The Issues with Psychoanalytic Supervision in Clinical Psychology: Evaluations, Criticisms, and Recommendations

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Abstract

The present article aimed to provide a theoretical overview of supervisor training. Accordingly, first, the conceptualization of supervision was critically examined. Then, the current state of supervisor training as a general term was explained, both globally and in Turkey. After that, the psychoanalytic supervision process was discussed from a historical perspective and psychoanalytic supervision practices in the field of Lacanian psychoanalysis were presented. Finally, in light of the formation of psychoanalytic supervision programs by various institutions from the past to the present, the institutionalization of supervisor training, along with criticism and recommendations, was analyzed. This research has revealed that becoming a supervisor is a challenging and experience-intensive task. Given the scarcity of research and applications in this field, it is expected that this review will serve as a pioneering compilation that will accelerate developments in the field. This article also has the potential to encourage future efforts in the field and bring forth innovative approaches and methods.

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Introduction

In general terms, clinical supervision is described as

an intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s), monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the clients seen by him, her, or them, and serving as a gatekeeper for those who are to enter the particular profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004, 8).

Although this definition is widely accepted among researchers, it falls short and does not give a thorough understanding of clinical supervision or adequately capture its characteristics (Milne, 2007). Moreover, this definition can also be considered unsatisfactory in terms of its inability to deliver the psychoanalytic perspective on supervision. In the context of this article, the Lacanian psychoanalytic meaning of supervision, as well as its characteristics, were analyzed.

In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, supervision is an essential component of the training and professional development of psychoanalysts (Moncayo, 2008). The supervisor pays attention to the supervisee’s discussions about the analysand’s symptoms, background, and therapy sessions while being monitored. The aim is to comprehend how the analyst is interacting with the analysand and to support the use of psychoanalytic methods that set psychoanalysis apart from other schools of thought. However, because psychoanalysis is not a rigidly defined structure that is independent of human subjects or subjectivity, each analyst’s individual style inevitably shapes the process. Here, "individual style" refers to a subjective articulation of the pre-existing components of a human structure rather than a reflection of ego preferences and characteristics. As aspiring analysts maneuver through their own ego identifications, they may find their own style through imitation or identification with the opposite of what their ego believes other people expect from them. To move beyond simple imitation, compliance, disavowal, defiance, or identification with the opposition, the supervisor's role is to help the supervisee discover their authenticity. In this respect, the supervisee can ultimately navigate the difficult process of transcending these identifications through personal analysis (Moncayo, 2008). Considering the definition of Lacanian psychoanalytic supervision, this study aimed to evaluate the issues with supervisor training. Firstly, the current state of supervisor training as a general term was presented both globally and in Turkey. Then, psychoanalytic supervision was discussed from a historical perspective. Thereafter, psychoanalytic supervision practices in the field of Lacanian psychoanalysis were
presented, and, finally, considering the formation of psychoanalytic supervision under various institutions from the past to the present, the institutionalization of supervisor training along with criticism and recommendations was discussed.

**Training of Supervisor**

In this part of the study, the current situation of supervisor training both globally and in Turkey were evaluated.

**Global Perspectives on Supervisor Training**

Even though the existing literature emphasizes the importance of supervision, paradoxically, the lack of serious attention to supervisor training (Milne et al., 2011) and little knowledge of how supervisors acquire competence indicates that some critical issues regarding clinical supervision process are not considered comprehensively (Milne, 2010). The paradox is that the importance of supervision as the foundation for training therapists, in tandem with the lack of a concerted effort to train supervisors, was also noted by Milne and James (2002). According to Milne (2010), this trend appears to be a universal oversight. The majority of psychologists in the US, according to Falender and Shafranske (2004), have not received any formal training in supervision. The potential negative effects of this lack of competence among supervisors have been cited as those who avoid their responsibilities, those who are destructively passive, and those who are authoritarian, judgmental, and demanding to the point of sadism (Milne et al., 2011).

