SUPERVISEES' EXPERIENCE OF NON-DISCLOSURE IN PSYCHOTHERAPY SUPERVISION

Maša Žvelc[1]
orcid.org/0000-0002-9647-7000

Institute for Integrative psychotherapy and counselling, Ljubljana

Gregor Žvelc[2]
orcid.org/0000-0003-0429-9882

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Psychology
Institute for Integrative psychotherapy and counselling, Ljubljana

ABSTRACT

The present study examined the processes of supervisees' non-disclosure in the supervision of psychotherapy. The purpose of the study was to determine the frequency of non-disclosure by supervisees, the content of non-disclosure and the reasons for it. The study involved 50 supervisees (42 women and 8 men), with different professional developmental levels and belonging to various psychotherapeutic schools. Study participants completed the Questionnaire of Significant Aspects of Supervision after each of two consecutive supervision sessions. Half of the sessions were conducted in individual and half of the sessions in group settings. Altogether, 90 completed questionnaires were used in the study. Interviews were performed with ten of the supervisees. Data was coded according to principles of grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). Our findings revealed that non-disclosure was present in 21% of the sessions. Supervisees conceal dissatisfaction with supervisors and their work, content related to the supervision group, information related to psychotherapeutic work, personal topics and topics related to wider

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1   Maša Žvelc, Assistant professor, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, supervisor and trainer, e-mail: masa.zvelc@institut-ipsa.si
2   Gregor Žvelc, Professor of clinical psychology; Psychotherapist, supervisor and trainer

professional activity. The reasons for non-disclosure were: not feeling safe enough in the supervisory relationship or the supervision group, concern for the supervisor, shame and self-criticism. These findings are significant both for the practice and for further research of supervision.

INTRODUCTION

Non-disclosure in supervision can be defined as cases where the supervisee in supervision conceals and decides not to share information that could be relevant for the supervision process. Although supervisees are expected to provide information regarding their work and other relevant information openly, research suggests that this is not the case (Ladany et al.1996.; Yourman & Farber, 1996.; Yourman, 2003.; Hess et al., 2008.; Reichelt et al., 2009.; Mehr, Ladany & Caskie, 2010.). Most supervisees, at least occasionally, conceal or distort certain content in supervision (Ladany et al., 1996.; Yourman & Farber, 1996.; Hess et al., 2008; Reichelt et al., 2009.; Mehr et al., 2010.), and between 30% – 40% of supervisees conceal information ranging between occasionally to very often (Yourman & Farber, 1996.). In contrast, Walsh et al. (2002.) found different results regarding the frequency of non-disclosure. Participants in their research were instructed to think of a clinical mistake they had made and write down who they shared it with. The majority of participants (90%) reported sharing the mistake and disclosing it to the supervisor in their education programme.

Mehr and colleagues (Mehr et al., 2010.) asked supervisees about their experience of non-disclosure in their last supervision session. Participants were presented with six categories of non-disclosure along with examples. Authors found that 84% of supervisees refrained from sharing certain information in supervision.

A study by Ladany and his colleagues (1996.) on the topic of non-disclosure in supervision revealed that concerning the content of non-disclosure, supervisees most typically hide negative thoughts and feelings towards the supervisor. As many as 90% of supervisees mentioned at least one example of non-disclosure related to negative thoughts and feelings towards the supervisor. Other categories of non-disclosure that follow in diminishing frequency are personal issues, clinical mistakes, worrying about evaluation, general client perceptions, negative reaction to the client, counter-transference, attraction between the trainee and the client, positive reaction to the client, positive reaction towards the supervisor, the supervisor's appearance and attraction between the supervisee and the supervisor. The non-disclosure of personal matters is seen by Ladany and co-workers (1996.) as positive since trainees do not need to disclose everything in supervision and thus need to set priorities. On the other hand, it must be noted that it is also important to disclose personal matters

that could have an influence on the therapeutic process. In contrast, non-disclosure of clinical mistakes directly affects the welfare of the client, which makes this type of concealment one of the most problematic.

Similarly to Ladany (Ladany et al., 1996.), Mehr et al. (2010.) found that most non-disclosure relates to negative experiences in supervision, personal matters and negative perceptions of the supervisor. Most of the supervisees (83%) concealed their non-disclosure in a passive way, meaning that neither they nor the supervisor talked about the topic. Other modes of non-disclosure were redirection (when the supervisor asked them about a particular topic, the trainees redirected attention by talking about something else) and active non-disclosure (when the trainees explicitly told their supervisor they did not wish to talk about what they had been asked).

The reasons for non-disclosure were mostly related to a fear of the supervisor's reaction, to what the supervisor would think of them, how they would evaluate them, and fear of negative consequences (Ladany et al., 1996.; Mehr et al., 2010.). Other reasons stated by the trainees (Ladany et al., 1996.): they considered the information irrelevant, too personal or too embarrassing to be shared; they did not share the information due to a poor working alliance, because they tried to be respectful and please the supervisor, or because they saw no point in sharing it at the time.

Hess and colleagues (2008.) investigated non-disclosure by pre-doctoral students. The authors of the study interviewed 14 students and asked them to describe a specific case of non-disclosure which had a significant impact on them personally or which impacted on the supervision relationship. Participants were divided into two groups according to the quality of the supervision relationship. Hess and colleagues found that all of the participants from both groups masked certain information; non-disclosure in the group of students with a good supervision relationship (N = 8) was more often related to clinical work, and non-disclosure in the group of students with a problematic relationship (N = 6) was associated with general dissatisfaction with the supervision relationship. In both groups, the most typical reasons for non-disclosure were fear/concern about how sharing would impact on the evaluation and negative emotions (uncertainty, vulnerability, doubt and shame). The group of students with a problematic relationship also frequently stated the main reasons to be the dynamics of power, demographic and cultural factors and the supervisor's theoretical orientation.

