

**Group Supervision Evaluation
Data Analysis Report
for the
Institute of Guidance Counsellors**

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Introduction

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC), through its regional branches, provides for country wide Group Counselling Supervision under the Programme of Professional Support for School Guidance Counsellors. This initiative, which is administered by the IGC and funded by Department of Education and Science, provides for five group supervision sessions per school year.

This report summarises the analysis conducted on the data returned from the Group Supervision Evaluation Questionnaire Form. Participants from the supervision groups were asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of each session. Guidance Counsellors returned their experiences of Group Counselling Supervision sessions, which occurred during the school year 2007-2008. In order to maintain confidentiality and foster openness, the forms are collected by the group supervisor in sealed envelopes and returned to the Monaghan Education Centre.

Method

From the evaluation forms received from the various centres at the different time points throughout the year, 598 were randomly selected for analysis as part of this evaluation process.¹ The data was entered into SPSS and quantitative analysis was carried out in order to ascertain the frequencies of scores for each question.

The qualitative data was analysed with a Descriptive and Interpretive Approach proposed by Elliott and Timulak (2005).

The following steps were taken in order to analyse the data recorded:

1. Data set was read in order to get a 'whole picture' – during this 'pre-analysis', any insights or understandings were recorded in memo form.
2. Data was divided into meaning units (answers to questions). These units provided a framework for the analysis. In order to maintain data integrity, they were coded which allowed them to be traceable to the original questionnaires for auditing purposes.
3. Meaning units were organised into domains in order to capture the emerging phenomenon found in the data.
4. The meaning units were categorised within each domain to discern regularities or similarities in the data. The meaning units were constantly compared to each other and the emerging categories until all the data had been sorted.
5. The categories were then extracted with regularities and similarities reviewed until a hierarchy of categories was established.

Note: A small number of comments received (less than 1%) did not fit into any category nor did they contribute to the understanding of the data and so are not included in the report.

Please also note, with reference to the next section, that question numbers correspond to the question numbers on the Questionnaire. The remaining questions from the Questionnaire are discussed under the Qualitative Section.

¹ Initially 500 evaluation forms were to be used, however, a clerical error occurred and a percentage of forms used contained 9 rather than 11 questions. A further selection of these shortened questionnaires were then added to the evaluation process.

Results

Participants were Guidance Counsellors from 2nd level educational establishments based throughout the Republic of Ireland. Five hundred and ninety eight (598) evaluations of sessions from throughout the school year 2007-2008 were included. Of those, 503 questionnaires indicated the gender of the participant with 411 female and 92 male participants.

Q1. Helpfulness of Sessions:

Participant's were asked to rate how they found the session from 1 (not helpful) to 5 (very helpful).

Table 1

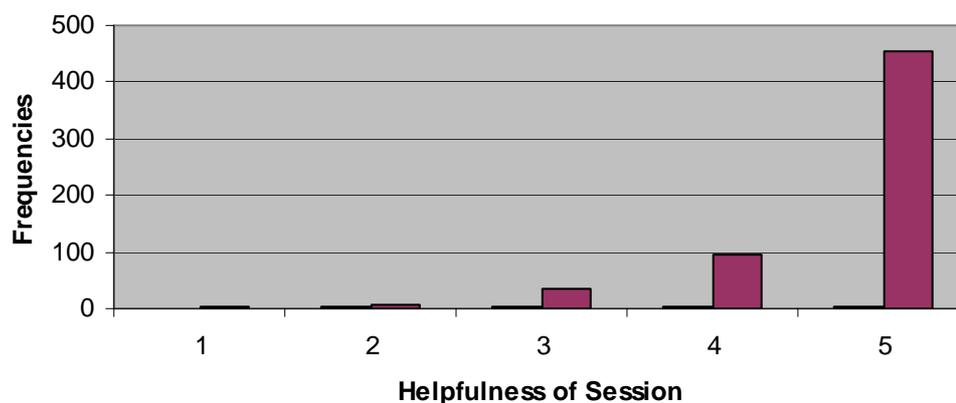


Table 1 shows the ratings that each participant gave regarding the helpfulness of the sessions. Five hundred and ninety three (593) replies were received of which 548 (92.4%) participants rated the sessions between 4 and 5 in terms of helpfulness. Mean = 4.67, Standard Deviation = .7.

Q2a. Issue for discussion in this session.

