



## Supervision and Peer Supervision in Online Setting: Experiences of Psychological Counselors\*

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Psychological counseling, supervision, peer supervision, and consultation in the online setting have become widespread. This study aimed to examine the experiences and opinions of psychological counselors regarding online supervision and peer supervision.

**Research Methods:** This qualitative study included six psychological counselors as participants. The data of the study were collected using semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group interview. Written documents and transcriptions of voice recordings were analyzed based on thematic analysis.

**Findings:** The results of the study related to the supervision experiences of psychological counselors yielded the following themes: role of the supervisor, supervision process, feedback from the supervisor, and the number of psychological counselors and clients.

Similarly, themes related to experiences of psychological counselors in peer supervision were as follows: effects of the peers, professional development, and negative perceptions about peer supervision. The opinions of psychological counselors regarding online supervision and peer supervision yielded two themes: the strengths and the drawbacks of the online environment.

**Implications for Research and Practice:** Online supervision can be useful for psychological counselors. However, it is crucial for future studies to investigate the experiences of psychological counselors with diverse characteristics to gain a deeper understanding. Mixed-method studies related to online supervision and peer supervision are recommended for more detailed information. Moreover, online supervision can be provided for psychological counselors-in-training and for professionals aiming to pursue career development.

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## Introduction

Psychological counseling, supervision, peer supervision, and consultation provided in the online environment have become widespread recently. Psychological counselors are using online tools in order to provide clients the suitable resources, information, and immediate help services in case of emergencies. Supervision and peer supervision can also be conducted through online tools. Supervision is a service that is provided by an experienced counselor for a relatively less experienced counselor(s) (Bernard, 1979). Supervision supports the professional development of psychological counselors and contributes to the well-being of clients (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). The main purposes of supervision are to encourage the professional development of psychological counselors (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Falender et al., 2004), increase their self-confidence, and provide psychological counselors and psychological counselors-in-training with some information and feedback about how to act creatively and flexibly while they work with their clients. Studies showed that psychological counselors can understand client's feelings more easily due to supervision (Wheeler & Richards, 2007). In addition, receiving supervision was found to be associated with improved professional development and increased self-confidence (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Pamukcu, 2011; Wheeler & Richards, 2007).

The studies focusing on supervision so far have generally aimed to examine the effectiveness of face-to-face supervision. However, online supervision has become more popular as technology has been integrated more into mental health. This new trend has inevitably raised new questions about online supervision. Several concepts have been used to address online supervision such as cyber supervision, Internet-based supervision, and supervision provided through technology (Rousmaniere, 2014). Methods of online supervision can widely vary, for instance, some supervisors ask for audio or video recordings of the psychological sessions from counselors via e-mail and provide supervision via telephone, while others prefer conducting supervision via video conference (Kanz, 2001).

When Internet services were relatively slow and expensive, it was believed that online supervision could be used only to support face-to-face supervision due to technical problems (Kanz, 2001). However, online supervision has been becoming an alternative in the training and supervision of psychological counselors. Online supervision has both advantages and disadvantages. If the psychological counselors receiving supervision live far away or supervisors have limited available time, online supervision might be a practical option (Abbass et al., 2011; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). On the other hand, it is necessary to consider certain disadvantages of online supervision such as security risks, technical problems like slow or frequently interrupted Internet connection, and problems to catch nonverbal messages (Kanz, 2001; Rousmaniere, 2014). Despite these disadvantages, previous studies showed that psychological counselors who received online supervision have reported high satisfaction (Conn, Roberts, & Powell, 2009; Kobak, Craske, Rose, & Wolitsky-Taylor, 2013; Xavier, Shepherd, & Goldstein, 2007), and indicated positive attitudes towards online supervision (Conn et al., 2009). Moreover, one study also showed that psychological counselors reported higher self-confidence after receiving online supervision (Weingardt, Cucciare, Bellotti, & Lai, 2009). Evidence also suggests that

therapeutic collaboration can be established between the supervisor and the psychological counselor in an online environment (Sorlie, Gammon, Bergvik, & Sexton, 1999).

Online peer supervision has also become a common practice. Peer supervision is defined as a process in which psychological counselors with similar levels of experience and knowledge supervise each other without the presence of a supervisor (Campbell, 2000). In this process, psychological counselors receive help and support from other psychological counselors. A study found that 31.7% of the school psychological counselors engaged in peer supervision (Perera-Diltz & Mason, 2012). It was also reported that peer supervision is practical, less formal and less frightening than other methods of supervision (Benshoff, 1993). Although peer supervision is a common practice among psychological counselors, studies are scarce in this field. Few studies showed that psychological counselors benefited from peer supervision by gaining more knowledge and insight, and feeling supported (Akhurst & Kelly, 2006; Benshoff, 1993; Borders, 1991). It was also reported that as a result of peer supervision, psychological counselors felt encouraged by peers, and their self-confidence improved (Akhurst & Kelly, 2006; Benshoff, 1993).

