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PROVIDING SUPERVISION FOR SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE CURRENT PROFESSIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Abstract: *The article presents a research identifying the attitudes of social workers towards providing supervision in their professional activities in two important directions: organization and realization of supervision; education, qualification and practical experience of the supervisor. The need of implementation of this research in two directions is justified by: insufficient study of the problem in the country, lack of normative regulation and standards for supervision in social work, presence of significant deficits of an organizational, technological and methodological nature when providing the supervision of social workers. In the totality of the presented factors there is a negative impact on the quality and effectiveness of the activities of social workers and the social services provided. Methodology for the identification of the attitudes of social workers towards their inclusion in supervision in the two presented directions is used. The analysis from the empirical research reveals a tendency of the respondents' positive attitudes towards realization of supervision by qualified and competent supervisors and characterized by good organization, technological and methodological provision. The need of realization timely actions for: adopting of a normative basis and standards for social work supervision, providing resource, taking responsibility by employers for creating a suitable organization and conditions for inclusion social workers in supervision is highlighted. The main focus is on taking responsibility for improving the quality and effectiveness of social work, clients' service and the realization of continuous learning and professional-personal development.*

Key words: *supervision in social work; supervisor; supervised social worker; attitudes towards conducting supervision; standards in social work supervision; quality and effective client service; professional-personal development of social worker.*

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Introduction

Supervision is an activity of key importance for practising social workers and it is realised as a shared responsibility and partnership between a supervisor and a supervisee which ensures quality and efficiency of the support and promotion of competent practice. It provides supervisees with the opportunity to acquire values, knowledge, skills and experience, to receive advice and support, to analyse their own and their clients' thoughts, feelings and experiences, to face the challenges, difficulties and problems in their professional environment, and to make a change and progress as regards themselves and their clients. Social workers' attitudes towards the implementation

of supervision in social work are essential [3; 4]. In Bulgaria, there is inadequate research on this problem and the existing analyses focus primarily on issues like the need for supervision in the realm of social work, the regulatory and methodological basis of supervision in the system of social services, models of supervision, implementing standards for receiving education and gaining qualification as a supervisor, providing supervision in the realm of social services, etc. [2; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 14].

The Social Services Act adopted in 2019 legally defines supervision for the first time as "professional support of public servants whose work involves providing social services, and of public servants

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giving referrals for the use of social services, for improvement in their professional skills, knowledge and attitudes with the aim of achieving and maintaining professional competence guaranteeing high quality of social work, as well as overcoming professional, psychological and emotional difficulties” [13, Additional provisions: § 1, item 19]. It lays out the right to regular supervision of public servants (including social workers) whose work involves providing and referring to use of social services. Although the definition states the professional character of supervision as an activity, those who provide supervision are defined as “employees of the social service provider who provide supervision” and “third-party social service providers” [13, Article 122, paragraph 2, item 1, 2]. This wording does not clarify the following aspects regarding the professional figure carrying out supervision: the legally required parameters of the educational and qualification degree of that individual; competences needed to carry out this work; professional experience; position occupied (functional and official responsibilities as a supervisor) in the social service, municipal social work departments and the bodies of the territorial structures of the Social Assistance Agency. Comparing this with the practice in countries with traditions and experience in this field, the regulatory act does not stipulate the development and application of social work supervision standards stipulating in details its conceptual, content, organisational, technological and methodical aspects.

In the regulatory definition of supervision, there is no provision of the functional and type specifics of supervision (administrative, educational and supportive function and supervision; individual and group supervision), as well as directing supervision towards creation of environment and conditions for reflection and continuous training and development of the social worker and the staff in social services and the departments of the municipal and state structures. A significant deficit is the lack of a framework setting the frequency of providing supervision, the minimum number of hours for individual and group supervision, as well as their correlation as relative quantitative shares.

The regulation-set inclusion of supervision in the realm of social services does not yet mean that the problems accumulated over the years will be solved overnight. In this respect, the limited range of researches in Bulgaria on matters regarding the attitudes of social workers towards carrying out supervision in social work as an important factor for encouraging and motivating social workers to use the capabilities of supervision consciously and responsibly, determines the topicality and necessity of our research on determining the attitudes of social workers towards carrying out supervision in social work in the ongoing dynamic development of the

system of social services at national, regional and local level and the requirements for improvement in the quality and efficiency of catering for users.

In view of the problems presented, the article will focus on two divisions of a complete research carried out over the 2014 – 2018 period with the aim of identifying the attitudes of social workers towards providing supervision in the realm of social work. They are characterised by their correlation and they are very important for the reforms in that specific field: *organisation and implementation of supervision with social workers; education, qualification and practical experience of supervisors in the realm of social work.*

Purpose of the research

The purpose of the research is to ascertain social workers’ attitudes towards carrying out supervision in social work in the divisions of “organisation and implementation of supervision with social workers” and “education, qualification and practical experience of supervisors in the realm of social work” in the field of social work in an ongoing and functioning institutional and professional environment.

