Opportunities, Advantages and Benefits in the Use of Intervision among Social Intervention Professionals

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the opportunities, advantages and benefits (OAB) associated with the use of intervision by social intervention professionals in Catalonia, Spain. A categorical content analysis was conducted, based on semi-structured interviews with six social intervention professionals who participate in continuous intervision sessions. Interviewees report multiple OABs derived from intervision: in-depth reflection on topics of interest; opportunities to learn, exchange resources and improve various human aspects; reviewing service situations and team dynamics; modifying and introducing practices; detecting and addressing conflicts; and, ensuring quality service. However, certain conditions must be met for intervision to function effectively. Based on these OABs, recommendations can be proposed for team development and self-assessment to improve intervision sessions, which in turn can enhance the care provided to service users and the well-being of professionals and teams. Integrating intervision as a regular practice into care services appears to be a valuable approach.

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Resum

L'objectiu d'aquest article és explorar idees sobre les oportunitats, avantatges i beneficis ('OAB') experimentats en utilitzar la metodologia d'intervisió per part de professionals d'intervenció social que treballen a Catalunya. Es va realitzat una anàlisi categorial de contingut en termes d'OAB, basada en entrevistes semiestructurades aplicades a sis professionals de la intervenció social, participants en sessions contínues d'intervisió. Les persones entrevistades comuniquen múltiples OAB derivats de la intervisió: reflexionar detingudament sobre els temes d'interès, per aprendre, intercanviar recursos i millorar diversos aspectes humans; revisar situacions dels serveis i els equips; modificar i introduir pràctiques; detectar i treballar conflictes; tenir cura de la qualitat dels serveis; tot i que s'han de donar condicions perquè la intervisió funcioni adequadament. A partir d'aquests OAB, es poden fer recomanacions per al desenvolupament i l'autoavaluació dels equips per millorar les sessions d'intervisió, que al seu torn poden tenir un impacte en l'atenció i la cura prestades a les persones ateses i en el benestar dels i les professionals i els equips. Sembla convenient integrar la intervisió com a pràctica habitual en els serveis d'atenció a les persones.

Paraules clau: Intervisió, grup de supervisió entre iguals, professionals d'intervenció social, interaccions laborals, anàlisi de contingut.

Introduction

Within the framework of teamwork in social intervention with disadvantaged people who are in situations of social exclusion or at risk of experiencing it, intervision can be proposed as a forum for reflection on professional practice, as well as an instrument for advice and support between professionals within a horizontal relationship.

Erpenbeck (2001) defines intervision as a form of systematic peer counselling—usually among professionals in the social field—that serves as a means to reflect on situations and processes arising from daily work practices, with the aim of making them more transparent and clearer. Colleagues come together to discuss specific problems or situations; usually, anyone in the group can put forward a work situation (Smets & Rispens, 2014). However, it can also happen that the group plans who should present and/or address the group with a specific issue, with roles being distributed and reversible (Tietze, 2010).

A comprehensive review of the literature on intervision reveals that several terms are used to describe it (Staempfli & Fairtlough, 2019), although the criteria offered to define it are generally accepted as including the following aspects: being a peer-led group with no external facilitators; using specified roles within a session, with reciprocity; and, establishing a focus on professional practice situations considered relevant to the well-being of professionals or the practice itself. Tietze (2010) also proposes that English-language terms in the literature, such as peer-group supervision, consultation or counselling, are sometimes used as synonyms for intervision, but they do not share the exact methodological characteristics or applications.

Intervision also provides a specific forum for reflection, enabling professionals to observe their practice from afar, outside the immediate pressures of intervention or decision-making. This process fosters greater awareness and also allows professionals to leverage their resources to develop ideas and strategies. Research confirms that intervision has positive effects on motivation and job satisfaction, as well as reducing workload and the perceived intensity of work demands, among other benefits (e.g., Diaconescu, 2015; Nieuwenhuijse et al., 2022; Sonneveld et al., 2020). Its practice is generally well received and is seen as supportive, with almost entirely positive outcomes reported, even though exhaustive reviews of intervision research related to social work, training and education in this field remain limited (Staempfli & Fairtlough, 2019).

The care and attention provided to people in need can have a negative impact on professionals' well-being across multiple levels (i.e., physical, psychological, emotional and relational). This highlights the need to focus on both work conditions and well-being, as some negative effects can be long-lasting (Losada et al., 2019). According to Diaconescu (2015), secondary trauma among social workers who support traumatised individuals often goes unattended, as it is generally poorly understood, minimised or

not recognised as a social problem. Consequently, affected professionals may not access or benefit from necessary resources that may be available for specialist training, prevention or strategies to manage secondary traumatic stress. Intervision is one of the recommended strategies for coping with these adverse reactions.

Erpenbeck (2001) also emphasises the fact that intervision lays down the condition to create a network in which its members gradually get to know one another better, within an atmosphere that fosters solidarity, mutual support, professional networking and effective information exchange. According to the author, participants in intervision should be professionals from the same field or from related areas, although diversity in terms of contexts or institutions where they work can be accommodated.

