

CHAPTER 10

The Future of Online Supervision: Synthesis of Research Findings and Implications for Practice

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Introduction

One of the concluding chapters of this monograph presents the results of a qualitative analysis of the views of supervisors and supervisees regarding the future of online supervision in Slovakia. The chapter provides a synthesis of insights into the current perceptions of online supervision from both the supervisors' and the supervisees' perspectives, while simultaneously opening a discussion on its potential direction and further development. The findings offer a practical framework for the use of online supervision and simultaneously provide a foundation for further research in this field. The issue of the future of online supervision is closely linked to ongoing technological developments, increasing demands for digital competencies among both supervisors and social workers, and the need to respond to changing working conditions in the helping professions. In social work, online supervision has become more prominently established particularly in recent years, with the COVID-19 pandemic acting as a significant catalyst for its development. The pandemic highlighted the need for flexible forms of professional support for social workers and simultaneously revealed the potential of the online environment as a legitimate space for supervisory work (Connell, 2023; Mo et al., 2021).

The aim of the analysis in this section was to explore perceptions of the future of supervision conducted in an online environment, from the perspectives of both supervisors and supervisees. In line with this aim, the following research question was addressed: "*How is the future of online supervision perceived?*" Through thematic clustering of codes emerging from the process of open and axial coding, nine subcategories were identified which, according to supervisors' views, play a key role in the implementation and use of online supervision in Slovakia:

a) Development and Normalization of Online Supervision

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered the emergence and rapid development of online supervision. The crisis situation helped overcome the initial resistance and skepticism of the professional community toward the online form of such intimate methods of work as psychotherapy and supervision. As some participants stated: *“By no means ... it is based on personal contact”* (S1); *“we are somewhat rigid”* (S11). Two supervisors (S2, S12) rejected the online format entirely. At present, online supervision is already regarded as a common and legitimate form of supervisory practice: *“it’s 2024 and it works ... development is moving forward ... and it will go on”* (S1); *“online as the normal”* (S11).

b) Standardization and Ethics

At present, none of the participants – although two of them reject the online format in principle while nevertheless accepting it as an option – question that the online modality has become a common and legitimate component of supervision. Supervisors, however, strongly articulate and experience the need for the standardization of formats and methods, as well as of processes, qualifications, and the material and technical conditions of online supervision. In particular, the need to establish ethical standards and to formally legitimize online supervision is frequently emphasized (S1, S3, S4, S10, P1). Closely related to this is the preparation of future supervisors, with a clear demand to incorporate online supervision competencies into lifelong learning curricula (S8, S10, S11, P1).

c) Technical and Spatial Prerequisites

Another important category that emerged concerns technical and spatial prerequisites. In this context, the importance of high-quality technical equipment becomes evident, including high-resolution video, the capacity to transmit subtle vocal nuances, as well as an appropriate physical setting that ensures privacy. High technical quality is expected to help compensate for the significantly reduced and limited possibilities of working with the supervisee’s nonverbal communication in the online environment. Intimacy and a sense of safety for the supervisee can only be ensured in a space

where the individual is alone, or, in the case of group supervision, where only members of the supervisory group are present. This requirement is not limited to minimizing distractions and maintaining focus on the supervisory process, but also relates to the ability to address intimate, often relational issues that require a high degree of discretion (S5, S14). Digital skills on both sides (S4, S10) – among supervisors as well as supervisees – increase their capacity to use the online format of supervision effectively.

d) Suitability in Relation to the Type and Goal of Supervision

The goal of supervision represents one of the key predictors in the choice of the online format. In emergency situations, online supervision is considered a particularly appropriate modality, as it enables a rapid response to the urgency of the situation (S1, S10). Some supervisors perceive the online format as more suitable for individual supervision (S13, S14), or for work with a small group of participants (up to three individuals) focusing on a single shared case (S13, S14). With regard to supervisory content, the view emerged (S9, S14) that “work-related” topics are more suitable for the online format than personal ones – where “personal” most likely refers to relational issues. By contrast, supervision at the level of the entire organization and supervision of large groups are perceived as inappropriate for the online format (S1, S8, S14).