The current legal regulations in this field do not provide to the necessary extent the right and opportunity of social workers to active and responsible participation in supervision with an emphasis on improving the quality and efficiency of catering for clients/users, on increasing competence and on promoting professional development.

Participants

The research is conducted among 55 practising social workers (N = 55) from the Municipality of Ruse, other municipalities of the District of Ruse, as well as neighbouring districts, who possess an educational qualification degree of “Bachelor” (58.18%) and “Master” (41.82%) of social work over the 2014-2018 period. Part of the social workers (7.27%) are mentors to students from the programmes in the Social Work division at the University of Ruse during their social work in the Municipality of Ruse. All respondents participate in the research voluntarily. The sample is unintentional and random. It provides equal opportunities for participation to all students from both educational qualification degree programmes. A small non-representative sample has been chosen in compliance with the following factors: cognitive and social orientation of the research and specific character of the interaction in the context of supervision as an activity with certain content, functional, role and technological characteristics; orientation of the interaction between a supervisor and a supervisee as well as the social workers’ attitudes determined by them towards active, motivated and responsible use; place, role and importance of supervision in the professional and institutional environment of social workers and its implementation as an activity focusing on improving the quality and efficiency of catering for clients/users, increasing

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social workers' competence and encouraging their continuous training and achieving a change and development; carrying out a research of a problem of great importance for the professional work of social workers and the efficient functioning of social services, departments, bodies or institutions, the development of social workers, their professional identity and career development; the specifics of the subject of research in the context of social work as a professional activity and the processes and dynamics related to its implementation; the purpose and subject of the research and the possibility for efficient work with the sample.

Methods

For the purposes of the research, an adapted and localised *Questionnaire on the attitudes of practising social workers towards the implementation of supervision in the realm of social work* is used. For verification of the validity of the questionnaire for the research sample, Cronbach's coefficient alpha has been calculated through analysis of the seven subscales with 39 questions included in it. The reliability of the questionnaire is confirmed by $\alpha = 0.765$, which reveals very good consistency of the questions. The correlation between questions is over 0.40, which shows good correlational connections in the structure of the questionnaire. The study is conducted with informed consent and is voluntary and anonymous. The instructions for completion of the questionnaire include explanations of the terms used (supervision and purpose orientation of supervision, supervisor, supervisee) and the functional, role and methodical specifics in the professional activity of the social worker in the field of social work. The research tool consists of seven subscales and includes 39 primary questions and 1 extra question, as respondents' answers about certain attitudes are graded according to a 5-point Likert scale. Besides the questionnaire, there is place on the platform for an anonymous and semi-structured survey. It provides respondents with an opportunity to respond with free text and without any limitation to the volume of opinions and positions on the issues in the questionnaire and about the real situation in providing supervision of social workers in the field of social work. The information received adds to the quality of the empirical data of the questionnaire and allows for a better quantitative and qualitative analysis.

An online form of an anonymous questionnaire is used for the research. It is generated in the online platform Google Drive and is embedded through a link in the website of the Social Work programme (<https://socialaffairsru.weebly.com/>).

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data from the research

Subscale 1A. Organisation and implementation of supervision of social workers

The subscale includes eight items related to ascertaining the social workers' attitudes towards the implementation of supervision regarding: content, functional and methodical nature; organisation, planning and method of realisation; need for standardisation and a larger relative share of the individual supervision provided; contribution to raising the quality and efficiency of catering for clients and of their own work. In synthesis, they represent an important factor for the formation of positive attitudes in social workers and the promotion of active and responsible use of supervision in their professional activity.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data in Subscale 1A of the research tool provides an opportunity for drawing the following main conclusions:

A. Respondents' answers to statements in all items related to positive attitudes and positioned in the affirmative sector of the scale have predominantly high values of relative shares and distribution within the 64.80% - 94.30% range (Table 1; Figure 1). With three of the items (Item A4, Item A6, Item A7), these shares are close to the bottom border of the distributed values under consideration, which reveals a certain dynamic in attitudes.

B. The relative share of the responses of the participants in the survey for all items in the subscale which reveal attitudes with positive orientation is represented by a high average value of 83.09%, as the share of responses with firmly expressed agreement (52.53%) stands out (Table 1; Table 1.1; Figure 1.1; Figure 1.2).

C. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data in items from Subscale 1A provides an opportunity to reveal that the social workers participating in the research express to a high degree their agreement with statements about positive attitudes related to:

- the significance and contribution of supervision for increasing the quality and efficiency of catering for clients and the activity of social workers (Item A5). The relative share of the answers of respondents with statements about positive attitudes has the highest numerical value for the subscale and reveals respondents' firmly expressed position on the purpose orientation of supervision (94.30%). It is accompanied by the lowest values of stated neutral and negative positions – 5.70% in total (Table 1; Figure 1);

- the need for introduction of supervision standards (Item A3). The high relative share of respondents' answers with statements about developing social work supervision standards (92.50%), accompanied by low values of expressed neutral and negative positions (7.60% in total), represents not only a clear and positive professional opinion on the importance of this issue (Table 1; Figure 1); it also indirectly reveals the presence of a