Participants were asked whether they had brought an issue for discussion to the supervision group.

Table 2

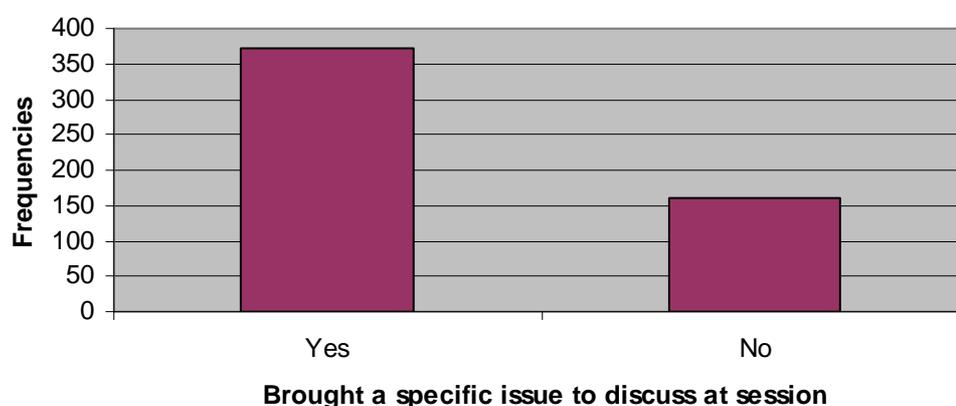


Table 2 shows the frequency of participant's bringing a particular issue for discussion at the supervision group. Five hundred and thirty two (532) replies were received and 372 (69.9%) specific issues were brought to supervision sessions.

Q2b. How did you feel issue was dealt with?

Participant's were asked to rate how well they felt that issues brought were dealt with from 1 (very poorly) to 5 (excellently).

Table 3

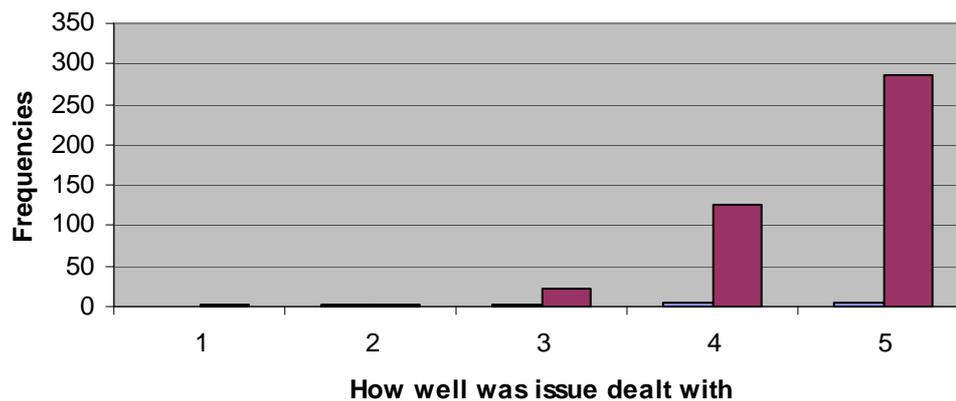


Table 3 shows the rating that participant's gave in relation to how well they considered the issue brought was dealt with in supervision. Four hundred and thirty nine (439) replies were received of which 412 (93.8%) participants rated their satisfaction at between 4 and 5. Mean = 4.58, Standard Deviation = .66.

Q3a. Was there sufficient time to discuss everyone's issue?

Participants were asked to rate from 1 (no time) to 5 (plenty of time) regarding the sufficiency of time allocated in order for each person to discuss the issue they brought. If participants answered 'No' they were asked to provide a reason, a) Time too short, b) Too long spent on one particular issue and c) Other.