Similar to online supervision, online peer supervision can be delivered through synchronous and asynchronous methods (Perera-Diltz & Mason, 2012). Psychological counselors can give or receive quick feedback via emails, Internet forums, and SMS about issues they encountered in the sessions, and share relevant information including professional issues and therapeutic techniques thanks to online peer supervision (Yeh et al., 2008). In a study, it was found that psychological counselors in an online peer group reported higher collective self-efficacy and improved conceptualization skills (Butler & Constantine, 2006). However, online supervision also has some disadvantages. Insufficient professional experiences of psychological counselors might lead to misconceptions, or an extreme level of empathy in the group might slow down the professional development (Akhurst & Kelly, 2006).

The studies on supervision and peer supervision in Turkey have mainly focused on face-to-face supervision (Aladag, 2014; Aladag & Kemer, 2016; Atik, Celik, Guc & Tatal, 2016; Sivis Cetinkaya & Karairmak, 2012; Ozyurek, 2009, 2010; Zeren & Yilmaz, 2011). Studies generally have examined supervision methods and opinions of psychological counselors on supervision (Atik et al., 2016); the basic concepts related to supervision models (Sivis Cetinkaya & Karairmak, 2012); the effectiveness of several supervision models (Koc, 2013; Meydan, 2014); and the characteristics of the supervisor (Aladag & Kemer, 2016). Measurement tools for supervision have been adapted and developed (Denizli, 2010; Ihan, Sarikaya & Yontem, 2018). As a result of these studies, the importance of supervision in the training of psychological counselors was emphasized as a common finding (Aladag, 2014; Aladag & Kemer, 2016; Buyruk Genc, 2009; Koc, 2013; Meydan, 2014; Pamukcu, 2011; Sivis Cetinkaya & Karairmak 2012; Ozyurek, 2009). To the best of our knowledge, no studies on online supervision and peer supervision are available in Turkey. Therefore, this study aims to examine the opinions of psychological counselors regarding online supervision and peer supervision. To achieve this purpose, we formulated our research questions as follows:

1. What are the opinions and experiences of psychological counselors about supervision?
2. What are the opinions and experiences of psychological counselors about peer supervision?
3. What are the opinions and experiences of psychological counselors about supervision and peer supervision provided in online environments?

## Method

### *Research Design*

This is a qualitative study which aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and opinions of the psychological counselors who participated in online supervision and peer supervision. This research was conducted in the case study design. In the case studies, factors related to certain situations (such as environment, individuals, events, and processes) are investigated in detail in a holistic way (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015; Yildirim & Simsek, 2011). The subject of this research was the experience of online supervision and peer supervision. Moreover, thematic analysis was used since this method is based on a descriptive approach rather than constructing a theory or examining the nature of language/ talk (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Howitt, 2016; Tuckett, 2005). Inductive thematic analysis was used since no a priori themes were defined based on a theory or existing framework in the literature.

### *Participants*

Psychological counselors were identified based on a convenience sampling method. In this sampling method, participants are reached based on the availability to the researchers (Bryman, 2012). Psychological counselors who participated in the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) project participated in online supervision and peer supervision. The participants of the study were three male and three female psychological counselors. All participants completed their bachelor's degree in Guidance and Psychological Counseling and they were master's students in the same program. All participants had already received supervision before the study as a requirement of their Master's degree courses. The ages of the participants ranged from 23 to 27. They had professional experience of 2 to 5 years.

Psychological counselors in this study conducted face-to-face and online psychological counseling sessions with several clients. Table 1 shows relevant information about each participant, with each of them being given a code (e.g., PC1, PC2, etc.) for anonymity.

**Table 1**

*Psychological Counselors' Sex, the Number of the Clients and the Completed Sessions*

Psychological counselors	Sex	Face-to-face		Online		Total	
		Clients	Sessions	Clients	Sessions	Clients	Sessions
PC1	Female	5	48	4	39	9	87
PC2	Male	4	35	2	15	6	50
PC3	Male	4	31	4	32	8	63
PC4	Female	5	35	3	28	8	63
PC5	Female	5	47	4	35	9	82
PC6	Male	4	32	4	31	8	63
Total		27	228	21	180	48	408

As seen in Table 1, a total of 228 face-to-face and 180 online sessions were conducted throughout the study. Twenty-seven clients in the face-to-face group and 21 clients in the online group participated in the sessions. All the clients were undergraduate students attending a public university in Istanbul. The supervisor in this study was an Assistant Professor in the Guidance and Psychological Counseling department who had experience in psychological counseling and supervision.

*Data Collection*

The data of the study were collected using a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. The question form was sent to three different independent experts who had experience in supervision and peer supervision with psychological counselors. After revisions based on the feedback, the final version of the form included the following three open-ended questions: "How would you describe the supervision experience in this study?", "How would you describe the peer supervision experience in this study?", "How would you describe online supervision and online peer supervision experience in this study?"