Both groups reported non-disclosure to have had negative consequences on them and their work with clients, while the group with a problematic supervision relationship stated that non-disclosure also had a negative effect on the supervision relationship. When asked what would help them disclose, the group with a proble-

matic supervision relationship answered that there was, in fact, nothing that would help, while the group with a good relationship reported that it would be beneficial if the supervisor asked further questions about their experience, and disclosed their own experience of a similar situation, which would help normalise the supervisees' doubts and confusion.

Sweeney and Creaner (2014.) conducted a study similar to that of Hess (Hess et al., 2008). Sweeney and Creaner interviewed six graduates of psychological counselling two years after they had completed their training and asked them about their non-disclosure during training (questions were asked in retrospect). Similarly to Hess, the authors divided participants into two groups; those with a satisfactory and those with an unsatisfactory supervision relationship. One of the most important conclusions of the study was that the quality of the supervision relationship significantly influenced the supervisee's non-disclosure. In contrast to the conclusions of Hess (Hess et al., 2008.), Sweeney and Creaner (2014.) found that it was difficult to disclose any content in an unsatisfactory relationship.

Sweeney and Creaner (2014.) also asked supervisees what they think would have helped them or what had helped them to disclose. Supervisees reported the following: supervisor's actions to have had the potential to encourage or had actually encouraged disclosure: the supervisor introducing interpersonal processing into the supervision relationship, providing a safe space or processing personal issues related to clinical work, asking the supervisees about themselves and revealing their own experience. The supervisee's actions that would encourage disclosure were: the supervisee's openness, decreased egocentric attitudes, working on themselves, and increased awareness. Self-disclosure could also be encouraged by factors related to the context of the training, such as more support from the leaders of the training and the delivery of information on how the trainees should effectively use supervision.

Reichelt and colleagues (2009.) investigated non-disclosure in group supervision on a sample of 55 therapists, who were students of clinical psychology. The study confirmed the presence of non-disclosure in supervision; 74% of supervisees provided an example of their non-disclosure. A significant part of non-disclosure was linked to the supervision relationship. The reasons associated with their non-disclosure were: fear of hurting the supervisor's feelings, asymmetry in the relationship, and the fear of the supervisor responding to the disclosure with criticism. Trainees questioned the supervisors' professional skills and feared receiving criticism that would not be constructive. When trainees were asked if they felt that supervisors were hiding anything from them, and what it was that they were hiding, more than half of the trainees answered that they felt that the supervisor was concealing something (pri-

marily concerning professional and personal matters and their opinions concerning the processes within the group).

Regarding professional content, supervisees believed that the supervisors did not provide direct feedback on their therapeutic work, and did not offer suggestions for further work. Concerning personal matters, students believed that supervisors withheld thoughts and opinions about them and information about themselves. As far as the group was concerned, trainees considered that the supervisor refrained from commenting on the negative aspects of group functioning. Some participants further reported that supervisors performed poorly at leading the group. As the most important finding of the study, researchers (Reichelt et al., 2009.) highlighted the students' desire to receive sincere and realistic feedback on their therapeutic work, including any shortcomings, and the evaluation of their clinical work.

Yourman and Farber (1996.) consider that withholding and distorting information is the result of resistance in supervision, stemming from the trainees' sense of shame and self-doubt (Yourman, 2003.). Students of psychotherapy often face challenges that weaken their sense of competence and independence, which can cause or strengthen shame and insecurity or result in being more selective in sharing information with the supervisor (Yourman, 2003.). Therefore, supervisees who experience more shame are less likely to disclose, especially about the content to which they expect the supervisor will react negatively. Based on the analysis of case studies, Yourman (2003.) noted that shame and non-disclosure have the most significant impact on the quality of supervision, especially on the supervision relationship, and that any issues in the supervision relationship inhibit supervisee's honesty.

Unlike previous studies, Strømme (2014.) conducted a longitudinal investigation of non-disclosure in supervision and explored "whether the trainees' degree of disclosure of feelings toward their supervisors was influenced by the evoked relational scenarios in them" (Strømme, 2014.: 584). The investigation was carried out by monitoring two examples of a supervision process for two years and conducting four in-depth interviews. It became evident that the perception of supervision and the supervision relationship changed over time. Both supervisees experienced some negative feelings towards the supervisor; one of them never explicitly talked about their feelings, and the other trainee only discussed them partly. The author concludes that the disclosure of negative emotions is influenced by the activation of the supervisee's relational scenarios. Strømme (2014.) further notes that disclosing negative emotions towards the supervisor does not necessarily lead to a positive outcome. She suggests that talking about the supervisee's negative emotions towards the supervisor in the initial phases of supervision is an inappropriate intervention, as the negative emotions can overwhelm the supervisee. She advises the supervisors to pay attention to the supervisee's internal relational scenarios in order to detect

any negative feelings towards them. However, the author believes that in the initial stages of supervision it is not wise to address those emotions.

