SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

Innovative Ways to Chart

the Bare Essentials

SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION: INNOVATIVE WAYS TO CHART THE BARE ESSENTIALS

Proceedings from the "Social Work Supervision: Innovative Ways to Chart the Bare Essentials" Seminar 2017.

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Social Work Supervision Seminar

Held on 7 July 2017 at the

National University of Singapore

SWAAB Supervision Seminar Workgroup Members

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Ms Ong Lee Lian

Assistant Director, Singapore Family Justice Courts

Programme Schedule

Time	Programme
8:30 – 9.15am	Registration
9.15 – 9.30am	All guests and participants to be seated
9.30 – 9.35am	Welcome Speech Dr. Peace Wong Yuh Ju, Member of SWAAB & Chairperson of SWAAB Supervision Workgroup
9.35 – 9.45am	Video Presentation
9.45 – 10.00am	Address by Guest of Honour Ms Ang Bee Lian, Chairperson of SWAAB & Director of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)
10.00 – 10.15am	Launch of Supervision Guidelines by GOH Presentation of Guidelines Mr Azman Bin Anuar Head, Family Support Services, Singapore Armed Forces Counselling Centre
10.15 – 10.45am	Keynote 1: "Issues and Challenges Facing Social Work Supervision in the 21st Century" A/P Kieran O'Donoghue, Head of School of Social Work, Massey University, New Zealand
10.45 – 11.30am	Tea Reception Engagement sessions with GOH, Head of Agencies, Supervision Workgroup Members and Supervision Seminar Organising Committee Venue: AS3: 04-01, Department of Social Work, National University of Singapore (NUS)
11.30 – 12.15pm	Keynote 2: "The Transformative Function of Supervision in Social Work" Ms Nicki Weld, Director of CNZN Ltd, New Zealand
12.15 – 1.00pm	Plenary Session: "Sharing of Perspectives and Experiences Across Countries: Evolving and Embedding Social Work Supervision in Practice" A/P Kieran O'Donoghue – Head of School of Social Work, Massey University, New Zealand Dr. Agnes Ng – Chief Executive, The Nurturing Education Ltd, Hong Kong Ms Ruth Chua – Executive Director, Counselling and Care Centre Ms Agnes Chia – President (July 2015 – July 2017), Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW) Facilitator: Ms Lee Yean Wun – Executive Director, Kampong Kapor Family Service Centre
1.00 – 2.00pm	Lunch
2.00 – 4.00pm	Workshops

4.00 – 4.30pm	Tea Reception
4.30 – 5.15pm	Closing Session: "Vision for Social Work Supervision in Singapore" Mr Udhia Kumar – Trainer, Family Resource and Training Centre, SASW Ms Annie Chia – Lead Social Worker, Kreta Ayer Family Services, Social Service Office @ Kreta Ayer Mr Wilson Mack – Assistant Director/ Principal Social Worker, Service Delivery and Development Group, MSF Ms Long Chey May – Deputy Director, Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Jurong Community Hospital Facilitator: Ms Jessica Chan – Lead Social Worker, Kampong Kapor Family Service Centre
5.15 – 5.45pm	Closing Note and Self-Care Activity for Supervisors Ms Yogeswari Munisamy – Senior Principal Social Worker, Child Protective Services, MSF
5.45pm	End of Programme

Welcome Speech

Dr. Peace Wong Yuh Ju

Member of SWAAB,

Chairperson of SWAAB Supervision Workgroup

Introduction

Dr. Peace Wong Yuh Ju shared the meaning of supervision, highlighting that it is the ability to see things differently and from different perspectives. She illustrated the 5 points based on the acronym SUPER:

SUPER-Vision Model

S – Strengths-Based

It is not only about finding fault with supervisees but about what could be done better and differently. finding strengths in supervisees and the supervisory process is important.

U – Understanding Contexts

There are many unique contexts to bear in mind and therefore supervisors need to understand these different contexts and conduct their supervision in these different contexts. Dr. Wong referenced Hawkins & Shohet's 7-eyed model of supervision and expanded on it to introduce 2 extra dimensions which are unique to Singapore. They are (1) understanding spirituality; and (2) understanding organizational constraints and resources.

P – Professional Relationship

Dr. Wong recognized that as we do supervision, there would be times whereby personal issues are being raised and the relationship crosses the boundaries between the professional and personal. While venturing into the therapeutic space is helpful, it has to be carefully treaded as both supervisors and supervisees should be reminded that supervision is about the professional working relationship between both parties.

E – Ethical Responsibility

Supervision is not optional, as it is the ethical responsibility of all social workers to receive supervision to gain competence in work. By receiving continuous training and support, social workers will be able to do good work for their clients. This goes beyond merely helping supervisees to grow, as it also embraces the idea of supervision in being able to serve clients well.

R – Reflexivity

Reflexivity can sometimes be missing if supervisors engage in a lot of administrative supervision. Perhaps, there could be a place and space that can be given to supervisees for them to reflect on their work and be reflexive about the supervisory process and practice.

Conclusion

Dr. Wong elaborated that supervision is about a relationship that is modeled on caring for the supervisees and on doing good for clients to ensure that the work is sustainable in years to come. For SUPER-vision to be fulfilled, peers in the sector need to be supportive of this work. She recognized that there are many resources available, and help rendered by SASW, MSF and SWAAB, as well as friends who journey together to venture into this aspect of social work practice. By developing this area of specialization, it will be able to enhance the well-being of clients, as well as help supervisees and supervisors to grow as professionals.

Video Presentation

Introduction

The video depicted the struggles of supervisors and supervisees as supervisors need more time to supervise their supervisees while supervisees want more regular supervision sessions. As a supervisor, there are many challenges faced which hinder their ability to supervise, such as an overload of cases, insufficient training in supervision, as well as minimal organisational support.

Utility and Meaning of SWAAB Social Work Supervision Guidelines – Sharing by Members of SWAAB Supervision Workgroup

Ms Yogeswari Munisamy, shared that supervision is the ethical responsibility of any social worker. The guidelines provide a local framework for social workers working in any of the subsectors to have a common reference.

To the supervisees, they can be informed of what the expectations as supervisees as part of their competency level and professional development. To the supervisor, they are more aware of the supervision guidelines that all supervisors in the various sectors are making reference to. Last but not least, at the organisational level, it is a strategic development relating to the adequate allocation of workload and manpower in order to make space for supervisors to provide supervision. As such, these tenets are the bedrock to ensure good social work practice in Singapore.

Mr Udhia Kumar sees the supervision guidelines as an aspiration documenting in detail what practice should be like. The document is also a reference to what an organisation should be providing to enable social work supervision practice to happen.

Mr John Ang views the supervision guideline as not completely replacing current organisational procedures. Instead, organisations can incorporate the document into their current practices. If an organisation does not have their own procedures, it is strongly recommended that they follow the supervision guidelines.

Conclusion

The SWAAB Social Work Supervision Guidelines provides a general framework for supervisees, supervisors, and organisations. The use of the Social Work Supervision Guidelines will facilitate a better understanding of social work supervision in Singapore.

Address by Guest of Honour

Ms Ang Bee Lian

Chairperson of SWAAB,

Director of Social Welfare

Ministry of Social and Family Development

Introduction

Ms Ang Bee Lian recognised that there is a relatively strong group of supervisors in Singapore today, opening up the doors for many more possibilities in enhancing supervision. She acknowledged those who had significantly contributed to social work supervision practice in Singapore and thanked the workgroup who had worked tirelessly to develop the SWAAB Social Work Supervision Guidelines. The expertise and knowledge, as well as the development of camaraderie in the social work fraternity, has built generations of social work practitioners.

Ms Ang further recognised the value of executive coaching in social work supervision and what it can bring to supervisees and strategic leaders both inside and outside of the sector. As social work professionals move outside of their domain and work in the context of the larger environment, executive coaching can be a very useful and relevant tool

She also thanked the SWAAB members (January 2017 to December 2018), who contributed to make today's event a reality. She also recognised their efforts in the space of social work accreditation. This is because the development and decision on social work accreditation guidelines, while already an advanced piece of work in other countries, is relatively new in Singapore.

What Can Supervision Be Like

Ms Ang shared a poem on supervision that she wrote many years ago, when supervisory practice was still in its infancy stage, and not as readily available:

> *Supervision*
>
> *a relationship which can potentially create*
>
> *music out of melody*

a painting out of a palette

and poetry out of words.

She elaborated that supervision, as mentioned previously by Dr. Wong, is a strengths-based relationship which can potentially create various possibilities based on what the supervisor and supervisee could do together. It is also about the chemistry and the dynamic relationship between both parties, which can make "music out of a melody", "a painting out of a palette", as well as "poetry out of words".

Conclusion

Supervisors have the potential and ability to inspire the next generation of practitioners, and the greatest reward will be to hear the stories of their supervisees who have made impacts on their clients' lives. Therefore, there are many who could continue to benefit from the supervisory process and relationship.

Keynote 1: Issues and Challenges Facing Social Work Supervision in the 21st Century

Associate Professor Kieran O'Donoghue

Massey University, New Zealand

Head of School of Social Work

The Evolving Nature of Social Work Supervision

We have learnt from the history of social work supervision that both contextual factors affecting social service organisations and the process of professionalisation influences supervision. This dynamic relationship tells us that supervision is an embedded and situated practice, shaped by the context and people who participate in it. We also know that supervision seeks to enhance a practitioner's practice as well as the wellbeing and development of workers. Thus, supervision can be understood as a partnership between the organisational context and the profession itself. In the twenty-first century, we find supervision evolving across the following continuums:

- From managerial to professional
- From uniformity to plurality
- From generalist to specialist
    - Supervision is influenced by the discourse of social work as a general practice. We need to involve practice from specialist fields and within organisational settings. We are one and we are unique.
- From supervisor focused to supervision focused
    - In the broader areas of knowledge creation, we used to think that knowledge and authority is located within experts – the supervisor. Now, we are recognising that it is being co-created through conversations, dialogues, networks and interactions.
- From organisationally sanctioned to professionally sanctioned
    - The responsibility to oversee and ensure quality services is no longer borne solely by social service organisations. Professional bodies and regulatory authorities now have the responsibility to safeguard practitioners and clients through codes, standards and guidelines as well.
- From the use of traditional media to digital media

In short, all these things are changing the nature of social work supervision. This evolving nature should not take us by surprise nor is it something new. Supervision changes over time – it changes as social work changes, as society changes, and as our organisations change.

The Changes Within Social Service Organisations, Within Professions and Within Regulatory Authorities

The different parties involved mediate the evolution and change in social work supervision. They all have a part to play in creating the supervision culture. Firstly, the influence of social service organisations as a whole on supervision is exerted through policies, guidelines, practices and the extent to which supervision contributes to:

- Organisational accountability and performance

- Quality assurance

- Organisational learning and development (alongside with consultation, coaching and mentoring)

- Organisation's role in the health and safety of workers

Secondly, for professional bodies and regulatory authorities, supervision is concerned with:

- Professional accountability

- Professional safety

- Practitioner development and well-being of practitioners

- Practice improvement

Within organisations, supervision influences the following:

- Organisational Culture
  - Workers will have talks and conversations over tea about the usefulness of supervision or the lack thereof, creating stories and narratives that shape perception. This in turns shapes supervision as supervisors/ management respond to such conversations.
- Leadership and Management
- Information and Communication Technology and Processes
- Resourcing
- Change
  - Current research has shown that social work supervision has predominantly focused on administrative tasks and functions, or concerned with unethical practices.

Research has also shown that greater focus directly on a social worker's practice with clients and the outcomes for clients, leads to higher likelihood for improvement.

The key for our own organisations is to reflect and ask ourselves – what are our policies and practices that support and/ or hinder supervision? If our policies set the standards of weekly supervision, are there guidelines for cancellation and rescheduling? Are our own supervisors supported, trained and coached for their roles? How can we tap on new technology to reduce file recording duration during supervision so that there can be more time for what is more important? How are manpower and resources allocated such that the supervisor-supervisee ratio is reasonable, such that external or professional supervisors can be brought in to provide specialised knowledge and skillset training?

Thirdly, regulatory authorities and professional bodies influence supervision culture through the following:

- Code of Ethics and Disciplinary (Code of Conduct)
- Accreditation/ Registration
- Capabilities/ Competencies framework
- Education and development for supervision and the supervisory workforce

The Influence of Evidence, Outcomes and Results Based Accountability on Supervision

This focus was derived from the "what works" debate – about what the effective practices are. For social work supervision, the development of evidence-informed supervision models is at an emergent stage. There is limited and little evaluation of supervision. Underlying this is the general lack of clear guidelines on how to evaluate supervision. This begs the question of how we should effectively evaluate the influence of supervision and its link to organizational outcomes and results. In addition, how then, shall we respond and attempt to overcome the issues and challenges posed to supervision?

Building a Professional Supervision Culture

This involves the following:

- Embedding social work supervision into the Code of Ethics and Conduct, Organisational and Professional Policies, Guidelines, Accreditation/ Registration and in the Practitioner and Supervisor competencies.
    - o In New Zealand, we have been fortunate enough to have a supervision policy in the social work's association since 1998, followed by a clause in the code of ethics about the responsibilities and supervisor-supervisee relationships since 2004. Both of these

have led to the association's competencies programme. In addition, 2000 hours of supervision is required for an official registration.

- Developing a literature base and community of practice that shares professional knowledge, wisdom and encourages debate.

  o As such, there is a need to continue the SWAAB supervision seminar.

- The development of local models of supervision practice that respond to people and context.

- Engaging with the ethical and practice implications for supervision in the "Digital Age"

  o Instrumental delivery of supervision through FaceTime, as well as through Video Conferencing

  o The human capacity for reflection, imagination, transformative and creative thinking using technologies as tools and platforms to come alive.

Building Supervision Capability Across Social Work

One way to do so is to focus on the supervisee and supervisor role development. The process of the different roles are charted out in the table below:

Supervisee Role Development	Supervisor Role Development
Learning to be a supervisee	Supervisor of social work students
Being a supervisee in an organisational setting	Supervisor within an organisational setting
Being a supervised professional who makes the most of supervision	Professional supervisor (accreditation/ registration)
Supervisee-led supervision for practitioner well-being and professional development and practice improvement	Advanced Professional supervisor

This process is a progressive pathway of development. It requires that both parties be supported by appropriate curriculum, education and training packages. This support then comes from universities with social work programmes, as well as organisations and private service providers of or relating to social work services.

In addition, there needs to be supervision of supervisors at all levels. A practitioner's competency should include active participation and the use of supervision to improve practice and develop as a social worker. Finally, there is a need for credentialing supervisors and assessing supervisor competency by way of portfolio.

<u>Evaluating the Influence and Impact of Supervision</u>

To do this, we need to develop evaluation approaches that consider the following aspects:

- The supervision alliance and the contributing interactional process
- The supervisee's learning and practitioner development through supervision
- The supervisee's emotional well-being, job satisfaction and satisfaction with supervision
- The influence supervision decisions and reviews have on the supervisee's practice with clients and client outcomes.
- Evaluations need to be triangulated at the relationship level, organisational level and across the profession.
  - o You cannot have supervision with yourself, it requires many parties.
- Alongside individual supervision, there is a need to evaluate different types of supervision (e.g. internal, external, peer, managerial, clinical, individual and group.)

- The supervision of supervision

- The development and evaluation of evidence-informed models of social work supervision and Field of practice specific supervision models (e.g. Child Welfare, Mental Health, Family Service Centres)

- Supervision education and training

After laying out the issues and challenges facing social work supervision in Singapore, I have the following suggestions. Some of which is already underway and needs to be seen through.

Firstly, develop a vision for the future of supervision and goals for the next 10 years. Singapore has the potential and capability to be the world leader in this area. To fulfill this vision, I respectfully recommend building supervision capability and strengthening professional supervision culture. The current work on guidelines serves as a foundation to build upon. To advance this, Singapore needs to map and evaluate supervision against your guidelines. Finally, to review, collect evidence, evaluate, and renew Singaporean supervision models constantly.

