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Evaluation of Supervision Practice of the Social Services provided to Elderly in Home Care Centre

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Abstract

In this paper we propose to explore and analyze the social services offered to elderly in Home Care Centre. An important role is overseeing the proposal of the supervision process into the centre, for improving the quality of the services provided to beneficiaries. Attention will be placed also to a number of skills and qualities that a successful supervisor need to have. The main data from this research have been acquired by the application of qualitative research techniques such as: interview, focus group and "observer participant" technique. Also we will offer a series of recommendations for the supervisors that works along with social workers in providing quality services to elderly.

Keywords

supervision, elderly care services, Home Care Centre, supervision guide

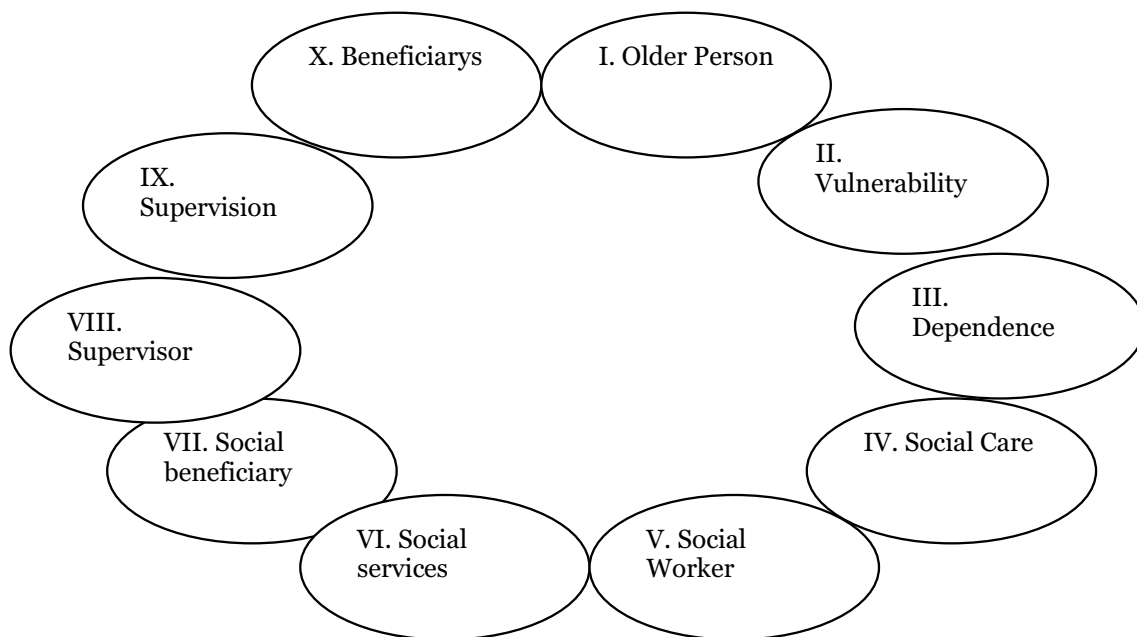
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In countries with a large tradition, the experience of supervision has long been considered one of the most important aspects of professional development in general, and of the practitioners in social services in particular.

Beneficiaries of welfare services always come with new needs, have different value systems, because of differences of vulnerable situations that are in today's society (Ponea, Sandu, 2010). Because of this diversity, social services must be very stringent with professional values and simultaneously has to respect the recipients' plurality of needs. In this respect, the supervision process realized at a high level represents the opportunity of a continuous training of the entire staff of the organization, and the increasing of efficiency of services provided to beneficiaries, considering the permanent changes (Ponea, 2010). We considered as necessary to adapt all the service which are provided to recipients of social services in line with the identified needs.

Social practice can be interpreted first as an opportunity to improve social services and as a way of development, both professional and personal, of the social services practitioners (Dawson, 1926, Hawkins, Shohet, 1989, Brill, 1990, Cojocaru, 2007).



The term „supervision” is a combination of two Latin words: „super”, which means „over, above”, and „videre” meaning „to see, to look”, and was built to describe a surveillance activity for a more efficient work in the organization, especially for people that were less trained or for volunteers (Hardcastle, 1991, Cojocaru, 2005).

Supervision is defined as an educational process (Haynes, Corey, Moulton, 2003) in which a person that knows more information and has more

skills is assuming the responsibility to teach another person (Itzhaky, Aloni, 1996) with less knowledge (Robinson, 2001).