Supervisees disclosed their negative reactions towards the supervisor less frequently if the supervisory style in supervision was unattractive (unsupportive, dissuasive) and lacked interpersonal sensitivity (was non-reflexive, non-responsive) (Ladany et al., 1996.). Supervisees disclosed more often in cases where the counter-transference of the supervisee towards the client was discussed more frequently during supervision sessions (Yourman & Farber, 1996.). Research also shows that when supervisees perceive the working alliance to be strong, non-disclosure is less frequent (Mehr et al., 2010.), and there is a greater willingness to disclose, both in a single supervision session (Mehr et al., 2010.) and within supervision in general (Walsh et al., 2002.; Mehr, Ladany & Caskie 2015.). Bradley McKibben, Cook and Fickling (2018.) established that supervisees who perceived more feminist behaviour by their supervisor were less likely to report withholding information. Feminist behaviour, according to the authors, included collaborative relationships, power analysis, attending to diversity and social context, and feminist advocacy and activism.

There are contradictory findings regarding links between the supervisee's anxiety and disclosure. Mehr et al. (2010.) found that the higher the anxiety experienced by the supervisee, the higher the occurrence of their non-disclosures and the lower their overall willingness to disclose in the supervision session. On the other hand, in a later study by Mehr (2015.), the links between the anxiety of the supervisee and their willingness to disclose were not confirmed. Yourman and Farber (1996.) did not find a connection between the non-disclosure of therapeutic material and demographic variables such as gender, age, nationality and number of years of training; disclosure was also not linked to a match in the theoretical orientation between the supervisor and the supervisee.

Yourman and Farber (1996.) believe that the phenomena of non-disclosure/concealing and distorting information is an inherent part of supervision. Yourman (2003.) also argues that a certain measure of non-disclosure is a normal response to the supervision situation and that a supervisee who does not retain certain data may have weak boundaries or lack the necessary degree of self-defence. Further research could investigate the degree to which non-disclosure has a negative influence on the supervisees' development and their work as therapists (Yourman & Farber, 1996.).

The purpose of our research was to investigate events where supervisees choose to withhold and not share their experiences in the supervision session. Our research questions were:

1. What is the content of non-disclosure in psychotherapy supervision?
2. What are the reasons for non-disclosure?
3. What is the proportion of supervision sessions in which supervisees would report non-disclosure?
4. What is the potential impact of supervisory sessions with non-disclosure events on the psychotherapeutic sessions that followed?
5. Are there links between factors of non-disclosure and the professional experience of supervisees, the forms of supervision (individual/group supervision, stable/unstable framework), and the presence of hindering events in supervision?

The current study employed both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Unlike most of the previous studies that were mainly based on retrospective information, we wanted to obtain a cross-sectional view of developments in supervision sessions happening in the present. Through open questions in the questionnaire, we investigated what was important in the relevant supervision sessions. We were interested in the fresh, direct experience of supervisees recorded immediately after the supervision sessions. The interviews with participants, which we conducted after completing the questionnaires, then enabled a more in-depth understanding of the processes in supervision.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The survey participants comprised 50 supervisees, with 42 women and 8 men. They were aged between 24 and 59 (M = 41, SD = 9.8). Regarding their professional developmental level, there were 20 supervisees (40 %) at the beginning level, 19 supervisees (37 %) at the medium level, and 11 supervisees (22 %) at an advanced professional developmental level. We categorized these levels of professional development based on supervisees' duration of psychotherapy clinical practice and the number of completed supervision hours. Half of the sessions were conducted in individual and half of the sessions in group settings. The groups were closed, except in two cases. Supervision is a mandatory requirement of the training (for trainees). The supervisees were required to have supervision with the same supervisor, providing continuity. Supervisees belonged to various psychotherapeutic modalities (psychoanalytic therapy, transactional analysis, gestalt therapy, reality therapy, systemic therapy, couple and family therapy, and integrative psychotherapy).

Instruments

Demographic questions and questions about formal characteristics of supervision – The questionnaire includes questions related to the supervisee's age, gender, level of education, level of education within psychotherapy (trainee, certified psychotherapist), psychotherapeutic school, number of supervision hours, frequency of supervision, predictability and regularity of supervisory sessions (supervision framework) and characteristics of the place where supervision takes place.

Questionnaire of Significant Aspects of Supervision – a form for the supervisee (Elliot, 2008.; Elliot, 2012., Žvelc, 2008.)

The questionnaire consists of:

- **Helpful aspects of therapy form-HAT** (Elliot, 2008; Elliot, 2012). We adapted it for the purpose of exploration of the process of supervision in psychotherapy. The questions in the questionnaire are open-ended.

In the questionnaire, supervisees are asked about:

- an event that occurred in supervision that they found to be the most significant, good, and encouraging for professional learning, work and development, and why it was important;
- an event that hindered or limited their professional growth, work and development.

A 10-point scale was used for the supervisees to assess the extent to which they found the event to be encouraging, and a four-point scale to assess to what extent the event was limiting.

- **Additional questions** relating to the non-disclosure process. The questions were as follows:

There are times in supervision when we do not share all information concerning the client, or concerning ourselves, the therapeutic relationship, the supervision itself etc. Was there anything in this session that you preferred to keep to yourself (you have not shared with the supervisor or with the group)? YES, NO

a. If so, please write down what it was you kept to yourself?

b. What were the reasons you decided to keep the information to yourself?

c. How did you feel about it?

In line with the study model proposed by Worthington and Roehlke (1979.), the supervisees evaluated their satisfaction with the session on a 7-point scale and their own perceived competence on a 5-point scale.

Semi-structured interview about the experience of non-disclosure in supervision

We developed a semi-structured interview for the purposes of the research. Questions in the first part of the interview referred to a particular supervision session for which the participants had completed the Questionnaire of Significant Aspects of Supervision, while the second part referred to the entire period of supervision up until then.