This problem of supervisory training has long been acknowledged. Since the first clinical supervisor training workshops were held in 1911, support for this training has increased (Kadushin, 1985). The results of earlier surveys, however, showed that a sizable proportion of programs did not offer supervisors any training (Stanton et al., 1981, as cited in Loganbill & Hardy, 1983). The implementations of such programs has become more widespread over time. A higher percentage of programs now offer some kind of training in supervision, according to surveys conducted in a variety of professional fields (Townend et al., 2002). The most popular training method mentioned most frequently was workshops in supervision. However, at this point, criticisms have emerged that the workshops are not fit for purpose, with their curriculum not being inclusive and the absence of a common standard for evaluating the competency of supervisors (Milne et al., 2011).

Moreover, in APA-accredited psychology doctoral and internship programs, there are still no specific training guidelines for supervisors to assure supervisory competence. The absence of such principles added to the situation where training is largely carried out in
workshops meaning that supervisor training is not well integrated into universities (Whitman et al., 2001, as cited in Milne et al., 2011). Nevertheless, the formal inclusion of supervisory competencies into a core-competencies model serves to show how this gap is only recently being acknowledged in professional psychology (APA, 2007). It has also been reported that in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, taking courses (to develop relevant knowledge and skills) and monitoring of supervision (including some form of direct observation and providing feedback) are becoming more acceptable (Milne et al., 2011). Milne examined several studies conducted on supervisor training and the components used within them. Primary corrective feedback, educational role-play, observational learning, direct teaching (such as verbal instruction), homework, and exams were most frequently observed (Milne et al., 2011). Such didactic training strategies offer important parameters for supervisor training. However, they do not go beyond role-playing and observational learning, leaving something missing from the skill set of the supervisor—his or her unique style. While the above lays out the profile of the supervisor training in the West, how does the supervisory process operate in Turkey?

The Supervisor Training in Turkey

First, there exists a paucity of research on supervisor training for clinical psychologists, according to researchers in this field and most articles on clinical supervision training have been written by specialists in psychological counseling and guidance. Therefore, this section was mostly based on this group of researchers’ observations and experiences in the field.

In Turkey, most of the supervisor training programs are offered by private institutions, each adopting different psychotherapy models, such as cognitive behavioral therapy and schema therapy. By attending these institutions’ education seminars and getting certificates, psychotherapists can become supervisors in their specialized fields. However, these training programs appear to have some inherent problems. Typically, the individuals under institutions that provide such training define and declare themselves as supervisors after completing their local and international training in any field. However, in these trainings, issues such as the content of the training and the training fee are determined privately by these individuals under institutions. In other words, there is no formal oversight or regulation by any organization or institution in the field of clinical psychology regarding the content and fees of supervisory trainings. In this regard, the adequacy and comprehensiveness of these trainings should be subject to discussion.

In most academic institutions, supervisor training is not featured. However, it is offered by some universities, including METU (Middle East Technical University). The lack of
academic interest in this area points out a great need for improving Turkey's supervisor-training system on university campuses. Indeed, the universities themselves could see it is to their advantage to develop qualified supervisors while at the same time positioning supervision as a subject worth studying. Additionally, nonprofit organizations moving in this direction would be a welcome ally ing to resolving the shortage of competent supervisors.

Another problem in Turkey is that those who hold the title of associate professor are automatically ushered into supervisory positions, regardless of their competence or experience. This is like giving the title of General Surgeon to a recent graduate physician who has never performed surgery. To be as knowledgeable as possible as a supervisor, one must complete a thorough training program, given that educational background and expertise are crucial to the supervision process.

Up to this point, supervisor training and its deficiencies have been discussed from an overall perspective. In the following section, the function of supervision in the psychoanalytic area, and the experience of undergoing supervision training based on psychoanalytic theory in institutional settings were analyzed, and suggestions were offered.