Supervision is:

- - An exchange of experience as a form of adult learning;
- - A formal framework for exchange of experience;
- - Way to support of daily work;
- - Way of monitoring and evaluation of the work and the adult learning;
- - Way of ensuring accountability;
- - "Binder" between theory and practice;

The purpose of supervision

Supervision, as an activity carried out by specialized personnel, aims to promote personal and professional development. The whole process is based on the granting of learning opportunities in order to improve the quality of their work (Kaplan, 1991; Lunden, 2007; Sandu, Cojocaru, Unguru, Ponea, 2010).

Group Supervision (Agapie et al, 2010), as an intervention method, aims to:

- Assessment of primary and secondary effects of work style and the terms related to team communication, as a distinctive part of the organization, and as well to the entire organization;
- Ability to analyze specific situations and to imagine alternative approaches;
- Methods to increase the quantity and quality of the work can be discovered, verified and depth in practice.

Supervision is an essential part of a profession and one of the elements that make the difference between an occupation and a profession (Kadushin, 1976, Bernard & Goodyear, 1998).

Supervision aims to facilitate a clearer perception by participants of their concepts, tools, goals and limits (Kadushin, 1992, Jourdan-Ionescu, 2007). We can therefore say that the heart of supervision is the supervised person. The observing process adapts to the way of thinking of the person which is supervised and provides him tools for the steps to achieve his own goals.

Evaluation of Home Care Center for the elderly

The program resources

- a). Name: Social Work Centre and for Home Care;
- b). Unit Type: socio-medical care at home;
- c). Project justification

This project started from the analysis of home care services practice and also from guided discharge from hospital, where there are cases where very complex and requires professional care, and some of these cases were labeled as purely "medical" or purely "social".

How can we define the situation of an elderly patient, who is home alone, and which is discharged from the hospital after a stroke with serious consequences which left him with a severe motor deficit? Is it a social case or a medical case?

The elders which are dependent or marginalized need a series of services that can be provided in an integrated framework as a socio-medical office. This has been proven over the years through initiatives of NGOs in the field.

- d) The purpose and the project objectives

This project aims to improve the life quality, integration degree and social participation of elders by providing specialized home care services and organizing social activities for elderly.

The main objective

Social Work Center and Home Care aims to improve quality of life for people that are facing health and social problems, by promoting a system of specialized home care services, supported by community partnerships and funds rising.

The research hypotheses

The research hypotheses aim the following aspects:

- Specialists are familiar with the concept of supervision, having their own opinion about this process;
- Specialists consider that is necessary the involving of a supervisor in the service concerned;
- Specialists consider that the implementation of supervision process would have a positive impact on the activities offered to beneficiaries.

The purpose of the research

In this research we wish to emphasize the need of supervision in the process of home care service.

The research objectives

The objectives of this research are:

- Evaluation of theoretical and practical knowledge of the interviewed subjects with respect on supervision;
- Measurement of the permeability level of supervision in Home Care Centre;
- Estimation of the impact of establishing a supervisory post in Home Care Centre;
- Construction of methodological tools for supervisors.

The target group consists of:

- Project Manager of the Care Home Centre;
- Two social workers from the Care Home Centre;
- A carer at home from the Care Home Centre;
- A nurse from the Care Home Centre.

The target group is formed by those who are trying to improve the life quality of older people who are home cared, and also want to cover a large palette of needs.

We chose one representative of each position of this service, considering that they know best the difficulties faced in the provision of services at home, if they "need" or not the intervention of a supervisor.

Population targeted:

The direct beneficiaries of the service are represented by elderly people and their extended family.

Design methodology

The research is qualitative

Agabrian mention that the "accuracy" of date, when we use qualitative research, does not refer to the number of subjects investigated, but to the quantity and richness of information gathered from each" (cf. Branc, 2008, p: 88).

The techniques used

As a qualitative research, the techniques used are: the technique "participant observer", structured interview and focus group.

Technique "participant observer"

The technique "participant observer" involves in research of one or more subjects, who collect and transmit to the sociologist the data on their life and work group "(Miftode, 2004a:130).

During each research "is good to have an ally on the spot" (Miftode, 2004b:129).