The interview included the following initial questions:

- the experience and the meaning of an event in the supervision session that the supervisee experienced as a positive one,
- the experience and the meaning of an event in the supervision session the supervisee experienced as a negative one,
- the experience and the meaning of an event of non-disclosure in the supervision session,
- the experience of psychotherapy sessions that immediately followed the supervision session in which the significant event occurred,
- the most significant facilitative factors in supervision ever experienced by the supervisee (with any supervisor),
- hindering events ever experienced in supervision (with any supervisor),
- events of non-disclosure ever experienced in supervision (with any supervisor).

Procedure

The present study is part of the first author's doctoral research (Žvelc, 2017.) which was approved on 3rd December 2013 by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana. The first author contacted a number of supervisors, working in Slovenia, from various psychotherapeutic modalities and explained to them the research protocol. She asked the supervisors to send the Questionnaire of Significant Aspects of Supervision to up to six of their supervisees. She limited the number of supervisees per supervisor because she wanted to include supervisees from different supervisors, thereby increasing the diversity of experience in various supervision practices.

Following a supervision session, each nominated supervisee completed the Questionnaire of Significant Aspects of Supervision, as well as a demographic questionnaire. Participants completed the Questionnaire of Significant Aspects of Supervision twice, after two consecutive supervision sessions. The participants then sent their completed questionnaires in a sealed envelope to the author's address. The first

author received 90 completed questionnaires (out of 100). The returning rate was 90%. She analysed the questionnaires regularly and started conducting interviews. She conducted ten interviews. She selected and interviewed those participants whose answers to the questionnaire stood out (among the questionnaires she had received until then) in terms of their positive or negative experience in supervision, using the following criteria: the participants who experienced a very positive and stimulating event, a significantly hindering event or reported concealing information at a supervision session. Most of the interviews were conducted within one month after the session (the session with the occurrence of the significant event reported in the questionnaire). Performing the interviews, the first author was keen to establish a good research alliance and a supportive relationship between the researcher and the interviewee. She found an alliance to be necessary due to the sensitive issue of non-disclosure in supervision. At the end of the interview, she asked the participants to contact the researcher if they wanted to report anything else. She received additional updated reports from three participants.

The participants agreed to have the interviews recorded. The interviews lasted from 22 to 62 minutes, with an average length of 45 minutes. Questionnaires were collected and interviews conducted from January 2014 to February 2016. The interviews were analysed regularly and completed when data reached a relative saturation point (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Interviews and answers to The Questionnaire of Significant Aspects of Supervision were transcribed into electronic form. The transcription of interviews was carried out by a psychologist who is experienced in transcribing data. In order to protect data, all names were replaced with I (for interviewee) and R (for the researcher), all data that would enable the interviewee to be identified was deleted (e.g. information about where they are employed, etc.) or changed (e.g. name). Answers were transcribed in conversational language.

Qualitative analysis, based on the grounded theory research method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015.) was made. We analysed qualitative responses from 90 Questionnaires of Significant Aspects of Supervision and ten interviews. In the analysis we classified and interpreted verbal material (Flick, 2014.). We followed the coding process proposed by Corbin and Strauss (2015) and used the research procedures described by Charmaz (2006.), Glaser and Strauss (1967.), Flick (2014.), Kordeš (2014.), Mesec (2014.a, b) and Rennie, Phillips and Quartaro (1988.). The first author first read all the answers and wrote down her impressions. Data was then openly coded (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Coding was performed using the ATLAS.ti computer programme (Friese,2014.). Following the procedure proposed by Rennie and his colleagues (1988.), she divided data into meaningful units, explored, searched for meaning, and attributed codes to data. She performed the analysis openly and sensibly, following

the principles of "brainstorming", in order to discover different levels of meaning in the data. She defined categories so as to be able to identify which category data belonged to (Hurlburt, 2014.). In the analysis, she also paid attention to apologetic (explicit) and operational (implicit) theories of action (Mesec, 2014a, b). Participants often defend their actions and their self-esteem so that the answers may be more or less socially desirable and apologetic (Elliot, 2010.; Mesec, 2014. a,b). Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the context of the entire transcript (not just individual segments) in the analysis, and not necessarily take each statement verbatim, but try to discover potentially hidden meaning (Finlay and Evans, 2009.; Kordeš, 2014.). Open coding of data was followed by an elaborate analysis of data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015.). At this stage, the second author joined the analyses. In analysing the data, we were guided by basic analytical tools (Glaser & Strauss, 1967.; Corbin & Strauss, 2015.); i.e. asking questions and constant comparison. The authors discussed the interrelations between the codes and the process of combining and merging the codes in a creative dialectical manner. Some codes were deleted, some merged, and we discussed and agreed about the relationships between codes, as well as superordinate concepts. This was followed by the construction of a theory, which represented the search for relations between categories, the final integration in the light of the context and the process, as well as elaboration of the explanatory framework for the phenomenon we investigated. Another crucial aspect during the analysis and construction of theory was the writing of "memos", done by the first author. The thoughts captured in memos helped classify data, and even more importantly, formed the basis for the development of theoretical ideas.

Quantitative methods (descriptive statistics and statistical inference) were used to process demographic data and data from questions that provided numerical data. The correlations were calculated by the Pearson correlation coefficient with the help of the IBM SPSS Statistics computer programme.

RESULTS

Out of the 90 reports covering a total of 90 sessions, supervisees withheld information in 19 sessions, which represents 21% or just over a fifth of the supervision sessions. Additionally, all of the supervisees who were subsequently interviewed also reported having at some time withheld some information in the course of their supervision.