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serious deficit in the legal and technological regulations in the field of social work related to the lack of supervision standards. It strays substantially not only from the practice in countries with traditions and experience in this field, but also from the possibility to legitimise a clear conceptual and technological framework of supervision of social work in Bulgaria. Some of respondents' answers are a confirmation of this, e.g. "Supervision in social work must be compulsory and regulated by legislation and standards", "Quality supervision can be carried out only if it is regulated by standards but they do not exist at the moment";

- making the social worker aware of the nature, functions, content, forms and methods of the different types of supervision (Item A2). The relative share of respondents' answers with an expressed agreement with the statements regarding this issue is third by the size of its numerical value in the subscale (90.80%), it is accompanied by some of the lowest values of stated neutral and negative positions in the subscale (9.30%) and shows the importance which respondents attribute to acquired knowledge, skills and experience regarding the content, type and methodical specifics of social work supervision (Table 1; Figure 1). The attitudes of respondents expressed in the given item are also characterised by another dimension - the high level of awareness of supervision implies a high level of conscious, responsible and active participation in supervision;

- planned implementation of supervision through certain organisation (Item A1). The high value of the relative share of respondents' answers stating agreement with the statements about this issue (88.70%) is accompanied by not so low values of neutral and negative opinions (11.40% in total). This reveals to some extent a certain level of explicitness

and agreement regarding the role and significance of organisational factors in the successful realisation of supervision and in the quality of the results from it (Table 1; Figure 1). However, the opinions of the respondents in the survey about the actual situation in a professional and institutional environment show presence of deficits and need for a change, e.g. "No supervision takes place in our social service. It would be very useful for me", "In our institution, no supervision takes place and we are forced to consult each other", "Supervision must be carried out periodically and according to a plan, but social services are badly funded and supervision fees are high. This leads to a lack of supervision or only to performing group supervision over longer periods in between";

- supervisor's awareness of the policy, achievements and development of the social service, department, body or institution of the supervised social worker (Item A8). The relative share of respondents' answers with positive attitudes is at 84.60%, but in comparison with the empirical data from other items, it is characterised by higher values of neutral and negative positions (15.30%) (Table 1; Figure 1). We can link the presented quantitative information and its analysis to certain dynamics in respondents' attitudes regarding the good level of supervisors' awareness when they have to supervise social workers in a number of social services over a long time period. Some of respondents' answers during our semi-structured survey corroborate our conclusion: "There are still not enough well-trained supervisors. Those who are certified can hardly have an in-depth knowledge of every service so that they can provide adequate problem-solving. There is only general talk and problem-solving in principle and the expected result is rarely achieved".

Table 1. Values of the relative shares of respondents' answers on the Likert's 5-point scale in Subscale 1A: 2014 - 2018

Item	Values of the relative shares of respondents answers Subscale 1A: 2014 – 2018 (%)				
	I entirely disagree	I'm inclined to disagree	I have no opinion	I'm inclined to agree	I entirely agree
Item A1	3,80	3,80	3,80	24,50	64,20
Item A2	0	7,40	1,90	38,90	51,90
Item A3	0	5,70	1,90	34,00	58,50
Item A4	3,70	16,70	14,8	38,90	25,90
Item A5	0	1,90	3,80	9,40	84,90
Item A6	9,30	7,40	11,10	29,60	42,60
Item A7	5,80	7,70	9,60	32,70	44,20
Item A8	3,80	0	11,50	36,50	48,10
Average value	3,29	6,32	7,30	30,56	52,53

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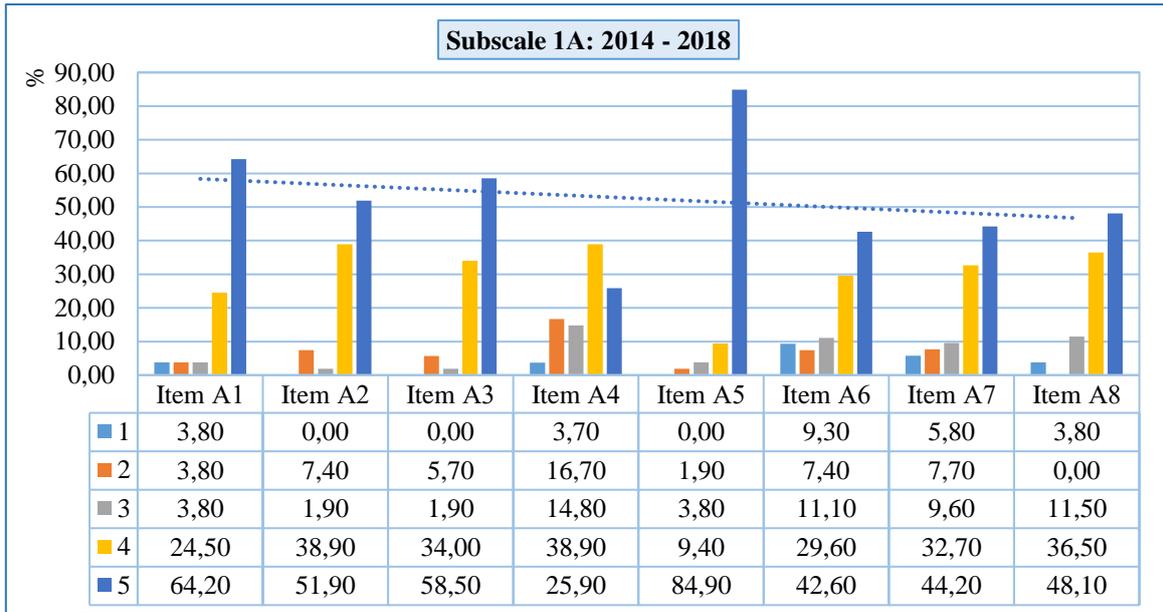