These groups operate without hierarchies and are primarily intended for participants to present work-related challenges, including cases that cause dissatisfaction, difficult or unresolved problems, or situations that require deeper reflection. Intervision is particularly beneficial for professionals experiencing dissatisfaction, seeking to expand their professional horizons or considering new challenges. Knowing that colleagues with diverse perspectives are experiencing similar situations can help professionals feel more at ease and emotionally resilient (Akhurst & Kelly, 2006). In addition, the advice shared within these groups is not dependent on financial transactions or expectations of reciprocity. Likewise, intervision serves as a platform for developing strategies to apply in the workplace and for practising conflict management, which can later be integrated once professionals have returned to their own units.

Further research also confirms that intervision contributes to achieving a certain level of professional quality (e.g., Wender, 2010; Vera Perdomo et al., 2009), ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of work performed. Erpenbeck (2001, p. 57) cautions that intervision should not be considered "an emergency solution or a cheap alternative; it should be understood as a true form of self-sufficiency." The following sections explore additional advantages and benefits that intervision provides.

From supervision to intervision

Supervision in the field of social intervention is understood as a form of support for professionals, which takes shape through reviewing the work they have completed and the feelings that accompany it (Quílez, 2018). It is also regarded as a form of continuous professional development, enabling practitioners to eventually conduct these reviews independently. This fosters greater autonomy, security and satisfaction in their professional practice, while also improving effectiveness and work quality (Puig, 2009).

Supervision does not provide solutions or tools directly; rather, it serves as a mechanism for professionals to develop their own competence by reviewing their actions and committing to investing in their own growth. Ruf (2006, p. 31) describes it as "a preventive mental hygiene

resource for practitioners who attend to people at risk of mental suffering, dependency, and social exclusion." The supervisor's relative distance from day-to-day functions and workplace challenges offers an opportunity for supervised professionals to discover their own reactions, strengths, potentials and possibilities. From Ruf's perspective, the questions and suggestions posed by the supervisor (or later by peers) create a model that encourages professionals to engage in critical and ethical self-reflection on the quality of care or services provided. For instance, Nieuwenhuijse et al. (2022) found that intervision can help professional caregivers develop a deeper understanding of the needs of individuals with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities. This, in turn, enhances job satisfaction and enjoyment while also helping professionals regulate their emotional responses.

Intervision and supervision are complementary processes; intervision can also strengthen supervision, as it allows for time and resource savings. Akhurst & Kelly (2006) argue that peer-group supervision and individual supervision models exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship.

Erpenbeck (2001) emphasises that reflection in social work is not limited to professional supervision but is inherent in all interactions and group dynamics. If work sessions or meetings are structured and planned, reflection can occur in a systematic and protected manner, fostering the emergence of intervision practices. Supervisors, meanwhile, act as facilitators who enable various achievements that contribute to team expertise and professional development. Wilbur (1991; cited in Akhurst and Kelly, 2006, p. 4) describes a structured group supervision model that can be adapted for peer-group supervision without a designated supervisor, as participants quickly internalise the structure, providing "a useful structure for peer-group usage, with a group member acting as facilitator."

Forms of group supervision exist along a continuum. As Inskipp (2002) suggests, a progressive shift can be observed in the roles and activities of the supervisor or facilitator, and indeed those of participants. Initially, the supervisor plays a more active role; however, as the group becomes more autonomous, peer supervision begins and intervision emerges.

In peer supervision, group members negotiate various organisational aspects, including structure, leadership, roles and responsibilities, which must be clearly defined to set expectations and determine how tasks will be executed. Tietze (2010) notes that intervision is distinguished by its focus on professional practice situations, its group-based format and a process that incorporates specified, reciprocal and reversible roles. Similarly, Akhurst and Kelly (2006) highlight that the chosen structure of a group determines which topics will be discussed, how material will be presented, the expected contributions of group members and the time allocation for different activities.

Finally, training for intervision aligns with cooperative group supervision, where the supervisor's role extends beyond supervision to include facilitation, modelling, and providing reflexive training on intervision tasks and techniques.

In summary, intervision is more than just group reflection; its methodology requires that cases or situations be analysed in real-time. It represents not only a form of peer supervision but also a structured approach characterised by horizontal collaboration and the collective development of alternatives, interpretations and solutions by professionals within the intervision process.

Apart from structured group supervision, intervision originates from Balint groups and it bears similarities with reflecting teams (as described by Andersen, 1987; cited in Tietze, 2010) and other clinical models, such as the relationship-based model. These approaches share a common structure: the separation between the individual presenting a case and the participants who reflect on it. They also feature three fundamental roles: the presenter, the facilitator, and the reflecting team. What differentiates intervision is that *roles rotate among all group participants* (Tietze, 2010).

Within the organisations where the participants in this study work, the Balint group perspective has long been incorporated into intervention work and is used to guide group analysis in professional settings.

Methodology of intervision

We highlight some methodological aspects of intervision, as the structure and facilitation of sessions directly influence the benefits, advantages, and opportunities it offers.