*Procedure*

*Training in online counseling, supervision, and peer supervision.*

The psychological counselors and the supervisor were trained by the researchers about online psychological counseling, standards and ethical principles of online supervision, online counseling, and online peer supervision. In addition, psychological counselors attended training sessions on technology use which was given by two experts from the field of Computer and Instructional Technologies.

*Online and face to face counseling sessions.*

Online psychological counseling sessions were conducted through video conferencing via Skype. Face-to-face sessions were conducted in counseling rooms at the campus. The counseling sessions, supervision, and peer supervision sessions took place within two months.

*Online supervision.*

Online group supervision meetings were held once a week and lasted approximately two hours. Prior to these meetings, psychological counselors sent the recordings and the transcripts of the counseling sessions to the supervisor via e-mail. Issues related to counseling sessions were discussed in group supervision via Skype. The supervisor watched the recordings of the sessions of each client before holding a supervision session. In supervision sessions, the supervisor provided feedback to the psychological counselors in terms of psychological counseling skills and case conceptualization. In addition to group supervision meetings, psychological counselors could contact their supervisors via telephone in case of urgent situations. However, no urgent situation occurred during this study that necessitated contact with the supervisor.

*Online peer supervision.*

Psychological counselors attended biweekly online peer supervision meetings, which lasted approximately two hours, without the presence of the supervisor. Psychological counselors discussed the main issues in the counseling sessions and gave feedback to each other.

*Informing participants.*

All psychological counselors were informed about the aim of the study before interviews. They were told that they would be included in the study only if they were volunteered for participation, and they were free to withdraw from the study or withdraw their data if they do not want to participate. All participants agreed to be included in the study and signed an informed consent form.

*Data collection*

The data were collected from the interview form sent to the psychological counselors via e-mails and later through a focus group interview. The focus group interview lasted approximately two hours, and one of the counselors (PC5) could not attend the interview because of personal reasons. Opinions of the psychological counselors were collected from all the participants via emails. In addition, the audio recording of the focus group interview was transcribed by the researchers and added to the data set.

*Validity and Reliability.*

In order to increase validity and reliability in qualitative studies, the role of the researcher should be well-defined in advance (Johnson, 1997; Merriam, 1995). In this study, the researchers did not conduct psychological counseling sessions and did not have a direct role in supervision and peer supervision. Limitations of the data collection can also be avoided using data triangulation (Yildirim, 2010). In this study, we conducted a focus group discussion to obtain the opinions of the participants as well as an interview to obtain more in-depth data. In addition, receiving expert opinions can be considered another measure to increase validity and reliability. Lastly, participant confirmation is another method that can be used to increase the credibility of the research (Johnson, 1997; Merriam, 1995; Yildirim, 2010). Therefore, the findings

were sent to the psychological counselors and they were asked to check their statements and confirm them.

### *Data Analysis*

In the study, the written documents and the voice recordings were analyzed using thematic analysis. After transcription of each interview and focus group discussion, codes and themes were generated separately by two researchers. In this process, the analysis unit was taken as “sentences” and “phrases”. Content under the themes and subthemes were separately constructed by two researchers. After discussing the discrepancies, the analysis was concluded. The finalized version of the themes was sent to the psychological counselors in order to get the final confirmation of the data.

## **Results**

### *Results of the Supervision Experience of the Psychological Counselors*

Psychological counselors’ experiences were categorized under four subthemes namely the role of the supervisor, supervision process, feedback from the supervisor, and the number of psychological counselors and clients. The findings can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2**

#### *Subthemes of Supervision Experience of Psychological Counselors*

Subthemes	Psychological Counselors
<i>Role of Supervisor</i>	
Teacher role	PC1, PC2, PC4, PC5, PC6
Psychological counselor role	PC2, PC3, PC4, PC5, PC6
Encouraging and supportive role	PC2, PC3, PC4, PC5, PC6
Experience of the supervisor	PC1, PC3, PC4, PC6
Supervisor’s control and authority	PC1, PC4, PC6
<i>Supervision Process</i>	
Discussing ethical issues	PC2, PC3, PC4, PC5, PC6
Professional satisfaction	PC5
<i>Feedback from the Supervisor</i>	
Reacting to negative feedback	PC1, PC4
Feedback provided for peers	PC4
<i>The Number of Psychological Counselors and Clients</i>	
The number of psychological counselors	PC1, PC2, PC4, PC5, PC6
The number of clients	PC1, PC2, PC4, PC5

*Role of the supervisor.*

Five psychological counselors emphasized the teacher role of the supervisor. The metaphor used by PC2 about the supervision was as follows: *"I resembled it to a culinary school. We try to arrange everything according to each counselor, I mean according to his taste. And we receive support from a better cook"*. PC2 mentioned the teacher role of the supervisor and emphasized the advantage of being in a group: *"While the supervisor was supervising others, I learned something about myself. It was advantageous."*