e) Hybrid Models and Process Design

A hybrid model – that is, a combination of online and in-person formats tailored to the needs of supervisees and the capacities of supervisors – is preferred by some supervisors (S4, S8, S14). This approach is often recommended as an equal balance between online and in-person sessions, or with the online format used at the beginning and at the conclusion of the supervisory process. The interviews also reflected views supporting the supplementation of group supervision with individual supervision conducted online. An additional suggestion (S13) concerned the creation of *asynchronous “bridges”*, enabling supervisees to pose questions to the supervisor after the supervision session has ended, for example via email, or even during the session through chat-based communication.

f) Public Awareness and Expectation Management

Supervision represents a specific form of professional education that can significantly enhance a practitioner's professional competencies. The opportunity – and in Slovakia also the obligation under current legislation – to participate in supervision applies to qualified professionals. Within organizations, decisions regarding the scope, content, and form of supervision are typically formulated by the commissioning party, usually a managerial or supervisory staff member. It is therefore essential that this individual is able to identify the needs of employees and has an informed overview of available supervisory services. When managers themselves have positive personal experience with supervision, they are better positioned to motivate their subordinates to engage in supervisory services and to create conditions that support the optimal course of the supervisory process. Conversely, conflating supervision with “pseudo-psychotherapy” or with various forms of specialized counseling may prove counterproductive (S1, S3, S6, S11, S13, S14).

g) Accessibility and Capacity

Owing in part to the online format, supervision has rapidly expanded across regions as well as into diverse types of social service settings, becoming a relatively accessible service for helping professionals. Supervisors perceive a current need to extend supervision into sectors adjacent to social services, such as education, healthcare, and other areas across the helping professions. Achieving this expansion, however, requires the availability of a larger number of qualified and high-quality supervisors who are listed in professional registries (S7, S11, S14).

h) Risks to Quality and Formalization

Supervisors identify “formalization” as one of the most significant risks to the quality of supervision – that is, the mere fulfillment of the legal obligation imposed on organizations operating in the social sector to provide supervision for their employees. In such cases, organizational leadership may fail to create a safe environment and may discourage workers from bringing forward “difficult supervisory topics,” out of concern that sensitive

issues could be revealed and interpreted as evidence of managerial inadequacy (S9). As a result, the core supervisory effect – intended to support workers’ mental well-being and enhance their professional qualifications – is entirely undermined, which in some cases leads to burnout and eventual job departure (S5, S14).

i) Digitalization of Processes and Emerging Technologies

Online supervision itself is inherently digital in form. Supervisors with longer-term experience in online supervision tend to integrate additional digital tools into the supervisory process. These include, for example, the use of online questionnaires for supervisees at the entry point of the supervisory process or at its conclusion, where supervisees provide feedback to the supervisor and other participants in the supervisory process (S8). Supervisors have also gradually adopted the use of chat functions or email for follow-up questions, suggestions for future supervision sessions, and, in some cases, the use of artificial intelligence for the development of screening techniques (S10, S13).

Based on the key categories from which the above subcategories were derived, core categories were subsequently developed and used to construct a paradigmatic model. This *model* is illustrated in Figure 1, which reflects the following main categories:

- a) historical context of the development and normalization of online supervision;
- b) conditions and context of online supervision practice;
- c) intervening factors;
- d) strategies;
- e) consequences.

Although the paradigmatic model is grounded in participants’ experiences and current supervisory practice, its analytical purpose extends beyond retrospective description. The model functions as a conceptual framework for anticipating future developments in online supervision by identifying key conditions, intervening factors, strategies, and potential consequences that shape its possible trajectories.