Figure 1 – Values of the relative shares of respondents’ answers on the Likert’s 5-point scale in Subscale 1A: 2014 – 2018

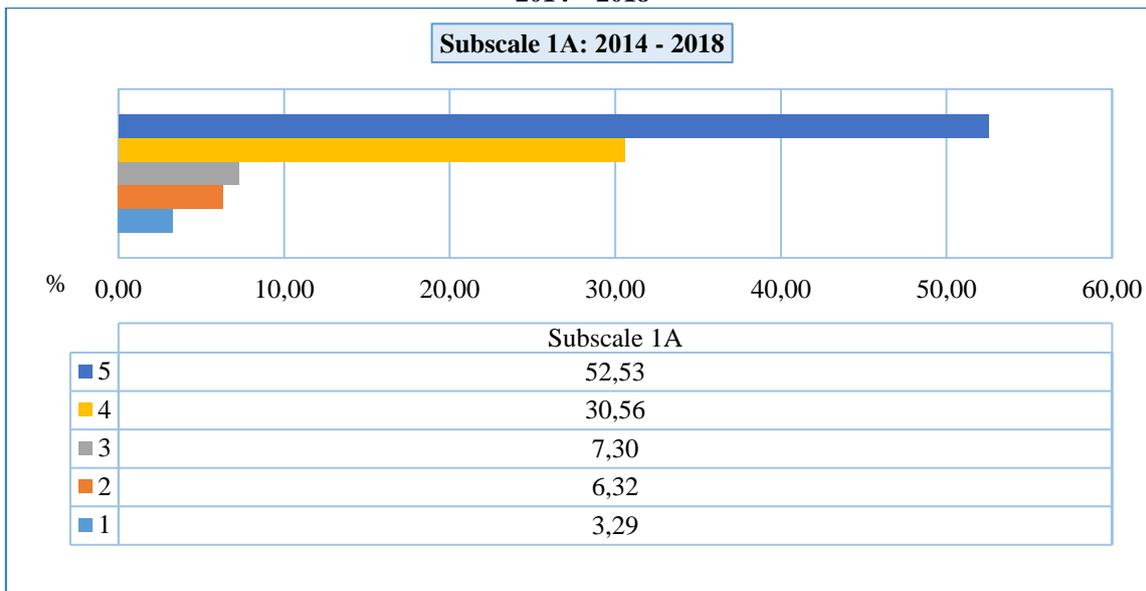


Figure 1.1 – Average values of the relative shares of respondents’ answers on the Likert’s 5-point scale in Subscale 1A: 2014 – 2018

N ^o	Evaluation of respondents’ answers on the Likert’s 5-point scale	Conditioned annotation of the answers
1	I entirely disagree	1
2	I’m inclined to disagree	2
3	I have no opinion	3
4	I’m inclined to agree	4
5	I entirely agree	5

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Table 1.1. Average values of the relative shares of respondents' answers on the Likert's 5-point scale in Subscale 1A: 2014 – 2018

Subscale	Average values of the relative shares of respondents' answers Subscale 1A: 2014 – 2018 (%)		
	negative answers	neutral answers	positive answers
Subscale 1A	9,61	7,30	83,09

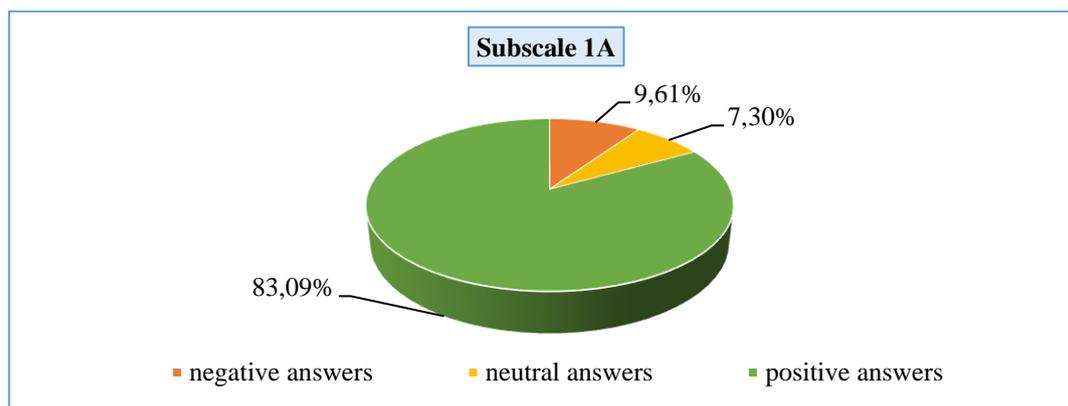


Figure 1.2 – Generalized types of respondents' answers for Subscales 1A: 2014 - 2018 (%)

The presented quantitative information and its analysis reveal that the social workers participating in the research generally express a high degree of agreement with the statements with positive attitudes in the majority of items related to components of great significance for planning, organising and implementing supervision based on good knowledge of its content, purpose, functional, organisational, technological and methodological specifics.