Table 4

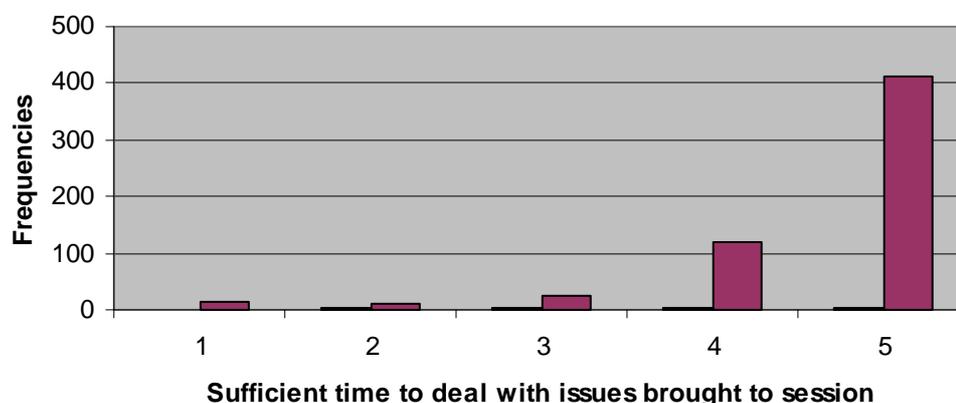


Table 4 shows the ratings that participant's gave in terms of sufficiency of time to deal with issues presented in the supervision group. Five hundred and seventy nine (579) replies were received of which 529 (91.4%) participants rated the amount of time allotted at either 4 or 5. Mean = 4.56, Standard Deviation = .85.

Q3b. If insufficient time, what was the reason?

Table 4A

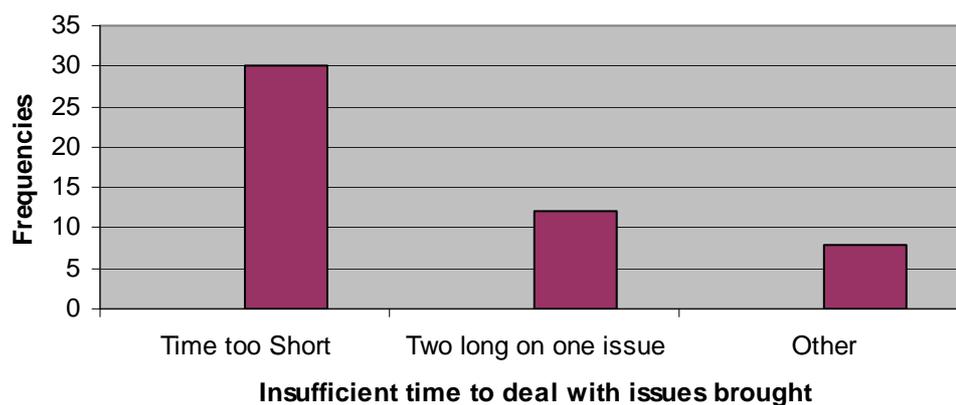


Table 4A illustrates the reasons provided by the participants regarding insufficient time to discuss all the issues brought to supervision. Fifty (50) replies were received of which 30 (60%) considered that the time allotted for group supervision was too short; 12 (24%) people considered that too much time was spent on one issue and 8 (16%) participants cited other reasons for insufficient time. These included practical issues such as room set up and the size of the group was considered too large for all issues to be addressed in the time available.

Q6. Learning from other members of the supervision group.

Participant's were asked to state if they had learnt anything new from issues brought up by other members of the group which they may use in the future?

Table 5

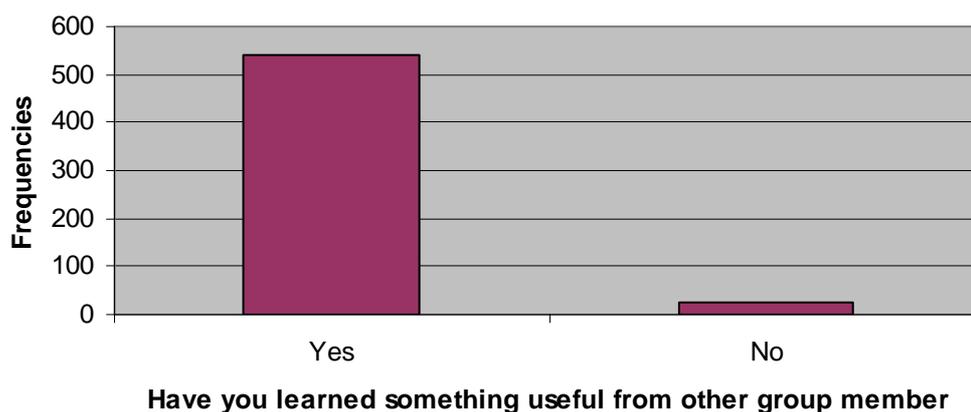


Table 5 shows the frequency with which participants felt that they learned something new that would be useful to them in the future from issues brought by other group members to supervision session. Of the 563 responses to this question 539 participant's (95.8%) considered that they had learnt something useful while 20 felt they had not.