Also, five psychological counselors mentioned the positive effect of the psychological counselor role of the supervisor. For instance, PC5 said: *"My supervisor helped me to clarify some issues just like a torch shining in the dark and realize more easily what I feel about my client."* Similarly, PC4 stated: *"I think my supervisor had a client-centered approach, I mean she took our positive and negative feelings into consideration and tried to understand them."*

Several psychological counselors emphasized that the supervisor encouraged them, calmed them down and helped them feel better. For instance, PC3 explained the supervisor's role as follows: *"Analyzer, negotiator, clarifier... I felt that I was not alone. She was trustworthy. I was quite satisfied."* Similarly, PC6 stated: *"It was a process I confided in. When I felt hopeless, the suggestions and guidance of my supervisor helped me a lot."*

Four psychological counselors (PC1, PC3, PC4, and PC6) emphasized the effects of the supervisor's professional experience on the process. For instance, PC3 stated that: *"Our supervisor has a long-time experience in the field, she had memberships to associations, and she is an advisor. I used to listen to her very carefully when she shared her experiences. Our supervisor was elaborating. She asked for more detailed questions etc."* Three psychological counselors (PC1, PC4, and PC6) stated that the supervisor provided a control mechanism and authority. For instance, PC1 addressed the control function of the supervisor as follows: *"I was comfortable during supervision because we were under the control of a professional counselor. There was an authority who wraps up what I said and gave us a scientific perspective. I believe that supervision is more controlled and more effective than peer supervision. We listened to each other, shared opinions, and the last words were told by the supervisor. She often had a more different point of view."*

*Supervision process.*

Five psychological counselors stated that discussion of ethical issues during supervision was important. For instance, PC2 said: *"Variety of cases was beneficial for the conceptualization of problems. Bringing ethical issues into the agenda was also useful, I was able to notice what information I forgot and lacked."* One psychological counselor (PC5) stated that supervision increased her job satisfaction: *"Sharing knowledge and experience helped me to increase my job satisfaction and increased my motivation"*.

*Feedback from the supervisor.*

Two psychological counselors emphasized feedback received from the supervisor: *"The first session... The supervisor said at the beginning: 'Don't get angry or offended...' I understood that something bad was coming. She did not say critically but I did not like to hear that much suddenly anyway. I felt bad because she was telling the truth. I found it difficult to make good sentences in the first sessions. Later I told to myself 'Of course, it won't go on like*

that.' In the following counseling and supervision sessions, I improved myself. The feedback I got worked well in professional terms... If supervision was face-to-face, the supervisor would smile, she would do something to make me feel good. If she had physical contact, I wouldn't feel like that. When I heard from a distance (online), it hurt (PC1)." PC4 also stated that: "During supervision, I felt anxious about receiving negative feedback about the method I used with my client. I used to think twice before I gave positive and negative feedback to my peers because I was trying to guess the reaction of my supervisor."

*The number of psychological counselors and clients.*

Five psychological counselors suggested that the number of counselors was a lot for supervision meetings, and it had a negative influence on the efficiency of the supervision. For instance, PC1 stated that the presence of many psychological counselors prolonged the duration of supervision and suggested that individual supervision would be better than group supervision: "The only thing I was not happy with was that supervision started late during the day and it lasted more than expected because of the crowd. I received face-to-face supervision too, it was not that much different. But it should have been conducted one-to-one. We started at 20:00 and finished around 22:00, so we almost fell asleep since we worked all day long. I was once late for one of the sessions. Later, the supervisor said let's talk one to one. It was my best supervision ever." On the other hand, PC5 stated that: "Group supervision is better. I mean, there should have been three people, maybe. For me, six people were too many. But you cannot get peer support when you are the only one. There should be at least three people. "

Four psychological counselors (PC1, PC2, PC4, and PC5) emphasized the difficulty in the supervision meeting because of the high number of clients: "Well, it goes better with fewer people. I mean, 'Who was whose counselor?' and let me confess, I sometimes got bored and did not listen to the rest. I often missed the story. (PC4)".