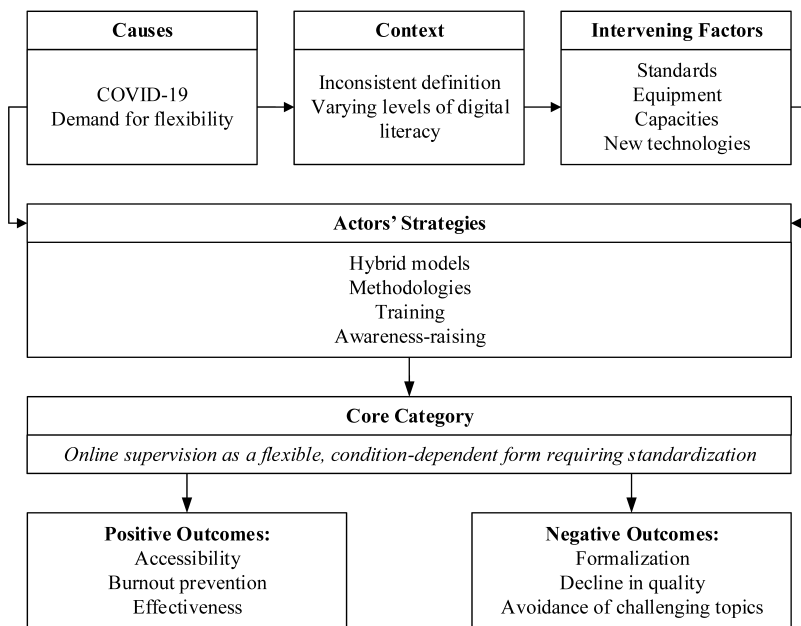


Figure 1: Paradigmatic Model of Online Supervision

Source: Author's own elaboration.

a) Historical Context of the Development and Normalization of Online Supervision

The development and normalization of the online form of supervision were driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. The critical, crisis-level, and in some cases existential situation made it possible to very rapidly overcome the initial resistance and skepticism of the professional community toward the online format of such inherently intimate methods of client-related work as psychotherapy and supervision. Examples of participants' statements reflecting this issue include: "by no means ... it is based on personal contact" (S1), "we are somewhat rigid" (S11); and two participants (S2 and S12) rejected working in the online format entirely, thereby expressing a strongly negative stance toward online supervision. The pandemic also significantly accelerated the use of digital technologies among helping

professionals – a group that does not typically perceive itself as highly technologically proficient. Crisis conditions forced social workers and other helping professionals to adapt technologically to the requirements of the online environment. At present, online supervision is already regarded as a common and legitimate form of supervisory practice: *“it’s 2024 and it works ... development is moving forward ... and it will go on”* (S1); *“online as the normal,” “the COVID period taught us how to function in the online space”* (P4, P17); *“it will become a common component ... a new form”* (P1); *“the future will bring more supervision”* (P17); and references to *“the offer on the website of the Association of Supervisors and Social Counselors”* (S1). Despite this normalization, online supervision still lacks clearly defined ethical and professional standards: *“we need to organize ourselves methodologically”* (S3); *“not only ethics – it will require a great deal of research, and reference to some established rules”* (S3); *“there is a need to unify what supervision is and what it is not”* (S6); *“some guidelines and standards are needed ... ethical standards”* (S10); and *“it should be included in professional training”* (S10, S11). The quality of online supervision depends on the supervisor’s ability to flexibly apply supervisory techniques and procedures, which cannot be mechanically transferred from in-person settings to the online environment, as they acquire entirely different dimensions outside face-to-face contact. Online supervision is thus already a legitimate component of professional practice; however, its effectiveness and quality depend primarily on supervisors’ capacity to hybridly combine digital and in-person formats: *“it is hard to say in what proportion”* (S3); *“it will be an option to be preferred”* (S4); *“online will be part of the portfolio”* (S11); *“to complement group supervision with individual online supervision”* (S13); *“to use a 50–50 model”* (S14); and *“it can support the professional development of social workers”* (P1). At the same time, personnel-related, material and technical, and ethical standards remain insufficiently defined. There is a need for digital tools that support the development of supervision without reducing its professional quality and that, above all, preserve the ethical principles of work with people.