Q7a. Satisfaction with arrangements for the session

Participants were asked to rate from 1 (very poor) to 5 (Excellent) how satisfactory the arrangements for the session were in terms of the notice that they were given

Table 6

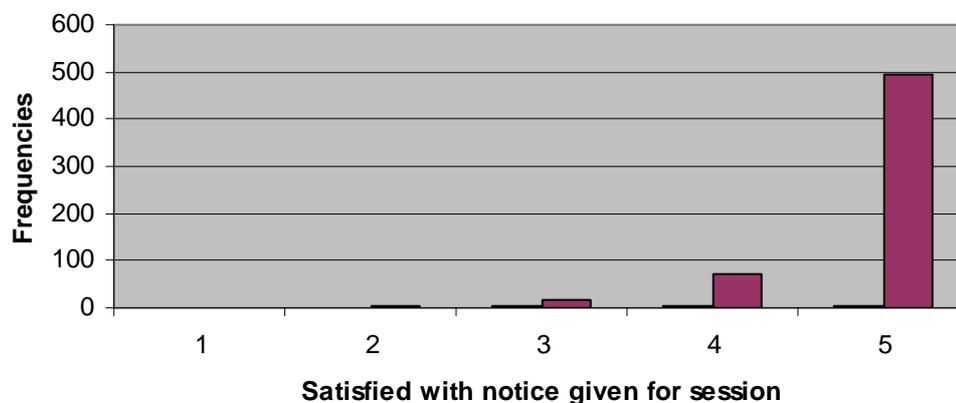


Table 6 shows the levels of satisfaction felt by participants regarding the notice they received of the session taking place. Five hundred and eighty seven (587) responses were recorded and of these 566 (96.9%) ratings were at the level of 4 or 5. Mean = 4.8, Standard Deviation = .52.

Q7b. Satisfaction with arrangements for the session

Participants were asked to rate from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent) how satisfactory the arrangements for the session were in terms of the venue in which group supervision took place.

Table 7

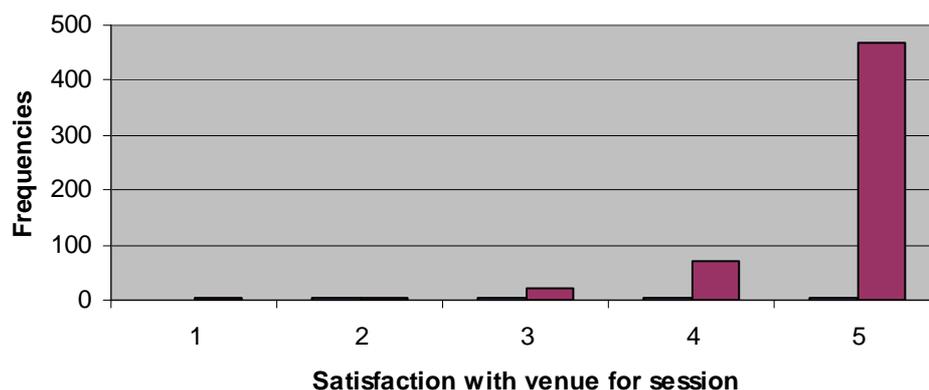


Table 7 shows the satisfaction that participants expressed in terms of the venue in which the supervision groups took place. Five hundred and sixty six (566) responses were recorded and of those 538 participants (94.5%) gave a rating of between 4 and 5. Mean = 4.76, Standard Deviation = .59.

Q10. Preferences for additional sessions

Participants were asked how helpful from 1 (not helpful) to 5 (very helpful) they would consider it to increase sessions to more than the current 5 sessions per year

