

Ladislav Vaska | Katarína Čavojská [eds.]

Social Work Supervision in a Digitalized World



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INTRODUCTION

Supervision constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of professional support in social work and other helping professions. It provides a space for reflection, learning, protection of professional identity, and mental wellbeing for practitioners who are long-term exposed to high levels of emotional, ethical, and organizational demands. This monograph was developed at a time when supervision – similarly to many other professional processes – has been undergoing significant transformation under the influence of digitalization, with experiences of the online environment shifting from a marginal solution to a common component of practice.

The COVID-19 pandemic represented a powerful accelerating moment that hastened the integration of digital technologies into the field of supervision. What had previously been perceived primarily as a supplementary or experimental form became, within a short period of time, an unavoidable reality. As a result, online supervision began to be widely implemented across various sectors of social work, health care, education, and other helping professions. This development opened up new possibilities in terms of accessibility, flexibility, and continuity of support; while at the same time, it introduced a range of new challenges – technological, relational, methodological, and ethical.

The aim of this monograph is to provide a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon of online supervision in the Slovak context, drawing on an integration of theoretical frameworks, empirical research, and reflection on current supervisory practice. The publication is the result of a collective effort by an authorial team combining academic, research, and practical experience in supervision, and represents an output of the *VEGA research project No. 1/0639/23, “Transformations of Supervision in Social Work in the Context of Digitalization.”* It thus offers a systematically grounded and multi-perspective view of contemporary forms of online supervision as well as its future directions.

The monograph is structured into several thematically interconnected chapters that progressively map the key dimensions of online supervision. The opening chapters present the theoretical foundations of supervision in the context of digitalization and the early experiences with distance-based forms. These are followed by empirical chapters focusing on the develop-

ment of the supervisory relationship in the online environment, the benefits and limitations of online supervision, its ethical aspects, and specific methodological approaches, including the use of visualization techniques. Particular attention is paid to an international chapter reflecting experiences from the Georgian context, which extends the local findings through a comparative perspective and demonstrates that many of the challenges associated with online supervision are transnational in nature. The analytical section of the publication culminates in a synthesis of the research findings and a standalone chapter dedicated to the future of online supervision. Based on qualitative research conducted among supervisors and supervisees, online supervision is presented as a flexible form of professional support that is shaped by contextual conditions and requires standardization. The authors also highlight the need for systematic methodological and ethical frameworks, the development of hybrid models, and the integration of online competencies into the education and training of future supervisors.

The ambition of this monograph is not merely to descriptively capture the current state of online supervision, but above all to create space for professional discussion on its qualities, risks, and future prospects. It is anticipated that the publication will be beneficial for practitioners, supervisors, managers of social services, students, and researchers, and that it will contribute to the professionalization and further development of supervisory practice in the context of ongoing digitalization. This book presents a comprehensive and systematic monographic analysis of online supervision in social work, combining theoretical reflection with original empirical research findings.

Although the empirical part of this volume is primarily grounded in the Slovak context, the issues addressed extend well beyond national boundaries. Digitalization is reshaping social work supervision across diverse welfare systems, organizational settings, and professional cultures. The findings presented in this book highlight key processes, challenges, and opportunities that are relevant to a wide range of international contexts, particularly in countries undergoing similar transformations in social services and professional education. By combining empirical evidence with theoretical reflection, the volume offers insights that may inform supervisory practice, training, and policy development in social work across different national and institutional frameworks.

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Editors

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