A relatively lower degree of agreement accompanied by a lack of opinion, expressing negative attitudes and not accepting the statements is presented in three of the items regarding:

- providing an opportunity for more participation in individual supervision than in group supervision (Item A4), where the relative share of respondents' answers with positive attitudes is 64.80% in total, only 25.90% of which have expressed this firmly (Table 1; Figure 1). High values have been found for neutral (14.80%) and negative (20.40%) positions, which form a total share of 35.20%, the highest for the subscale (Table 1; Figure 1). The lack of legal and technological regulations for supervision in social work in the period of conducting the research has a significant impact on respondents' attitudes and their ability to give a response, e.g. "I don't have an opinion on some of the questions since no supervision is carried out in the institution in which I work.", "No supervision is carried out in our institution and that's why I haven't given any answer to some of the questions or I have answered with 'I don't know'", "Social services are poorly funded and supervision

fees are too high. This leads to lack of supervision or only to group supervision. We don't have the opportunity to take part in individual supervision";

- regular provision by the management of the social service, department, body or institution of an opportunity for social workers' participation in supervision (Item A6). The relative share of responses with statements with positive attitudes has a comparatively high value (72.20%). However, the share of responses with negative attitudes sits in second position in the subscale as per value (16.70%) and, together with the stated neutral opinions, forms a total share with a comparatively high value – 27.70% (Table 1; Figure 1). The analysis of empirical data reveals the presence of a certain dynamic in respondents' attitudes which, in our opinion, is influenced by the lack of legal and technological regulations of supervision. This is confirmed by the respondents' answers in the survey, e.g. "No supervision is carried out in our institution...", "Supervisions are expensive and funding is small, which also makes their implementation difficult and colleagues again turn to consultations between one another", "No supervision is carried out in small populated places and small organisational bodies. It would be very useful for me";

- satisfaction with the quality of the provided supervision (administrative, educational and assisting) and with the supervisor's style of work (Item A7). The relative share of respondents' answers with statements with positive attitudes is at 76.90%, 42.60% of which are characterised by their firm nature

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(Table 1; Figure 1). Comparatively high values have been ascertained for neutral (9.60%) and negative (13.50%) positions. They form a total share of 23.10%, the highest for the subscale, and reveal the presence of a certain dynamic in respondents' attitudes (Table 1; Figure 1). We could draw conclusions about this dynamic by making a comparison with the empirical data from items A4 and A6 and the related quantitative and qualitative analysis. It reveals presence of problems when participating in individual supervision and the regular provision of supervision by managements, which is caused to a great extent by non-existing legal and technological regulations and by the insufficient funding of supervision. Here are some of the respondents' answers in the survey which corroborate this conclusion, e.g. *"In practice, supervision is often carried out by professionals with no qualification and practical experience in social work"*, *"No supervision is carried out in our institution.... We mostly exchange ideas with other colleagues and we help one another"*, *"There is no possibility for individual supervision"*, *"Very often supervision is regarded ONLY as psychological support, which is wrong, in my opinion"*, *"At present, the number of certified supervisors is very small, but, unfortunately, there are also some who are certified but have no sensibility regarding problems in the social sphere and have a low level of theoretical competence"*. The presence of certain deficits in the provision and implementation of supervision inevitably leads to dissatisfaction with its quality and the supervisor's style of work.

Subscale 3C. Education, qualifications and practical experience of supervisors in the field of social work

The subscale consists of five items connected with ascertaining the attitudes of social workers towards carrying out supervision in the following

directions: educational qualification degree in social work of the supervisors carrying out supervision with social workers; educational qualification degree of the supervisors which is not lower than a Master's degree in social work; duration and quality of the practical experience of supervisors in the field of professional social work; possession by supervisors of a licence for carrying out supervision in social work; clear understanding by supervisors of their own professional role supporting them in the analysis of issues related to their own, supervisees' and their clients' activity. Together they represent one of the most important factors not only for motivating social workers to participate in supervision and use its capabilities actively and responsibly, but also for the quality and efficiency of the performed supervision and the catering for clients/users.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data in Subscale 3C provides an opportunity for drawing the following main conclusions:

A. Respondents' answers to statements in all items related to positive attitudes and positioned in the affirmative sector of the grading scale have predominantly high values of relative shares and are distributed within the 68% - 94.20% range (Table 2; Figure 2). One of the items in the subscale (Item C2) has a numerical value of the relative share which is positioned at the bottom border of the distribution, while the rest are in the middle and top tier. We will interpret this as an indicator of minor dynamics in the attitudes and relative stability of the general positive tendency (Table 2; Figure 2).