Although the crisis situation has passed, the demand for online supervision has persisted. Many organizations, as well as supervisors themselves, perceive its main advantages particularly in terms of geographic accessibility, the ability to choose a supervisor from a broader pool rather than solely on the basis of proximity, and savings in time and travel costs: *“you are at home in the evening, you don’t have to travel”* (S1, P15); *“you have a whole list of supervisors”* (S7); *“it saves time and money – travel costs”* (S8);

“operational accessibility ... when needed, we are online within an hour” (S13); “I don’t travel, I am online for an hour and that’s it” (S14).

b) Conditions and Context of Supervision Practice

Another factor that plays a significant role in the implementation of online supervision is the context and conditions under which online supervision is conducted. From the statements of supervisors, it is clear that participants place great importance on the *technical and technological infrastructure*: *“I did it over the phone” (S1), “It depends on the technological capabilities of both the supervisor and the supervisee... sharing the screen” (S4), “good technical setup (also P1) ... good acoustics ... they must have good equipment ... evaluation online questionnaires” (S8), “improve the technology” (S9), “quality PCs and screens ... a technological challenge” (S13).* In addition to computers with high-quality screens sensitive to image and sound transmission, supervisors also emphasize the importance of ensuring privacy in the room: *“a separate room” (S5), “privacy” (S8), “ensuring the protection of confidential information”; “secure communication platforms that ensure reliability” (P1), “a new or adapted methodology for online supervision, but also a wider range of supervisors, creating a platform somewhere with a list of supervisors” (S7).*

A major issue is the *varying levels of digital literacy* among supervisors and supervisees, as well as the infrastructure: *“it depends on the technological capabilities and skills” (S4), “the employer’s good technical setup” (S5), “ability to use artificial intelligence” (S10).* Different approaches to online individual and group supervision also emerge in the responses.

They point to *limits conditioned by the type of supervision*: *“I can’t do online supervision for organizations” (S8), “more suitable for work-related topics than personal ones” (S9), “complement group supervision with individual online format” (S13), “for me, online is only individual ... maybe three people working on one case ... but I wouldn’t do it for a group” (S14).*

Three supervisors described an analogy between online supervision and online psychotherapy: *“an analogy with psychotherapy – short-term online, long-term in person” (S4); “so that they do not think they can provide therapy or some form of specialized counseling” (S6); “therapies progressed faster than supervision ... we are rigid ... therapies are ahead, they operate fully online ... in the Czech Republic there are already applications for online therapies” (S11).* These statements point to *differences across sectors* in the pace and extent of digital adaptation.

c) Intervening Factors

Intervening factors play a significant role, as they can substantially influence both the scope and the quality of online supervision. Particularly emphasized are the absence of *ethical codes*, professional guidelines, *methodological frameworks*, and *legal regulations*: “a methodological and legal foundation is needed ... it is not sufficient to refer only to general ethical rules” (S3); “more emphasis on ethics” (S4); “so that supervisees do not have unrealistic expectations ... an escape character ... they may think they can do therapy or some kind of special counseling – relaxation techniques, playing the guitar, fortune-telling with cards” (S6); as well as the need for guidelines and standards: “I hope standards will emerge ... references to ethical standards” (S10).

Another key intervening factor concerns *the quality of nonverbal signal transmission*: “good acoustics in the room and good video so that we can monitor various forms of para-communication” (S5); “ensuring high-quality and secure technological conditions ... good Internet connection ... failure of technical equipment ... technical stability” (P1). Capacity-related aspects of supervision were also mentioned: “there would have to be many of us” (S7); “a wide range of choice, not limited by proximity” (S6); “the supervisor travels to us” (P9). Finally, attention is drawn to *new technologies* and the use of a spectrum of digital communication channels, such as “video, email, chat... AI-supported pre-supervision and skills assessment” (S10); “follow-up questions after the session ... or using chat functions during ongoing group supervision” (S13).

