

# Counselling Supervision

## Lecture 2

### Functions of Counselling Supervision

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## **Lecture Two Outline**

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### **2.1 Introduction**

In this lecture, we will focus on the functions of counselling supervision and the scope of counselling supervision. We will differentiate between counsellor supervisor and administrative supervisor. We will also discuss the roles and responsibilities of both the supervisor and the supervisee.

### **2.2 Expected Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

- a) Discuss the functions and scope of counselling supervision.
- b) Differentiate between counsellor supervision and administrative supervision.
- c) Discuss the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and supervisee.

### **2.3 Functions of Counselling Supervision**

Generally, supervision satisfies a number of functions in practice. These may be in relation to the supervisee emotional competence, needs of a supportive nature, knowledge and skills competence, needs of educative or learning needs as well as service management needs which may be administrative in nature. Some of the functions includes:

### **Support (Restorative)**

During counselling supervision session, the counsellors have an opportunity where they can discharge emotions and recharge energies. Counsellors reflect on personal issues that may hinder their capacity to provide effective services to clients and at the same time receive support to manage such issues constructively. This restores counsellor's ability to continue working with the clients.

### **Education (Formative)**

The counsellor receives information on new counselling trends, and on use of skills or updates on policy matters. They are able to reflect on their way of working with clients and to ensure they maintain ethical practice. It is also an opportunity to receive feedback and challenge on the quality of their practice.

The supervisor role is to instruct supervisees on assessment, diagnosis, counselling approaches and skills, ethics and legal issues that arise in supervision. Education may include assigning readings, suggesting a literature search on a specific topic, offering suggestions for attending workshops, and discussing with the supervisee any topic. Education includes teaching, which is experiential and demonstrates a technique. Stebnicki (2008) clarified the role of supervisor as educator when he stated that one of his or her primary responsibilities is "to facilitate supervisory approaches that will maximize the supervisee's ability to become a skilled, competent and ethical counselling professional".

### **Administrative (Normative):**

Administrative roles are a necessary part of the supervisory relationship. In the administrative role, supervisors are responsible not only to and for their supervisees and their supervisees' clients but to their entire service delivery unit (Gottlieb, Robinson, & Younggren, 2007). Supervisors must attend to policies and procedures of the organization or setting, licensing body, or professional association. This could include dealing with legal and ethical matters, supervising client documentation, attending to billing matters, assisting the supervisee in learning ways to cope with bureaucracies, assuring adherence of the supervisee to licensing regulations, and reviewing with the supervisee the legal requirements involved in reporting potential violence or suspected abuse.

Counsellor supervision can help account for the counsellors' practice in relation to the nature of services offered, number of clients seen over given periods of time, factors hindering the provision of quality counselling services, the use of available resources such as copies of guidelines, space for counselling, record keeping and data tools.

Supervision captures issues of interpersonal conflict among staff that could affect good practice and communicate with line management. Through counselling supervision, counsellors negotiate for manageable client workload, time and space.

### **Evaluation of Casework:**

Evaluation of the supervisee is a primary responsibility in supervision. Supervisors are ethically required to provide the supervisee with regular and systematic feedback and evaluation (ACA, 2005; NASW, 2008). As evaluator, supervisors typically serve as gatekeepers for their profession. Behnke (2005) stated that as gatekeeper, the supervisor has significant input into whether a supervisee qualifies as a counselling professional. Evaluation is by assessing client needs, outcomes and approaches. It promotes quality care and ensures standards.

### **1.4 Scope of Counsellor Supervision**

The ultimate scope of counsellor supervision is to do that which is necessary to assure that the supervisee's current and future clients receive the best services available. The scope of legal and ethical responsibility in counsellor supervision is far-reaching. The supervisor is legally and ethically responsible for all of the professional activities of the supervisee as well as his or her own actions as a supervisor (ASPPB, 1998). Practically, this means that supervisors must have some knowledge of all the clinical activities and cases of the supervisee and be available to provide supervision as needed (ACA, 2005).

Bernard and Goodyear (2009) suggested that three main purposes of supervision are fostering the supervisee's professional development, ensuring client welfare, and empowering the supervisee to self-supervise. Supervisory responsibilities can also be described as either administrative or clinical. According to Campbell (2006), "administrative supervisors and counsellor supervisors function under two separate models with different purposes, different missions, and different rule books". Utilizing a business management model, administrative supervisors focus on maintaining a well-functioning organization and are concerned with productivity, workload management, and

accountability. Counsellor supervisors have a teaching, training, mentoring, and monitoring position, which involves helping trainees to develop and maintain competence.

A study by Tromski-Klingshirn and Davis (2007) found that supervisees who received both administrative and counsellor supervision from the same supervisor reported overall satisfaction with their supervisors and did not view this dual role as problematic. It seems that these functions do not conflict and can be carried out ethically and competently by the same supervisor.