Of course, the information obtained from these observers should be viewed with more confidence and also with many reservations; because they are too involved and too closely tied to the community they are investigated. The data volume offered to the researcher can be subjectively and therefore unrepresentative.

Utilization of "participant observer" is a form of cooperation between theorist and practitioner who must accept and abide by the rules imposed by a scientific study (Miftode, 2004a:131).

The interview

Playing a Supporting Role in a sociological investigation, interview technique is intended to provide us with additional and complementary data on the topic, or data that supports or call in question the conclusions based on direct observation or documentation (Miftode, 2004b: 244).

During the interview we generally use open questions as to allow the interviewee a wider expression of his views, and an accurate description of the problems they face (Sandu, 2002, p: 78).

Focus Group Technique

Simone Branc (2008) identifies three categories of limitations of the focus group, as following:

- A first category is derived from the qualitative nature of the investigation and is linked to poor statistical relevance;
- A second category of limitations arising from the moderation of these interviews which is extremely complex, and the outcomes depends more by work of the moderator, than in usual interviews;
- The third category of limits is the most important and refers to various group, such as polarization effects (exaggerated opinions and attitudes

expressed, the effect of pressure groups), the effect of herd, conformity to group norms, group contagion, etc.

Through focus group we can obtain qualitative data that capture the behavior of individuals, perceptions rather than quantitative information, and qualitative opinions with numerical value (Larson, Grundens-Schuck, Lundz, 2004, Sandu, 2009).

In this research we used the focus group technique to obtain the necessary data for validation the supervision protocol for Home Care Service.

The participants in the focus group were represented by supervisors within the Supervision and Social Planning, from "Al. I. Cuza" University, Iasi, Romania, They were both supervisors and supervisees who are working in different social services in Iasi.

The observation grid contain seven items that have to be noted by the "observer participants" concerning to the professional relationships that are between the centre specialists. The "observer participant" studies his own by observing the other members.

The Interview Guide contains 10 questions.

Through the first question we want to underscore the position of the specialist in the Home Care Centre.

Question number 2 - shows the specialist experience in Home Care Centre.

Question Number 3 - highlights the activity made by the social service professionals.

Question number 4 - we want to find out what knowledge about the supervision process the practitioners have (if they heard of this term before, if they know what it means) .

Question Number 5 - reveals how experts would see this process of supervision in their organization.

Question Number 6 - highlights what should do a supervisor in his activity to meet the highest standards of quality.

Question No. 7 - shows the problems (difficulties) faced by professionals in the Center when providing services for elderly.

Question No. 8 - highlights what skills should have a successful supervisor.

Question number 9 - we want to know whether the intervention of a supervisor would influence the quality of services that are provided to elders. If so "how" and if not "why."

Question No. 10 - points out what steps should a supervisor take to maintain its work to the highest standards of quality.

Obtaining the data

For obtaining the necessary data, in this research we used the following: the interview, the "observer participant" technique, and focus group.

Data analysis

We used a qualitative content analysis.

Simona Branc defines content analysis as "a technique for collecting and organizing information in a format that allows researchers to make inferences about the characteristics and meaning of messages (written and oral) and of the artifacts of social communication" (2008, p: 98).

Qualitative content analysis (Livesey, 2006) is based on the constructivist paradigm and seeks to understand the latent meanings of the messages analyzed (Sandu, 2010).

Branc notes as the defining characteristic of content analysis the encoding process, which allows the organization of the categories by marking passages of text with alphanumeric codes, words or phrases (2008, p: 99)

One of the best methods of qualitative data analysis is Grounded theory, which involves the systematic generation of concepts and theories based on the data collected.

"Grounded Theory is an inductive approach that starts with general remarks and during this analytical process is created conceptual categories that explain the explored theme" (Walker, Myrick, 2006; Branc, 2008, p: 86).

The stages of a research based on Grounded Theory (LaRossa, 2005) are the following:

- Simultaneous data collection and analysis;
- Highlighting the themes emerging from early data analysis;
- Discovery of main social processes revealed by the data collected;
- Inductive construction of abstract categories that explain and summarize these processes;
- Sampling for improving the categories through compared process;
- Integrating categories in a theoretical framework that specify causes, conditions and consequences of the studied processes (Sarker, Lau, Sahay, 2001; Branc, 2008, p: 86).

The objective version of "Grounded theory", the meaning is something that to be "discovered" in the data.