As Singapore embarks on this journey, you need to keep in mind the challenges facing social work supervision will undoubtedly mirror those faced by social work. The digital environment, doing more

with less, the expectation of greater levels of expertise and better results will continue into the future. It is essential that social work supervision keep human relationships at its core and provides a secure base for practitioners by supporting their development and well-being as a practitioner and their practice with clients.

Keynote 2: The Transformative Function of Supervision in Social Work

Ms Nicki Weld

Director

CNZN Ltd, New Zealand

Introduction

Ms Nicki Weld posed the question of whether viewing supervision as a reflective process that allows participants to think deeply and vulnerably about life and values, work and career, relationship and connection, could make an immense difference in how participants live. Ms Weld expounds on how supervision should not just be about compliance and reacting, as this could lead to distrust. She further states that supervision needs to be seen as a safe space where we can create a pause in the noise of everyday life to create learning and experiences. She makes reference to Joseph Jaworski's (1996, p. 82) engagement in inner education so as to be able to identify and discover our inner sense of identity as human beings.

Supervision is always transforming and evolving. It is not a place to meet organisational indicators, but a place of learning. It is a safe and predicted space for supervisors to reflect and think about their roles and practice. Ms Weld explained that apart from normative, formative, and supportive/restorative supervision, there is also transformative supervision, in which social workers experience a change and shift in their values. They gain insights and excitement to move forward and try things that are new and different.

The Transformative Function

The transformative function of supervision has the following effects:

- It engages the worker in personal and professional change that progresses their development in new ways
- It can cause an observable shift in behaviour and thinking that moves a worker in a new direction
- It is not just a pause whereby a normal function later resumes, but leads to a fundamental shift in ways of thinking and working
- It leads to moments of amplified insight that contributes to an action of change

In essence, supervision can be a deep and rich place. It is about metacognition and where thoughts and existing knowledge are examined and whereby the ability to adopt new perspectives is evident. Therefore, this requires supervisors to be active learners.

Indicators of Transformative Function

The following are indicators of the transformative function in action:

- Having a deep sense of thoughtfulness that leads to a change or shift in values or beliefs
- Establishing a new behaviour that is immediately put into action in the workplace
- Having a sense of excitement, passion, and motivation to do something differently following a connection to self 'truth'
- Having a named breakthrough in thinking or a new realisation that is connected to the workplace and the self
- Having an expanded view or position in relation to an issue or difficulty that links prior learning and connects to future action

Ms Weld shared a personal experience of transformative supervision. Her own supervisor had advised her to be mindful of her own inner critic, as this would put a lot of unnecessary worry and pressure on herself. She became excited about the idea of the inner critic as she was unfamiliar with it and explored ways to externalise the challenges that one might face within ourselves. It contributed in her contemplating where the inner voice came from and to identify the cause of the doubt in order to solve the issue. It led to a notable shift in her perspective, and she was able to extrapolate this thinking and learning in her own supervision to her supervisees.

Supervisors as Leaders

Ms Weld shared regarding the notion of emotional intelligence. She used the analogy of a base camp as something that is restorative and can replenish us. This analogy sees that supervisors play a role as a base camp for their supervisees, which provides a safe and relational space for supervisees after they have faced difficulties in handling cases during their social work practice. Therefore, this space should not be authoritative and bureaucratic, but a foundation that can support safe practice and where supervisees can return to in order to improve their competency and capability so as to develop fresh ideas.

In order for supervisors to enable the transformative supervision, they should possess these relational components:

- Committed – Being present for their supervisees and bringing them into your consciousness
- Curious – Having a wondering mindset

- Analytical – Having an inquisitive and enquiring mindset. Bringing practice wisdom and knowledge into the picture to find out what is happening
- Intuitive – Being attuned to emotions as it is the voice of our intuitions
- Compassionate – Be mindful and considerate about vulnerabilities and having a safe space for making mistakes and handling it
- Honest – Being firm with your honesty and not going around the corner to avoid any difficult topics

At a macro level, social work supervisors are leaders and to accomplish transformative supervision, they should be:

- Practice leaders – Ability to inform and transform social work practice
- Open and honest – Being humane and sharing mistakes with others so that learning can occur. Having hard conversations to mobilise and motivate
- Have a well-articulated practice vision – Knowing what to contribute towards the direction of the social work profession
- Able to support workers to be flexible, resilient, and adaptable – Being able to identify gaps and training needs

Practicing Self-Reflection

She introduced a self-reflection tool that she developed, which includes 5 questions so that supervisors constantly reflect on their practice during their learning journey:

- What are my immediate thoughts and feelings when I reflect on a decision?
- What went well? How would I rate myself?
- What could I have done differently?
- What's my learning from that decision?
- What would I try to do more of or less of next time?

Ms Weld further shared on self-reflection by some of the supervisors. They admitted that it was difficult not to be judgmental and jump into the situation by offering advice and therefore, one needs to have awareness before reacting, through being sensitive and reflective. Some also relied on the experience of others to gain confidence to approach a difficult situation, and others see the importance of the transformative function as it allowed for them as supervisors to better be able to listen and hear their supervisees' opinions and perspectives. These allowed for opportunities for self-development.

Continuous Learning

Ms Weld touched on the issue of continuous learning. As social workers who choose to be in the service of people, we have a responsibility to be constantly learning and to contribute to this learning to make positive changes to the current landscape. Supervisors should put themselves into the pathway of new experiences and supervisors should not be considered a chore. An exhausted supervisor will not be able to support personal and professional development and quality practice. With transformative practice, supervisees can share the wisdom of their supervisors through teaching and practice-based evidence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, if social work practice goes 'stale', it cannot achieve anything transformative. She encouraged social workers to step more strongly into the therapeutic space and to help people to emotionally and socially adapt to situations they cannot change. Social workers can help those in difficult situations to emotionally adapt and provide access to resources. She urged social workers to increase the provision of therapeutic social work in order to transform social work practice. She also mentioned exploring the conscious use of the self because the deeper one goes into their relationship with people, the more conscious one would have to be of themselves. Social workers should not be complacent in their supervisory practice, but should move out of their comfort zone, ask tricky questions, share a thought, or amplify their insights.

Supervision is a place of learning and it should be exciting and not just reactive. To invigorate social work, supervisors should take the opportunity to develop themselves in order to support positive social change and achieve transformative practice.

Plenary Session: Sharing of Perspectives and Experiences Across Countries – Evolving and Embedding Social Work Supervision in Practice

<u>Panellists:</u>

Associate Professor Kieran O'Donoghue
Massey University, New Zealand
Head of School of Social Work

Dr. Agnes Ng
Chief Executive
The Nurturing Education Ltd, Hong Kong

Ms Ruth Chua
Executive Director
Counselling and Care Centre (CCC)

Ms Agnes Chia
President (July 2015 – July 2017)
Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW)

<u>Facilitated By:</u>

Ms Lee Yean Wun
Executive Director
Kampong Kapor Family Service Centre

Introduction

Ms Lee Yean Wun started by highlighting the need to embed social work supervision into practice. She then invited the first panel speaker, A/P Kieran to share his experiences of New Zealand's social work and supervision landscape across the years.

Sharing of Perspectives Across Countries: The New Zealand Experience – 1994 to 2017 by A/P Kieran

A/P Kieran shared the experience of New Zealand from 1994-2017.

1994 – 1997: Managerialist Dominance

Managerial dominance was prevalent from 1994 to 1997. Social Work Review 6 (5/6) deliberately focused on supervision and management. The editorial noted that a decision was made "to emphasise the crucial role that supervision plays in ensuring social workers maintain professional and ethical standards in their practice. Supervision can be a way of ensuring that social work is not undermined by the imperatives of organisational efficiency" (Barrett & Munford, 1994).

In response to the managerial dominance, Tony Morrison wrote about professional danger and supervision's role in addressing this concern: The Aotearoa New Zealand Association for Social Workers (ANZASW) developed a supervision policy linked to the competency programme in 1998, and the Massey University and Auckland College of Education started delivering postgraduate supervision qualifications in 1998.

1998 – 2008: Professional Resurgence

There was a professional resurgence from 1998-2008. From 2000 onwards, key guidelines were put in place where all employers had to provide supervision even if they had to look outside for supervision resources (e.g. engaging external supervisors). An 8-year training project was established, which comprised of 10 days of supervision training for all Child Protection (CP) and Non-Government Organization (NGO) related services. The year 2003 saw the reinforcement of the state of supervision with the Social Workers Registration Act (Voluntary Registration) being put in place. In 2004, the ANZASW added the clause in the Code of Ethics on "responsibility in supervisory relationships". Strong guidelines regarding supervisory conduct were created in 2005 and in 2007, there were formalised expectations of Registered Social Workers to receive supervision.

2009 – 2017: Evolving Professional Culture

Since 2009, the ANZASW and SWRD policies on supervision were updated. There has been widespread use of supervision policies by social service organisations and postgraduate supervision qualifications also increased. Extensive supervision literature base has also started to be developed and there have been ongoing calls for mandatory social worker registration. In 2014, a chief social workers review found that more time was needed to be dedicated to supervisory practice and there was a need to improve the quality, frequency, and availability of supervision. In 2015, an evaluation of clinical supervision in Allied Health across two District Health Boards found that 93.75% of social

workers were satisfied, very satisfied or completely satisfied with supervision. The evaluation also found that 93.75% of social workers gave an overall evaluation of their supervision as good, very good or excellent. In another survey conducted amongst 278 registered social workers, respondents' experiences showed significant differences in supervision pertaining to areas of practice and ethnic identities. It also found that there was a need to improve supervision overall, particularly in the statutory area of practice. Lastly, A/P Kieran also highlighted the need to improve the cultural competence of social work supervisors as they practice in multi-cultural contexts.

In conclusion, A/P Kieran stated that there is a continual need to evolve in response to the practice environment, professional expectations and organizational cultures. Social work supervision in New Zealand is embedded through social worker registration, the efforts of the professional association and through organisational supervision policies. The challenge ahead is to advance the quality of supervision to develop better practitioners and best social work practice with clients in order to achieve the best outcomes for clients.

Sharing of Perspectives and Experiences Across Countries by Dr. Agnes Ng

Dr. Agnes Ng shared the efforts made in her country and concurred with A/P Kieran that the journey to upgrade social work supervision has not been easy, having struggled for more than 25 years in her career. She proceeded to share on the Hong Kong experience of supervision. She highlighted the key word – "evolving" and spoke about how supervision is continually evolving and that it takes the whole fraternity to achieve this. Singapore continues to demonstrate this progress, and it is noteworthy that social work is evolved by people i.e. energy, motivation, hope and support, from the ground.

The developmental progress of social work supervision work has been very slow in Hong Kong, contrary to popular belief. Even though supervision in social work has been part of the helping profession in Hong Kong from the beginning of professional education, the pace of research and development in supervision practice has been slow as it was taken for granted. There was much effort in administrative work with no supervision quality standard and structure coupled with a lack of time and incompetence. The earliest research on supervisory practice was by Ko (1987) and only picked up again after a decade (Chan, 1998; Fu, 1999; Leung, 2012; Tsui, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008; Social Worker Registration Board, 2006). Across the years, there have been new challenges in social work supervision and context due to changes in government funding to long term grants. This promoted greater work accountability and workers' competence, as social workers handling complex cases were frequently put at risk. Among the challenges faced, Dr. Ng stated that most prominent issues related to supervision is the competence of supervisors. This is because competence directly points to supervisor-supervisee dyad's perception, interpretation and

expectations in developing a collaborative supervisory relationship. This led to increased attention and more funding for supervision practice.

Another important dimension Dr. Ng highlighted was the dynamics between supervisors and supervisees. Research reported that supervisors tended to adopt task-centred approaches rather than worker-oriented approaches to supervising staff and proportionally had performed more on administrative functions. This issue surfaced again a few years after the implementation of Lump Sum Grant (LSG) as many organisations changed their staff structure and provision. The conflicts occurred due to equal work but unequal pay. Most of, if not all the organisations had focused their time and efforts on cost saving matters. Thus, supervisors perceived that the administrative function was more important than educational and supportive functions in supervision. Social workers frequently complained that there was no supervision policy, no supervision structure and that supervisors lacked competency and time to do supervision.

She cited Tsui's study (2008) which surfaced that there were differences in understanding and expectations between supervisors and supervisees towards supervision. Supervisors perceived supervision as a rational and systematic process whereas supervisees expected emotional support and collaborative teamwork. The differences in expectations created a psychosocial distance between supervisor and supervisee. Supervisees experienced a lack of trust and support as there was no safety in the supervisory relationship. The wider context of the Chinese culture also impacted younger supervisees as they felt they had to "show face" to older, more senior supervisors. This cultural obligation to respect their seniors sometimes led them to attribute excuses like "they are old and have no energy" to senior supervisors so as to justify the lack of proper supervision.

Dr. Ng shared that research showed that the following aspects of supervision are important for social workers in Hong Kong: 1) Supervision Constructs, 2) Supervisory relationship in the Chinese context, 3) Effects of Power and Supervision Types, 4) Good and Bad Interaction Process, 5) Attachment Styles and Behaviour, and 6) Supervisory Relationship of Job Performance and Satisfaction.

She then shared the effects of advocacy on social work supervision in Hong Kong:

1) For organisations: They have more awareness looking at the needs and effectiveness of supervision practice.
2) For supervisors: They are more aware of their role and the competence required in supervision.
3) For social work educators: They place a greater emphasis on "strengths-based" and "cultural-based" supervision training.

4) For researchers: They have done more research work to illustrate practice that blends both Western & Chinese cultures.

5) For supervisees: They demand their right for effective supervision

Ms Lee thanked Dr. Ng and added that the ecomap of supervision includes the organisation, educator, research, policy and funding. Ms Chia resonated with Dr. Ng's points and acknowledged that the power imbalance is always present. While upholding safety, we should not neglect openness due to accountability and quality. Dr. Ng shared about a supervisor whose supervisee had lied to him and tried to cover up her mistake. The supervisor reprimanded the supervisee and told her not to do it again. Dr. Ng pointed out that instead of using legitimate power, the supervisor could rephrase his statement to be more supportive.

Sharing of Perspectives and Experiences Across Countries by Ms Ruth Chua

Ms Ruth Chua thanked the Social Work Accreditation and Advisory Board (SWAAB) for inviting her to be on the panel. She shared that CCC has been very connected with social workers in the field, not just in training and consultation but also in their professional development. She proceeded to share about the growth of social work in Singapore over the past 20 years, and qualified that these were based on her own observations and not based on research or studies.

Sharing of Perspectives and Experiences Across Countries

Ms Chua observed that before 1991, there were not many social work-trained people. The main emphasis of supervision was more administrative and task-oriented. The supervisor took on the "expert position" and in her experience, was not a resident supervisor but an external one. Many supervisees shared one supervisor and resources were more embedded in social work practice. As a young social worker, she would look for her supervisor only when needed e.g. for case consultation. This was informal, "in the moment" supervision.

1991-2000 was characterized by an emphasis on a more educative role in supervision. There were more training in the field on social work and counselling skills. Resources were embedded in training programs provided to social workers e.g. Family Therapy training. During training, live, video-recorded supervision was introduced to workers. The role of the supervisor moved to be more directive and guiding. That period also saw FRTC's launch of the first Social Work Supervision Manual.

2000-2010 saw an increase in the development of professional supervision. There was a shift to a more supervisee-centered supervision with the focus on the supervisee's needs. There was an

increase in reflective, video-recorded and external supervision. Supervisors' roles became more collaborative. This was in direct contrast to the period before 2000 where supervisors functioned more as expert problem solvers. The first supervision training conducted by the late Mr Anthony Yeo was also introduced during this period.