The results in Table 1 show that there are statistically significant correlations between non-disclosure and the age of the supervisees, their appraisal of the importance of the positive event, and the reporting of an event that hindered the process

of supervision. Older supervisees reported less non-disclosing during the session. The supervisees who reported non-disclosure during a session ascribed lower significance to the identified positive event, and reported the occurrence of a hindering event in the selected supervision session more often.

It can also be seen from Table 1 that there are no statistically significant correlations between the supervisee's report of withholding information during the session, and the professional developmental level of supervisees, the stability of the supervision framework, the satisfaction with the session and the assessment of their competence.

Table 1. Correlations between the presence of non-disclosure in the session and the selected variables for each selected session

Selected variables	First selected session	Second selected session
Age	-.41***	-.45***
Level of development	-.25	-.26
Supervision framework	.10	.24
Satisfaction with the supervision session	-.21	-.25
Importance of the event	-.29*	-.24
Reported hindering event	.47***	.33*
Competence	-.08	-.21

Note. Pearson correlation coefficients calculated from individual pairs of variables, correspond to the nature and measurement level of the variables in pairs. N= 90; * p< 0,05; *** p < 0,001

Table 2 presents descriptions of categories and subcategories of supervisees' non-disclosure and related examples. After every quote there is a pair of ID numbers (for example 59:10). The first number indicates the number of the transcript, and the second one the number of the quote (e.g. 9:22 means questionnaire number 9, and 22 is the 22nd quote in that questionnaire). The letter" I" before the ID number refers to the interview. We have used this system of ID numbers throughout after every citation.

Table 2. Content categories of non-disclosure, their definition and related examples

Category or subcategory	Definition	Example
Dissatisfaction with the supervisor and their work	Hiding dissatisfaction and disagreement that the supervisee experiences in relation to the supervisor and their work.	
The supervisor's behaviour at the supervision session	Supervisees do not share their dissatisfaction with the supervisor, their work or their »philosophy and method« of psychotherapy.	*"I would like more clarity in the way the supervisor expresses himself. I would like to see him express his opinion / explain it /share his view or opinion. I felt as if he was not really 'cutting to the chase'."*(59:10)
Long-term dissatisfaction with the supervisor's attitude towards the supervisee, supervisee's clients, the supervisor's style of supervision or the way the supervisor views therapy.	Concealing long-term dissatisfaction with the supervisor's attitude towards the supervisee, supervisee's clients, the supervisor's style of supervision or the way the supervisor views therapy.	*"I did not share my disagreement with her way of doing things and her pessimistic view of the clients."* (13:13) *"... It is hard for me to express criticism. What I am unhappy with. Or what I need*." (I 9:22)
Content related to the supervision group	This category relates to the supervisee withholding thoughts, ideas and emotions about the group.	
Unpleasant emotions in the group: *- The feeling of shame, inferiority, being criticised - Perceived competitiveness*	This subcategory relates to the supervisees withholding the information that they have felt some unpleasant emotions in the group, felt criticised and felt ashamed or inferior. This subcategory also includes the supervisee not sharing that they have perceived some competitiveness in the group.	*"That, at the beginning of supervision, I also felt uncomfortable and criticised by the supervisor and the group."* (127:7) *"Sometimes I feel like there is a game going on (perhaps a little jealousy/peer rivalry) between the trainees. [...] When I perceive that [...], I block it."* (162:10)

Category or subcategory	Definition	Example
Supervisees not sharing their ideas	This subcategory contains answers that refer to times when the supervisees in the group do not share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions.	*"Sometimes I get an idea of how my colleague or colleagues could act in a certain situation, but I do not express it, because I do not know if that would make sense to others ..."* (I 6:51)
Information related to the supervisee's therapy work	This category relates to the supervisee withholding information related to their own therapy work	
Withholding information regarding the supervisee's own actions in psychotherapy	This subcategory relates to withholding information about specific interventions or actions relating to the supervisee's way of leading the psychotherapy session.	*"That the client does not come to my office, but that we go for long walks instead and have our session during the walk.* "(44: 8) *"THAT's harder to point out. When I am not sure [if I have acted right]."* (I3:15)
Withholding thoughts and feelings towards the client	This subcategory relates to withholding thoughts and feelings towards the client or towards the therapy with the client.	*"[did not share] feelings of attraction that I occasionally feel towards the client."* (27:3) *"The fact that I don't see the point in continuing therapy.* « (I 8:13) » *that I feel empty [...], exhausted."* (I 8:6)
Private information	Supervisees withhold private information and topics such as their personal traits, problems they might have in their private life, their life circumstances etc.	*"That I find it hard to grieve myself and avoid it."* (16:12) *"Those topics that feel very private, I don't know, like my family and relationship with my partner"* (I 5:18)
Information related to a broader professional environment	This category relates to information relating to other supervisors or work relations and details about what is happening at work, in associations etc.	*"Details about relations at work (with my colleagues)"* (125:7)

Category or subcategory	Definition	Example
The wish to end supervision	This category relates to the supervisee not telling the supervisor that she would like to terminate the process of supervision.	*"[did not mention] the topic of ending the process of supervision."* (5:12)

Table 3 presents the reasons for supervisees' non-disclosure in supervision and examples of supervisee's responses to the topic.

