of social worker

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Supervision Defined

o *...A staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate the on-the-job performance of supervisees for whose work he or she is held **accountable**. In implementing this responsibility, the supervisor performs **administrative, educational and supportive** functions in interaction with the supervisee in the context of a positive **relationship**. The supervisor's ultimate objective is to deliver to agency clients the best possible service both quantitatively and qualitatively, in accordance with agency policies and procedures. (Kadushin, 1976, p.21; 2002, p. 23)*

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Components of Supervision

SupportiveSupervision   AdministrativeSupervision

EducationalSupervision

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Administrative

o Case assignment
o Monitoring - assessment, intervention planning, and ongoing work
o Ensure social workers implement agency policy and procedures and work within the structure of the agency
o Evaluate the worker's performance and participates in decisions about the supervisee's career advancement and salary increases

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Education

o Develop professional capacity of supervisees through enhancing their knowledge and skills

o Develop greater worker self-awareness

o Methods: Direct teaching and reflective discussion.

Support

o Help the worker handle emotional and social job-related stress

o Provide encouragement, reassurance, and appropriate autonomy

o Enhance staff morale and job satisfaction of social workers.

Interpersonal Dimensions

o The working relationship between client-worker and worker-supervisor-also referred to as parallel process

o More credible when supervisor's use of authority was based on skill rather than simply position

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Clarifications

o Clinical supervision focuses on the dynamics of the client situation, the social worker's interventions, and interactions between worker and client
o Less focus on agency
o Supervision and clinical supervision increasingly used interchangeably

Clarifications

o Not field instruction/education of students
o Consultant rather than supervisor – no authority or evaluation role
o Mentor or coach
o Peer supervision – a misnomer

Impact of Supervision

o Meta-analysis
o 27 studies of supervision
  • child welfare
  • social work
  • mental health
o Supervision contributed to positive and negative worker outcomes.

(MorBarak, M. E., Travis, D. J., Pyun, H., & Xie, B., 2009).

Impact of Supervision

o Task assistance
o Social and emotional support
o Supervisory interpersonal interaction

Task Assistance

o Educational, training, and instructional activities
o Provide workers with:
  • Tangible advice
  • Knowledge
  • Coaching
  • New or advanced skills
  • Solutions to respond to their work.

Support

Listening to and relating in a supportive manner to:
  • workers' emotional needs
  • job-related stress, confusion, and feelings of being overwhelmed.

Interaction- Relationship

Interaction refers to workers' perceptions of:
- the quality of the relationship with the supervisor in general, and
- their satisfaction with their supervisor or supervision.

Beneficial Effects

o Increased:
- job satisfaction,
- organizational commitment
- retention,
- job performance,
- psychological well-being such as increased self-confidence and empowerment.

Detrimental Effects

o Related to:
- intention to leave
- turnover
- job stress
- burnout
- negative psychological well-being such as depression and anxiety.

Key Finding

- "The results indicate that the task-assistance dimension has the strongest link to beneficial work outcomes" (MorBarak et al., 2009) p. 27.

- The key component for clinical leadership is content, practice knowledge and expertise of the clinical supervisor. Only with this expert knowledge can the leader/supervisor have legitimacy and influence.
(Bogo et al., in review)

- Implications:
  - Expertise and content knowledge
  - Leader in evidence based practice
  - Ability to teach

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Organization Context

Hospitals – program management
- Less supervision
- More use of practice councils

Mental health – program management
- More interprofessional supervision
- More use of groups

Child welfare – transformation
- From administration to clinical

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Organization Context

Children's Mental Health
- Less time for live supervision and reflecting team?

Aging
- US study found little supervision.

In jurisdictions that require supervision for licensing, social workers purchase private 'supervision.'

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Impact of Organization on Supervision

o Findings from empirical studies
o Organizational downsizing and cutbacks leads to a cycle
  • More demands, stress re:time
  • Fear job security
  • Reluctant to ask for help from supervisor "it is important to appear skilled and competent."