B. The relative share of the respondents' answers with positive attitudes in all items in the subscale is represented by an average value of 79.68%, which is one of the highest among other average values in the subscales of the questionnaire.

Table 2. Values of the relative shares of respondents' answers on the Likert's 5-point scale in Subscale 3C: 2014 - 2018

Item	Values of the relative shares of respondents answers Subscale 3C: 2014 – 2018 (%)				
	I entirely disagree	I'm inclined to disagree	I have no opinion	I'm inclined to agree	I entirely agree
Item C1	2,00	14,00	8,00	26,00	50,00
Item C2	7,50	9,40	15,10	39,60	28,40
Item 3	0	5,80	9,60	30,80	53,80
Item C4	7,50	7,50	9,40	30,20	45,40
Item C5	0	0	5,80	40,40	53,80
Average value	3,40	7,34	9,58	33,40	46,28

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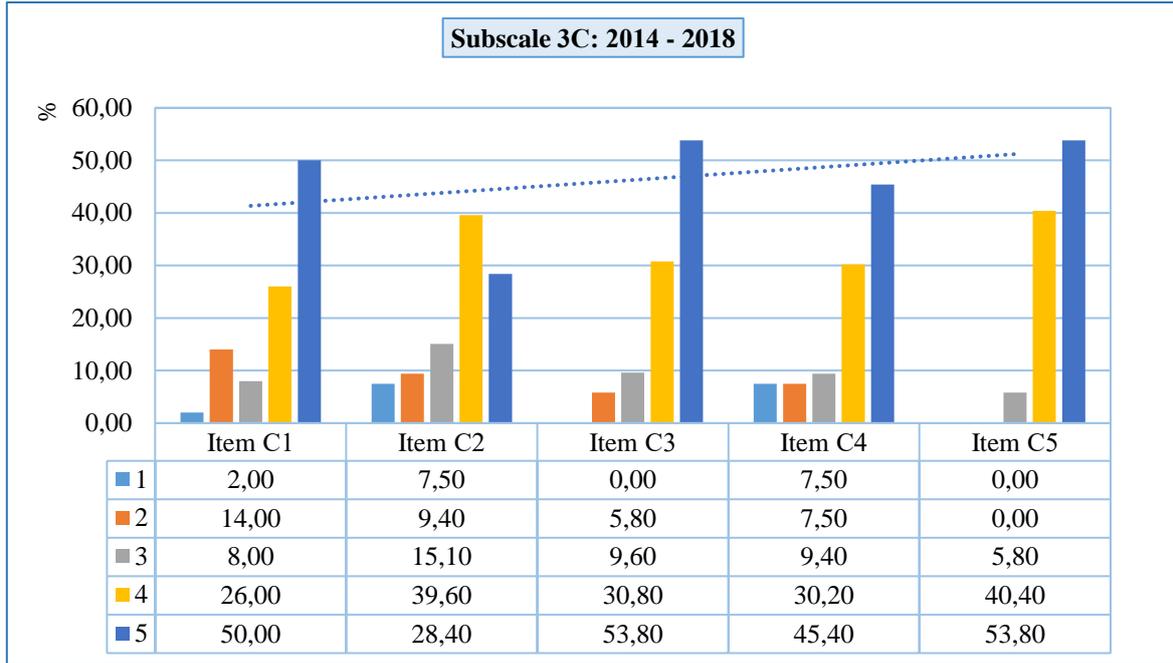


Figure 2 – Values of the relative shares of respondents’ answers on the Likert’s 5-point scale in Subscale 3C: 2014 - 2018

Table 2.1. Average values of the relative shares of respondents’ answers on the Likert’s 5-point scale in Subscale 3C: 2014 – 2018

Subscale	Average values of the relative shares of respondents’ answers Subscale 3C: 2014 – 2018 (%)		
	negative answers	neutral answers	positive answers
Subscale 3C	10,74	9,58	79,68