#### *Results of Peer Supervision Experience of Psychological Counselors*

Psychological counselors' opinions were categorized under three subthemes: the effects of peers, professional development, and negative perceptions about peer supervision. The findings can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3**

#### *Subthemes of Peer Supervision Experience of Psychological Counselors*

Subthemes	Psychological Counselors
<i>Effects of Peers</i>	
Peer support	PC1, PC2, PC4, PC5, PC6
Universality	PC1, PC4, PC5, PC6
Giving and receiving feedback	PC1, PC2, PC4, PC5
Working with peers from different gender	PC1, PC4
<i>Professional Development</i>	
Learning process	PC3, PC5, PC6
Working with different cases	PC2, PC4
<i>Negative perceptions about peer supervision</i>	
Lack of supervisor	PC1, PC3, PC5

*Effect of peers.*

Five participants (PC1, PC2, PC4, PC5, and PC6) emphasized the importance of peer support in this process. For instance, PC2 said: *"I was like a learner, an observer in peer supervision. I believe that I learned a lot from other psychological counselors."* PC1 also explained the support she received as follows: *"It was beneficial to learn about a method used by one of my peers; all the details from recording procedures to the questions asked. I can say that it also motivated me for the practice. Or I had the opportunity to question myself about whether I felt the same as my peers. We aimed to collaborate and help each other."* PC1 also explained an important function of peer supervision especially while working with difficult clients: *"I believe that my peers understand me and give the message that you are not alone, we also experience these problems. The feedback from my peers reflecting their understanding of my feelings was useful for difficult clients. Receiving feedback especially about my feelings helped me progress more. Once, I realized my anger with one of my clients when I received feedback from my peers. The emotion reflection of the group helped me realize."*

The findings revealed "universality" as another factor contributing to the peer supervision process. PC5 explained: *"Feeling of being understood due to similar experiences, comfort, and collaboration. Being aware of similar experiences made me feel good"*. PC6 emphasized the contribution of common experiences to objective self-evaluation of psychological counselors as stating: *"The similar experiences helped me to make healthy internal and external attributions."*

Four psychological counselors (PC1, PC2, PC4, and PC5) mentioned the importance of peer feedback, and the experiences of the psychological counselors whilst giving feedback. For instance PC4: *"Of course, how you say something is also important. When we say 'How would it be if it were like this and that?', the person perceives it in a relatively positive way, he or she would say 'Ah, yes, I can try it the next time or so'... Actually, we already wouldn't give very harsh feedback."* Two psychological counselors mentioned the advantages of working with peers from the other gender group: *"Peers from both genders were positive because it brought different ideas and opinions together. (PC4)."*

*Professional development.*

Three psychological counselors (PC3, PC5, and PC6) used similar phrases highlighting the peer supervision as a learning process. For instance, PC3 stated: *"It helped me to help my clients more self-confidently. It helped me to learn more."* and PC6 reported that: *"It was informative to listen to the stories directly from a first-hand resource"*.

According to two psychological counselors (PC2 and PC4), peer supervision was an opportunity to learn about different cases and perspectives. In this line, PC2 said: *"I noticed that it is possible to make mistakes in this process. I felt as if I have been experiencing different cases by thinking 'What would I do if I were in their shoes?'"*

*Negative perceptions about peer supervision.*

Although most of the participants consider peer supervision as an important support in the learning process, three psychological counselors (PC1, PC3, and PC5) stated that peer supervision had disadvantages when compared to supervision. For instance, PC1 described peer supervision meetings as stating: *"A more intimate*

atmosphere... Using slang or more comfortable self-expression. But someone had to take control because of the lack of authority. Since everybody was at the same level of the hierarchy, this was sometimes difficult. To deal with a person with low motivation in the group, and this often negatively affected the others in the group."

#### *Results of Online Supervision and Online Peer Supervision Experience of Psychological Counselors*

Opinions about online supervision and peer supervision had two subthemes: strengths and drawbacks of the online environment. The findings can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4**

##### *Subthemes of Online Supervision and Online Peer Supervision Experience*

Subthemes	Psychological Counselors
<i>Strengths of the Online Environment</i>	PC1, PC3, PC5, PC6
Effective use of time and place	
<i>Drawbacks of Online Environment</i>	PC1, PC2, PC4, PC5
Technical problems	PC2
Distractors	

##### *Strengths of the online environment.*

Practical issues (i.e. use of time and place) were the most commonly stated advantages of online supervision and peer supervision. For instance, PC5 said: "If the supervision and the peer supervision had not been carried out online, there would have been some disadvantages in terms of time such as (the need to) commuting to the meeting area." PC6 explained his opinions as follows: "When we consider the limitations in daily life and working life such as distance and time, face-to-face would be more difficult."

##### *Drawbacks of the online environment.*

Four psychological counselors (PC1, PC2, PC4, and PC5) reported technical problems as the main drawback of the online setting. For instance, PC4 stated: "Face-to-face supervision is more effective. Because losing the connection due to technical problems affected the process negatively. In addition, someone wanted to give an opinion, but another talked suddenly at that moment..." and similarly PC5 said: "There were many interruptions. Even the supervisor lost the contact many times and the camera was freezing sometimes."

PC2 explained the distractions in the online setting as a limitation: "There were moments during supervision and peer supervision when I did something else since I was in front of the computer. If it was face-to-face, I think I would be involved in the process more."