From 2010-2016, there was a move from supervisee-centered supervision to a focus on the supervisor as a person. There was more structure in supervision and more risk assessment taking place during supervision. Formal supervision in agencies became more common and were more collaborative in their approach i.e. supervisors would listen more and invite supervisees to ask questions. Supervisors were also held to a higher level of accountability than in the past. More resources were made available in the sector and the Singapore Association of Counselling (SAC) started its registration of clinical supervisors. There was also the launch of clinical supervision standards and procedures as well as the launch of more local literature on supervision such as CCC's "Clinical Supervision – Clinician's Perspectives and Practices Towards Professionalising Counselling" (2014) as well as the "Montfort Care Supervision Guide - Superecipe" (2016).

Ms Chua observed that currently, there is strong recognition of the value of supervision in raising standards of practice, recruiting and retaining social workers and in ensuring safe practice for vulnerable populations. She also highlighted the need to support social workers who may be burnt out and leaving the field. Additionally, Ms Chua also observed greater support from the Ministry as seen in the increase in funding for the training of supervisors, the deployment of Master Practice Leaders for supervision and the engagement of external supervisors in agencies.

Current State of Supervision

She noted that supervisors now have to juggle between four key functions: educative, supportive, administrative and mediative. There are often tensions and ambiguities among the four functions. Supervisors can become overwhelmed with accountability while sharing responsibilities with supervisees in risk management of clients. Ms Chua posed a question to the audience: "Do supervisors take over that risk management? How much control should clients also take for risk management?"

Ms Chua also highlighted the impact of personal and professional life stages on supervision and the challenges supervisors face at each stage. She noted that many young supervisors with little direct practice experience have been pushed into the role of supervisor due to lack of manpower and there were more senior supervisors leaving. Thus, they struggle with both lack of experience in work as well as life stage and family challenges.

Ms Chua shared that this current period has seen an increase in reflexivity in all aspects of social work supervision which is at the centre of the four functions/roles (i.e. educative, supportive, administrative and mediative). It is important to be reflective of one's own attitudes and emotions and how they influence supervision. There also needs to be greater collaboration among partners (policy makers, social service organisations, professional associations and social work educators) to help supervisors in crisis.

Strengthening Supervision Practice in Organisations

Ms Chua added that professional associations (such as SAC and SASW) should work closely with organisations in encouraging the implementation of supervision polices, guidelines and procedures. Supervision practice should also be integrated in the practice context in order to recognise the uniqueness of clients' profile and organisational culture. Organisations should also utilize more than one supervisory arrangement (e.g. split between professional development and performance management).

A "Culture of Contribution" in Supervisory Practice

Ms Chua highlighted the need for an increased space for thinking, peer support and reflection as part of social workers' work and to encourage more research to be done on the effectiveness and outcome of supervision.

Ms Lee ended the session by thanking Ms Chua and concluded that supervision is about supporting and guiding the practitioner to have better client outcomes. Lastly, Ms Lee invited Ms Agnes Chia to share about what more can be done in the present and future.

Sharing of Perspectives and Experiences Across Countries by Ms Agnes Chia

Ms Agnes Chia shared the SASW's perspective on social work supervision. She pointed out that in every period, the focus of supervision depended on practitioners' needs and the existing ecosystem. In today's context, supervisors cannot afford to separate the functions of supervision but need to integrate them due to limited resources.

She invited the audience to think about how supportive supervision informs its administrative and educative counterparts. Furthermore, administrative supervision does not equate to a top-down, KPI-directed approach but is in fact intertwined and synergised with the supportive function. It is knowledge-based and emphasises an evaluative and outcome-based management.

She then moved on to share the development of SASW from 1999 to 2000. 1999 saw the introduction of a brief training course on supervision. In 2000, the "Manual on Supervision for Social Work Supervisors" was produced. The manual was comprehensive and covered all the four functions of social work supervisors. It included the knowledge and skills, the learning processes and needs of supervisees, the engagement process and how to give feedback and appraisal.

Ms Chia noted that feedback and requests from participants over the years showed a demand for the sharpening of skills and techniques, coaching through role plays and reviewing of recordings. Supervisors want support in terms of knowing how to use self as an instrument in supervision. She highlighted the need to continue to develop the ability of supervisors and to strengthen their personal capacity to develop social work outcomes.

Ms Chia pointed out that the Diploma in Clinical Supervision at CCC complemented the FRTC training course for those who wished to further develop their skills, especially the use of 'self' as a supervisor. She also shared the finding of an evaluation done by SASW:

1) Supervisors face challenges in carrying out the administrative function e.g. getting staff to meet outcomes/KPIs. Many agencies use a business model of KPIs to map out the administrative function of casework. This is difficult to execute and most supervisors avoid the administrative role as they do not resonate with the administrative function, though it is still needed.
2) The educative function has debatable definitions. This role may be seen as too academic by some supervisors.
3) The relatively under-developed functions of supervision include the administrative and educative function (Normative – Administrative; Formative – Educational; Restorative – Supportive). (Brigid Proctor, 1988; Kadushin and Harkness, 2014).

Ms Chia pointed out that supervision seeks to facilitate the sustainable provision of competent practice, attainment of professionally appropriate outcomes for clients and achieving of organisational mission. Supervision ensures quality and accountability through a holistic and developmental learning/coaching process. It also ensures both professional and personal growth across time: Administrative (organisational knowledge and skills), Educative (knowledge based, values, ethics) and Supportive (the conscious use of self with emphasis on training through role play and videoing to help supervisees develop personal capacity and social work outcomes).

Questions from the Floor

<u>Ensuring a Culture of Supervision</u>

Dr. Ng responded that the Head of Agency needs to be convinced that supervision is important as he/she holds the resources. He/she needs to draw people together to convince them of the importance of supervision and to think of how to offer support with resources and training. We should also acknowledge agencies who have promoted supervision and affirm them publicly, for example, through awards.

Ms Lee added on that as a sector, we need more evidence and research to show that clients' outcomes are better with supervision.

<u>Developing Group and Community Supervision</u>

Ms Chia stated that the focus of supervision is currently on case practice. It is helpful to zoom out and transfer skills and knowledge to other areas like group and community work as many of the skills can be applied to other domains such as the administrative and supportive domains. We can bring in the sub-domain for the educative part.

<u>Training Supervisors When Reflection is an Important Component</u>

A/P Kieran shared that we can use the approach of getting them to think about the "Why, what, how come, what do I do with this?" of supervision. We should also help them to think back on their own experience and to learn what to do and what not to do. He also suggested getting supervisors in training to consider things from another person's point of view. Other techniques like journaling, recording and the use of videos are also helpful. We should be innovative and creative in the process. Lastly, we need to help supervisees learn from their mistakes.

Closing

Ms Lee highlighted that there are many ways to acquire skills and competencies as supervisors. Traditional supervision is merely one means to the end, and peer supervision, mentoring and coaching are also avenues to acquire skills and competencies. The social work fraternity should continue to consider ways in which they can move supervision forward down the road.

Workshop 1: Supervision of Supervisors

Workshop Presenter:

Ms Juliana Chua

Clinical Director

Counseling and Care Centre

Introduction

Ms Juliana Chua began by asking the audience how many of them were supervising someone at the moment. She then opened the floor for questions with regards to the challenges faced by supervisors.

The challenges that were brought up from the floor were on:

1) Managing conflicts between colleagues
2) Supervisees that do not want to be a supervisor
3) How to supervise someone from a different practice orientation
4) Managing roles and developmental levels of supervisor/supervisee
5) How to be a supervisor to someone who is older, of different gender, holds a different theoretical orientation, or is at a different life stage and with different life experiences
6) Multiple roles of supervisor, such as administrative and clinical roles
7) How to invite more reflexivity in young supervisees
8) How to prevent supervision fatigue
9) How to be attuned to parallel processes so as to effect a change in the supervisees
10) Characteristics of the supervisee, such as encountering problems with his or her character

Framework of Supervision

Ms Chua first explained the framework of supervision and drew diagrams to illustrate. It came from a systematic point of view, in which the system should first be understood in order for one to work with it. The diagram included four figurines – the supervisor of the supervisee, the supervisee, the social worker and the client.

Sacred

Space

⟷

Supervisor   Supervisee   Social Worker   Client
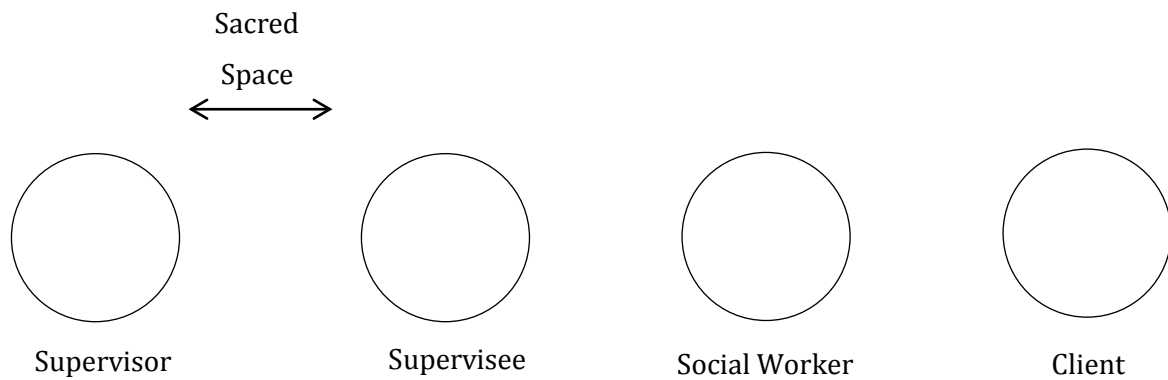
Ms Chua expressed that supervision is the growth of another and the act of paying it forward, so that that person can proceed to cultivate the competency of another. She then pointed out that the space between the supervisor and the supervisee is a sacred space and a place of growth for the supervisee. This sacred space is also one that is safe as safety is important before vulnerability can be shown. Ms Chua listed some of the factors to guard this sacred space of growth between the supervisor and the supervisee.

Roles

To create a secure space, the role as a supervisor has to be very clear. Roles should be clarified to build up the competency of the supervisee so he/she can feel confident to build up the capacity of the social worker. This is important as there could be multiple roles and relationships between the supervisor and the supervisee, one of which is also friendship. Some dual/triple roles may cross boundaries, thus creating confusion. Hence, in the context of supervision of the supervisee, the roles have to be drawn out clearly and effectively conveyed to the supervisee.

In achieving that, the supervisor has to also have a clear understanding of his/her role. His/her role is not to take over the supervisee's supervision of the social worker, or to be better therapists to the client, but rather, to meet the needs of the supervisee and provide advice if the supervisee encounters difficulties when working with the social worker.

This is so as to prevent potential competition that that might occur between supervisor and supervisee in relation to the social worker, in which the supervisor may feel triangulated when dealing with conflicts between supervisee and social worker. Ms Chua also then responded to the first challenge posed, that as supervisors, they were not able to mediate the problems between colleagues. Supervision is always supervisee-led which means that in every session, there should be a clear focus on what the supervisee wants.

Ms Chua addressed a question from the floor, which was how the situation of the social worker constantly reporting to the supervisor instead of the supervisee should be dealt with.

She mentioned that the supervisor can interact with the social worker, but this interaction must not affect the relationship that the social worker has with the supervisee. It is always important to direct the social worker back to the supervisee. Being aware of why this is happening is crucial in managing the situation. In this case, knowing one's role is thus pertinent to prevent possible triangulation.

Reflexive Practice

In enhancing one's role as a supervisor, it is important to be aware of the interaction and physiological responses between the supervisor and the supervisee that may trigger negative feelings towards supervision. There may be feelings of dread, ambivalence, anxiety relating to the supervision or also positive feelings of excitement and hope. It is good to reflect about the interactions and inner conversations that are going on and ask questions like "What is going on here that makes me feel this way?" and "Why am I responding the way I am responding?" as each of these feelings trigger a different sense of who you are.

Apart from supervisors, young supervisees who have little experience to facilitate reflexive thinking may rely on knowledge first. Hence for young supervisees, it is good to let them build up in their knowledge in action and thus they would need competent things to read. To stimulate their reflexivity, they can start off with a reflection of the event, reflection in action which is to reflect when they are carrying out the activity, and reflection on action which is turning practice into knowledge.

To encourage reflexivity during supervision, questions like "What did not sit very well with me?", "What happened at that moment?", "How should I make sense of it?" can be asked. As supervisors, the differences between the supervisees and the supervisors themselves should be respected.

Parallel Processes

One of the questions posed by the floor was also how the supervisor should evaluate the competency of the supervisee and whether it is acceptable to sit in during the supervision session between the supervisee and the social worker.

Ms Chua mentioned that the supervisor should not enter a supervisee's supervision session, similar to how the supervisee should not bypass the relationship between the social worker and the client. The supervisor would need to ask the supervisee what would be most helpful for him/her. There

can be live supervision but the intervention has to always be the one the supervisee is responsible for. Taping the sessions is also another useful method.

Managing Developmental Level of Supervisor and Supervisee

Ms Chua shared that a supervisee who just started out as a supervisor may not do well with a fresh supervisee. There would be an anxiety to want to get it right, and this anxiousness can result in competition as both would want to be the better supervisor. For a fresh supervisee who has just started out as a supervisor to a social worker, he/she may feel incompetent or unsupported. The implication is that the supervisor of the supervisee could be more aligned to advice the social worker, thus affecting the sacred space between the supervisor and the supervisee.

Ms Chua recommends for start out supervisees to have more senior supervisors, as they are more experienced in respecting the boundary and space of the former.

Things Needed for Supervision of Supervisors

Ms Chua then listed some of the things that were needed for supervision.

1) Do not assume the struggles or competency of supervisees, and do not assume your own competency

As complacency may get in the way, it is important to display vulnerability by admitting the lack of knowledge. This is because learning comes from being humble and for the supervisee to also admit if he/she does not have the knowledge. This vulnerability displayed by both parties can protect the sacred space of learning so that it can cultivate growth.

2) Ability to ask for feedback from the supervisee

It is good to know how the supervisee thinks of the supervision sessions. Questions such as "What is something that I did just now that did not sit well with you?" or "Was there something that I could have done differently?" are questions that can be posed to the supervisee.

Ms Chua cautioned that self-reflexivity should not turn into self-criticism. It is also important to observe and know how the supervisee listens to feedback. In this case, the supervisor can ask the supervisee how they want feedback to be given. She also suggests asking the polar opposite of "How would you not like feedback to be given to you?". Ms Chua mentioned the two different types of feedback i.e. reinforcing feedback and enhancing feedback. Reinforcing feedback is something that you want to carry on doing; whereby enhancing feedback is something you can enhance and do differently. Both are necessary in supervision.

Ending

Ms Chua ended by reinforcing that the sacred space between the supervisor and the supervisee is a space of love, and a space whereby supervisees can feel good about themselves. Ms Chua also listed out the spirits that supervisors should have, which are spirits of commitment, curiosity, intuitiveness, honesty, compassion, generosity, humility, hospitality, empathy.

Workshop 2: Supporting the Conscious Use of Self in Supervision

<u>Workshop Presenter:</u>

Ms Nicki Weld

Director

CNZN Ltd (New Zealand)

Introduction:

Ms Nicki Weld opened the session by going through the workshop objectives which include: (i) To describe key principles of relational work that support the conscious use of self, (ii) To examine the operational uses of self, (iii) To enable reflexivity, and (iv) To explore the concept of self-compassion. She shared a quote that described her thoughts on social work supervision: "In a relationship of trust and transparency, supervisees talk about their work and through reflection and thoughtfulness, learn from it and return to do it differently" (Carroll, 2007). Supervision is an opportunity to integrate work experiences and learning. However, trust can be difficult to establish as supervisees may be guarded about the things that they share with their supervisors, especially if their supervisors are the ones reviewing their progress.