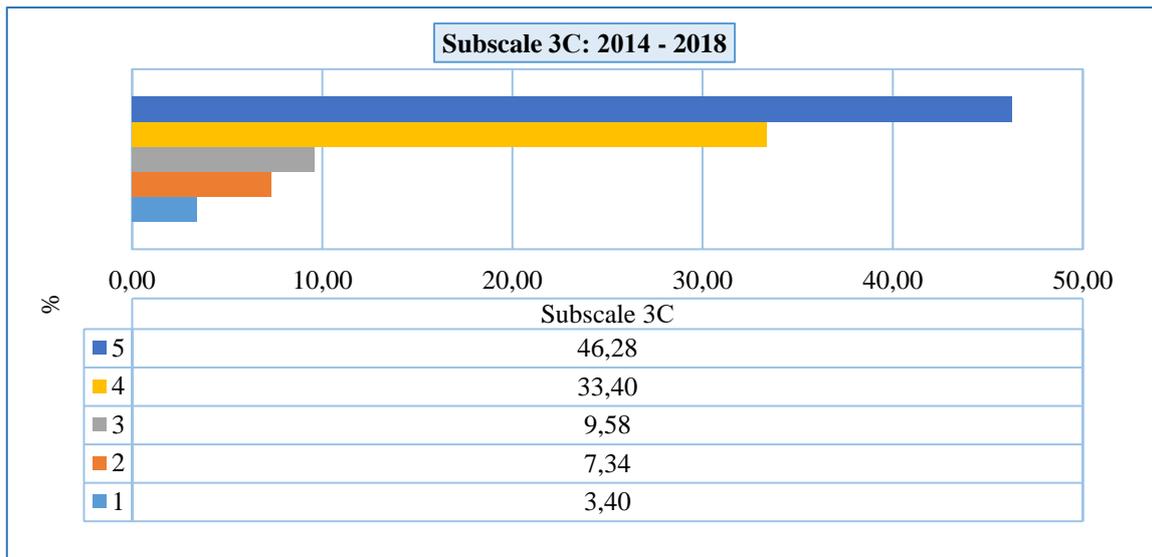


Figure 2.1 – Average values of the relative shares of respondents’ answers on the Likert’s 5-point scale in Subscale 3C: 2014 – 2018

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№	Evaluation of respondents' answers on the Likert's 5-point scale	Conditioned annotation of the answers
1	I entirely disagree	1
2	I'm inclined to disagree	2
3	I have no opinion	3
4	I'm inclined to agree	4
5	I entirely agree	5

The findings show predominance of responses with explicitly stated agreement in the group of affirmative responses (46.28%) (Table 2; Table 2.1; Figure 2.1; Figure 2.2). Comparatively, there is a minimum increase in the relative share of responses with negative attitudes (10.74%) and with neutral position (9.58%), whose total average value is 20.32%. Generally, it reveals the presence of a certain dynamic in respondents' attitudes which we believe is a result of implementation of supervision in a number of cases by professionals without the necessary education, qualifications, expertise and experience in a given field as well as a result of the lack of legal regulations and standards of supervision in social work which set: the educational qualification degree in social work, preparation, competences, experience and licensing of the supervisor.

C. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data in Subscale 3C reveals that respondents express agreement to a certain degree with statements with positive attitudes related to:

- education and qualification in social work of supervisors carrying out supervision with social workers (Item C1). The relative share of responses with positive attitudes has a relatively high numerical value (76%), which positions it in third place among other items (Table 2; Figure 2). A characteristic feature of this item is that the share of responses with negative attitudes (16%) is double the numerical value of and dominates over the one with stated neutral opinion (8%) (Table 2; Figure 2). We will base the quantitative information and its qualitative analysis mainly on the effect of the current situation related to the lack of regulations and standards for supervision in social work, non-existence of supervision and deficits in the implementation of supervision. Some of respondents' answers in the survey are a confirmation of this, e.g. *"No supervision is carried out in the social service in which I work and I have answered negatively to some questions. To compensate for this, colleagues consult with one another"*, *"There are frequent cases when supervision is carried out by professionals without education, qualification or experience in social work"*;

- educational qualification degree of the supervisors which is not lower than "Master's" in social work (Item C2). The relative share of respondents' answers with positive attitudes has the lowest value (68%), which is accompanied by high values of the share of responses with statements with

negative attitudes (16.90%) and neutral opinion (15.10%) (Table 2; Figure 2). Together they form a relative share of 32%, which comprises nearly 1/3 of respondents' answers. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data allows for outlining a significant dynamic in the attitudes of the participants in the research. We will again, as with previous items, attribute it to the effect of the current situation in the realm of social activities with the lack of legal regulations and standards of supervision, as well as deficits in its implementation. The analysis in Item C1 and Item C2 reveals the urgent need for introduction of legal, educational and qualification as well as organisational and technological regulations of supervision in social work. Respondents' answers in the survey are in the same train of thought, e.g., *"Supervision in social work is absolutely compulsory and must be well regulated"*, *"It is necessary to introduce social work supervision standards which will define not only its purpose, content, methodology and licensing procedure, but also the competences of supervisors and the responsibilities of employers and social workers for its regular implementation"*.

- duration and quality of supervisors' practical experience in the realm of their professional social work (Item C3). The relative share of respondents' answers with positive attitudes has a high value (84.60%) and it takes second position in the subscale (Table 2; Figure 2). The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data reveals low values of statements related to negative attitudes (5.80%) and neutral opinion (9.60%), which is an indicator of minimal dynamics (Table 2; Figure 2). In parallel with this and having in mind the analysis of the previous items, we can safely conclude that it is not the current situation with its negative aspects that has an impact, but mostly the willingness and attitudes of the social workers participating in the research towards taking part in supervision carried out by supervisors with long and good practical experience in social work. Some of respondents' answers from the survey support the conclusion drawn, e.g., *"Supervisors must be well trained and have rich practical experience"*, *"There are still not enough well-trained supervisors"*.