For analysis of data obtained in the research, has started from identifying the most important elements and the most relevant objectives, along with the purpose of the work, then we extracted the categories through two successive inductions (Sandu, 2009):

- Keyword extraction derived from the expressions of the interviewed subjects;
- Identifying the categories in which fit the subjects' responses.
- After the interpretation of the categories and sub categories we past to the next step, generating a theoretical model, namely as "Methodological Guide for Supervision."

Qualitative data analysis

Supervision aims to increase the efficiency and professional quality of the services that are offered to beneficiaries.

Throughout their work, social workers face various situations, and often are put in extreme situations to solve various problems raised by beneficiaries.

We believe that the possibility of benefiting of supervision as social workers is an opportunity for professional development and for increasing work quality carried out within the service (Middleman, Rhodes, 1985; Shulman, 1995; Taibbi, 1995; Tsui, 2005).

The data analysis and interpretation of the "Necessity of supervision for Home Care Centre" research Analysis the directions research

For data analysis and interpretations we will consider the following directions:

- Level of theoretical and practical knowledge of interviewed subjects about supervision;
- The impact of establishing a supervisor position in the Home Care Centre;
- Level of permeability of supervision in Home Care Centre.

Subjective analysis

With the help of the three first questions we defined the sample.

According number one and number two questions the experts interviewed are: the project coordinator of Home Care Centre, two social workers, a doctor and a home caregiver, with experience within the social system ranging from 14 months to 3 years.

By question number three we evaluated the professionals' activities. These are:

- Project Coordinator - "I plan the centre activities, coordinate the technical team, monitor and evaluate team activity and the care activity, mediate conflicts among team members, establish and monitor the development of annual budget expenditure, initiate and maintain collaborative relationships with other public and private institutions etc. "
- Social workers - "initial evaluation, action plan preparation, implementation and monitoring. "
- Home caretaker - "visits to elders home, communication with him, cleaning, shopping, general toilet, etc. "
- Doctors - "Medical consultations at home.

Word Frequency Analysis

After analyzing the frequency of words in the interviews we identified the following keywords:

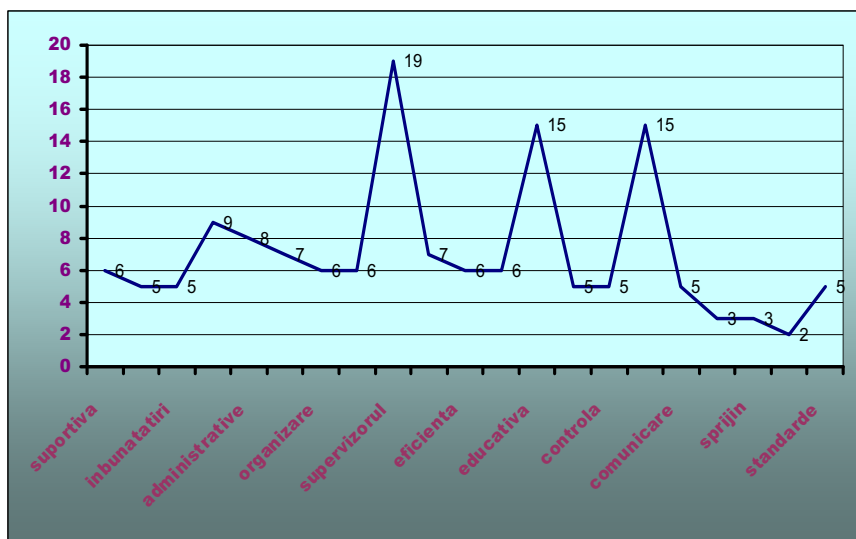
FREQUENCY	WORD	WORD – OTHER FREQUENCIES
33 repetitions in the text	Supervisees	-supervisees - 19 repetitions in the text - the supervisees – 11 repetitions in the text -supervision – 3 repetitions in the text
26 repetitions in the text	Services	-service - 10 repetitions in the text - for the service - 8 repetitions in the text -services - 8 repetitions in the text