Building Trust in Supervision:

Ms Weld asked workshop participants to discuss in small groups the different ways of build a trusting relationship in supervision. One group shared about the need for the supervisor not to be criticizing or blaming towards the supervisee but instead to be constructive in addressing mistakes and stepping in to help when the supervisee encounters problems. Another group shared the need for the supervisor to make time for supervision, to create a safe environment for supervision by being willing to be vulnerable, to be opened to addressing issues and to acknowledge that they do not have answers to everything. Injecting some humour into the supervision session would also lighten up the atmosphere of supervision which could help in creating a safe place for the supervisee to share his/ her concerns.

Te Ao Maori Principles (The Maori World)

Ms Nicki then shared the "Te Ao Maori principles (The Maori World)" concepts from the Maori worldview, which she opined was applicable to supervision and helpful in building trust:

- Ako (learning together) – the teacher teaches the student, and the student too teaches the teacher. It is a process of knowledge sharing, being vulnerable and acknowledging what the supervisee has to teach the supervisor and for the supervisor to offer back.
- Wairuatanga (spiritual embodiment) – the supervisor brings to mind his/her supervisee before the supervision session and to reflect on who they are. This serves as a form of preparation for the supervisor to uphold respect towards the supervisee as a unique individual.
- Mana (respect, personal prestige, presence and character) – the worth of the person regardless of their age, life stage and what they bring. It is paramount to acknowledge the supervisee's presence and to work sensitively with that, to keep them intact even in hard conversations.
- Whanaungatanga (the building of relationships) – exploring and seeking to understand the supervisee's world, and their relationships and support network.
- Manaakitanga (kindness, extending hospitality and care for others) – extending hospitality and care for others.

It is important for the supervisor to prepare for supervision, to ensure that the session starts and ends on a good note, and to consider the supervisee as a holistic being with spiritual, psychological, emotional, physical and relational needs and ways of being.

Empathy

Ms Weld shared that empathy can be as simple as "I see you", i.e. for supervisors to try and imagine how things are for the supervisee.

As supervision is a time for the supervisee to be vulnerable to share, the supervisor should separate the problem from the person. (i.e. a problem is a problem, it should be isolated from the person). The supervisor should also avoid criticising the supervisee during the supervision session in order to create a safe space for them to share.

For supervisors to establish empathy, they must be present not just physically, but mentally as well. This means suspending mental chat and locating to what is happening for the supervisee, and helping them to let go of some thinking and ideas so that new thinking and ideas can come in.

The Importance of Humour

Humour helps support openness and increase trust, warmth and positive interaction in the supervisory relationship. Humour can also be an icebreaker to help the supervisee to relax into the

session, especially if they are nervous. Used carefully, humour can also help the supervisee to let go of stress and support a sense of resilience. In addition, humour can be a powerful healer and provides a valuable way to support human connection, towards a more conscious exploration of self.

Personal and Professional Self

The development of our personal self is intractably connected to that of our professional self and vice versa. When we are working with people, we bring both our professional self and our personal self to the professional relationship and we need to remain conscious of how we balance this. Too little of our personal self can make us cold or distant, resulting in people struggling to connect to us, while too much may result in confusion for people who might view us as friend, and hence the goals and boundaries of the work becomes unclear. Ms Weld emphasized the need to mind the gap between the professional and the personal self and to bring the two sides together to support good practice.

Ordering Principles

"Our view of human needs will acutely reflect those we have experienced ourselves, key dilemmas will reflect the greatest challenges we have had to adapt to, solutions we have to offer or ideals on how to be will often reflect solutions to our own issues and conflicts." (Edwards & Bess, 1998, p. 92).

Edwards and Bess commented that all of our professional knowledge is filtered through our personality and personal life experiences (Edwards & Bess, 1998, p. 99). Often, this is evident in the perspective we bring to our work, which is in turn shaped by our family, culture, values, education, experiences, relationships, and socioeconomic class (Harms & Connolly, 2009, p. 8). The intersect of this with our professional self (informed by our training, ethics and standards, code of conduct, colleagues, agency culture, supervision, and previous practice experiences) influences the type of practitioner we become (Harms & Connolly, 2009 p. 8).

In some way, these 'unconscious ordering principles' can become the code of how we approach challenges or difficulties. These may also contribute to whether we have an internal or external locus of control, which will shape the approach we take to our work. For example, if we personally believe that fate happens and people are victims of life events with little control over this, we might join in blaming external factors as the main cause of what is not working well in a person's life and hence personal responsibility and development to making change happen might not occur. However, if we believe strongly that people are in charge of their lives and their destiny is not

foregone, we might expect high levels of personal initiative and responsibility. We might then get frustrated if people do not make changes quick enough or embrace new ways of being. It is also important for supervisors to take note of their key dilemmas as these will be the greatest challenges they may face in supervision.

The Conscious Use of Self

Dewane comments that "melding the professional self of what one knows (training, knowledge, techniques) with the personal self of who one is (personality traits, belief systems and life experience) is a hallmark of skilled practice." (Dewane, 2006, p. 544). She suggests that there are five operational uses of self in social work:

1) Personality

Being real, human, accessible and congruent in our professional relationships helps people to connect and learn about their own self. In using our personality, we bring aspects of ourselves into the relationship that help people to make a connection with us and who we are. This include factors required to build the relational foundation of therapeutic work such as humour, empathy, and being authentic, and that the worker should have self-confidence and self-respect and be free of anxiety (Belkin, 1984, p. 65).

Anxious or insecure workers have been observed to try and please people rather than try and help them, and risk trying to get their own needs met through their work with others (Belkin, 1984). Dewane, Edward and Bess also suggest that we should explore why we are in this field of work, by conducting a self-inventory that examines what we enjoy about it, what attributes we bring to it, what makes us uncomfortable, what need it might be fulfilling in us, and how we approach it (Dewane, 2006; Edwards & Bess, 1998).

Participants were asked to discuss the following questions during the workshop:

- What motivates you to do this type of work?
- What are the top three attributes and skills you think you bring to it?
- What do you enjoy about the work?
- What triggers your flight/fight response or makes you uncomfortable about the work?
- What need is doing this work fulfilling in you?

<div align="right">(Dewane, 2006; Edwards & Bess, 1998)</div>

It is paramount to do a self-inventory regularly, by asking yourself these questions, understanding what motivates you to do this work, what makes you uncomfortable and whose needs you are

fulfilling when you work. There is a possibility of professional dangerousness when we are just meeting our personal needs by doing this type of work. Ms Weld opined that it is okay to enter social work to meet some personal needs, but it is also important to ensure there is a balance in these needs.

2) Belief Systems

When we meet a person, their belief system and ours can connect, collide or just be different, and it is important that we take time to be fully aware of our own beliefs and where they come from. Our beliefs and values are often built through the process of our socialisation and can contain important threads of culture and faith woven through our lives by significant people, especially when we were children. We can often feel very strongly about our beliefs and values because they can be an intrinsic part of who we are and hence we may defend them very strongly because we feel we are literally defending our self.

In therapeutic social work we may need to create places of flexibility and adaptation to our belief system so that we do not inadvertently discount another person. Instead we need to see differences as a useful place of exploration to build understanding, and if need be, to change. Just because one has carried a belief for long, does not mean that it is still useful and relevant in different situations. When applying our belief system, we need to consider how we personally view the world, which includes examining our values and how we respond to challenges and difficulties.

Participants were asked to discuss the following questions during the workshop:

- What is your view of how the world works?
- What traumas or life crises have shaped your world-view?
- What are your top three personal beliefs or values?
- Is there a specific school of thought that influences your social work approach and have you re-examined this lately?
- If someone has a very different belief system from your own, how do you work with this?

(Dewane, 2006; p. 550)

3) Relational dynamics

When working with people, we are constantly involved in a range of relational dynamics and "deeper relational work requires greater use of self, which in terms raises the possibility of transference and countertransference being present" (Sudbery, 2002, p. 154). Transference and countertransference can be experienced in both positive and negative ways and always involves a transferring of previous emotional responses and reactions to and from another person or situation.

Often, previous emotional responses and coping strategies that people use, especially as children, may have been adaptive and worked at that time, but as people grow older, these can become maladaptive and contribute to alienation and people withdrawing from interaction with them. Through the therapeutic relationship, we can help people to learn about their styles of coping and provide feedback on social engagement. This is the type of feedback one would normally get as a child from a parent, but the people we work with may not have had this feedback because of parental attachment disorders or other reasons. A therapeutic relationship offers a powerful way to work with previous and current relational difficulties through the exploring of transference both of the person's reactions and of our own.

Part of therapeutic social work can also include the dynamics named within Eric Berne's transactional analysis theory, which explores what ego states people might move in and out of in each interpersonal interaction or 'transaction'. Berne suggested that people with a history of relational trauma as children were often caught in the ego positions of child and parent and would unconsciously move others into these roles as well instead of engaging with others from an 'adult' to 'adult' perspective. Again, driven from a foundation of unmet needs, people often experience unstable and unsatisfactory adult relationships because of continuing childhood patterns of attempting to get needs met rather than having constructive ways of navigating this as an adult.

By staying aware of relational dynamics when engaging in therapeutic social work, we have the potential to tap into these as rich sources of information, not only about the person we are working with but also with ourselves. This requires us to be keenly aware of our emotions, thoughts and body responses to people. We need to check if what we are experiencing belongs fully to the current situation, or if it could in part belong to past experiences. Transference, countertransference, and transactional analysis provide an opportunity to express and explore what is happening in the room at that time and whether this dynamic is part of a wider contributing factor to the problem or difficulty. What is essential is that we allow feelings to safely surface so they can be explored in a forum such as supervision.

Participants were asked to discuss the following questions during the workshop:

- What sort of behaviour from others provoke strong emotional responses with yourself?
- What feelings in yourself do you find most distracting or troubling?
- If you felt triggered around a personal grief issue in an interaction with a client who was grieving how would you manage this?
- Is there anyone you are working with right now who provokes a strong reaction (either positive or negative) in you?

- How do you manage transference when you are aware this is being directed at you?

4) Anxiety

A key emotion that helps us in the constructive use of self in therapeutic work is that of anxiety. Linked to countertransference, anxiety in our professional role can be a powerful source of information that alerts us to our own fight/flight/freeze responses and helps us to be mindful and honest in our work. If we are feeling anxious, we can explore this to determine if it is a transference response or a worry about our own competence. It can help to name a worry that we have about what is happening in the situation we are working with. For example, we can openly say, "I'm noticing myself feeling quite anxious right now as I'm feeling worried about...".

In social work, when we are working with vulnerable people, anxiety helps us to stay alert to danger and harm and to explore. Unmanaged anxiety often contributes to a range of professionally dangerous dynamics where instead of exploring or naming our anxiety, we engage in ways to manage it that lead to discounting, colluding, becoming hostage to another person's belief system, or accommodating high levels of stress until we experience exhaustion and burn out.

There is often a professional fear of naming anxiety based on not being perceived as coping or up to the job. This needs to be challenged because noticing anxiety or feeling overwhelmed is healthy and is an indication of insight and trying to manage what is happening. It is completely unrealistic for social workers not to experience anxiety and to have to deny or minimise this. Working with people who have high levels of complexity and who at times can be unpredictable in their behaviour, is anxious work.

We also have lives outside of work and issues in our personal lives which may increase our vulnerability or reduce our energy to manage our professional work. Recognising when we are anxious and having a safe place to discuss and talk about it not only helps with the situation but can also be restorative. Anxiety can be extremely exhausting and not having safe ways to process it can be harmful, not only to ourselves but also for those we work with. Anxiety and depression can be interlinked and as this piece of research shows, have serious consequences for people we work with, along with ourselves.

In all the work we do there is an exchange of energy. If our energy is stressed, anxious or depressed, as this research highlighted, there can be serious consequences for those with whom we are working. It is our responsibility to ensure the energy we are bringing into our interactions with others is positive and not transmitting anxiety or low moods. Anxiety is an emotion that, left unmanaged

and unexplored, can contribute to mistakes in our work and cause professional dangerousness. However, it can also be a rich place of learning and contribute to an opening up of discussion and awareness for other people to increase safety and wellbeing.

Participants were asked to discuss the following questions during the workshop:

- How do you know when you are anxious? What is happening in your body? What thoughts are you having? What else is happening?
- Imagine understanding anxiety as peeling back layers of an onion. Think of a situation that you felt anxious about and keep peeling it back, layer by layer until you identify what the true cause of the anxiety is. Speak this out loud to yourself.
- Are there any older childhood messages or experiences you can track your anxiety back to?
- What do you typically do when you feel anxious?
- What is the most helpful way you have found to manage anxiety?

5) Self-disclosure

This is where the social worker shares something about themselves or their lives in the therapeutic relationship. Sometimes this might be initiated by the client who may ask a question about the social worker's life or self. Answering such questions can be helpful in engagement and in the building of rapport, but it is best that the social worker shifts the focus back to the client as soon as they can.

The social worker may decide that sharing something about themselves could support therapeutic rapport or contribute to the personal development of the client. Dewane (2006, p. 544) comments, "Self-disclosure must lead to growth; it should deepen the capacity for insight and for relationship. In other words, it should be for furthering the therapeutic alliance. It is ultimately predetermined for the client's benefit." This is a useful self-check to help ensure that worker self-disclosure is about meeting the client's need and not the worker's.

Sometimes a small amount of self-disclosure is useful at the beginning of the therapeutic relationship to help build engagement, rapport and connection. This might be as simple as sharing where the worker grew up or how many children they have. Self-disclosure is not useful when the focus shifts off the client and onto the worker and when the client may feel the need to support the worker or not talk about themselves. Another risk of self-disclosure is when it creates a degree of familiarity that generates the impression of a friendship rather than a professional working relationship. This can create confusion for clients, especially those who might be lonely and looking for a friend. Generally, self-disclosure is helpful in building rapport or in creating a general point of

connection if it is kept to fairly broad topics that hold minimal consequences or detailed information e.g. "I have a cat too, what's your cat's name?"

Self-disclosure can also be helpful in supporting personal development if it is done as a reflection. For example, "I'm noticing myself feeling quite tense as I hear about how he treated you, how did it make you feel?" Sometimes people want to know if we have experienced what they have, but for others, this may not be important. For those who do want to know, we can gently question its importance and redirect the focus back to them.

Sometimes, our own urge or anxiety to connect or to make a point can lead us to self-disclose. However, this is ultimately about our own needs. It is important to remember that the people we work with are not there to meet our needs. We should instead convey a genuine enthusiasm and interest in learning about them. Our role is to help them connect to themselves and develop insight and strategies to deal with the difficulties and challenges in their lives, rather than having them learn about our views and us.

Here are three helpful questions to consider before using self-disclosure:

- Was the disclosure for the person's benefit or was it for a possibly unnamed need/benefit of your own?
- How will this disclosure support the person on the therapeutic journey you are on?
- Is there another way you could contribute to this person's work that doesn't require direct personal sharing of your own experience?

6) Reflexivity

Reflexivity is thinking about how the social worker's personal views and interpretations intersect with practice in a particular situation (Connolly & Harms, 2009 p. 6). This is different from reflection which can be limited to simply analysing what happened, how it happened and how and what the worker did in response. Reflexivity is thinking about thinking. This process requires one to bring the reflection of self into the picture. So along with what and how, it asks the worker to consider why they thought or acted in particular way and what beliefs, values, experiences informed the decisions or views they formed. It also requires workers to be aware of how these values, beliefs and experiences may then influence a situation and the worker's interpretation of it.