- possession by supervisors of a licence for carrying out supervision in social work (Item C4). The relative share of the respondents' answers with positive attitudes has a high value (75.60%) and takes the fourth position in the subscale. It is accompanied by high values of responses related to negative

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attitudes (15%) and neutral opinion (9.40%), which form a total relative share of 24.40% (Table 2; Figure 2). The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data shows presence of a certain dynamic in respondents' attitudes. We can assume that it is affected, as is the case with the previous items, by the lack of legal regulations and social work supervision standards which set the conditions, right and procedures for access to licensing and the licence expiration period, as is the practice in countries with traditions and experience in the field [1]. In connection with the outlined dynamic and the related need for licensing and regulation of the job of a supervisor with standards of supervision, we can present some of respondents' answers from the survey: *"It is necessary to introduce social work supervision standards which will specify its purpose, content, methodology, licensing procedure..."*, *"At present, the certified supervisors are very few..."*.

- clear awareness of supervisors' own professional role supporting them in the analysis of issues related to their own, supervisees' and their clients' activity (Item C5). The relative share of respondents' answers with positive attitudes has the highest value of all items (94.20%), with prevailing answers with firmly stated agreement (53.80%), which also have the highest numerical value in the subscale. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data provides grounds for outlining a stable positive trend in respondents' attitudes, which is confirmed by the lack of responses with negative attitudes and the lowest value of the share of responses with a neutral opinion (5.80%) (Table 2; Figure 2). When analysing data and having in mind the analysis in the previous items, we can conclude that there are explicitly stated respondents' attitudes regarding the need for supervisors with suitable training and high level of expertise who possess professional conduct and work with a clear idea of their own functions and role as well as of their assisting and developing nature regarding the supervisee and their client/user.

Discussion and conclusions

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data reveals a relatively high degree of explicitness and agreement with statements with positive attitudes in the majority of the items in Subscale 1A and a high level of explicitness and agreement with statements with positive attitudes in all items in Subscale 3C. This allows highlighting a general positive trend in respondents' attitudes in the directions of the research, which are of significant importance for assisting, encouraging and motivating social workers for active and responsible implementation of supervision in their professional activity:

- organisation, planning and carrying out supervision; social workers' awareness regarding the

content, functional, technological and methodological specifics of supervision and a balanced use of its various types and forms; adopting and introducing social work supervision standards; acknowledgement by social workers of the importance and contribution of their participation in supervision for improving the quality and efficiency of catering for clients/users and the assisting nature of their work; social workers' satisfaction with the quality of the provided supervision and with the style of interaction with the supervisor; supervisor's awareness of the policy, achievements and development of the social service, department, body or institution;

- high educational and qualification degree in social work of the supervisors and practical experience in the field of social work with long enough duration and high enough quality to guarantee their competence; licensing of supervisors' job activity and legalisation of their status; principle and objective understanding of supervisors' functional, role and methodological specifics of their activity assisting them in the analysis of dynamic situations and important issues in a working environment.

The minimal dynamic observed in both subscales is interpreted as a result of the lack of legal regulations and social work supervision standards which, in their totality, lead to the lack of sufficient funding, competent human resources and a procedure for licensing of supervisors guaranteeing not only the quality and efficiency of the provided supervision and the catering for clients/users, but also the change and development of the subjects under consideration. Regardless of the observed minimal dynamic, the general positive trend in both subscales is markedly expressed and ascertained.

The summarised conclusions from the research in the part concerning the observed dynamics suggest the need for taking measures which would contribute to making changes in certain areas: adopting legal regulations and social work supervision standards which will set the organisational and technological nature and specifics, the resource and methodological provision, the introduction of requirements for compulsory use by social workers of supervision with certain quantitative and qualitative parameters, time interval and right of provision by a licensed supervisor; inclusion of supervision learning content with a wide enough scope, with a theoretical and practical focus and use of supervision in the practical training of students in the bachelor and master programmes in social work; launching master programmes in supervision in social work as part of the "Social Work" professional division with the aim of providing supervisors with suitable education, qualification, competences and experience.

The realisation of the presented measures has the potential and the possibility for creation of favourable environment and conditions for making social

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workers' attitudes towards carrying out supervision in their professional activity even more positive, thus achieving a significant improvement in the quality and efficiency of social work and the catering for clients/users, as well as the assistance and promotion of social workers' development.

Conclusion

The formation of positive attitudes in social workers towards the implementation of supervision requires attracting the attention and joining of efforts of all responsible subjects and institutions at micro-, mezzo-, and macro-level in the sphere of social work for realisation of timely changes in the external professional and institutional environment (adopting

regulations, standards, resource provisions, employers accepting responsibility and creating a suitable organisation and conditions). Taking such action on their part in the direction under consideration is an important prerequisite and factor for making changes in the internal environment – making social workers' attitudes towards inclusion in supervision more positive, assisting them in making use of its possibilities, promoting the taking of responsibility for improving the quality and efficiency of social work and catering for clients/users, as well as realisation of continuous training and professional and personal development.

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