**Supervision in the Psychoanalytic World: Past, Present, and Future**

Analyzing the evolutionary and transformative history of supervision in psychoanalysis is important to problematize supervisor training. Max Eitingon is said to have invented supervision at the Berlin Institute in the early 1920s which later became a recognized component of analyst education. Eitingon should at least be given credit for having formalized and institutionalized it within psychoanalytic training. But most people regard Sigmund Freud as being “the first supervisor” in actual practice (Watkins, 2013a). Early in Freud’s career, supervision was a practice in which his colleagues discussed their patients with each other in Wednesday night meetings at his home, accompanied by conversations within the student-teacher relationship (Watkins, 2013a). It can be argued that he gave didactic guidance during this time to support their therapeutic efforts. In this period, psychoanalysts were described as seeking support from someone who has more knowledge and experience, rather than finding their own styles to deal with their patients. However, later on, Freud encouraged a process of gaining experience through subjective processes and developing one's own style on the journey of becoming an analyst, in contrast to the Berlin Institute’s policy of analysts’ going through didactic training. These processes led to the emergence of two distinct schools of thought: the Berlin and Vienna schools. The latter group revolved around Freud himself. Their goal was to find new opportunities for conducting more rigorous psychoanalytic work and promoting the application of psychoanalysis in both therapy and education. In Berlin, on the other hand, a
trend developed where the members wanted to gradually separate psychoanalytic institutions from the broader analytic movement and position psychoanalysis as a subspecialty of medicine. Safouan and Rose (2000) claims that as this view gained ground, the focus shifted toward obtaining a diploma in psychoanalysis, which ultimately resulted in the long-term dominance of the Berlin school. As the time went by, the Berlin perspective, which was also adopted by the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA), gradually changed the field of psychoanalysis from a personal choice to a compulsory domain by adding more requirements, such as completing a certain number of sessions and attending educational seminars, ignoring an individual's personal development in analysis. As for supervision, the administrative mentality came down on it, limiting its autonomy and freedom. Instead, instructions and generally accepted principles governed the process, and everything had to proceed per the agreed-upon plan. Consequently, supervision functioned only as a standardized criterion for evaluating candidates (Safouan & Rose, 2000). This can be interpreted as subjective processes in the analysis being unseated from their starring role to make way for the establishment of objective criteria, thereby eliminating subjectivity.

The institutionalization and standardization of supervision sparked criticism from many scholars working in the field of psychoanalysis. They argued that the hierarchical structure of the institutions would impede the potential for change and transformation within the field by isolating analyst candidates from subjectivity and confining them to idealization (Moncayo, 2006). This kind of institutionalization, according to Lacanian psychoanalysts Safouan and Rose, resulted from identification with the Other and transformed it into a powerful machine that gives instructions. In this case, the psychoanalyst would continue to act as a student, voluntarily remaining in that role because of identification, and voluntarily adopting a submissive position. This position entailed the subject giving up his or her subjectivity and attributing it to a master or an institution (Safouan & Rose, 2000). Therefore, it can be claimed that the psychological experiences of the supervisee and supervisor were being ignored. Unfortunately, this form of supervision could not be expected to contribute to the development of the analyst’s identity as a therapist or creating his distinctive style during this period (Watkins, 2013b).”

At this point, what Lacan says about the institutionalization of supervision can be specified. Lacan clarifies a crucial point that many people overlook: the analyst’s style must shape the institution if there is to be a master of it. For Lacan, institutional structures should be a place where the emphasis is on knowing how not to know, rather than associating knowledge with power. Lacan discusses how training analysis should be approached, even though it is clear that he held different views from the analysts of his time, who belonged to
powerful institutions that included "masters." Lacan contends that a less structured institution is not the answer to the debates over training analysis. Nevertheless, what should not be done in training analysis is to provide pre-established knowledge, even though this knowledge may be the outcome of the analytic experience (Safouan & Rose, 2000). Subjectivation is somehow connected to this; anywhere and in any format, knowledge can be obtained and learned. It seems inappropriate for Lacan to impart knowledge while ignoring the unconscious and desire, which are the main topics of analysis, and focuses instead on any institution that awards the status of becoming an analyst.