Table 8

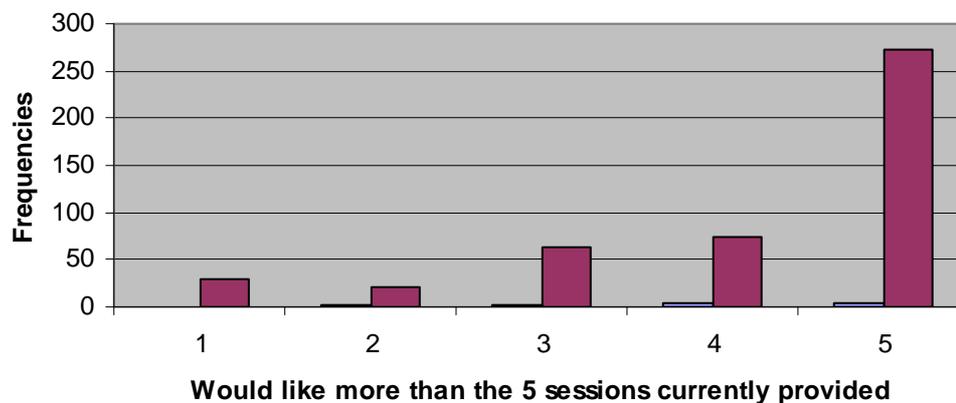


Table 8 shows participants preferences for having more than the current 5 sessions provided per year. Four hundred and ninety eight (498) participants were asked this question and 465 responses were recorded. Of those 350 (75.3%) participants rated their preference for more session at between 4 and 5. Mean = 4.16, Standard Deviation = 1.21.

Qualitative Data

All participants were asked the following four open questions:

1. What aspects of the session most appealed to you?
2. What aspects did you consider least useful to you?
3. Are there any changes you would like to make for these sessions in the future?
4. Please add further comments or suggestions if you wish.

Due to a clerical error, different forms of the questionnaire were used and only 495 participants were asked the following question:

5. What did you do to help yourself meet your goals for this session?

The data was analysed and the following domains and categories were extracted.

Domain	Category	Frequencies*
A. Helpful Aspects of Group Supervision	1. Group as Supportive Environment	304/754
	2. Work related inputs	292/754
	3. Sense of Sharing	118/754
	4. Supervisors Input	40/754
B. Least Helpful Aspects of Group Supervision	1. No unhelpful aspects to supervision group	171/199
	2. Distractions to work of the group	27/199
C. Changes to Group Supervision	1. No changes required	286/424
	2. More Time/Sessions	89/424
	3. Suggestions for Change	49/424
D. Strategies for Meeting Goals	1. Prepared prior to session	179/319
	2. Participated in the group	131/319
E. Comments	1. General Comments	63/63

*No. in Category/No. in Domain

Qualitative Findings

Domain A: Helpful Aspects of Supervision Groups.

Category 1 - Group as Supportive Environment.

Participants mentioned three hundred and four (304) occurrences of experiencing their group as supportive. Particular mention was made of a sense of openness, listening to each other, discussing common issues and respect for each other.

Examples:

- *“Openness and honesty of the session”*
- *“Everyone listens to each other and supports one another”*
- *“Support of peers”*
- *“Great sharing of expertise, non-judgemental”*
- *“The openness of session - good support – participation”*
- *“The openness of approach - the respect for and sharing of views”*

Category 2 - Work related inputs.

Two hundred and ninety two (292) instances were provided for when group supervision was helpful in relation to ideas and issues that participants were dealing with in their work.

Examples:

- *“A chance to take some time to examine what I am doing and reflect on how other Guidance Counsellors do things”*
- *“Discussion of various issues that arise in school”*
- *“The explanation of different techniques for dealing with specific issues and the practical way it was done”*
- *“Sharing of case loads, insights from colleagues and supervisor”*
- *“Advice on how to approach problems and ideas for resources”*
- *“Open exchange of case studies and identification of range of responses/resources”*

Category 3 - Sense of Sharing

Participants mentioned a sense of sharing as being a helpful aspect of group supervision on 118 occasions. That sense of sharing included sharing experiences, practical suggestions, ideas and ways of working.

Examples:

- *“Sharing approach to problems”*
- *“Sharing experiences and solutions”*
- *“Opportunity to discuss and share strategies and ideas”*
- *“Sharing of ideas, cases, solutions”*
- *“The sharing of others practical experience around referring”*
- *“Sharing of groups experiences and challenges”*

Category 4. Supervisor’s Input.

The group supervisors input was named 40 times by participants as being a helpful aspect of the groups.

Examples:

- *“As always the genuine respect of the supervisor for those present “*

- *"The facilitation was very helpful"*
- *"Expertise of facilitator"*
- *"The issues raised and the support given by facilitator"*

Domain B: Least Helpful Aspects of Supervision Group

Category 1 - No unhelpful aspects to supervision group

Of the 199 responses regarding the least helpful aspects of group supervision, 171 participants responded that there were no 'unhelpful' aspects.