19 repetitions in the text	Supervisor	-supervisor – 19- repetitions in the text
15 repetitions in the text	Educational	-educational - 12 repetitions in the text - to educate – 1 repetitions in the text - that educate - 1 repetitions in the text -education - 1 repetitions in the text
15 repetitions in the text	Residency	- residency - 15 repetitions in the text
15 repetitions in the text	Learned	- learned – 8 repetitions in the text -learning – 7 repetitions in the text
15 repetitions in the text	Age	-age - 5 repetitions in the text -elders – 5 repetitions in the text -old person - 1 repetitions in the text -third age - 4 repetitions in the text
9 repetitions in the text	Experience	-experience - 9 repetitions in the text
9 repetitions in the text	Specialist	-specialist - 5 repetitions in the text -specialists - 2 repetitions in the text -the specialist - 2 repetitions in the text
8 repetitions in the text	Administrative	- administrative – 8 repetitions in the text
8 repetitions in the text	Results	- results - 6 repetitions in the text - the results - 2 repetitions in the text
8 repetitions in the text	Supervision	- supervision - 5 repetitions in the text - supervised - 2 repetitions in the text - I supervise - 1 repetitions in the text

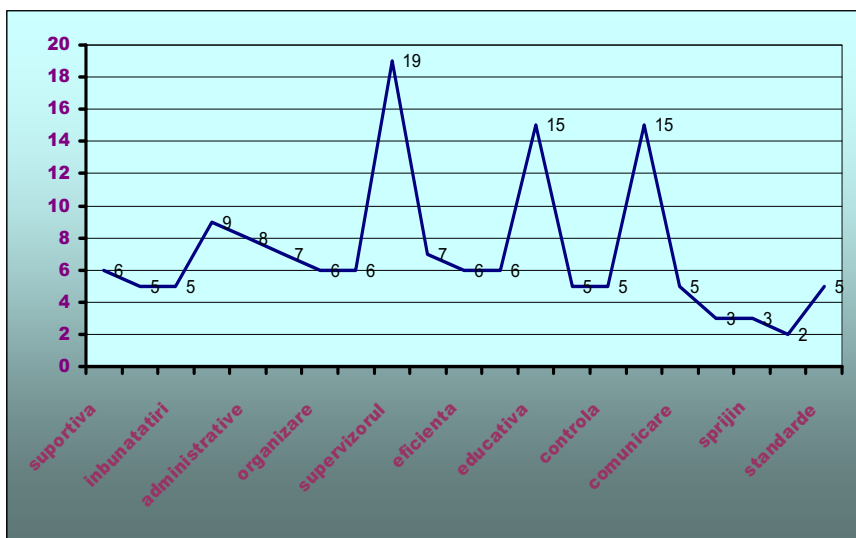
7 repetitions in the text	Development	- the improvement - 2 repetitions in the text - the professionalism - 1 repetitions in the text - professionalism -2 repetitions in the text - professional - 1 repetitions in the text - development - 1 repetitions in the text
7 repetitions in the text	Success	- success - 7 repetitions in the text
7 repetitions in the text	Relationship	- relationship - .7 repetitions in the text
7 repetitions in the text	Need	- need - 7 repetitions in the text
6 repetitions in the text	Quality	-quality - 6 repetitions in the text
6 repetitions in the text	Supportive	- supportive -4 repetitions in the text - support - 2 repetitions in the text
6 repetitions in the text	Care	- care - 6 repetitions in the text
6 repetitions in the text	Organize	- organize - 3 repetitions in the text - organization - 2 repetitions in the text - organized - 1 repetitions in the text
6 repetitions in the text	Efficiency	- efficiency - 4 repetitions in the text -efficient - 2 repetitions in the text
6 repetitions in the text	Evaluate	- evaluate – 3 repetitions in the text - I evaluate - 2 repetitions in the text - evaluation - 1 repetitions in the text

6 repetitions in the text	Benefits	- benefits - 3 repetitions in the text - beneficiary - 1 repetitions in the text - beneficiary - 2 repetitions in the text
5 repetitions in the text	Coordinator	- coordinator - 2 repetitions in the text - the coordination - 2 repetitions in the text - I coordinate - 1 repetitions in the text
5 repetitions in the text	Success	- success - 5 repetitions in the text
5 repetitions in the text	Standards	- standards - 5 repetitions in the text
5 repetitions in the text	Control	- to control -.2 repetitions in the text - control - 2 repetitions in the text - the control - 1 repetitions in the text
5 repetitions in the text	Improvement	- improvements - 3 repetitions in the text - the improvement - 2 repetitions in the text
5 repetitions in the text	Communication	- communication - 5 repetitions in the text
3 repetitions in the text	Monitoring	- monitoring - 3 repetitions in the text
3 repetitions in the text	Help	- help - 1 repetitions in the text - helping - 2 repetitions in the text
2 repetitions in the text	Stimulate	- stimulate - 2 repetitions in the text
2 repetitions in the text	Intervene	- intervene - 2 repetitions in the text