d) Strategies

The interviews also revealed a range of strategies that supervisors use to support the implementation of online formats of supervision. Core strategies include the use of hybrid models, the introduction of ethical norms into online supervision, the standardization of methods, techniques, and procedures, curricular initiatives in the education of both students in the helping professions and participants in advanced specialization training, the establishment of technical standards, engagement with the public, process digitalization, the preservation of relational sensitivity, and the purposeful and targeted use of online formats. The use of *hybrid models* – alternating between online and in-person (face-to-face) formats and sup-

plementing group supervision with individual sessions – was reflected in participants' statements such as: “supervision ... online will be an option, not a preference ... short-term online, long-term in person” (S4); “being able to set aside time” (P17); “to alternate online and in-person ... online evaluations ... not only as one of the good alternatives” (S8); “more suitable for work-related topics than personal ones” (S9); “having online as one option in the portfolio” (S11); “to complement group supervision with individual online sessions” (S13, P15); “50–50 models, with the beginning and end in person ... more than six participants exceeds the limit for online group supervision” (S14). Supervisors also expressed the view that online supervision would significantly benefit from having its own *standards*, understood as minimum procedures, formats, and methods of work, as well as clearly anchored ethical rules. These standards should already be integrated into the professional training of future supervisors: “to organize things methodologically ... ethics ... a code” (S3); “more emphasis on ethics” (S4); “to unify what supervision is and what it is not” (S6); “guidelines and standards ... a curriculum with online-specific features ... references to ethical standards ... reflection on ethics and good practice – integrated into curricula” (S10); “to train supervisors as a standard ... to have online as part of the portfolio” (S11). In the online format, particular emphasis was placed on technical standards, including the already mentioned quiet and uninterrupted spaces that ensure sufficient intimacy, high-quality equipment with fast data transmission and high-quality audio and video, as well as an adequate level of digital competence among supervisees.

One of the main strategies supervisors identified for improving the quality of online supervision involved working with the *management* of the organizations that commission supervision. Supervisors reported encountering situations in which management is unable to formulate the supervisory request clearly, often because supervision is confused with a form of specialized counseling or “quasi-therapy,” or because unrealistic expectations are held (S4, S6, S14).

Elements of *process digitalization* also emerged within the online environment. Supervisors referred to examples of good practice they had introduced, including efforts to digitalize or automate supportive processes, such as “online evaluation questionnaires, links” (S8), “providing space after the session ... allowing room for questions even after the supervision has taken place or prior to the next session” (S13), and “using AI as a filtering and quality-control tool ... with the possibility of chat communication during supervision” (S10).

At the same time, a strong emphasis was placed on *maintaining sensitivity* toward both the subject matter and the supervisees. This sensitivity was reflected in respect for preferences regarding formats and topics, in allowing supervisees to try different formats without coercion, and in the acceptance of selected supervisory contracts: “*it will be an option, not a preference ... and not every contract should be accepted*” (S4); “*respect for preferences, a trial online session, then a choice ... let’s try it ... without applying pressure*” (S14).

According to supervisors, the quality of online supervision is significantly enhanced when online formats are not used universally or indiscriminately, but rather applied in a *targeted* manner – for example, in urgent critical situations: “*she was in a very poor state ... more like crisis intervention*” (S1); “*short-term online, long-term in person*” (S4); “*if it concerns purely work-related problems, it can work ... with an effort to avoid overly complicated topics*” (S9); “*it is more suitable for individual supervision*” (S13, S14).

e) Consequences

During the interviews, in addition to positive and negative consequences, transformative effects were also identified. Among the *positive* outcomes, supervisors most frequently mentioned: “*it has the potential to motivate people ... time flexibility ... a wide range of choices when selecting a supervisor*” (S6, P9); “*burnout prevention, emotional release*” (S7); “*time savings ... the hours I save*” (S8, P17); “*having online supervision as part of the portfolio*” (S11); “*rapid convening ... high accessibility ... flexible scheduling ... operatively provided support ... enrichment of the individual format*” (S13); “*high accessibility across sectors ... available to most*” (S14); and “*more effective collaboration*” (P1).

Negative risks were primarily associated with formalization (“*there is a risk of formalization/box-ticking*”), the avoidance of complicated topics and tendencies to escape from serious issues (S9), a decline in quality under poor conditions (S4), and a reduced capacity to capture supervisees’ nonverbal expressions (S5).

Among the *transformative consequences*, supervisors identified, for example, the need to develop standards for online supervision, to incorporate instruction in online formats and methods into training curricula, and to

use artificial intelligence as a supportive tool within the supervisory process (S10, S11).