Examples:

- *"None on this occasion"*
- *"Nothing all very useful"*
- *"Everything was useful"*
- *"All very worthwhile"*
- *"None - all excellent"*
- *"Nothing was un-useful"*
- *"Nothing everything discussed is useful for future practice"*

Category 2 - Distractions from work of the group.

Participants highlighted 27 instances when they considered that a distraction from the work was an unhelpful aspect of their supervision group.

Examples:

- *"When we go off in a tangent"*
- *"When there was no direction in the discussion"*
- *"When we go off track and move away from counselling to more day to day issues"*
- *"Not enough in attendance"*
- *"I thought the second issued dragged on a little too long"*

Domain C: Changes to Groups

Category 1 - No changes required

When asked what changes would you like to make for supervision sessions in the future 286 comments were given by participants stating that they did not require any changes.

Examples:

- *"Nothing comes to mind at moment"*
- *"No - very helpful all round"*
- *"No. It works well"*
- *"No- balance is good"*
- *"Perfectly fine"*
- *"No. All arrangements satisfactory"*
- *"No, find them very useful as is"*

Category 2 - Length and Amount of Sessions/Time

Participants made 89 comments regarding the length of sessions and their frequency. Of those, 25 expressed that they considered the present 5 sessions to be adequate, whilst 54 suggested that they would like more sessions per year. Nine comments indicated that length of sessions was not adequate.

Examples:

- *"5 is excellent for me (just the right number)"*
- *"I think 5 (sessions) is adequate"*
- *"5 x 2 hour sessions is most appropriate in my opinion"*
- *"More often - one session per month is needed"*
- *"Reschedule sessions to start in Sept - 3 before Christmas, 2 after - more sessions would be preferable"*
- *"Just have more often- one every 3/4 weeks at least"*
- *"The length of time available"*
- *"More time or more sessions"*

Category 3 - Suggestions for Change

Forty nine (49) suggestions for change were offered from participants. Many changes suggested focused on specific groups in terms of venue and time of meeting. However, 11 comments concerned content that participants would like included in the groups. A further 11 were related to numbers of people in each group with 9 suggestions that there should be more people in the group and 2 considering that groups should be smaller.

Examples:

- *"Needs to be more discussion of case studies- individual counselling situations"*
- *"Input on/refreshment of counselling techniques"*
- *"Legal advice - we need it. Definitive"*
- *"There are other Guidance Counsellors who may wish to join and these have to be contacted"*
- *"Only two attended this session, better with more"*
- *"Size of group should be reduced to 4 people max"*

Domain D: Strategies for Meeting Goals

Four hundred and ninety five (495) questionnaires asked participants "What did you do to help yourself meet your goals for this session?" The comments received (319) fell into two categories, 1) Prepared prior to session or 2) Participated in the session.

Category 1 - Prepared prior to session

There were 179 instances when participants prepared for group supervision before arriving in order to meet their goals for that session. These preparations included reflection on their work, deciding on a particular issue of concern, reviewing their work before the session. For some others, it was about preparing themselves mentally in order to focus on the group.

Examples:

- *"Reflected on cases before I arrived"*
- *"Think about areas I needed help with"*
- *"Prepared the questions I wanted to ask in advance"*
- *"Had a detailed case ready for presentation"*
- *"I reviewed the history, i.e. notes of the students I would like help with"*
- *"Had a quiet lunch on my own before the sessions to get my thoughts in order"*

Category 2 - Meet goals by participating in session.

Participants, on 131 occasions, mentioned that they meet their goals for the session by actively taking part. Participation included bringing specific issues of concern to the group, participating in discussion and listening to others ideas and points of view.

Examples:

- *"Asked questions, sought opinions from other group members"*
- *"Brought up what needed to bring to session"*
- *"Was prepared and open to listen and learn"*
- *"Discussed and listened"*
- *"Spoke about my own clients"*
- *"I participated and wasn't afraid to share my experiences in the safe environment created"*
- *"Participated in discussion – contributed"*
- *"Shared problem took responses on board, got ideas for plan on how to deal with...."*
- *"Listened, took on board what people said"*
- *"Involvement - participation in group, concentrating, notes"*

Domain E: General Comments

Participants were asked at the end of the questionnaires if they had any other comments. 63 comments related to the supervision group in general with the majority indicating their thanks and the view that the sessions were excellent. A number elaborated on this and expressed the benefits of the group supervision.