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Organization Culture

o Culture of fear or of learning
o Making mistakes, being blamed for 'not knowing,' and being judged
o Learning organization
o Standards of practice

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Organization Culture

o It is the response of the organization that will determine whether the disclosure of error leads to better practice or to a culture of fear
o Education and remediation is preferred to punishment and sanction
o Consequences must be seen as just

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Organization can…

- Provide supervision and clear definition of the role.
- Provide intensive training on new models that will improve client outcome and worker sense of competence
- New models are reinforced in supervision that focuses on using new knowledge and developing new skills.

Enduring Characteristics Structure

- Available, regular and un-interrupted supervision which creates a safe, confidential holding environment
- And 'when I need it.'

Enduring Characteristics Content

- New knowledge to practice more effectively - target "things that you are lacking."
- New treatment modalities and the related skill set are learned: evidence-based practice
- Supervisor has expert content knowledge
- Gain competence and hence confidence
- Themes relevant to the setting – e.g. safety and self-care

Enduring Characteristics
Content

- ○ Provide expert input about "stuck places"
- ○ Reflect on practice and social worker's feelings rather than only strategize the "next intervention" or client plan.
  - feelings, response to diversity, awareness of anti-oppressive practice dynamics.
  - struggles as clinicians, counter-transference issues
- ○ Explore issues in depth

Enduring Characteristics:
Teaching Techniques

Teaching techniques
- ○ Concrete experience
  - Video review
  - Going out with workers on cases
  - Observing workers and clients behind one way mirrors
- ○ Reflective observation
  - Specific feedback, reinforcement, prasie
  - Discussion and review
- ○ Linkage to a knowledge base
  - Conceptualization
  - Explanation

Enduring Characteristics:
Teaching Techniques

- ○ Preparation for next intervention
  - Skill training
  - Role play
  - Observation of expert
  - Demonstration
  - Coaching
  - Review client goals and progress
- ○ Planning
  - Assessment of competence
  - Identify learning goals and activities for achievement
  - Evaluation of progress

Enduring Characteristics:
The Relationship

o Supervision needs to be a safe place to learn and grow
o Supervisors have faith in workers' capacity – encourage growth and development, promote self-efficacy
o Importance of feeling validated and accepted e.g. "what you're doing is really great but you could also look at it from this angle."

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Enduring Characteristics:
The Relationship

o Reciprocal partnership exists with the supervisor (this models a parallel process with clients)
o There is respect for the stage a person is at in their career – delegate responsibility and encourage autonomy appropriately
o Supervisor is seen as a role model

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Supervisors' Role as Evaluator

o Supervisors also play the role of manager and evaluator: time consuming, must transition quickly from one role to another – need dialogue and transparency with workers.
o Dual role can inhibit open discussion

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Formats

o Individual
o Supervision group
o Individual and group
o Peer group
o Interprofessional supervision – frequently with a service team

"New approaches"
Group Supervision

o Mutual aid processes important
  • Feedback from peers
  • Sharing information
  • Learning from others
  • Exposure to multiple perspectives
  • Peer support
o Group supervisors who were perceived as competent in promoting mutual aid were valued.

Group Supervision

o Negative factors in group supervision:
  • Large group (mean=6; range up to 15-20)
  • Spending more time on administrative issues
  • Conflict in group – only small percentage
o Job satisfaction of workers in group supervision was influenced by:
  • Perceived quality of supervision
  • Perceived view of organizational support
  • Perception of supervisor's skill

Inter-professional Supervision

o With the team
- Stable
- Small
- Have low turn-over
- Are cohesive

Inter-professional Supervision

o Value
- Feel supported by colleagues, they are "in it together"
- Richness of various perspectives and diverse knowledge
- Feel they learn from one another
- Availability of immediate assistance when needed
- Some professions valued team supervision more than discipline-specific supervision which was experienced as fault-finding

Conclusions

o Social workers continue to value supervision
o It promotes positive worker outcomes
o Yet to demonstrate link to client outcomes
o Challenges relate to time, resources, and role of evaluation

Conclusions

○ Importance of organizational support for supervision and atmosphere of continuous professional learning

○ Appoint as supervisors those with practice expertise

○ New supervisors need training in the process of supervision
- Concepts about teaching and learning
- Relationship dynamics
- Teaching techniques

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