The above description of the main research categories forming the *paradigmatic model of online supervision*, illustrated in Figure 1 earlier in the text, indicates that the expansion of the global and societal crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic generated increased demand for support for individuals exposed to extreme work-related and emotional pressure. This urgent situation prompted an equally urgent response, in which professionals learned – often rapidly and without formal training – to use digital technologies in order to both provide and receive professional support. As the online format has expanded into various domains of social life, across diverse groups and through different professional roles, pressure has increased toward normalization and the establishment of standards. Unclear boundaries between supervision and other helping methods, disparities in technical equipment, and differing capacities to use digital technologies create a demand for hybrid strategies and for the targeted matching of supervisory topics with appropriate formats. The findings indicate that positive outcomes – namely accessibility, preventive value, and the effectiveness of online supervision – are most likely to be achieved when optimal personnel-related, procedural, and material–technical conditions are in place. Conversely, formalization of supervision and low-quality implementation represent major risks and key predictors of unsuccessful online supervision. New asynchronous technologies and artificial intelligence hold the potential to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of online supervision; however, their use requires strict ethical frameworks.

Although a smaller number of participants represented the supervisee perspective, analysis of the statements of the five supervisees made it possible to identify the following specific features emerging from their accounts:

- Online supervision is perceived by supervisees as the result of the natural development of society and the profession, requiring specific technical, competency-based, and ethical prerequisites.
- Supervisees adopt a pragmatic view of online supervision, emphasizing time and organizational efficiency, including time savings, easier coordination, and reduced travel costs.
- Among the most important intervening factors influencing supervisory effectiveness, supervisees highlight the quality of the supervisor–supervisee relationship, grounded in trust, the opportunity for emotional

expression, and the supervisor’s ability to use techniques that support relational quality.

- There is an expectation of greater flexibility in the range of supervisory formats offered, as well as the possibility to choose a supervisor.
- The use of online supervision may result in greater accessibility and efficiency of supervision.
- At the same time, in-person contact continues to be highly valued, as it fosters trust and emotional connection between supervisor and supervisee, which supervisees regard as a key element of supervision.
- Supervisees place strong emphasis on the supervisor’s personal qualities and on the supervisory relationship itself.

Taken together, the findings presented in this chapter highlight the context-dependent nature of online supervision and point to the need for its thoughtful, ethically grounded, and professionally supported integration into supervisory practice.

More specifically, the qualitative data analysis indicates that, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, online supervision has become established as a legitimate and stable component of supervisory practice. Its further development is perceived as inevitable, yet contingent upon several key factors. The findings confirm that the pandemic constituted a major historical turning point that accelerated the normalization of online supervision and helped overcome the initial resistance of the professional community toward digital forms of practice (cf. Mo et al., 2021). Online supervision is currently accepted as a “standard” component of supervisory practice, particularly due to its temporal, geographical, and organizational accessibility. Nevertheless, it is not perceived as a universal substitute for in-person supervision, but rather as a complementary or situationally appropriate form of professional support (cf. Lohrke & Metz, 2021; Vrtová & Vaska, 2022).

A key finding of the research is the pronounced need for the *standardization of online supervision*. Supervisors clearly point to the absence of well-defined ethical norms, methodological guidelines, legal frameworks, and technical standards that would adequately reflect the specific characteristics of the online environment (cf. Collins-Pisano et al., 2023; Vrtová & Vaska, 2022). This absence increases the risk of blurred boundaries between supervision, therapy, and other forms of professional support, as well as the risk of a decline in the quality of the supervisory process. The findings further indicate the need for the systematic integration of online supervision

into the education of future supervisors and into lifelong learning curricula (cf. Mo & Chan, 2023; Mo & O'Donoghue, 2024; Vrt'ová & Vaska, 2022).

Technical, spatial, and competency-related prerequisites emerged as fundamental conditions for the quality of online supervision. High-quality transmission of audio and video, secure digital platforms, protection of confidentiality, and the assurance of privacy for supervisees are essential in the online environment. Equally important is the digital literacy of both supervisors and supervisees, which significantly influences the effectiveness and fluency of the supervisory process (cf. Mo & Chan, 2023; Mo & O'Donoghue, 2024; Sandusky et al., 2022; Vrt'ová & Vaska, 2022).