Table 3. Categories of reasons for non-disclosure, their definition and related examples

Category	Definition of the category	Example
Not feeling secure enough in the supervision relationship or supervision group	The supervisee does not feel safe in relation to the supervisor or the supervision group; expects negative reactions from the supervisor or members of the supervision group; e.g. he or she fears a critical response if he shares a certain topic.	*"Perhaps because of the feeling of not (yet) feeling safe enough in the relationship with the supervisor."* (58:13) *"In the past, I noticed that she did not respond favourably to my opinion, which was friendly and respectful, and then followed me more closely when working with clients and trusted me less."* (13:15) *"For the fear of being misunderstood –being criticised and "abandoned" and not getting support."* (127: 8)
Concern about the supervisor, trying to please the supervisor	The supervisee is afraid that he or she might hurt the supervisor by disclosing information.	*»Because I realise that the end of the process would mean the supervisor loses a part of her income – although she never spoke about it. Just my own bad feeling about it."* (5:13)
Too personal	The supervisee finds the topic too personal to discuss it in supervision.	*"It was not suitable for supervision, because it is a very personal matter – so I decided not to share it."* (16:13)

Category	Definition of the category	Example
Shame, the supervisee's own criticism	The supervisee is ashamed of the issue they do not wish to talk about or criticise themselves about it.	*"Because of shame about those feelings."* (27:8)
The tendency to avoid, deny	It is hard for the supervisee to admit certain issues or deal with a certain topic and instead chooses to withhold information or avoid it because it is less stressful for them.	*"Perhaps the reason is also that I do not pay much attention to it, I sometimes put my head in the sand and do not want to admit it, maybe I naively think that if I do not deal with it, it will go away or it does not matter."* (27: 7) *"Because I find it easier and less stressful for me."* (14: 8)
Ethics, confidentiality	The supervisee does not share information because the supervisor knows the person that the information is related to.	*"Because another supervisor is in charge of group supervision and I will talk about it with him."* (15:14)
Not the right time	The supervisee believes it is not the appropriate time to disclose, that there was not enough time to disclose or that it is not yet the right time to talk about it.	*"... it is also true that I did not express this because other problems were more important."* (163: 10) *"... I was not yet ready to share."* (3:16)

The influence of the supervision sessions on the subsequent therapeutic sessions was determined by analysing ten interviews with the supervisees. We asked them about their experience of psychotherapeutic sessions that took place after the supervision session in which they withheld information. In five cases where trainees did not report about non-disclosure in supervision sessions, we found a positive influence of supervision on the supervisee's next therapeutic session. Out of the five cases in which supervisees reported non-disclosure, in one case the assessed impact of the supervision session was mixed, positive and negative, in one case a supervision session had a positive impact, and in three cases we were unable to reach a conclusion about what kind of impact the supervision had on the therapy (insufficient data, or supervisee having another supervisor whom he or she trusts).

DISCUSSION

Non-disclosure in supervision can be defined as cases in which the supervisee conceals or withholds information that might be relevant for the supervision process. Our participating supervisees reported non-disclosure in one-fifth of the sessions covered. The finding that supervisees conceal information in supervision is in line with the findings of other authors whose results also reveal that supervisees conceal or distort certain content in supervision to a varying degree (Ladany et al., 1996.; Yourman & Farber, 1996.; Hess et al., 2008.; Reichelt et al., 2009.; Mehr et al., 2010.). Most studies ask participants about their non-disclosure over a longer period of time in the past, and most participants then identify the content that they have hidden at least once (Ladany et al., 1996.; Yourman and Farber, 1996.; Ladany & Melincoff, 1999.; Hess et al., 2008.;Reichelt et al., 2009.). Mehr and colleagues (Mehr et al., 2010.) asked supervisees about their experience of non-disclosure in their last supervision session and found that 84% of supervisees withheld information. This reported percentage is much higher than the percentage found in our study (21%). One of the possible conclusions is that our supervisees concealed or reported withholding information less frequently. The difference in the percentage can partly also be attributed to a difference in methodology. In contrast to our research plan that included asking the supervisees without giving them direction about what categories of information they withheld, Mehr and colleagues (2010.) offered participants six categories of non-disclosure and also provided examples. By doing so, Mehr and colleagues (2010.) narrowed the participant's focus onto specific content, enabling participants to quickly recall specific cases of non-disclosure. Providing categories perhaps helped participants feel less "guilty" about the content of non-disclosure, as the researcher had already foreseen it. Another explanation is that because of the open-ended questions our participants might have only provided answers regarding non-disclosing events which they thought were meaningful to the supervision sessions and not simply any non-disclosing event. It is also possible that the difference in findings of Mehr and colleagues (2010.) is partly due to the differences in the context in which supervision was taking place, which may reflect different cultures in the institutional training of therapists in Slovenia and the USA. In Mehr's sample (Mehr et al., 2010.), the participants were recruited from university degree-level training programmes, and the majority of participants were being evaluated in supervision. Supervision in the context of our research (within various psychotherapy training institutes which are not linked with universities), does not have such strong formal evaluative component. It might be that our participants were less afraid that they would fail their training if they revealed more sensitive topics (such as therapeutic mistakes and misconduct, negative feelings toward supervisors etc.). Congruent with

this hypothesis is also our finding that, in contrast to Ladany and colleagues (1996.), we did not find non-disclosure regarding concerns about evaluation in our sample. Connected to the difference in the organisational context of psychotherapy training, there is also a big difference in the age of the supervisees between our sample (M= 41 years) and Mehr's (Mehr et al., 2010.) (M= 29 years). Our participants were much older than the participants in the Mehr study. In our research we found that non-disclosure decreases by age (Table 1), which may also be the reason for the lower percentage of non-disclosure events in our sample.