## **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

The aim of this study was to investigate the experiences and opinions of psychological counselors regarding online supervision and peer supervision. Psychological counselors reported that different roles of supervisors contributed to

their professional development, that group supervision had both advantages and disadvantages, and that the number of clients and the number of psychological counselors participated in the discussions affected the efficiency of supervision. Psychological counselors reported that peers helped each other during peer supervision, and this process contributed to their professional development. Finally, it was found that although psychological counselors encountered some problems in the online setting, they stated their positive experiences with online supervision and peer supervision.

During supervision, psychological counselors received feedback from both the peers in the same peer supervision group and the supervisor on their counseling skills, which was considered an important opportunity for their professional development (Bakalim, Sanal-Karahan, & Sensoy, 2018). The findings of the present study also revealed that feedback from both the supervisor and peers was important for professional development. Group supervision is particularly advantageous because of the interaction in the group (Sivis Cetinkaya & Karairmak, 2012). In addition, feedback from supervisors and peers may contribute to the professional development of psychological counselors (Aladag, 2014). On the other hand, group supervision has been reported as a limitation since a high number of psychological counselors might have a negative impact on the effectiveness of supervision. This finding is in line with the results of the study of Akhurst and Kelly's (2006) in which the number of participants in a supervision group was found to be an important factor for the effectiveness of the supervision. Therefore, supervision meetings with a high number of participants might be disadvantageous.

In our study, we found several common characteristics of online supervision and face-to-face supervision. For instance, the most emphasized themes by psychological counselors receiving online supervision were the positive effects of the supervisor's role as a teacher and a psychological counselor in addition to getting benefit from the supervisor's experiences. This finding is similar to the studies conducted with psychological counselors who received face-to-face supervision. In a study focusing on the effects of supervision, it was concluded that supervision helped psychological counselors improve their counseling skills, increase self-efficacy, and provide social support (Wheeler & Richards, 2007).

Another study on supervision revealed that the main problem with supervision has been finding a suitable time for sessions (Kilminster & Jolly, 2000). However, psychological counselors receiving online supervision stated that online supervision was advantageous in terms of scheduling the sessions. This finding may imply that online tools can be used as an alternative when a supervisor and a psychological counselor have problems in arranging a common timetable for sessions. In addition, supervisors and psychological counselors should be aware of the limitations of online supervision and it is essential that feedback should be clear and comprehensible in the online sessions (Kilminster & Jolly, 2000). Therefore, the limitations related to the online setting should be taken into consideration while organizing and conducting sessions. In conclusion, our findings revealed that online supervision was perceived as similar to face-to-face supervision. However, there might be problems in

understanding the clues of communication in feedback provided by supervisors in the online setting.

A limited number of studies on peer supervision have also presented similar findings. Previous studies showed certain functions of peer supervision such as receiving feedback, support, improving personal and professional development due to experiencing different points of view, and learn from others (Borders, 1991). Similarly, the opinions of psychological counselors in this study emphasized the importance of peer supervision on personal development and professional competence. Psychological counselors who attended peer supervision stated that they received feedback from their peers about various issues and it was important for their professional development and personal awareness. Such feedback may also have a function as social support in mental health professionals (Lakeman & Glasgow, 2009). On the other hand, in some cases, it was reported that social support becomes dominant in the groups without a leader, as a result, supervision meetings can go off the topic (Counselman & Weber, 2004). Comparing supervision and peer supervision in the present study, some psychological counselors highlighted the negative effects of having no leader and suggested that they needed a leader in the meetings. Finally, it was stated that online supervision was advantageous in terms of time, however, the effectiveness of the supervision sessions might decrease because of the technical problems such as power cuts or slow Internet.

The strength of this study was that data were collected with an interview form and focus group interviews. This helped us to reach enriched information about the experiences and the opinions of the psychological counselors. In this way, the limitations of one data collection method were tried to be avoided using another method. We could obtain deeper insights into the experiences of psychological counselors using multi-methods for data collection. Another strength of this study is that researchers were not involved in online supervision, online peer supervision or online counseling. Therefore, we tried to minimize the researcher's allegiance. Last but not least, as far as we know, this is the first study focusing on online peer supervision in Turkey.

However, there are also some limitations. First, psychological counselors in our study were homogeneous in terms of age, educational level, and their professional experiences. Psychological counselors were relatively young and already embraced online tools. Therefore, we are not aware of the experiences of psychological counselors with diverse backgrounds such as older psychological counselors. The study is also limited to the supervision and peer supervision conducted with psychological counselors in Istanbul. Nevertheless, it is believed that this study has the potential to shed light on future studies on this subject in the Turkish context.

As a result of this study, it can be suggested that online applications of mental health such as online supervision and online peer supervision can be integrated into psychological counseling and guidance programs as an elective course or as part of a course as a result of the latest advancements in technology. Based on our findings, supervision provided in undergraduate and graduate education can be delivered via

online tools. Thus, inexperienced psychological counselors living in different cities or countries can benefit from supervision.