## 2.5 Differences between roles of Counsellor Supervisor and Administrative Supervisor

Counsellor Supervisor	Administrative Supervisor/Manager
Provides emotional support	Provides managerial support
Deals with the issues that affect the counsellor's work	Deals primarily with work related issues
Provides opportunities for the transfer of knowledge and skills	If contracted by the workplace, could recommend further training opportunities on behalf of the counsellor
Should provide on-the-job training and professional development opportunities	Gives counsellor open and honest feedback on performance with regard to counselling knowledge and skills
In some cases (subject to contractual agreement), may give general feedback on performance to workplace	Provides feedback on work performance to senior management
Provides guidance to case management and facilitates skills development	Manages administrative work-related issues
Deals with any ethical issues in relation to counselling practice	Deals with ethical issues only as they pertain to organizational policy and procedure
Acts as resource for upgrading knowledge and skills and keeping abreast of current developments in counselling.	Acts as resource for information on national and organizational policy and protocols

## **2.6 Roles and Responsibilities of the Supervisor**

Counselling supervision entails a multitude of roles for the supervisor. The NASW (1994) Guidelines for Clinical Social Work Supervision and the ACES (1993) Ethical Guidelines for Counselling Supervisors provide comprehensive lists of the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor. The role of the supervisor is a composite of many roles, and these roles change as the focus of supervision changes. Competent supervisors have a clear idea of their role in any given situation, why they are serving in that role, and what they hope to accomplish with the supervisee.

A skilled supervisor is able to sort out the supervisory needs in various situations and assist supervisees with their work in a manner consistent with client needs and agency policy. Ethical supervisors do not relax their supervision requirements for a supervisee in terms of frequency and content of supervision because they assume the supervisee is clinically competent based on the supervisee's education or experience. A number of authors have defined the major roles in which supervisors function. AlleCorliss and Alle-Corliss (2006) compiled a list of typical supervisory roles based on their experience that includes teacher, model, evaluator, mentor, counselor, and adviser. Bernard and Goodyear (2009) summarized the supervisory roles suggested by several authors whose work has been most influential. A supervisor's role is that of teacher, counselor, and consultant. Less frequently mentioned roles are evaluator and administrator.

Offering counselling to supervisees is not a typical role of a supervisor. It is not appropriate for a supervisor to assume a primary role as a counsellor. However, on occasion, the supervisor may address the supervisee's personal issues as they affect the supervisee's counselling work. There are many commonalties among the various descriptions of the supervisor's role, and no one role is correct for all situations. Much depends on the supervisor, the supervisee, the setting, the client, and the professional and ethical standards that apply to the role of the supervisor in that setting. According to Corey et. al, (2006) the supervisor's theory of supervision is a factor in determining appropriate roles and responsibilities. The following are roles of a supervisor; teacher or coach, administrator, mentor, evaluator, consultant, recorder and documenter, counsellor, empowerer, advocate and adviser (Corey et al 2006)

**Mentor:** The supervisor plays the role of a trusted guide for the supervisee. The mentor role includes providing direction and guidance for supervisees and assisting them with assessing their current abilities and desired goals as counsellors. Johnson (2007) defined mentoring as “a personal relationship in which a more experienced faculty member or a counsellor supervisor acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced student or supervisee. A mentor provides the protégé with knowledge, advice, counsel, challenge, and support in the protégé’s pursuit of becoming a full member of a particular profession”. Johnson (2007) summarized the characteristics of mentors by stating they are typically kind, healthy, and competent.

**Consultant:** The supervisor may consult with the supervisee to resolve a problem or to help the supervisee make a decision, such as choosing the best treatment approach for a client. There is general agreement that the goal of all consultation is to solve problems in order to help people work more effectively. Dougherty (2009) defined consultation as “a process in which a human service professional assists a consultee with a work-related or caretaking-related problem with a client system, with the goal of helping both the consultee and the client system in some specified way”. Consultants assist consultees with immediate problems and offer solutions for similar problems that may occur in the future.

**Counsellor:** According to Corey, Corey, and Callanan (2011) there seems to be basic agreement in the literature that the proper focus of the supervision process is on the supervisee’s professional development rather than on his or her personal concerns. Becoming the supervisee’s therapist creates a conflict of interest, but there are times when the supervisor serves the supervisee well, by functioning as a counsellor as long as boundaries are maintained. The supervisor can help the supervisee deal with issues of personal strengths and weaknesses as they relate to the supervisee’s practice as a counsellor, explore countertransference issues, and cope with stress and burnout.

**Adviser:** Although the primary approach in supervision is to empower supervisees to learn how to make their own decisions, occasions do arise in which giving advice about a situation is in order. Issues surrounding suicide, dangerousness, duty to warn, court appearances, and treating minors may require direct intervention by the supervisor with the supervisee.