The results of our research show that older supervisees reported non-disclosure during sessions less frequently, while Yourman and Farber (1996.) did not find any links between non-disclosure and age. Supervisees who report non-disclosure see the identified positive event in the session as less important and report a hindering event in a session more often. Thus, it can be seen that there is a correlation between a perceived lower significance of positive supervision events, the occurrence of hindering events in supervision, and non-disclosure in supervision. What might lie in the background of all these is a rupture in the supervisory working alliance.

In our research, we found the following categories of non-disclosure: dissatisfaction with the supervisors and their work, topics related to the supervision group, information related to their psychotherapeutic work, topics they found to be too personal and information related to their broader professional activity. These categories can be compared to the findings of other studies (Ladany et al., 1996.; Reichelt et al., 2009.; Mehr et al., 2010.). Comparing our results to the results reported by Ladany and colleagues (1996.), our findings differ in that our supervisees did not report withholding information due to concerns about evaluation, positive reactions to the supervisor or being attracted to the supervisor, or the idea that the supervisor is attracted to the supervisee. With regard to the difference in reporting the concerns regarding evaluation we have hypothesised above, the factors of a culturally different training context and the difference in the age of the participants may be the significant reasons. With regard to the difference in the non-disclosure of attraction in supervision dyads, we wonder if there are some cultural differences, but we do not have any solid basis for the interpretation of that data. More research is needed in this respect.

Supervisees give a variety of reasons for non-disclosure including: not feeling safe in the supervisory relationship or the supervision group and expecting negative consequences from the supervisor or members of the group; concern for and trying to please the supervisor; the information was too personal; shame; confidentiality of data, etc. Similar reasons are also mentioned by other researchers (Ladany et al., 1996.; Hess et al., 2008.; Reichelt et al., 2009.; Mehr et al., 2010.). The difference

lies in that the participants of the research by Hess (Hess et al., 2008) also cited demographic and cultural factors as the reason for non-disclosure, while this was not reported by any of the participants in our study. We think that the reason for this is that the Slovenian sample is more homogeneous in terms of demographic and cultural factors (for instance: all white, middle class etc.), both among the supervisees and between the supervisees and supervisors.

From the analysis of our data, it can be observed that the supervisees more easily disclose a sensitive topic if they feel safe with the supervisor and perceive the supervisor as open and accepting. Other authors also found correlations between disclosure, the supervisor's style of supervision (Ladany et al., 1996; Walsh et al., 2002) and supervisory relationship (Mehr et al., 2010.). The more supportive, sensitive and responsive the supervisor is, and the more the supervisee feels secure in the supervisory relationship, the higher the probability that the supervisee will disclose information. Although a slightly different finding is reported by Hess (Hess et al., 2008), who found that supervisees with a good relationship also withhold information, the type of information differs. Supervisees with good supervisory relationships withhold information related to clinical work, while supervisees with a problematic supervisory relationship lie or conceal information regarding the supervisory relationship. This latter finding is not in line with our research; our results suggest that the supervisees with a problematic relationship hide both types of information. Our research is however consistent in suggesting that the supervisees with a better supervisory alliance are more likely to talk about difficulties in the supervisory relationship.

An important question is how the non-disclosure affects the quality of the supervisee's therapeutic work. Several studies have looked at non-disclosure; however, despite suggestions that the influence of non-disclosure on supervisees' development and treatment of clients in psychotherapy should be investigated (Yourman & Farber, 1996.), we were unable to find any studies that would provide an empirical answer to this. In our research, we analysed the impact of the supervision sessions on subsequent therapeutic sessions by analysing ten interviews with the supervisees. In the interviews, we asked the supervisees about the influence of supervision on subsequent psychotherapy sessions and we were able to determine a positive influence of supervision on the subsequent therapy session in all five cases in which there was no report of withholding information from the supervisor. Out of the five cases in which supervisees reported non-disclosure, in one case the assessed impact of the supervision session was mixed, positive and negative, in one case the supervision session had a positive impact, and in three cases we were unable to reach a conclusion as to what kind of impact the supervision had on the therapy (insufficient data, or supervisee having another supervisor whom she trusts). It seems that the

impact of non-disclosure is related to the type of non-disclosure (the content and the reason for it), and the context of supervision (e.g. having more supervisors).

Our data indicates that non-disclosure in supervision might be negatively related to the quality of psychotherapeutic work. For example, one supervisee withheld from her supervisor that the supervisor's comment hurt her and that she disagreed with his guidelines. Non-disclosure had a mostly adverse effect on the supervisee's next therapy session where, despite disagreeing with her supervisor, she applied the method that was proposed by him. The supervisee forced herself to perform the interventions as if she was not herself, she felt as if she was losing her professional identity and the client actually cancelled the next therapy session.

However, the relationship between non-disclosure and its impact on subsequent psychotherapy sessions is not clear-cut. It is possible that even if the supervisees do not disclose certain information, they can effectively lead the next therapy session. For example, when in one case the supervisor talked to his supervisee about the importance of mourning for the family he counselled, the supervisee became aware that he also found it difficult to grieve, but he did not share this with the supervisor. This awareness helped him to address the topic of mourning in the next therapy session (whereas previously he had been avoiding the topic of mourning with the family). The fact that this supervisee did not disclose his emerging awareness of his own difficulties with grieving did not hinder the next therapeutic hour with the family. The reason for non-disclosure that might be illustrated by this example is that the changes (insights, etc.) elicited by supervision may sometimes take time to »sink in«.