The research also confirms that the *appropriateness of online supervision is contingent upon the type, goal, and content of supervision*. The online format is perceived as particularly effective in crisis situations, in individual supervision, in work with small groups, and in addressing predominantly work-related topics. By contrast, online supervision is considered less suitable for work with large groups, entire organizations, and deeply personal or relational topics. For this reason, the use of *hybrid models* – flexibly combining online and in-person formats according to participants' needs and the nature of the supervisory process – appears to be the most appropriate solution (cf. Jeyasingham & Devlin, 2024; Phillips et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2022).

A significant intervening factor was also identified in the role of *organizational management* that commissions supervision. Misunderstanding the goals of supervision, its formalization, or its reduction to a mere legislative obligation substantially diminishes its value and may lead to the loss of its preventive and developmental functions. Conversely, informed and supportive management creates conditions for a safe and meaningful supervisory process (cf. Rankine et al., 2025).

From the supervisees' perspective, online supervision is perceived as a natural consequence of social and technological development, offering increased accessibility, flexibility, and efficiency. At the same time, supervisees continue to place strong emphasis on the supervisor's personal qualities, the quality of the supervisory relationship, trust, and emotional connection, all of which are regarded as key elements of supervision regardless of the format used (cf. Connell, 2023). Personal contact therefore remains a highly valued aspect that the online environment cannot fully replace.

The resulting *paradigmatic model* of online supervision demonstrates that its future lies in the targeted, ethically grounded, and professionally reflective integration of digital tools into supervisory practice. Online su-

pervision has the potential to expand access to supervision, strengthen burnout prevention, and increase the effectiveness of support for helping professionals. However, this potential can only be realized if clear standards are established, hybrid strategies are developed, and a strong emphasis on the quality of the supervisory relationship is maintained. New technologies, including asynchronous tools and artificial intelligence, are increasingly discussed in professional discourse as significant opportunities for the further development of online supervision; at the same time, they require strict ethical regulation and professional oversight.

Since the pandemic period, online supervision has become established within the helping professions as a frequently used format, largely due to its flexibility, time efficiency, and improved accessibility, including broader possibilities for selecting a supervisor. At the same time, its effectiveness remains contingent on adequate technical conditions, digital competencies on both sides, and the availability of a secure and confidential setting. Most notably, participants emphasized the ongoing absence of clearly defined procedural, material–technical, and ethical standards, which continues to shape both the quality and perceived legitimacy of online supervision. These conditions form the starting point for the discussion of future trajectories and the key challenges for practice.

The Future of Online Supervision: Key Findings and Implications for Practice

Addressing the research question indicates that the future of online supervision is perceived by participants as probable and legitimate, yet simultaneously conditional. Its further development will not occur “on its own,” but only under conditions in which technical, methodological, and ethical frameworks are clearly and appropriately established. From the perspectives of both supervisors and supervisees, the online format does not emerge as a full substitute for in-person supervision, but rather as a stable component of a broader supervisory portfolio, whose suitability depends on the goal, type, and sensitivity of the supervisory topic.

Based on the research findings, three realistic trajectories of future development can be identified. The first is a professionalization trajectory, in which online supervision acquires clearly defined standards (ethical, procedural, and technical) and becomes a well-integrated component of supervisor education and training. The second is a hybridization trajectory,

characterized by the natural embedding of alternating online and in-person sessions and by the emergence of a process design based on intentionality – that is, deliberate decisions about when the online format is supportive and when it becomes limiting. The third, risk-oriented trajectory is a formalization trajectory, in which online supervision remains primarily an administrative “box-ticking” requirement, accompanied by weakened reflection, insufficient safety, and a tendency to avoid complex or demanding topics.

In terms of practical implications, these findings suggest that the key challenge for the coming period is not to decide whether online supervision should be used, but rather how, when, and under what conditions it should be applied. The future of online supervision will depend on the capacity of the profession and its institutions to establish clear standards, support the development of digital competencies, and simultaneously preserve what is fundamental to supervision: a high-quality supervisory relationship, trust, safety, and professional reflection, regardless of the format employed.

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