**Recorder and documenter:** Another role of the supervisor is that of recorder of supervisory sessions. This is essential for the protection of the supervisee and the supervisor. It is good practice

for a supervisor to keep track of what the supervisee is bringing to supervision. In clinical social work, Coleman (2003) note that “documentation is important in supervision and verifies that the service actually occurred. It is not unusual for licensure boards, insurance carriers, and professional entities, to request verification of supervision”. Supervisees should sign a written contract at the start of the supervision process. The following documents are important; dates and duration of each face-to-face supervision session; an outline of each session, including questions and concerns, progress towards learning goals, recommendations, and resources; a follow-up plan with rationale; cancellations of sessions; dates of all telephone and electronic contacts and the nature of each contact. Professional practice entails maintaining records of every session, including any major issues that arise in the discussion. The confidentiality of those records should be;

Empowerer: The best way to sum up the many roles of the supervisor is as empowerer of the supervisee. To empower is “to enable, give another the ability and authority to do something” (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2009). One role of the supervisor is to help the supervisee solve immediate counselling issues, but ultimately, the supervisor’s function is to teach supervisees how to handle challenges and to know when to seek help through consultation. Supervisors serve in many roles, often simultaneously. The role chosen should be a good fit with the purpose of the supervisory context. It is important for a supervisor to be aware of the role he or she is functioning in and why.

Advocate: Increasingly, social justice and advocacy is a major concern for all counsellors (Roysircar, 2009; Steele, 2008). Since marginalized clients are often oppressed to some degree by the dominant society, counsellors can do a great deal to further the welfare of their clients by both speaking on their behalf and teaching them skills to become advocates for themselves. One role of a supervisor is to address with supervisees how they can begin thinking in terms of advocating for their clients.

The relationship between the supervisor and supervisee brings responsibilities for both. A main shared responsibility is to monitor counsellor standards and the supervisee’s competency in

handling challenging issues while maintaining ethical practice. The supervisor's main responsibilities are to:

- Discuss the supervisee and supervisor's expectations.
- Create the supervisory context by defining the parameters about what is appropriate to bring to supervision.
- Establish, with the supervisee, a relationship of trust that enables creative thinking and sharing of difficulties and differences.
- Encourage the supervisee to develop his or her unique professional style and approach.
- Define and outline practical details such as location, times, length and frequency of sessions, and payment as applicable.
- Clarify any unique or particular issues of accountability, and responsibility and any conflicts of interest if, for example, the supervisor is the manager as well.
- Take responsibility for discussing how issues of confidentiality are handled, such as links with line managers and other professionals.
- Identify and respond to situations if it emerges that a supervisee is unfit to practice or when challenging dilemmas arise, for example the overconfident supervisee, one who shows incompetence, or one who says 'Yes, but...'.
- Give a different and creative perspective to difficult situations, where this is called for.

The following case studies provides a scenario on the roles and responsibilities of supervisors in different supervision settings. It is important to assess each supervision situation and ensure quality supervision.

### **Case Study: Ryan**

Ryan is a licensed counselling psychologist, he is supervising Mary, who is a PhD holder in counselling but not licensed as a practitioner. In their private practice setting, they work primarily with clients with serious mental illness and with the families of those clients. In his role as a supervisor, Ryan acts as a consultant and peer supervisor to his supervisee because Mary already has her doctorate. Ryan is confident in Mary's abilities and judgment and provides supervision as needed.

## **Case Study: Tony**

Tony is a licensed social worker who is supervising a bachelor's-level counselling trainee in a community college counselling center. Students come to the center for counselling on relationship difficulties, academic performance anxiety, and personal issues such as depression. In his role as supervisor, Tony acts as a teacher, adviser, mentor, and evaluator for his trainees. In this supervisory situation, Tony is the expert, but he must provide opportunities for his supervisees to grow in knowledge and skills through hands-on training as well.

Reflecting on these cases, respond to the following questions;

- i) How are Ryan and Tony's role appropriate for their situations?
- ii) Which supervisory role would you be more comfortable with in the two case studies?

## **2.7 Roles and Responsibilities of the Supervisee**

The supervisee has responsibilities that include:

- Discuss, from the outset, any particular requirements or issues that might affect the supervisory relationship such as obligation to have supervision for registration or training, completing supervision reports, cultural or gender restrictions.
- Reach an understanding with the supervisor about the main aims and objectives of supervision at his/her stage of practice and experience, and being clear about any particular needs such as development of specific skills or theoretical ideas.
- Consider how to deal with any serious concerns, such as finding the supervisor 'incompetent' or unhelpful, in the absence of separate line manager.
- Be prepared for sessions meaning having cases organized and thought given to dilemmas.
- Respect the supervisor's time, which requires attending on time and being prepared. Clarity about responsibilities helps when it comes to choosing a supervisor and selecting a supervisee.

## 2.8 Summary

In this lecture, we have discussed the functions and scope of counselling supervision; we have identified the difference between counsellor supervision and administrative supervision. We have explored the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and supervisee.

## 2.9 Further Reading

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