Psychological counselors and supervisors should also be aware of the limitations of online applications. Psychological counselors should take some technical and strategic precautions to prevent or reduce the effects of their disadvantages. In other words, an alternative action plan should be considered in advance when communication is interrupted because of the technical problems or slow Internet connection. Another problem with online supervision and peer supervision might be unclear feedback in the online setting. Therefore, psychological counselors and supervisors should check regularly for clarity and comprehensibility. Also, before sessions, supervisors can make necessary evaluations about counselors' competence and knowledge about Internet tools, whether they feel comfortable, and disclose themselves during online communication. Lastly, interviews can be conducted with psychological counselors with various characteristics to increase the generalizability of our findings. In this line, mixed-method studies related to online supervision could be carried out to obtain a deeper understanding of the experiences of psychological counselors.

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## Çevrimiçi Süpervizyon ve Akran Süpervizyonu: Psikolojik Danışmanların Deneyimleri

### Atf:

Amanvermez, Y., Zeren, S. G., Erus, S. M., & Buyruk Genc, A. (2020). Supervision and peer supervision in online setting: Experiences of psychological counselors. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 86, 249-268, DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2020.86.12

### Özet

*Problem Durumu:* Son yıllarda çevrimiçi (online) iletişim araçlarını kullanarak yapılan psikolojik danışma, süpervizyon, akran süpervizyonu ve konsültasyon gibi hizmetler artmıştır. Bu artışla beraber internet üzerinden sağlanan hizmetlerin etkililiğine dair araştırma soruları gündeme gelmektedir. Alanyazındaki araştırmalar çoğunlukla yüz yüze süpervizyonun ve akran süpervizyonun etkililiğini incelemektedir. Bundan dolayı çevrimiçi süpervizyon ve akran süpervizyon süreçleriyle ilgili detaylı bilgilere ihtiyaç duyulduğu düşünülmektedir.

*Araştırmanın Amacı:* Bu çalışmada, çevrimiçi süpervizyon ve akran süpervizyonuna dair psikolojik danışmanların deneyimlerini ve görüşlerini ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaçla şu sorulara cevap aranmıştır: (1) Psikolojik danışmanların aldıkları süpervizyona ilişkin görüşleri nelerdir? (2) Psikolojik danışmanların katıldıkları akran süpervizyonu konusundaki görüşleri nelerdir? (3) Psikolojik danışmanların süpervizyon ve akran süpervizyonunun çevrimiçi ortamda yürütülmesine yönelik görüşleri nelerdir?

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Bu çalışma, durum çalışması deseninde tasarlanmış, nitel bir araştırmadır. Derinlemesine incelenmeye çalışılan durumlar, çevrimiçi süpervizyon ve akran süpervizyonu deneyimleridir. Araştırmaya çevrimiçi psikolojik danışma, süpervizyon ve akran süpervizyonu deneyimi yaşamış altı psikolojik danışman katılmıştır. Psikolojik danışmanlar Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışma alanında lisans eğitimlerini tamamlamış ve yüksek lisans eğitimlerine devam eden psikolojik danışmanlardır. Bu çalışmadaki süpervizör ise İstanbul'da bir devlet üniversitesinde Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışma alanında öğretim üyesi olarak çalışan, bireyle psikolojik danışma uygulamaları ve süpervizyon konusunda deneyimli bir profesyoneldir. Araştırmanın verileri, araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ile toplanmıştır. Görüşme formuna verilen cevaplar e-posta aracılığıyla psikolojik danışmanlardan toplanmış ve daha sonra psikolojik danışmanlarla odak grup görüşmesi yapılmıştır. Yazılı dokümanlar ve ses kayıtları türünde toplanan veriler, tematik analiz kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Veriler çözümlenirken, analiz birimi olarak cümleler ve sözcük öbekleri seçilmiştir.

*Araştırma Bulguları:* Bu çalışmada ilk araştırma sorusu, psikolojik danışmanların süpervizyon deneyimlerine yönelik görüşlerini anlamaya yöneliktir. Bu konudaki bulgular, süpervizörün rolü, süpervizyon süreci, süpervizörden geribildirim almakla ilgili konular, psikolojik danışman ve danışan sayısı olmak üzere dört alt tema altında

ortaya konulmuştur. Süpervizörün özellikleri teması altında, süpervizörün öğretmen ve psikolojik danışman rolünün, destekleyici, cesaretlendirici ve deneyimli olmasının, kontrol ve otorite sağlamasının psikolojik danışmanlar tarafından önemli görüldüğü sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca, süpervizyon sürecinde etik konuların tartışılmasının etkili olduğu, mesleki doyumu arttırdığı, grup süpervizyonunda süpervizörden geri bildirim almanın ve akranlara geri bildirim vermenin önemi ortaya konmuştur. Bir diğer bulgu ise grup süpervizyonu için altı kişinin fazla olduğu görüşünün, psikolojik danışmanlar tarafından vurgulanmasıdır.