Lacan further introduces the "passe" system as an experiment because he was a supporter of innovation and welcomed fresh perspectives on institutionalization. In this system, the candidate analyst shares his analysis experience with two peers, who then report their observations to a pass committee comprised of analysts. The pass committee assesses whether the analysis qualifies as a genuine analysist. However, considering the potential for misinformation when conveying the situation of the analyst candidate, Lacan concludes that this approach is ineffective (Moncayo, 2006). Analysts are not required to "pass" to practice as analysts. Lacan puts an end to the pursuit of an objective evaluation and viewpoint within an institutional system (Moncayo, 2006).

Thereafter, Lacan starts to highlight the importance of personal analysis in the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee, excluding the institution. Personal analysis is especially crucial here, as it prevents the supervisor from becoming the primary target of superego projections from the supervisee. While the supervisor guarantees his knowledge, he should avoid providing explicit instructions on what to do and how to proceed. Otherwise, the supervisor becomes an educator and an element within the university/master discourse (Moncayo, 2006). Lacan states that: ‘A psychoanalyst authorizes himself, only by himself ... and some others’ (Lacan, 1967/2001, 243). The analyst derives authority from himself and his personal analysis, and the supervisee is directed towards his own personal analysis for addressing encountered problems and transference from the analysand.

These principles give rise to two questions: Is institutionalization possible? And if it is deemed necessary, how should it be structured? Harms Sachs (Safouan & Rose, 2000) warns that in any setting characterized by an organization and a hierarchy, the emergence of novelty and the striving for change are frequently suppressed. Institutions by nature have a conservative viewpoint, prioritizing their self-preservation, which precludes the acceptance of individuals who are creative and innovative. Moncayo (2008) offers an alternate viewpoint in response. The main mission of an institution should be striking a balance between avoiding rigid and static definitions and ensuring the transmission of knowledge, wisdom, and
therapeutic practices. The aim is to uphold standards, encourage the dynamic growth of psychoanalysis as a living cultural structure, and prevent the dilution and degeneration of evolved ideas into widespread assumptions. With each new generation, psychoanalysis needs to reinvent itself, figuring out novel ways to bring together traditional components and new experiences and ideas. The repetition in transmission and analysis practice is not just a repetition of what has already been said, but rather a repetition with a fresh distinction. Through fresh interpretations and insights, this process enables the renewal of psychoanalytic theories and methods. In summary, with this balanced model, both a certain standard is expected to be achieved, and a space will be opened for subjectivity and innovation.

At this point, the concept of a supervisor-training program can be re-evaluated in light of Moncayo's suggested institutional model. While a system based on rigid standards and the power of knowledge may not leave room for subjectivity in supervisor training, Moncayo suggests an approach whereby high-quality supervisors who have cultivated their unique styles can be developed. This alternative model accepts the notion that effective supervision requires not only strict adherence to predetermined rules but also the development of supervisors' unique strengths and talents. Institutions can foster a diverse cohort of supervisors who bring their unique perspectives, approaches, and expertise to their supervisory roles by providing a training framework that combines core competencies with chances for personal growth and self-expression. Such an approach not only promotes the development of capable supervisors but also enriches the supervisory landscape with a wealth of varied and innovative practices.

**Discussion**

This article has problematized the topic of supervision training in clinical practice. In this context, it first addressed the definition and conceptualization of supervision. While supervision is often understood as an evaluative intervention provided by a more experienced member of a profession to younger or novice members of the same profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004), this definition is insufficient when it comes to the psychoanalytic definition of supervision. Psychoanalytic supervision goes beyond a teacher-student relationship that is characterized by identification and imitation, expanding to include the supervisee’s subjective processes within the framework that will help them discover their unique style (Moncayo, 2008).