The Johari Window

The Johari window was created by Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham (Harry) in 1955 (Johari – combined their first names). One therapeutic target of supervision may be the expansion of the "Open" square at the expense of both the "Unknown" and the "Blind" square, which results in a greater knowledge of oneself, more confidence and awareness, while voluntary disclosure of the "Hidden" square may result in greater interpersonal intimacy and friendship.
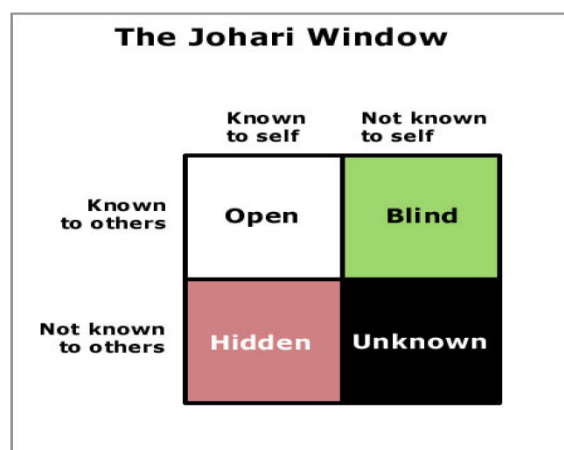
Participants were asked to discuss the following questions during the workshop:

- In your experience, what supports a supervisee to share something that was 'hidden' (known to them but not to anyone else)?
- An approach you would take to name something that was 'blind' to a supervisee?

Participants shared about being direct and upfront about issues (naming the issues so that the issue is the problem and not the person), giving the supervisee the time to process, think and reflect, being mindful and respectful in bringing hidden issues up for discussion, and practicing active listening (i.e. looking out for change in tone/pattern so as to reflect these back to the supervisee).

Learning from Practice Mistakes

Self-Compassion

Just as we hope to practice with compassion in our work, we also need to direct this toward ourselves. Letting go is very helpful, and there is a need to generate this in our supervisees. We do not need to take the mistake and be held back by shame, but instead we can just take the learning and move on. This requires regular messages to ourselves such as "we all get things wrong" and acknowledging that we are human and may not always get things right. We also need to recognize high expectations and standards that is preventing us from letting go of mistakes. We can write down and explore a mistake or behaviour and peel it back to the old message or behaviour that may have driven it and simply understand this. Practicing self-compassion can help us relax and accept ourselves more and this in turn allows for us to be open and available to others.

Workshop 3: Supervision of Group Work Practice – The KISS Model

<u>Workshop Presenters:</u>

Mr Lee Seng Meng
Centre Director
SHINE Children and Youth Services (Previously Student Care Services)

Mr Nur Fadhli Bin Prayitno
Senior Social Worker
SHINE Children and Youth Services

Introduction

Mr Lee introduced group work as a key specialisation and core competency of social work practice. Yet group work supervision, as important as it is, has been given less emphasis compared to generic case work and clinical supervision. At SHINE Children and Youth Services (SCYS), a taskforce was formed many years back to focus on the development of group work supervision. They have since developed the framework which will be shared during the workshop.

Supervision of Group Work Practice in SCYS

The group work supervision framework is part of the structured professional development road map which SCYS has developed to enhance the competency of their social work practitioners. It includes the following components:

1) Level 1 and 2 Training on Group Work Practice for All Staff

All staff in SCYS have to go through 2 levels of training which will equip them with the knowledge and skills on Group Work. The Level 1 training is a 2 days training which covers basic knowledge areas and the level 2 training is a 1-day training which covers areas such as the 6 tensions of group work and focuses more on the skills and techniques of group work practice.

2) SDS (Shadow, Do, Shadow)

Staff also go through the SDS (Shadow, Do, Shadow) model of learning which Mr Lee and Mr Fadhli have found more effective in integrating learning. New workers are given an opportunity to 'shadow'

SCYS's existing group work sessions for 1 or 2 session(s). During this time, they can observe the dynamics of the group, the group leader's role and the running of the group. After which they will practice group work themselves and this is when they will discover and experience the challenges of running a group. After the 'doing', they would have the next opportunity of 'shadowing' again to have a better idea of the things they should be looking out for. This space offers them a chance to find some answers to the difficulties and challenges they faced during the 'doing' process. This model has proven effective as the lenses before and after running a group would be very different and the learning is then maximized.

3) Individual & Team Supervision

Individual supervision is given to some workers who have the extra responsibility of leading the group work. Team supervision, on the other hand, takes into account of the whole team that is running the session (e.g. how they are interacting, co-facilitation between the group workers and non-group workers in the team).

4) Group Work Consultation

Group work consultation involves the group work team presenting their cases and challenges to their supervisor.

5) Video Recording

Similar to individual case work sessions, group work also uses video recordings to identify areas for supervision support. The worker pulls out specific segments of their group work which they identify as requiring further exploration.

6) On-site Assessment

The supervisor goes on-site to the group work session to have a sense of the session and the worker's challenges.

7) Coaching and Skills Practice

KISS Model

In group work supervision, SCYS has adopted the KISS model. KISS is an acronym for Knowledge, Intention, Self and Skills, which are the 4 domains to be explored during supervision. Mr Lee raised a learning point he gained from a sharing by Associate Professor Kieran O'Donoghue during the

morning sharing. He was reminded that the purpose of supervision is to supervise the practice as well as the practitioner. By supervising the practice, one needs to have the knowledge and skills to do so. Yet sometimes, despite having the necessary knowledge and skills set, the practitioner is still stuck. There are many factors resulting in this state of "stuckness", but one of the core factor is the "self" of the worker which then needs to be further explored. In the social work profession, we also need to be intentional in terms of knowing what we are doing and why we are doing it. Hence, the KISS model is developed and introduced in SCYS for group work supervision.
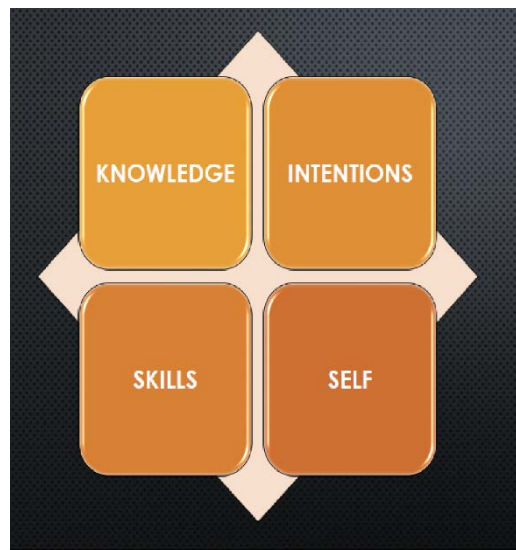
K - KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge of group work forms the basis of supervision. Supervision helps to follow-up on what one is trained in and to maintain standards.

A group worker is required to be aware of the following aspects of group work as they plan and run the group:

1) **Group Work Planning**
    i. Needs – Whose needs should be considered? The clients' and/or various stakeholders' needs?
    ii. Homogeneity versus Heterogeneity – An example of homogeneity is when there is a common goal; an example of heterogeneity is when different members have different personalities.
    iii. Group Composition
    iv. Manpower - What is the ideal composition for the number of members as well as staff?
    v. Expertise

     vi.   Time – What is the necessary number of sessions for the objectives to be met? Time for planning and reviewing are also essential to be included in the time set aside by the group worker.

     vii.   Facility – what is the physical environment/venue for running the group work?

2) Group Work Stages & Theories

Tuckman's stages of group informs the worker of the stages in which the group moves into. The worker has to be sensitive to how the group is like and how the dynamics affect the group members.

3) Group Dynamics

4) Group Norms and Group Process

5) 6 Tensions of Group Facilitation

     i.   Structure (Tight vs Loose)

     ii.   Pace (Fast vs Slow)

     iii.   Interaction (Cooperative vs Competitive)

     iv.   Focus (Process vs Task)

     v.   Concern (Individual vs Group)

     vi.   Control (Internal vs External)

6) Facilitation Strategies

Example: How can we draw out responses? It could be through giving rewards or using a tool.

7) Dealing with Challenging Behaviours

Reflecting on the challenging behaviours of group members, the worker has to ask him/herself what triggers these behaviours. Some causes which lead to such behaviours could be the need to seek attention, feeling of inadequacy or even revenge.

8) ESC (Environment, Structure, Command & Control)

For *environment*, the worker needs to consider how the environment is helpful for the participants and if there any distractions which may affect the group work.

For *structure*, the worker should consider how the design or structure of the session (e.g. are the rules tight or loose?) has an impact on the group members.

For *command & control*, the worker should consider the seating arrangement of the group.

The group worker should constantly reflect on the above 8 components to ensure that knowledge learnt about group work are fully utilized.

<u>I - Intention</u>

Two questions are asked in this domain:

- Why did you do what you did? (Did the action meet the objective of the intention?)
- What do you hope to achieve from what you did?

Adopting Matt Somer's coaching model, ARROW (Aims, Reality, Reflection, Options, Way Forward), supervisors can bring their supervisees forward by reflecting on their practice so that they can better deal with similar situations in the future.

<u>S - Skills</u>

A list of 18 + 3 skills has been identified as essential for any group worker to be equipped with. This is adopted from Corey & Corey's 18 group leadership skills checklist. These skills are similar to those used in case work. They include active listening, reflecting, clarifying, summarising, facilitating, empathizing, interpreting, questioning, linking, confronting, supporting, blocking, assessing, modelling, suggesting, initiating, evaluating, terminating, cutting off, drawing out and focusing. Overall, this check-list is helpful for social workers to be aware of the skills that are important for group work. It serves as a tool for self-assessment e.g. What is my competency level for this particular skill? From there, the supervisor can have a discussion and may even have extra training, coaching and role-playing for the supervisees.

Mr Lee noted that "linking" is a skill that is particularly important in group work because it promotes member to member interaction and facilitates the exploration of common themes in a group. Another important skill that was highlighted is "confronting". The roles and involvement of the worker are different at the different stages of group work. At the start, there is more involvement from the group's facilitator while during performing, the role of the group facilitator decreases. If the worker hopes to be in more control at the start, he/she needs confronting skills. The worker cannot be too laid back because it is expected for the group to norm and not form and storm throughout. It is important to note that the term "confronting" does not mean the worker challenges aggressively, instead, it means the worker knows how to address the issues directly without fear and in a very comfortable and safe environment.

Mr Lee and Mr Fadhli elaborated on the 3 additional skills which the group worker would require.

1) Cutting Off

To lead an effective group, the group worker must be willing and able to cut off members when necessary. A participant raised to Mr Lee her fear that the client may be offended if he/ she is cut off. Mr Lee replied that this is an area that the supervisor can further explore with the supervisee on why he/ she thinks that cutting off is offensive. Mr Lee demonstrated 3 possible ways to cut someone off.

I. Cut and stay with the person

Cut the irrelevant point yet stay with the person so that he/she is able to focus on what the worker hopes to discuss. This could involve asking a question, having the person to do some focused activity, having the person comment to each member or having the members give the person feedback. In this way, the person will not feel offended.

II. Cut and stay with the topic

You do not want the person to talk anymore but you still want to continue with the topic, so you move on to the next member but stay on the same topic. Mr Lee gave an example, "June, let me get the other members' comments about their relationships with their parents. Can any of you relate to what June is saying?" This is an example of how the worker exercises his/ her group facilitation skills.

III. Cut and leave the person and topic

An example, "I think we need to move on. I want to shift our attention to an exercise that I think you will find interesting."

During supervision, it is important for the supervisor to process how this skill should be executed with the supervisee. There are many factors to consider about cutting off such as timing. It is essential to train the worker to find the right timing to cut off such as identifying a pause when the person speaks.

2) Drawing Out

A skilled group worker understands when and how to draw out members to contribute during the discussion. It is important to draw out delicately, get a member to talk, share, or express himself without feeling forced or pressured. The facilitator has to be mindful of not spotlighting an individual such as "Hey! Why are you not talking?"

Some strategies in drawing out the individual include:
- Allowing 'outs'
- Inviting by eyes
- Use of Dyads
- Use of Rounds
- Use of movement/written exercise

Mr Lee shared an example of delicately drawing out an individual by asking the members in a particular area to share instead of pinpointing or pressuring one member. This creates a safe environment and serves as an encouragement for members to share without feeling pressured.

3) Focusing

Another important skill is the ability to establish focus. How does one establish, hold and shift the focus of the group? Once the group worker has the group focused, knowing how to hold and deepen the focus is essential. Holding the focus means sticking to what is currently happening and deepening the conversation. It is important that the group develops some depth and goes beyond the forming stage. The difference between a workshop and a group is that a group has a life and it progresses so that the members can safely share.

There are 3 considerations to keep in mind for holding the focus:
- When to hold it
- How long to hold it
- How to hold it

Group workers consciously shift the focus when they decide that there is a need for a change in the group. The shift can go in any of the following directions:
- From a topic to a person
- From a topic to another topic
- From a topic to an activity
- From a person to another person
- From a person to a topic
- From a person to an activity
- From an activity to a person

S - Self
Despite having the knowledge and skills, a group worker may at times continue to face obstacles. For example, the worker may know about the skill of cutting off but feels it is too rude a thing to do. Hence, exploring the 'Self' is the next domain of the KISS model where supervision looks at his/ her:
- Beliefs and Values
- Emotions – Response, Vulnerability, Reaction
- Patterns
- Struggles & Obstacles

Two concepts are used to understand the Self: **Johari Window** and **NLP Neuro-Logical Levels**
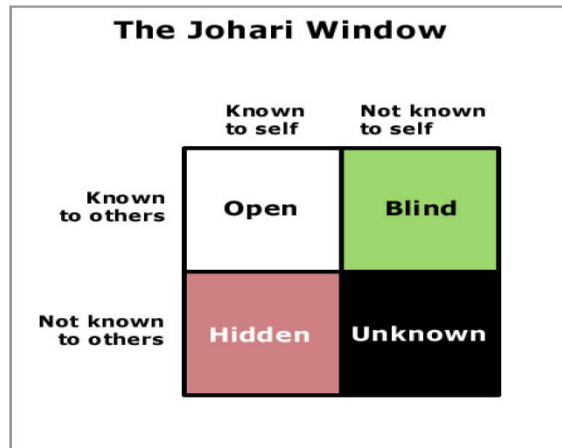
The Johari Window

With the help of the **Johari Window Model**, the supervisor can assist the supervisee in identifying his/ her blind spots. In this aspect, looking at recordings as well as having on site assessments are crucial to help the supervisor identify and surface these blind spots. It is essential for safety and trust to be established within the supervisory relationship to surface difficulties and concerns that may arise.

Mr Lee and Mr Fadhli shared the use of **NLP Neuro- Logical Levels** through the statement 'I can't do that here':
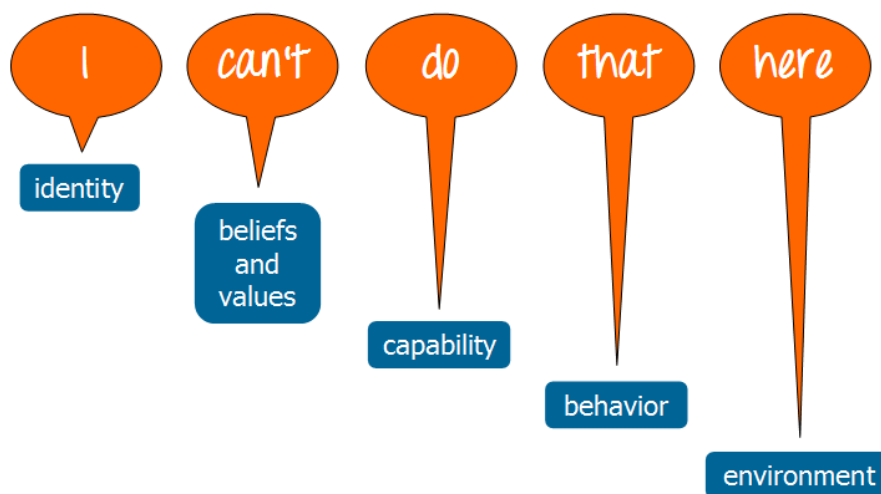
Five different people could be saying the same statement but they all mean different things. The emphasis on the different words refer to the different areas in which the supervisee is facing the difficulty.