Bu çalışmanın ikinci araştırma sorusu, akran süpervizyonu deneyimine yöneliktir. Elde edilen bulgulara göre, akranların etkisi, mesleki gelişim ve akran süpervizyonuna ilişkin olumsuz görüşler olmak üzere üç alt tema oluşmuştur. Psikolojik danışmanlar, akranların birbirlerine destek vermesinin ve benzer yaşantılara sahip olduklarını fark etmelerinin, geri bildirim verme ve almanın ve ayrıca farklı cinsiyetteki psikolojik danışmanların görüşlerini dinlemenin bu süreçte kolaylaştırıcı olduğu görüşündedirler. Ayrıca öğrenme sürecine katkı sağlaması ve farklı vakaları dinleme ve çözüm bulma açısından mesleki gelişimi desteklediği yönünde görüşler ifade edilmiştir. Psikolojik danışmanlar, süpervizörün olmaması yüzünden yaşadıkları otorite ve yönlendirme eksikliğini akran süpervizyonun olumsuzluğu olarak belirtmiştir.

Üçüncü araştırma sorusu, süpervizyonun ve akran süpervizyonunun çevrimiçi ortamda yürütülmesine yönelik psikolojik danışmanların görüşlerinin neler olduğudur. Bu bağlamda çevrimiçi ortamın güçlü yönleri ve çevrimiçi ortamın güçlükleri şeklinde iki alt tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Zaman ve mekanın etkili kullanılması çevrimiçi ortamın güçlü yönünü oluştururken, teknolojiden kaynaklı engeller ve çevrimiçi ortamda dikkat dağıtıcı unsurların varlığı çevrimiçi ortamın güçlükleri olarak ortaya konmuştur.

*Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Öneriler:* Çalışmanın sonucunda psikolojik danışmanlar, süpervizyon sürecinde süpervizörün farklı rollerinin psikolojik danışmanların mesleki gelişimlerine katkı sağladığını, süpervizyonun grup ortamında yürütülmesinin hem zorluklarının hem de avantajlarının olduğunu, danışan ve psikolojik danışman sayısının süpervizyonun verimliliğini etkilediğini düşünmektedirler. Akran süpervizyonu ile ilgili olarak da, akranların birbirlerini etkiledikleri, mesleki gelişimlerini destekledikleri ve süpervizörün eksikliğini bu süreçte dikkatlerini çektiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Süpervizyon ve akran süpervizyonunun çevrimiçi ortamdan yürütülmesinin psikolojik danışmanlar için olumlu bir deneyim olarak görüldüğü ve bununla birlikte çevrimiçi psikolojik danışmada bazı engeller yaşadıkları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Bu çalışmanın sonucunda elde edilen bulgular düşünüldüğünde, çevrimiçi süpervizyon ve akran süpervizyonunun, gelişen teknolojiyle güncellenerek, psikolojik danışma ve rehberlik programlarında yer alması önerilebilir. Psikolojik danışmanlar ve süpervizörler, çevrimiçi ortamda yürütülen süpervizyon ya da akran süpervizyonunun sınırlı yönlerinin farkında olmalıdırlar. Psikolojik danışmanlar bu dezavantajlı durumları azaltmak veya hiç yaşamamak için hem teknolojik hem de stratejik bazı önlemler almalıdırlar. Bu önlemler, İnternetin yavaş olduğu veya

teknolojik araçlarda yaşanan problemlerin kurulan iletişimi sekteye uğrattığı durumlarda, psikolojik danışmanların bir yedek plana sahip olmaları şeklinde olabilir. Çevrimiçi yürütülen süpervizyon ve akran süpervizyonu gibi uygulamalarda geribildirimlerin yeterince açık ve anlaşılır olmaması sorunu doğabilmektedir. Buna karşılık oturumlarda geribildirimlerin açıklığının ve anlaşılabilirliğinin kontrol edilmesi önemlidir. Süpervizörler psikolojik danışmanların çevrimiçi oturumlara uygun olup olmadıklarını değerlendirebilir. Bu konu hem psikolojik danışmanın İnternet araçlarını kullanmadaki bilgisi ve yeterliliği, hem de psikolojik danışmanın çevrimiçi iletişimde kendisini ne kadar rahat hissettiği ve kendisini ne kadar açabildiği gibi birtakım değerlendirmelerin yapılmasını gerektirir. Bu çalışma, süpervizyon ve akran süpervizyonunun etkileri hakkında ipuçları verse de deneysel bir çalışma değildir. Gelecekte farklı özelliklere sahip psikolojik danışmanlarla derinlemesine görüşmelerin yapılması, farklı modellere ya da kuramsal yaklaşımlara dayalı süpervizyon süreçlerine yönelik yeni araştırmaların planlanması da önerilebilir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Grup süpervizyonu, akran süpervizyonu, online süpervizyon, online akran süpervizyonu.