b) Graphic representation of keywords



According to the interviews analysis, the specialists consider that supervision is necessary for the centre. The supervisor must intervene (through support, training and expert guidance) in realizing the objectives of the services offered to elders, so that the social worker's work be materialize in results of maximum efficiency, and the customers enjoy the benefits of supervision.



The interviewed experts focus primarily on two of the functions of supervision: educational function and supportive function.

Most recommended activities in the supervisor work are: support, monitoring, organization, management, coordination, communication, evaluation and control (Unguru, Sandu, 2010).

For the supervisor practice with efficiency, you must undertake certain essential elements; for example, the interviewed experts in the centre emphasize the following: the role of experience in working with older people, be perfectionist, knowing how to develop an empathetic relationship between him and the supervised one, to develop professional, the activities he undertake to meet quality standards. And last but not least, to know how and when to stimulate the social worker, motivating him to "target" for excellence.

I. The level of theoretical and practical knowledge of the interviewed subjects about supervision.

According to question number four - supervision is defined in several ways, from the "relationship of support and guidance, monitoring and meet the centre objectives", and ending with evaluation and control of the social workers activities"

According to the data obtained from the "observer participant" within the centre, specialists know the concept of supervision and have their own image of how this process develops.

We had the pleasure of collaborating with the highly trained specialists who have demonstrated through their responses that they have solid knowledge about the social supervision, the manner in which this process must be organized, the expectations of the parties involved, knowledge needs and personal development, and also the advantages and limits of supervision.

II. The impact of establishing a supervisory post at Home Care Centre

Estimating of supervision impact upon the specialists has been achieved through the questions number five, six, nine and ten.

Question number five follows a description of the practical process of conducting supervision in the specialists image that were interviewed, of the actions that must be taken by supervisor, methods and techniques used, how the principles of supervision will need to be implemented and what impact this process would have on beneficiaries.

Beyond the thinking differences, all respondents stressed the importance of the relationship that is established between supervisor and the supervised one, relationship that should be like friendship, rely on knowing each other, sharing emotions, opening, sincerity, but also objectivity.

Some of the methods that should be used for the supervision could have a positive impact are: active listening, discussion, analysis and reflection, collaboration and exchange of ideas.

Question number six aims to identify the qualities required for a supervisor, and provide practical tips to the experts interviewed.

For supervision to have a positive impact, the supervisor must excel in everything he do and at the same time to fold the supervisees' needs.

The responses to this question are very different, which shows that expectations across the work of a supervisor are very high, his skills and qualities have to cover a large area because his responsibilities in the relation with the person he supervise are diverse.

It only remains for us to enumerate these recommendations / qualities of the supervisor, issuing an invitation to meditate on them:

- To organize supervision sessions very well (to set the objectives, stages, evaluation methods of each person supervised, to determine the length and frequency of meetings);
- Maintain a continuous and direct contact with the supervisees, to ensure a learning environment, to guide using principles of adult learning;
- To encourage, motivate and excite the supervisees;
- To worry about the development of the supervisees responsibilities, their interest in providing quality service and ethical behavior;
- To stimulate reflexive critics, competence and performance;
- To provide feedback, to monitor the practice review and avoid malpractice;
- Be a good listener, "not to give the impression of a man who knows everything and who is present only to display his knowledge"; be familiar with the functions and limits of supervision.
- According to question number 10 we wanted to find out which are the steps expected by the specialists from the supervisor:
- First of all a rigorous theoretical, a rich experience in the field of social work, knowing his own limits, and the desire to continuously improve, exchange of experience with as many specialists in the field;
- Use the entire arsenal of professional knowledge gained in this field (his professional relationship with supervisees), continuous contact with the beneficiaries and the social worker, continuous improvement, a better communication, teamwork;
- Conduct;
- Moral, ethics.

The way how would influence the quality of services by the intervention of a supervisor is estimated also with the help of the question number nine.