If the emphasis is on:
- **Here**: It refers to the environment
  E.g. I can't do group work practice with YOU. It does not mean that I cannot do group work. Instead, it means that I cannot do group work in this organisation or setting.

- **Tha**t: It refers to the behaviour

  E.g. I can't do cutting off/drawing out.
- **Do**: It refers to capability
- **Can't**: It refers to beliefs and values
- **I**: It refers to identity

Having an understanding of the Neuro- Logical Levels, we are able to identify the areas the supervisee needs support in rather than just assuming the statement "I can't do that here." means I can't do everything.

Summing up these 4 domains (K – Knowledge; I – Intentions; S – Skills; S – Self), it is crucial that we not see each domain individually and in isolation. When we explore skills, there are many times in which it will cross with knowledge, intentions and self. The 4 domains will cross one another as they are dynamic. Hence, we have to look at these 4 domains as a whole.

Workshop 4: The Use of Attachment Theory in Social Work Supervision

<u>Workshop Presenter:</u>

Mr Tony Ong

Senior Therapist

Counselling and Care Centre

Introduction

Mr Tony Ong opened the session by sharing that the objective of the workshop was to put forth his experiences in the use of attachment theory in social work supervision and his observations of the reverberating impact of such interventions across the various levels of systems. He would also explore the implications of the use of the attachment theory on supervisors.

He then moved on to share about the journey of the development of attachment ideas starting from children to adults/ couples/ mandatory clients, to child protection clients and trauma issues to social work supervision and then to the supervisors' self.

Theory of Attachment

Bowlby's theory of attachment has been used to explain the impact of early childhood experiences with primary attachment figures on a person's internal working models for subsequent relationship formation, maintenance and termination (Bowlby, 1982, 1988). Mr Ong discussed how the theory of attachment can be applicable to adults and trauma too. He also shared its relevance in staff welfare supervision.

He explored how attachment theory can be activated in times of threat and danger. He shared that attachment development is a process and therefore requires time to form. Trust is also essential for attachment formation and becomes secure only after repeated testing. Attachment can also persist even though the primary attachment person may be absent.

Attachment Styles and Behaviour

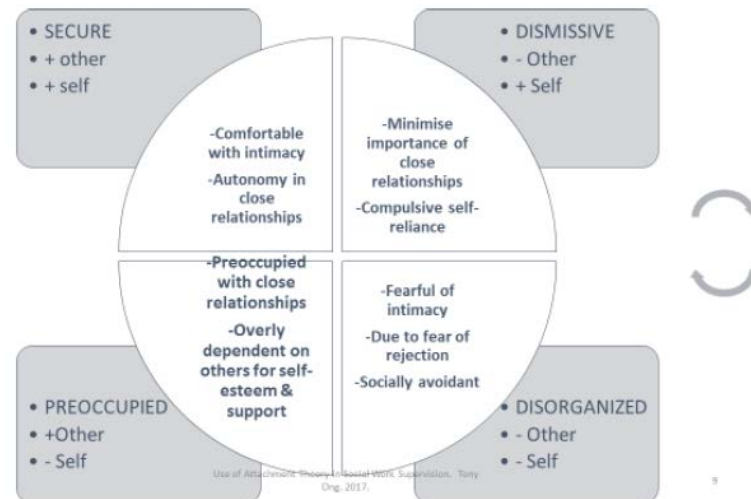Mr Ong shared 4 types of adult attachment styles, namely secure, dismissive, preoccupied and disorganized.

TABLE 1. Patterns of Adult Attachment Behavior Within Supervisor–Student Supervisory Relationships — Bennett & Saks (2006)

Supervisor Behaviors			
Secure/Autonomous	Dismissing	Preoccupied	Unresolved/Disorganized
• Appears secure regarding relationships and others • Empathic; sensitively attuned to others • Responsive and supportive • Predictable • Meta-cognitive thinker • Able to read other's "cues" • Encourages exploration as well as need for support	• Appears dismissive of attachment • Chronically ignores or dismisses legitimate learning needs • Tends to be unresponsive and inattentive • hyper-critical, focusing on weaknesses rather than strengths	• Anxious and/or preoccupied about maintaining attachment • Is inconsistent and intrusive • Needs to feel needed • May micromanage • Doubtful about own abilities	• Unresolved regarding personal history of abuse and/or loss • May be verbally or emotionally threatening • May be incoherent and disorganized when speaking • Has problems maintaining professional boundaries

Secure: A self-confident person who attends to his/her needs and is available.

Dismissive: A person who thinks very negatively of others and does not perceive it as safe to receive help due to negative views of others. A person who relies on self to protect oneself and shows very little emotions when in a crises stage. However, in reality, he/she may possess high levels of anxiety.

Preoccupied: A person who thinks that he/she has nothing to bring to the table and will view others as being more powerful. He/she can be very clingy and frequently cries for help.

Disorganized: A person who is in a frozen position where he/she can neither move forward nor backward.

Attachment behaviour (Pistole & Watkins, 1995) is characterized by behaviours that result in a person attaining or retaining proximity to some other differentiated and preferred individual, who is usually conceived as stronger and/ or wiser (Bowlby, 1977a, p. 203). There are five functions of attachment behavior (Morrison, 2005, p. 202), namely:

I. Ensure safety when threatened
II. Ensure comfort when distressed or anxious
III. Ensure proximity/ closeness when isolated
IV. Ensure predictability or regain control when it is chaotic
V. Contain responsibility when it is overwhelming

As such, the ability of the social worker in building a secure base with the client would determine the extent to which the client is able to feel safe enough to explore his/ her problems in the context of his environment towards the management of his/ her problems (Bowlby, 1982, 1988).

In utilizing the theory of attachment, it is important to think about where the other person's behavior is coming from. A person's attachment style is not a negative thing. If a supervisee has a dismissive style, he/ she can still be engaged during supervision.

Isomorphism (Liddle, 1998, p. 55; Schwartz, Liddle, & Breunlin, 1998, p. 185)

Isomorphism happens when patterns of interaction are replicated or mirrored across the different levels of system that have been subjected to supervisory intervention and change. The interactions between supervisor and trainee (supervisee) may resemble interactions between trainee (supervisee) and family members (clients), or those among the family members themselves.

Ong (2012)
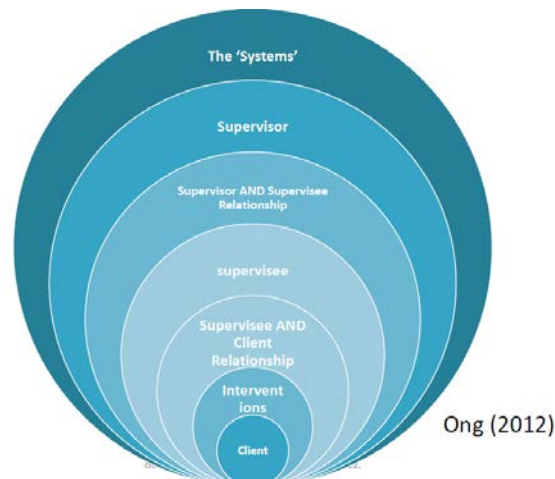
The inherent power of the supervisory role gives supervisors the responsibility of being responsive to the supervisees. Rather than viewing attachment as pathological, it should be viewed as variations in (a) comfort with a safe haven or (b) preference for exploration (Bennett, 2008. p. 99).

Group Discussion

A group discussion was subsequently conducted and the participants were given time to consider and discuss the following issues in groups. Below documents some responses given by participants:

What are the stances of the supervisor using Attachment Theory?

- Being able to hold a safe space for supervisee to share difficult things
- Being mindful (awareness of own attachment style and how it interacts and affects response with supervisee)
- Empathy for supervisee
- Proximity (being available)
- Assess where supervisee is and find strategies so that you can support them through the work
- How to attend to supervisee appropriately
- How to affirm supervisees (i.e. when to affirm them so that they see you as genuine)
- Appropriate structuring to create safety
- Setting off an agreement on goals and tasks
- Help supervisees discuss for themselves (be curious why a supervisee is explaining feelings openly or lacking in it)

Mr Ong also discussed the centrality of the attachment quality of the supervisory relationship in supervision outcomes (Bennett (2008, p. 100), Riggs & Bretz (2006) and Bennett & Deal (2012)).

"The more a student experiences a sense of secure attachment to a specific supervisor, the more likely a working alliance will be created." (Bennett (2008, p. 100), Riggs & Bretz (2006) and Bennett & Deal (2012)). A secure supervisor-supervisee relationship is based, in part, on how well the supervisor can read the attachment cues of the supervisee and give appropriate and sensitive care in response (Bennett, 2008). Mr Ong went on to discuss the use of attachment strategies in social work supervision (Morrison, 2005, p. 200). As a supervisor, it is important to judge if, when, why and how you would want to engage the worker in the discussion of the role that attachment might play in their responses to workplace struggles. He reiterated that as a supervisor, one has to think about one's own coping mechanisms and how one has been shaped by previous experiences. When both supervisor and supervisee understand their own attachment styles and their responses to others' attachment styles, with regard to both strengths and weaknesses, this may be an opportunity for personal and professional growth (Ladr-Finefrock, 2013).

Moving on to the next discussion question, he shared that in order to use the attachment framework, supervisors need to be aware of self.

What are the implications for practice as social work supervisors?

- Tuning in to self and being aware of attachment style as it can impede practice style
- Understanding supervisee's preferred learning style so that there can be a better match
- Self-perceived attachment versus others' perceived attachment style
- Working with supervisee without compromising client's wellbeing
- How clients make sense of it
- Creating a safe environment for the supervisee
- Organizational culture for open interactions

In order to respond rather than react to the supervisee, the supervisor needs to recognise that:

isomorphism has a reverberating effect on him/herself and other relationships,

attachment is fundamental to human relationships and we do carry it in all of our relationships in terms of emotional experience that is a reflex because of our past experiences,

an organisation with clientele groups who are highly insecure will find this approach of supervision helpful because it parallels the caregiving role to contain the supervisee in the process of intervention during supervision,

the impact of one's attachment style on oneself (intrapersonal) and others (interpersonal) because it will impede one's practice as a supervisor, and

the care of and for oneself as a practitioner and a person will be crucial since there is a lot of use of self in the supervisory relationship so that one can continue to have the capacity to care for others as a supervisor.

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Workshop 5: Supervision in a Fast-Paced Social Work Setting

Workshop Presenters:

Ms Chan Lay Lin
Principal Medical Social Worker
Institute of Mental Health

Mr Gideon Ng
Senior Medical Social Worker
Institute of Mental Health

Introduction

Ms Chan opened the session by setting the context of what working as a Medical Social Worker (MSW) entails. There is a need to operate in a multi-disciplinary work environment which includes psychiatrists, nurses, allied health workers, case managers, psychologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists in order to provide holistic care for patients. At the Institute of Mental Health (IMH), the deployment of MSWs includes 25 workers serving in 20 acute and 15 inpatient wards and another 25 workers being deployed to outpatient care. In addition to the work environment and the number of workers, Ms Chan also touched on the multiple roles played in the medical social work setting. These roles included family case work, psychosocial assessments, counselling and community networking.

Thereafter, Mr Ng took over to facilitate an activity to creatively and clearly bring forth a point. The activity was a series of steps that had to be completed by two participants from opposing teams whilst they were blind-folded. In the first stage, team members had to direct the blind-folded players to a designated location to find a parcel. In the next stage, the players had to grab a string that was tied to the parcel and surrender it to Mr Ng who had been waiting at the front of the room. The last stage required the players to open a zip-lock bag to obtain a drink, and to finish the drink.

To conclude the activity proper, Mr Ng posed a question to the players and their team members to ask them about their experience while playing the game. One of the blind-folded players described her experience to be complex and pressurising as there were numerous voices that were shouting out instructions at her. On the other hand, one of the team members shared how she

decided to direct the player as she knew that she had a loud voice and because her team was quiet. Mr Ng then stepped in to link the activity to the medical social work environment.

In a fast and furious environment, there are similarly a lot of voices and it can be confusing who we ought to listen to. When the expectations are so minute, how do we help others to navigate through something that seems so unclear? What are the difficulties in a fast and furious environment and how can we better understand them? With these questions posed, the time was handed over to Ms Chan, who began by highlighting the importance of knowing where an opinion comes from and the difficulty of supervisees seeking supervision from others rather than their own supervisors. Following that, Ms Chan presented the first challenge of supervision in a fast-paced medical setting.

Challenges

Challenge 1: The Lack of Control over Referrals

The lack of control over referrals results in tight deadlines and overwhelming pressure inflicted onto workers from the heavy case load. Following treatment pathways, the patient would usually be discharged within two weeks. However, there are instances when the patients or their families are not ready for the discharge. With organizational pressures and 'out of the ordinary' directions from management which require coordination from multiple stakeholders, what should one do? Ms Chan answered this question by stating the need to prioritize cases as well as to develop the skills of negotiation. With a heavy case load, prioritization based on risk is fundamental as there is limited time and MSWs can only do what is humanly possible. Furthermore, being able to negotiate confidently aids in helping the team to better understand the plight of the patients.

Ms Chan added that supervisors can help supervisees to manage things and improve the efficiency of getting work done. To do so, it requires going down to pinpoint exactly what supervisees are struggling with, sitting down with them to go through the details, looking at their cases and their recordings and helping them to recalibrate and better handle their workload. Especially with junior staff, supervisors can help supervisees to run through their case load to prioritize their cases based on the level of risk (client and staff safety, etc.) and consequences of intervention or delayed intervention.

Challenge 2: Supervision in a Multi-Disciplinary Team

There is consensus that collaborative leadership is important, however, the actual enactment is often a challenge as there are differences in ideas and formulations regarding cases. While participating physicians in a study conducted by Lingard (2012) indicated a belief that teams functioned non-hierarchically, reports from non-physician clinicians and the authors' observation data revealed

otherwise. It showed that hierarchical behaviours persisted, even from those who most vehemently denied the presence of hierarchies. As a result, the solution lies not in running away from the fact that hierarchy exists but in how we manage it.

In response to a question on what can be done, one person mentioned that supervisors can help supervisees regarding case presentations as there is a need to be able to present a case concisely and recommend a plan of action within the span of two minutes. The idea of authority was also brought up as supervisees must be made to understand that they have their own knowledge and speciality in the psycho-social-spiritual sphere, and therefore have the ability to speak up for their patients.

According to Lingard, adopting a collaborative approach will always be challenging in the traditional health care system that reinforces the idea that physicians sit at the top of the hierarchy. By openly recognizing and discussing the tensions between traditional and inter-professional discourses of collaborative leadership, it may be possible to help inter-professional teams, physicians and clinicians work together more effectively (Lingard, 2012). Inter-professional collaboration requires a broad and multifaceted approach, which will involve dialogue within and across professions, as well as with patients and their families (Lingard, 2012). How supervisees coordinate, cooperate and communicate in multi-disciplinary teams is steered by their motivations, which, in turn, strongly depend on their perceptions of power and conflict (Janns, 2012). Supervisors can advocate, empower and demonstrate to their supervisees that leadership in multi-disciplinary teams can be dynamic, and that everyone in the multi-disciplinary team is a leader in their respective knowledge and skill specialty. Supervisors should demonstrate this in multi-disciplinary team meetings.

As a concluding statement for this section, Mr Ng reminded the audience that MSWs must be able to prove themselves as a valuable team member and consistent worker so that they can put their foot down when necessary and the role of supervisors is to demonstrate what this might entail.

Challenge 3: Supervision in a Climate of Ongoing Changes

Extensive changes occur every three to four years and the apparent endless tidal waves of change have often led to 'change fatigue', especially when the speed and scale of changes result in additional paperwork and a lengthening of the helping process.