Examples:

- *"Thank you. Excellent work"*
- *"Thank you for all your support and patience"*
- *"Found the session very helpful"*
- *"Supervision is essential for self care and to provide a good service to our students"*
- *"Thanks for everything. Its essential that we attend as it really is so helpful."*
- *"Not sure how helpful it will be as this was the first session but I thought it was good so would be optimistic that it will be useful"*
- *"The supervision has been very beneficial to me and my professional development"*

Limitations

While useful information is gathered, there are however, some limitations to an evaluation of this nature. Although a random sample of questionnaires was selected, errors can occur because of non-response. Some group participants may have chosen not to respond and may have different opinions to those who did, resulting in a bias of the estimates. Questionnaires depend on the participant's motivation, honesty, memory and ability to respond. The participants in these groups have the ability to respond and as they are completed at the end of each group, their experience will be fresh in their mind. However, depending on their experiences, their motivation and the accuracy of their responses cannot be accounted for. A documented difficulty with self-report questionnaires is that people may be motivated to give socially desirable answers (Foddy, 2008). Structured surveys are often seen as having a low validity due to closed end questions, which may compel people to make a choice that does not fully explain their response. While this questionnaire

offered participants an opportunity to expand on some issues with open ended questions, there was not much space for them to explain their views. Supplementary semi-structured interviews with a random sample may increase validity. Some specific psychometric measures are also available for evaluating supervision and may be adapted for this context (for example, Working Alliance Inventory, Efstation et al. 1990; Horvath & Greenberg, 1989).

Summary

In general, data analysis for this evaluation of group supervision, suggests that the participating Guidance Counsellors are very satisfied with their group supervision. Over 90% of participants rated their satisfaction at 4 or 5 on a 1-5 Likart scale in terms of the helpfulness of the sessions, how their issues were dealt with, the notice and venue for session and considered that they had learnt something from others in the group.

The most helpful aspects of the groups appear to be that it provides a supportive environment that many participants described as 'open'. The groups served as a place where people could share their experiences, ideas, resources and get input on particular issues that they were struggling with in their work. These inputs came from both peers and supervisors.

When asked about the least helpful aspects of the group 86% of those who responded considered that there were no unhelpful aspects to group supervision. 14% of the respondents felt that it was not helpful when there were distractions from the main focus of the groups.

Participants were invited to comment on any changes they would like to make to the groups and 80% of those who replied considered that no changes were necessary. The majority of those who addressed changes to be made commented on the amount of sessions available per year. Whilst 7% of comments given suggested that participants were happy with the current provision, 18% of comments suggested that it would be preferable to have more sessions per year or that the sessions should be longer in length. When participants were asked to indicate their preferences for more sessions per year 75% rated their preferences at 4 or 5 for more sessions. In terms of sufficient time within each session to deal with issues brought, there was a 76% agreement at a rate of 4 to 5 that there was enough time. However, a significant minority felt that there was not enough time allotted within each session to deal with the volume of issues presented.

The Guidance Counsellors indicated that they brought 372 specific issues to their supervision group over the course of the year. In order to meet their goals, the participants appear to fall into two groups. Some participants met their goals by preparing before hand. They did this largely by reflecting on their work and selecting a particular issue with which they needed help. Another group met their goals by participating in the group fully, asking questions, getting advice from others and listening to their peers.

In conclusion, the experiences of participants regarding Group Counselling Supervision are very positive. This provision appears to be meeting the expectations of the participants at a high level. Most people expressed satisfaction with the groups as they are but a significant majority feel that they would benefit from more groups being scheduled each year or as mentioned, having longer supervision sessions.

References

Efstation, J., Patton, M. & Kardash, M. (1990). Measuring the working alliance in counsellor supervision. *Journal of Counseling Psychology.*, 37 (3), 322-329.

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Foddy, W. (2008). *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires: Theory and Practice in Social Research*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Horvath, A. & Greenberg, L. (1989). Development and validation of the working alliance inventory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 36, 223–233.

Appendices – Qualitative Data Analysis Procedures

- **Domains and Categories supported by participants' comments.**
- **Please note: Quantitative Data Analysis Procedure is available in Excel Worksheet in accompanying CD. Please find sample attached here.**

- **Sample Quantitative Data Analysis Procedure**
- **Full list available in Excel Worksheet – please see accompanying CD.**