Although the importance of supervision has been emphasized in the related literature (Milne et al., 2011), little information exists about supervisor training in Turkey or even in the wider world. This situation is borne out by the scarcity of studies done in this field. Even worse, reports have come in relating the poor quality of the workshops where much of this training
takes place (Milne et al., 2011). This being the case, integrating supervisor training into institutional structures like academic institutions appears to be a logical solution to this problem. Therefore, efforts to institutionalize supervision and its history in psychoanalysis were carefully addressed.

Max Eitingon is believed to be the first to institutionalize supervision, at the Berlin Institute. Later, psychoanalytic institutions in Berlin began to separate from the main analytical stream in favor of setting themselves up as a subfield of medicine. As a result, eventually, the significance of subjectivity, considered an indispensable part of the analytical experience, was replaced by objective training, criteria, and assessments in the supervision process. Many scholars have criticized this institutionalization and standardization of psychoanalysis. Specifically, they accused such institutions of forcing the psychoanalyst to behave like a student, relinquishing their subjectivity and transferring authority to the institution or the master. Thus, this mode of supervision cannot be expected to further the analyst's development as a psychoanalyst or to the formation of their unique style. At this point, Lacan emphasizes the importance of personal analysis in the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee, excluding institutionalization. He states that a psychoanalyst is only authorized by himself and a few others (Lacan, 1967/2001). The psychoanalyst derives his authority from himself and his own personal analysis, and the supervisee, in turn, is directed by the supervisor to go through their own personal analysis to address whatever issues have emerged and the transference experiences with the analysand.

This all raises the question of whether institutionalization is even a viable option; if it is deemed necessary, then how should such centers be structured? Moncayo (2008) emphasizes that institutions, particularly those concerned with psychoanalysis, should aim to strike a balance. This balance rules out being too rigid and fixed in their definitions, while still ensuring the transmission of valuable knowledge, wisdom, and therapeutic practices. The ultimate goal is to maintain high standards, foster the dynamic growth of psychoanalysis as a living cultural entity, and prevent the degradation of advanced ideas into common assumptions. To achieve this, psychoanalysis must continually reinvent itself with each new generation, integrating traditional elements with new experiences and ideas to stay relevant and effective. This balanced model should also be applied to the institutionalization of supervisor training. As mentioned, Moncayo’s approach, when it is applied to supervisor training, challenges the idea of rigid standards and a purely knowledge-based system. Instead, it advocates for a more flexible model that encourages the development of high-quality supervisors with their distinct styles. In this approach, effective supervision is seen as a
combination of following established guidelines and allowing supervisors to cultivate their strengths and talents, acknowledging the importance of subjectivity in the process.

Given the above, the psychoanalytically oriented supervisor training being offered at the Middle East Technical University (METU) stands out as an excellent example of the balanced model recommended by Moncayo. This program includes an internship for students who have completed their course at the doctoral level in supervision training. For the master’s students, they work with patients under the supervision of trainee supervisors. These trainees, taking supervision of the supervision (also called supervision square) by experienced supervisor instructors, then openly discuss the challenges they have come across, some of which are suggested to be incorporated into their own personal analysis. Moreover, supervisor candidates are not subject to an evaluation system based on written assessments like midterms and finals, which are part of the university evaluation system. Supervisor candidates continue to receive supervision of supervision from more experienced and seasoned mentors with discussing cases, strengthening their subjectivity, and gaining experience during this process. This experience progresses in the context of a more master-apprentice relationship beyond the university discourse. In addition, this system is updated with each new generation of doctoral students. In METU Clinical psychology program, when comments on the program are discussed in general meetings, the latest generation’s input is helping to improve the overall operation. An added benefit is the additional flexibility given to the institutional framework, thereby meeting the subjective needs of supervisor candidates.

In summary, we have called attention to the paucity of research into this essential area and the spotty presence of supervisor training facilities. It is therefore hoped that this article will serve as a preliminary exploration that will galvanize developments in this field. Not only is psychoanalytic supervision training far from prevalent, but also the very task of training supervisors is a formidable one. We anticipate that this article will spur future endeavors in the field, with the potential for uncovering innovative approaches and methodologies.

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Özet