"Change does not happen in a bubble, it takes place within the context of real working lives. Social work supervisees manage teams and changes that raise political uncertainties, ethical dilemmas and sometimes genuine feelings of loss by staff and even service users." (Lingard, 2012)

Drawing on her research on the merger of 3 hospitals, Rogers (2010) argues that staff viewed the organisation as breaching the psychological contract. A psychological contract relates to pay and work, socio-emotional factors such as trust and loyalty and an ideological element, something that captures the 'moral imagination' (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003). In Roger's research, supervisees were angry and mystified by the speed and scale of the changes, not convinced that the changes were driven by a desire to improve patient outcomes and experienced a sense of loss, grieving for the past and feeling completely disconnected from what was happening around them. The resistance turned into a loss of meaning.

However, this does not mean that change inevitably breaches the psychological contract. Supervisors can help by understanding what change means to supervisees, the attachments supervisees may have to particular contexts and ways of working and support the staff to manage transitions in a focused and sensitive way (Ingram, 2012). A supervisor's role in change is to lend understanding and support to the supervisee as change is a stressful process. Real change happens through interactions and social processes, as it is a relationship. One of the most important aspects of managing change is to manage one's relationships with supervisees and their relationships with one another and to support colleagues through what can be an uncertain or a stressful process (Ingram, 2012). Supervisors can help supervisees to reframe and co-construct meanings about the change that are core to their professional motivations. It is important to maintain openness by appreciating the function of the change for the organisation and to have a tolerance for ambiguity.

At this point, Ms Chan posed another question asking participants if any of them had experienced changes that were well-negotiated as a result of people attending to losses and relationships. One participant shared her own experiences in supervising different groups and how it was essential for her to pace, to re-orient her frame of mind and to see how her supervisees could cope with her leadership. This then led to a remark about the importance of preparing the ground by linking change to motivations and enabling a vision of the bigger picture.
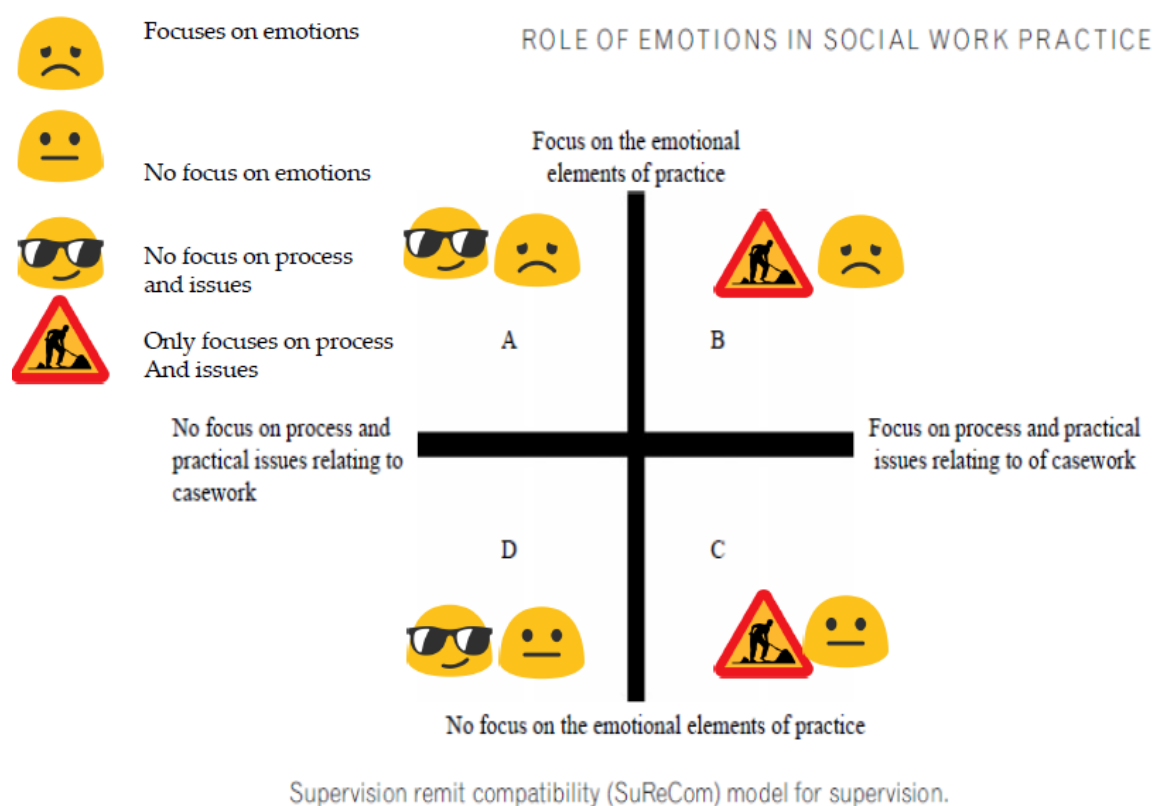
As a concluding statement, Ms Chan shared that supervisors can be the voice for their supervisees to the management by first discussing with their supervisees their feelings toward the change, and consequently, by bringing the feedback to the top.

Challenge 4: Is there a Place for Emotions in Supervision in a Fast-paced Setting?

There is difficulty to tread into the field of emotions as there are differing schools of thoughts regarding the subject. Kant and Descartes postulated that emotions compromise on rational thought. Ingram (2012) pointed out that this view was countered by enlightenment philosophers such as David Hume who stated that emotions and reason should work in harmony (Howe, 2009).

Munro (2011) also highlighted the importance of workers being able to identify their own emotional responses and those of service users in achieving positive relationships.

Supervisors are needed to anchor feelings and enable supervisees to think more rationally so that emotions do not become a hindrance to the work. In this regard, Ms Chan introduced a model for supervision known as the "Supervision Remit Compatibility (SuReCom) Model" developed by Indal-Snape and Ingram (2012). This model seeks to encourage and facilitate a partnership approach to supervision which allows both parties to clarify the balance and nature of the expected supervision relationship, and to adjust and modify it accordingly.

Focuses on emotions

No focus on emotions

No focus on process and issues

Only focuses on process And issues

ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Focus on the emotional elements of practice

A

B

No focus on process and practical issues relating to casework

Focus on process and practical issues relating to of casework

D

C

No focus on the emotional elements of practice

Supervision remit compatibility (SuReCom) model for supervision.

There are four key aspects to this model:

I.   Aspiration: Allow for supervisor and supervisee to plat where they would hope the balance of supervision would be

II.   Negotiation: Any divergence in views can be explored and discussed

III.   Agreement: Both parties can then reach an agreed balance, which can be linked to personal, professional, organisational/ national perspectives

IV.   Review: Both parties can revisit at any stage to consider whether the agreement is still valid or requires adjustment

Focus on the emotional elements of practice
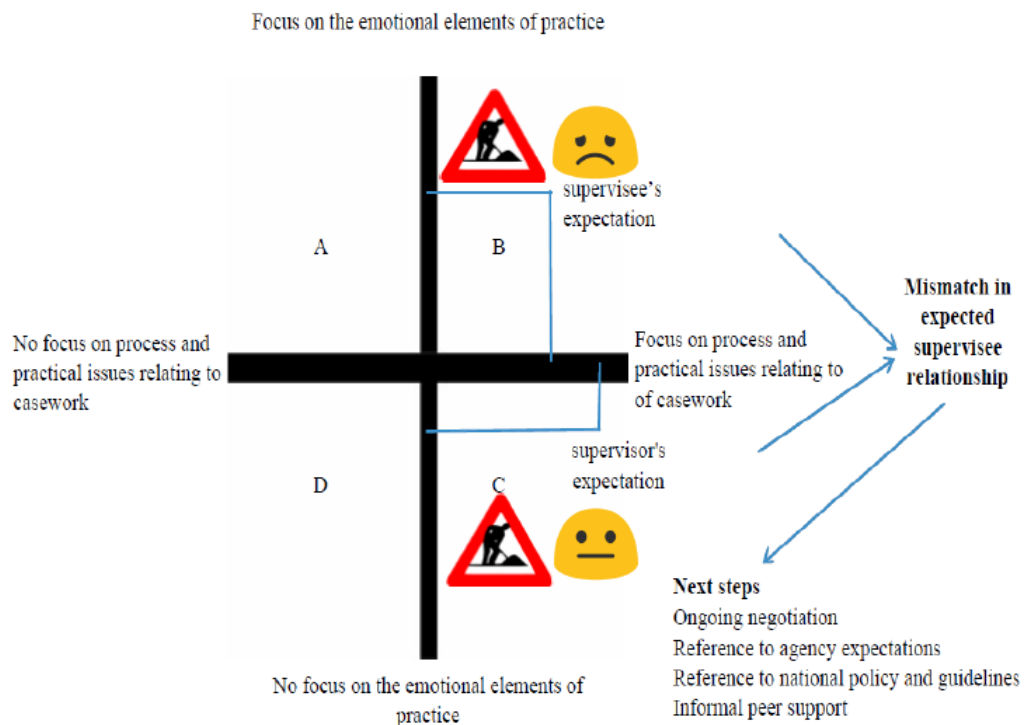
Example of a mismatch in expectations between a supervisor and a supervisee.

This model allows supervisees to make choices regarding what they are comfortable in discussing during the supervision session. This allows the emotional disturbances to be felt within the safer setting of the supervisory relationship, where it can survive, be reflected and learnt from (Hawkins and Shothet, 2000, p. 3). While it is essential for supervisees to process their emotions, it is equally important for supervisors to be aware of themselves and know how comfortable they are with handling situations when difficult emotions are brought up.

Challenge 5: Is there a Place for Post-modern Supervision in a "Modern Setting"?

Postmodern intervention suggests that knowledge and meaning are created discursively between people and that multiple voices are valued. It also suggests that local, small narratives are important and the interactive dynamics of social, political and economic power is a crucial factor in how dominant narratives are created.

1) Managing Psychiatric Diagnosis in Social Work
- There is a need to critique the use of systemic hypotheses in clinical work. This is because systemic hypotheses promote the expert position of the therapist and tends to underplay the role of the client in the therapeutic process.
- Betrando proposes to view the systemic hypothesis as a collaborative action, involving the dialogue between parties in a clinical setting. This interactive hypothesis is created by the very interaction of all participants in the therapeutic dialogue, and as such it may be considered a dialogue in itself (Bertrando & Archelloni, 2006).
- Hypothesis by themselves are not the problem. The problem lies in clinicians who get themselves married to them. This is the same with diagnosis. Supervisors should not abandon the diagnosis attached to the client, but use it to guide oneself to support the supervisee in his/ her work. For example, the supervisee should conduct suicide risk in depressive patients and avoid making plans with persons when they are in manic or highly psychotic moments.
- Supervisors should encourage the use of psychiatric diagnosis as a working hypothesis in the conversations with their supervisees, by focusing not on the diagnosis and the symptoms but on supervisees' relationship with their clients' relationship with their diagnosis/ illness and the related symptoms and with the multi-disciplinary team. Examples of questions to ask: "When you say that the client has no insight into his illness, how is that influencing your perception about him or your intervention? How are you making sense of the multi-disciplinary teams view that a patient has a delusional disorder and your doubt about the diagnosis? How might this inform you assessment or your intervention plan?
- Ms Chan also provided a caution that there is an inadvertent risk of supervisors taking on a psycho-social-spiritual sans biological approach in their supervisees work with their clients, and in managing their supervisory relationship with their supervisees.

2) Co-constructing Diverse Ideas
- Conversations with social workers about their practice become opportunities for collaboration, critical reflection and support. Unspoken beliefs, statements and social practices that have been marginalised or silently endorsed can be surfaced through supervisory questions for shared examination.
- The practice of generating many diverse ideas helps social workers claim their own knowledge (For example, "What informs you to take the course of action to conduct an unannounced home visit?" - child abuse case) and to reveal uncertainties and mistakes. (For example, "You made your first contact with the mother for 30 min, without intending to meet her. What guides you to do what you have done?" - working with the alleged "PD" mother of a patient).

- Moving forward, supervisees would also be able to look at the improvements that can be made.

3) Reviewing the Supervisory Relationship
- Although the supervisory relationship is not positionally equal, supervisors can reduce these hierarchical differences and stimulate co-constructive conversations with their supervisors by having a conversation about the relationship. Questions such as " I am curious if there is anything about me being your supervisor and a senior in the department that might sometimes hold you back from sharing your difficulties at work with me?" or "As your supervisor, what would I have to take note of or do to make this working relationship beneficial for you?"

Challenge 6: Leadership Accountability in Social Work Supervision

Tapping on the words of Admiral Michelle Howard (Navy's top female commander), Ms Chan brought forth 5 lessons:

1) Diverse teams generate better ideas
- Homogeneous teams often end up in very similar solutions.

2) You need to preach the diversity gospel
- Having, struggled with gender integration in her work, Admiral Howard is now a sought-after speaker on diversity, but that wasn't always a role that she relished. Admiral Howard studied up on gender integration, diversity, and inclusion, so that she could speak about those issues with authority from both a personal and historical standpoint.

3) To lead, you need to let go
- One needs to let go of biases and negative attitudes.
- If we cannot let go of our own hang-ups, we would have limited capacity to help our supervisees do the same.

4) Mentors don't need to look just like you
- Supervisors need to facilitate the process of helping supervisors to discover themselves and to seek inspiration from people who have the same purpose and motivation.

5) Leading and standing up for ourselves and for our supervisees
   - There is a need to take on the entire package as supervisors – the rewards, the work, responsibilities, accountability and courage to stand up for supervisees, especially when the going gets rough.

Conclusion

It is an oxymoron for social workers to be silent because we are advocates. Let our voices be heard, speak up on behalf of our profession, inspire and set the bar for our supervisees, struggle victoriously. Bring voice to the profession and to the clients that we serve.

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Workshop 6: Boundaries and Ethics
in Supervision

<u>Workshop Presenter:</u>

Dr. Agnes Ng

Chief Executive

The Nurturing Education

Introduction

Dr. Agnes Ng started the workshop by asking participants what were the boundaries and ethics they faced as supervisors during supervision. Most commented on the need to have an honest space for discussion and to respect each other. Dr. Ng agreed that this is what she also hoped to see during the course of the workshop and encouraged all to ask questions and to share their rich wealth of experiences.

Dr. Ng reminded participants that it is essential to read the Code of Ethics so as to be familiar with the requirements. She also highlighted the importance of reading the Code of Ethics from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) as they are very established and can provide guidance to workers.

Aims and Outcomes

Dr. Ng went on to cover the aims of the workshop, which was to provide a platform where participants could explore, revisit and share working experiences in dealing with issues of dual relationships and ethical boundaries. She reinforced the need to use the ecological perspective in dealing with issues directed at ethical decision-making. In the professional supervision work context, the ecological perspective would include the five key areas: Society, profession, organization, client and self.

The intended outcomes of the workshop are three-fold:

   I.   To explore the topic of ethics and boundaries,

  II.   To provide information including history and guiding frameworks in dealing with dual relationships and ethical decision-making, and

III.   To summarise principles and core values of the profession in the ecology system so as to ensure social work supervisors recognize their professional liability, responsibility and accountability and the possible legal implications related to their supervisory responsibility.

Supervisors were reminded of their responsibility to be aware of the cues that lead to boundary violations especially in this present social climate where clients are more comfortable making complaints about their workers.