All experts that were interviewed said that a supervisor intervention is beneficial both to increase service quality and to develop the professional of specialists from Home Care Centre.

During supervision, the supervisees must be supported to cope with situations that they did not experience before or who possess little knowledge, by accumulating new information, develop new skills, acknowledging better understanding of the beneficiary, but as well their behavior related to it.

After analyzing the data has highlighted the importance of supervision to ensure the effectiveness of assistance for recipients. The presence of a supervisor in the social service leads to better collaboration between them and hence social specialists to develop services and to improve their quality.

Affordability level of supervision at Home Care Centre

By question number seven experts highlighted the idea of acceptance or otherwise of a supervisor intervention. Experts claim that a supervisor intervention is required.

The situations when they need supervision intervention are: "in crisis situations, in the process of intervention, in conflict situations with beneficiary / careers or between team members etc."

Supervisors have to carry out the transfer of knowledge, abilities, skills and information between him and the supervisees. As shown in the subjects' responses, the most important and consistent transfer is the emotional one, in the relationship between supervisor and supervisees in realizing an emotional discharge, a decrease of negative emotions that can lead to overload, ensuring the emotional support necessary for continue work in good conditions.

In this respect, by question number ten the specialists are asked to complete the successful supervisor portrait by highlighting the skills, abilities, qualities that ensure an effective supervision process.

Certainly, it is important to note that not only the features are defining for a supervisor, but all the elements involved have their role and contribution to the success of their activities.

The supervisor has the role to be a model, engine of the group and action, as the teacher can influence the students' behavior.

The most important skills from the specialists' perspective are the following:

- Objectivity;
- Professionalism (theoretical knowledge and experience in working with the target group);
- Good mediator in the relations with other specialists;
- Good organizer;

- Open and effective in communication (not impose his points of view, not manipulate);
- To acquire knowledge about the needs of older people and their psychology;
- Experience in working with elderly;
- Managerial experience;
- To delegate tasks appropriately;
- To assume the role effectively;
- To be up to date with all the news in the field;
- Work in the field;
- To present models of good practice, that he applied with great success in his work etc.

It was shaped by the idea of accepting a supervisor from outside the institution. Thus the supervisor should have loads of skills and abilities in achieving an effective supervision for the centre.

Analysis of data obtained showed that the relationship between the professionals involved in the supervision process is very important and has a decisive role for the smooth running of the process (Finch, 1997). This relationship should be based on openness and honesty, mutual trust, objectivity, fairness, responsibility, warmth, understanding and acceptance.

From all the obtained data it shows up the need of supervision for social workers (Hurduc et al, 2010) from the centre.

Conclusions

The obtained responses impress by sincerity and openness, the specialists revealing their emotional experiences, attitudes and points of interest.

Identification of the above and matching them with the three directions of the research have shown that supervision is significant within the social services.

From the obtained data apparent the purpose of this research, namely: the need of supervision of social workers.

An effective supervision involves a good working relationship between supervisor and social workers, relationship that is depending by the involvement and collaboration, taking into account everyone's opinion. The involved aspects in the relationship formation include support, openness, and common tasks.

Skills and competencies needed by the supervisor in the supervision relation, refers to interpersonal communication, developing the ability to

negotiate power, patience, calm, understanding and acceptance of others, the ability to see everyone's strengths, resistance to stress, collaboration.

The involved aspects in deepening the relationship between supervisor and supervisees are: distinguishing between the idea and the idea of supervisory control, real supervision, competitive supervision, feedback, institutional supervision, the human quality of the supervisor and the providing advices.

From the obtained data, the supervisor role in the future projects has a major importance. The existence of effective supervision involves the supervisor's acceptance, clearly outlining its role and his specialization in a particular area.

According to the data interpreted after the interviews and the application of the "observer participant" technique in the Home care Centre, and their correlation with the specialized literature, it have been helpful in making a methodological guide for the supervision of social services offered to the elderly.

The obtained data were helpful in establishing the guide elements on:

- The role of supervisor;
- The qualities and skills necessary for an effective supervision;
- The skills of a successful supervisor;
- The activities of a supervisor.

On the other hand, specialized literature was a way of guidance in realizing a fair and clear methodology for implementing the proposed guide. We consider necessary to address a specialized language in developing this guide, a fact that maintains the reference to common "denominator" shared by all the professionals **working in the social field.**

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