Therefore it becomes relevant to ask, does each non-disclosure in supervision necessarily have a negative impact on psychotherapy? We believe that non-disclosure of certain information of a rather personal nature, information that is not too burdensome for the supervisee or the supervisory relationship, does not necessarily interfere with the quality of the supervision process and therapeutic work. Ladany and colleagues (1996.) hold a similar opinion and see personal issues as a healthy type of non-disclosure since supervisees do not need to share everything in supervision and need to choose priorities. Yourman (2003.) also argues that a certain measure of non-disclosure is a normal response to the supervision situation and that a supervisee who does not keep back certain data may have weak boundaries or lack the necessary degree of self-protection. On the other hand, Ladany and colleagues (1996.) stress that it is necessary for supervisees to share personal information which influences the therapeutic process and to disclose clinical mistakes. Similarly, we also believe that it can be critical if supervisees withhold information that could influence the supervisory alliance, as well as content associated with a strong supervisee's coun-

ter-transference, mistakes in psychotherapy and behaviour of the supervisee that deviates from the psychotherapeutic agreement and framework, which also relates to the issues of ethical practice.

Study limitations and suggestions for further research

One of the limitations of our research was that we only included the experience of supervisees in our collection of data, but not that of supervisors. This limitation is indeed characteristic of most studies of non-disclosure (Ladany et al., 1996.; Yourman & Farber, 1996.; Walsh et al., 2002.; Hess et al., 2008.; Reichelt et al., 2009.; Mehr et al., 2010.; Sweeney & Creaner, 2014.). Only a handful of studies include supervisors and even the ones that do (Yourman, 2003.; Nielsen et al., 2009.), do not investigate the dynamics within the dyad supervisor – supervisee. Our study into non-disclosure relies on the memory of the participants and memory is selective. In future studies, we propose the research of both sides of the supervisory pair, which is in line with the findings of other researchers (Gray et al., 2001.; McCarthy, 2001.; Beinart, 2012.). In accordance with the findings of Ladany and colleagues (1996.), we believe that non-disclosure should be investigated from session to session and the same holds for the supervisor's disclosure.

The other limitation of our research is that we do not know how long after the session the supervisees completed the questionnaire. We asked them to complete the questionnaire after the session or at least within 24 hours before sending the questionnaires to the researchers by post. We could improve our research by asking the supervisees to send their completed questionnaires after the session by e-mail or other electronic devices, which could control the time. That is important regarding our intention to have fresh information after the session and not a retrospective one.

CONCLUSION

The results of our study confirm the presence of processes within the course of supervision that are hidden from the eyes of the supervisor. We believe that it is important for the supervisor to be aware of the fact that supervisees deliberately avoid certain topics. The most common information supervisees withhold is their dissatisfaction with the supervisor or supervisory group and the content related to therapeutic work with clients. Covert topics can have a negative impact on the supervision and therapeutic process. We propose that supervisors can lower the rate of non-disclosure by establishing and maintaining a good working alliance, which is a relationship characterised by safety, agreeing on goals and methods of supervision

and therapy. Secondly, it is important that supervisors initiate communication about the supervisory relationship or about relationships in the supervision group if the supervisee participates in group supervision. Thirdly, we think that non-disclosure could also be prevented by paying more attention to the supervisee's personal (counter-transference) responses to the client in psychotherapy.

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Maša Žvelc

Institut za integrativnu psihoterapiju i savjetovanje, Ljubljana

Gregor Žvelc

Sveučilište u Ljubljani, Filozofski fakultet, Odsjek za psihologiju
Institut za integrativnu psihoterapiju i savjetovanje, Ljubljana

ISKUSTVO SUPERVIZANATA O NEOTKRIVANJU PODATAKA U SUPERVIZIJI PSIHOTERAPIJE

SAŽETAK

U prikazanom istraživanju analizirali su se procesi neotkrivanja podataka od strane supervizanata u superviziji psihoterapije. Cilj istraživanja bio je odrediti učestalost neotkrivanja podataka od strane supervizanata, sadržaj neotkrivenih podataka i razloge za neotkrivanje. U istraživanju je sudjelovalo 50 supervizanata (42 žene i 8 muškaraca) različitih razina profesionalnog razvoja koji pripadaju različitim školama psihoterapije. Sudionici istraživanja ispunili su Upitnik o značajnim aspektima supervizije nakon svaka od dva uzastopna supervizijska susreta. Pola susreta održavalo se kao individualni a pola kao grupni suprevizijski susreti. U istraživanju je ukupno korišteno 90 ispunjenih upitnika. Nakon toga, proveedeni su intervjui s deset supervizanata. Podaci su kodirani u skladu s načelima utemeljene teorije (Corbin i Strauss, 2015). Naši su rezultati pokazali da je neotkrivanje bilo prisutno u 21% supervizijskih susreta. Supervizanti prikrivaju nezadovoljstvo sa supervizorima i njihovim radom, sadržaj povezan sa supervizijskom grupom, informacije povezane s psihoterapijskim radom, osobne teme i teme povezane sa širom profesionalnom aktivnošću. Razlozi za neotkrivanje podataka bili su: nedovoljan osjećaj sigurnosti u supervizijskom odnosu ili supervizijskoj grupi, briga za supervizora, stid i samokritika. Ovi su rezultati značajni i za praksu i za buduće istraživanje supervizije.

Ključne riječi: supervizija; neotkrivanje podataka; supervizanti; supervizijska zajednica; kvalitativno istraživanje