History of Professional Ethics

Dr Ng spoke about the history of professional ethics in social work. She broke it down into four conceptually distinct periods: Morality, values, ethical risk management and digital period, all of which are crucial in developing the professional ethics that social workers now refer to.
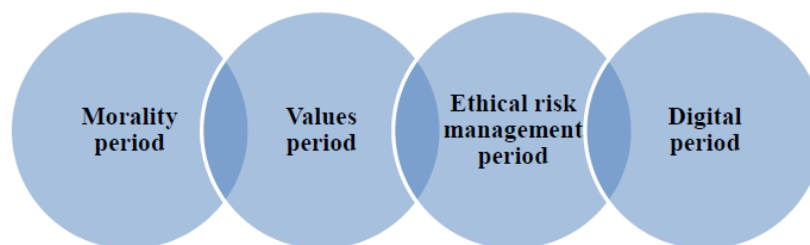
Group Activity: Identifying Boundaries and Ethics in Supervision

Participants were split into four groups and different scenarios with ethical dilemma(s) involved were given to each group. The scenarios involved:

I.   Supervisee sharing of confidential information with colleagues in an open setting
II.   Supervisee receiving emails from clients
III.   Supervisee receiving physical contact (e.g. hugs) from clients
IV.   Supervisee experiencing burnout
V.   Supervisee confiding in supervisor his/her own personal marital conflicts

Participants were then encouraged to discuss with one another before coming up with a suggested stand to the scenario and how they would, as supervisors, choose to handle them. The different scenarios challenged participants on how they would choose to react, as supervisors, if they had experienced similar situations with their supervisees, and what principles or core values in the profession they would choose to adhere to guide their responses. Participants were reminded to be alert to boundary violations and consequences of actions even as one seeks to understand the context in which some of these scenarios played out.

Group Debate: Professional Boundaries in Supervision - Risk of Dual Relationships

While on the topic of dual relationships in the social work profession, Dr. Ng held the discussion in the form of a debate, in which participants were split into two groups – absolutist (i.e. takes an unwavering view of ethical guidelines on the basis that in litigious environment, right and wrong is very clear) and the relativist (i.e. one must consider the context of the situation to make a judgement). Both sides were encouraged to debate about the issue before coming to a conclusion on the general stand on what should be the best practice and response towards it. Dr. Ng then concluded the debate with a call to understand the risk of forming dual relationships and therefore the importance of creating clear boundaries. She cited Freud (2002) who listed 3 reasons for clear boundaries:

I. Protection of the therapeutic process,
II. Protection of clients from exploitation, and
III. Protection of social workers from liability

As such, she emphasized the importance of assessing any situation from the five categories of dual relationships in social work so as to better manage levels of risk.

These five categories are: Intimacy, personal benefit, emotional/ dependency needs, unintentional/ unplanned relationships and altruism (Reamer, 2000). Reamer (2000) indicated that social workers' emphasis should not necessarily be avoiding dual relationships at all costs but instead, to manage risk.

It is also crucial to consider different cultural contexts in practice. For example, in the Asian context, the other person may have the habit of giving gifts as an expression of appreciation. How then, does the social work profession draw the boundaries in such a cultural context? Dr Ng reiterated that maintaining professional boundaries in social work is essential to helping clients and upholding the standards of the profession. As social work involves sustained and frequent interaction with our clients, it is all the more imperative to establish professional boundaries with them.

Dr Ng shared some factors to consider when deciding whether into a secondary relationship:

- How will this secondary relationship change the power differential or take advantage of a power differential in the therapeutic relationship?
- How long will this relationship last? Is it a one-time occurrence or expected to last indefinitely?
- How will ending one relationship affect the other relationship?
- How much will objectively be impaired?

- What is the risk of exploitation?

Boundary issues are inherent in the practice of social work. Careful risk management decision-making procedures allow practitioners to avoid boundary violations and to make informed, ethical determinations when assessing boundary crossings. Thus, maintaining professional boundaries in social work is essential in helping clients and in upholding the standards of the profession. Because social work often involves sustained interaction with individual clients, it is imperative that social workers establish professional boundaries with them.

Dr Ng further illustrated the need to create clear boundaries with the following diagram – SPACS (refer to figure 1).
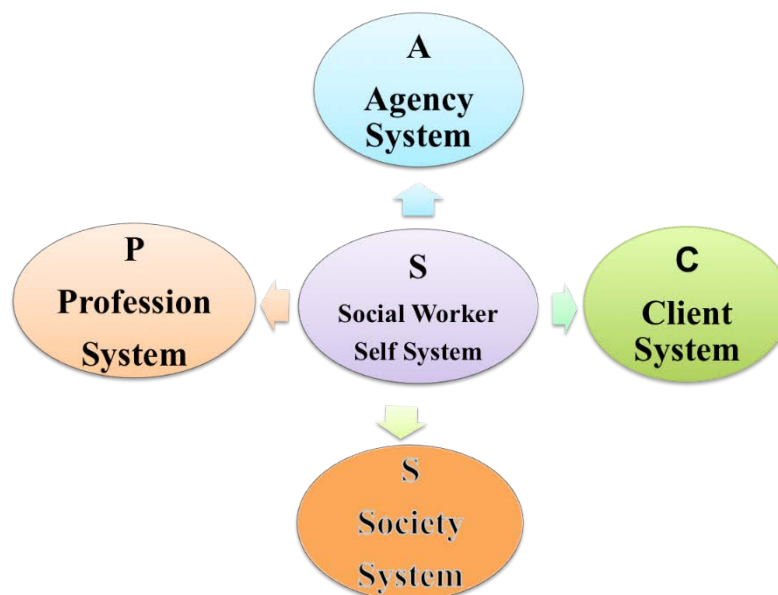

Figure 1: SPACS Model

Through the diagram, she explained how the social worker Self System (S) will interact with and therefore be influenced by different systems: Profession (P), Agency (A), Client (C) and Society (S) and therefore fuels the need to establish different but clear boundaries when interacting with different systems.

Relationships and Professional Boundaries

When in doubt, the following questions can assist social workers in making a decision:

- Is your relationship focused on promoting the wellbeing of the service user?
- Are your personal needs being met through your contact with the service user?

- Has the service user ever behaved in a way that suggests that they have misunderstood your professional relationship?
- Is your relationship with the service user, their friends or family, adversely influencing your professional judgment?
- Is the only relationship you are having with the service user, their friends and their family a professional one? If not, have you made your employer aware of this?

Dr. Ng also provided the following suggestions to avoid development of dual relationships:

Avoiding Dual Relationships

- Watch for conflicts of interest
- Prohibit sexual relationships with clients or former clients
- Decline to enter into financial relationships with client

Nurturing Non-Professional Life

- Cultivate friendships outside of work
- Participate in activities we have
- Leave work in the office
- Consider finding a therapist

Reamer (2001) suggests that "a sound risk management protocol to deal with boundary issues" should contain six major elements:

I. Be alert to potential or actual conflicts of interest
II. Inform clients and colleagues about potential or actual conflicts of interest, and explore reasonable remedies to it
III. Consult colleagues and supervisors, and relevant professional literature, regulations, policies, and ethical standards (Code of Ethics) to identify pertinent boundary issues and constructive options
IV. Design a plan of action that addresses the boundary issues and protects the parties involved to the greatest extent possible
V. Document all discussions, consultation, supervision, and other steps taken to address boundary issues
VI. Develop a strategy to monitor implementation of action plan

Conclusion: How to Maintain Professional Boundaries in Social Work

Dr. Ng concluded the workshop by emphasizing how the Code of Ethics can help participants in their work as supervisors, with the following purposes:

- Providing guidance when existing inexplicit norms and values are not sufficient, that can guide a novel situation
- Reducing internal conflicts, that is, strengthen the sense of common purpose among members of the organization
- Satisfying internal criticism from members of profession
- Create generalized rules for individuals and organizations that have responsibilities for important human goods
- Establish role-specific guidelines that instantiate general principles as particular duties
- Establish standards of behavior toward colleagues, students/trainees, employees, employers, and clients
- Strengthen the sense of common purpose among members of the organization.
- Deter unethical behavior by identifying sanctions and by creating an environment in which reporting unethical behavior is affirmed
- Provide support for individuals when faced with pressures to behave in an unethical manner.

The workshop created opportune conversations amongst supervisors who attended the session. This included an open discussion on how they would react to difficult situations that bring about different forms of ethical dilemmas, and how the code of ethics, agency's principles and standards can come in to aid them in coming to their stand on to handle these situations.

Dr. Ng provided a very good platform for participants to exchange inputs and opinions with one another through real life case scenarios that some of them personally faced during their course of work as supervisors. The debate on the discussion of dual relationships was a good engagement to bring emphasis on the risk of forming dual relationships especially in social work practice. It also offered new insights to participants with some of them commenting on how despite the risk of dual relationships, due flexibility should also be exercised with context and intentions being considered in different situations.

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Closing Session: Vision for Social Work Supervision in Singapore

<u>Panellists:</u>

Mr Udhia Kumar

Trainer, Family Resource and Training Centre

Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW)

Ms Annie Chia

Lead Social Worker

Kreta Ayer Family Services, Social Service Office @ Kreta Ayer

Mr Wilson Mack

Assistant Director/Principal Social Worker

Service Delivery and Development Group, Ministry of Social and Famiy Development

Ms Long Chey May

Deputy Director

Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Jurong Community Hospital

<u>Faciliated by:</u>

Ms Jessica Chan

Lead Social Worker

Kampong Kapor Family Service Centre

Introduction

Ms Jessica Chan invited everyone to reflect on their learning from the seminar and workshops. The audience were also encouraged to ask questions and share about what inspired them today.

Transformative Function of Social Work Supervision

Mr Udhia Kumar reflected that what struck him was Ms Nicki Weld's speech, which highlighted "transformation" as the fifth function of supervision. It was something to be conscious about and exceeded the four fundamental functions. He was impressed by the idea of supervisors as "practice

leaders" as this would place social work supervisors beyond just their own organisations in contributing to the sector and profession.

Applying Good Practices of Social Work Supervision

Mr Wilson Mack shared that over many years of being a supervisor, he had noticed that he tended to focus on clients more than his staff during supervision. He reflected that he could have done better by thinking about what he could do for his supervisees and organisation as well. He also pointed out that good practices can be documented, transferred and/or applied at the organisational level. This would not only help the supervisee but also the agency. As a vision, it is people-oriented and can aid the agency and the state of supervision in Singapore to achieve better outcomes.

Supervisory Relationship and the Conscious Use of Self in Supervision

Ms Chan responded that the perspective on "it is about the relationship" and "self of the practitioner" resonated with her. She wondered how she could have helped her staff to grow and to keep the "sacred space" safe during supervision. A safe, trusting and nurturing relationship can help the supervisee to grow, which in turn also benefits the clients. Mr Kumar agreed and wondered about what would happen after the end of the formal supervisory relationship. He questioned the nature of the relationship in the aftermath of the end of the supervisor-supervisee relationship.

Ms Annie Chia added on that she was able to relate with the concept of the "conscious use of self". In her journey as a young supervisor, she found herself being challenged, and hence this concept would be useful for the supervisor in conducting honest and authentic supervision. This is a transformative process that requires personal conviction where each supervisor needs to believe in the meaning and impact of supervision. Ms Chan agreed and added that using honesty and transparency to build a more trusting supervisory relationship takes time.

Ms Long Chey May reflected that the young workers are more fortunate now and that there are much more resources available for supervision. However, cases are also more challenging and complex now. She highlighted that supervisors now have to wear multiple hats. The dynamics means that supervisors now have to play multiple roles and as they transit from one role to another, they would need to reflect on how each role can be played better. She wondered why supervisors struggle with the different roles since it is all part and parcel of being a supervisor. Ms Long also pointed out the need to recruit the mid-level layer of supervisors in order to develop the social work competency framework to the next level.

In addition, Ms Long highlighted Clifton's Strengths-Finder as a tool to discover the strengths of supervisees. She also pondered how supervisors and supervisees can be more effectively matched for a better fit. Because it is the supervisor's job to help the supervisee to identify his/her limitations, the supervisor also ought to give the supervisee opportunities instead of being harsh towards them. She noted that feedback in itself is neutral and supervisors should have the ability to be vulnerable. It is also not necessarily ideal when things are going smoothly as interruption is needed for growth.

Culture of Sharing Within Social Work Sector

Ms Chan talked about the culture of sharing – How we can share resources across sectors and pull our resources together, to contribute to rich and meaningful outcomes. Mr Mack pointed out that the challenge is that as employees, we often work *in silos* within the boundaries of our own agencies. He felt that the culture of cross-agency collaboration is not so strong yet in Singapore. He attributed this to a spirit of competition among agencies.

Ms Chan challenged how we can counter this competition to cultivate a stronger collaborative culture. She feels that the spirit is still there but we should consider how to share and better utilise existing resources across sectors and agencies by trying on one another's work such as recruitment and the matching of supervisors to supervisees. It is important to be mindful of this lack of collaboration and break down any invisible barriers.

Ms Chia proposed that in Singapore, our professional identities tend to be tied to our institutions rather than the social work profession as a whole. Ms Long emphasised that social workers should be clear of their role as social workers. This means that social workers serve the entire sector, not just the agency they work for. Thus, social workers need to wear the hat of service and contribution to the sector.

Mr Kumar also questioned if supervision is meant only to serve the organisation's needs or to benefit the field of social service as a whole. He asked the floor to adopt the perspective of the receiver of the service, and postulates that if social workers have a safe and trusting relationship with their supervisors, their cognitive functions need not be preoccupied with unnecessary distractions and can be properly devoted to working with clients. What he envisions is that between supervisors and organisations, lies the layer of the sector – "the supervisor of the supervisor". The needs of supervisor should be taken care of by the sector.

Ms Chia connected with Mr Kumar's point that supervision is about the people and the relationships. Social workers need to claim back the purpose of social work, especially with the changes in the social work landscape, as supervisors become bogged down by administrative tasks.

Mr Mack remarked that in many agencies, supervisors may have insufficient bandwidth to take on supervision, due to them having caseloads, groupwork, community work and other tasks. Some agencies also have uneven provisions with regards to manpower. Hence, while many supervisors do have the intention to engage in more supervision, they lack the time to do so. The management needs to cultivate a culture of proper and effective provision of resources so that supervisors are able to engage in adequate supervision.

VISION of Supervision in Singapore:

The panel presented their VISION of supervision in Singapore.

V – Shape Vision and Value, Accept and Embrace Vulnerability

The panel envisages that this is a long journey but hopes to grow a group of supervisors who share this vision in 5 – 10 years' time.

I – Inspire, influence, Interrupt and Impact

Supervisors need to inspire supervisees to internalise these values. Therefore, they should not take on supervisees when they are burnt out as they will not be able to properly guide these supervisees.

S – Skills Sharing, Transfer and Enhancement to Prevent Stagnation

There is a need to smoothen the learning process, practice self-care, and implement safe practice. Having situational leadership helps supervisors adapt and react according to needs such as having the ability to diagnose the supervisees' strengths during the supervision process.

I- Innovate, Improve & Use IT Intelligently

This can create better impact in intervention

O – Outcome Focused, Openness to Uncomfortable Areas and Organisational Goals

Keeping these things in mind will allow for better measurement of outcomes to attain goals.

N – Nurture the Next Generation and Cultivate Needs

Nature requires nurture, and thus the next generation should be nurtured to embrace disruptions and differences.

	Grow Supervisors with VISION	Grow Supervisees to Adopt Shared VISION
V	Shape *Vision* and *Value*. Accept and embrace *vulnerability*.	Values clarification and have vision of type of SW you aspire to be. Accept vulnerability.
I	**Inspire, Influence, Interrupt & Impact.**	**Inquiring mind** to gain insights. **Introspect** and reflect on practice - impact on self and client & family constantly and consistently.
S	**Skills sharing**/transfer and enhancement so as not to be stagnant. Smoothen learning process Self-Care and Safe Practice **Situational leaders** concept	Skills acquiring and seek supervision actively, **Self-directed** learning. **Self-Care** and **Safe Practice** for sustainable practice.
I	**Innovate, improve** (QI) & use IT intelligently to create Impact in intervention.	Internalize Information and learning including "dark" spots. **Innovate** and seek out practice wisdom to improve **intervention.**
O	**Outcome focused** and open to areas you are uncomfortable with. **Organization goals** and demands in mind.	Outcome focused and **Open** to supervisors with diverse knowledge and skill sets. Match own needs to organization demands and needs. Hone operational skill sets.
N	Nurture next generation and cultivate needs. **Nature needs nurture.**	Needs evaluation and embrace meaningful disruptions and accept nuances & notable differences.

Figure 2: Table of VISION shared by Ms Long Chey May