At the beginning of group work, a supervisor typically provides or proposes a framework, methodology, or technique for conducting the sessions. Once supervision is no longer required, teams often choose to continue their peer supervision independently, specifying their own approach, while still often employing techniques common to professional supervision (Erpenbeck, 2001). The significance of these elements is particularly notable when peer supervision or intervision occurs among professionals working within the same team or organisation.

An experienced professional who facilitates, observes, and guides the implementation and monitoring of intervision plays a crucial role in identifying team strengths and areas requiring improvement. This individual provides feedback on the intervision process within its specific context and suggests tailored adaptations as the group progresses. In this study, one of the interviewees has undertaken this role, and their experiences have been considered relevant.

The situations or cases discussed in intervision may relate to team dynamics, intervention strategies, or relationships with individuals, families, institutions, and other stakeholders. During sessions, group members aim to provide constructive contributions that offer fresh perspectives and support the development of effective solutions.

Erpenbeck (2001) defines a "case" not as a general topic or experience, but as a specific situation involving relationships and challenges that concern professionals and for which they have been unable to find solutions

through personal reflection. All participants in intervision sessions must be thoroughly familiar with its methodology.

As previously noted, intervision tasks and roles are regularly rotated or renewed. This makes it possible to foster different expertise and competences among members and to prevent the formation of hierarchical structures and individual responsibilities (Smets & Rispens, 2014). As stated, the main roles—host, interviewer/moderator, recorder, observer, and subject expert—can vary, and additional roles may be introduced based on specific needs.

While a case or challenge is being presented, group members are expected to listen attentively, without interrupting. The moderator or interviewer may intervene to refocus the discussion if the presenter strays from the key issue and can also help clarify the problem or formulate a central question. Salinsky (2009) notes that in clinical analysis groups, the session leader should discourage excessive questioning of the presenter, as the goal is to allow the group to engage with the case based on their observations, with time allocated afterwards for reflection. Non-verbal cues, such as gestures and expressions, are just as important as verbal content and should be carefully observed. In the feedback phase, Erpenbeck highlights the importance of ensuring group engagement so that members remain invested in the discussion.

Ribé (2012) explains that when a professional presents a case they must try to relax, tolerate not receiving easy answers, advice or "recipes," and listen to what group members feel and think about the relationship between the client/patient and the professional. The advised person expresses everything that has helped to clarify or reformulate the issue or case. When analysing a problem or the dynamics of the group, they can pass the floor to other participants, allowing them to share their impressions, emotions, clarifications and restatements. Based on all this material, one or more *working hypotheses* will be developed.

In the formulation or planning of alternatives, strategies and actions, participants make use of various creative methods and their areas of prior knowledge. At times, it is appropriate to develop standardised instruments and formats that enable the follow-up of actions and systematise everything related to intervision. The group of organisations examined in this research follows this as one of its goals.

Part of intervision's effectiveness is determined by conscious and detailed work on responses and decisions, which are built with the participation of everyone, especially when they affect the functioning of the team. Consequently, decisions or resolutions must be as consensual as possible, and solutions should not emerge hastily in meetings, especially during the implementation phase.

Erpenbeck also believes that it is appropriate for the advised person to report the results of applying what they gathered from the group or, if applicable, to set out the reasons why they have not done so. In other situations, it is exclusively the counselled person who can decide what seems

most appropriate for them to use or apply from the help received, including different perspectives and alternative courses of action.

The fact that the parties involved continue to work together throughout the period between intervision sessions establishes a degree of continuity and interconnection between them. Ribé (2012) emphasises the importance of continuity. It facilitates group cohesion, develops a group-centred culture and allows a host of experiences to be stored, which can resurface in later meetings. He also underlines that addressing cases calls for continuous analysis and sustained participation from group members. Indeed, it is important to consider what solutions the groups should adopt when individuals leave for any reason and what implications this might have for the functioning of intervision, as well as the benefits or challenges it may present.

Following a structured sequence and timeline in the development of the intervision process is important not only for conducting a session effectively, but also because it benefits professionals in their daily practice (Erpenbeck, 2001). The contributions and benefits of the intervision methodology to the work and daily practice of staff is therefore an interesting element to examine in the analysis of the arguments presented in this research.

Other Opportunities, Advantages and Benefits in Intervision (OAB)

The approach to working on OAB within the group of organisations examined in this research is based on the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis perspective. This widely recognised and extensively applied method for situational analysis and diagnosis of individuals, groups, communities, social realities and organisations is designed to support organisational stability and enhance productivity (Oion & Aranguren, 2021). Adaptations of this tool within the field of social work have been made to align with the specific realities of professional practice and intervention. Given the nature of social work, its language and framework must reflect its core values and principles, while also emphasising collaboration and solidarity as fundamental components.

As previously discussed, intervision enables professionals to update their resources for implementing ideas and developing solutions, both collectively and individually. It enhances motivation and well-being, fosters solidarity and support networks, facilitates the management of emotional distress and conflict at both personal and group levels, improves professional quality and maximises the use of resources available within the group, including team cohesion and self-awareness.

Furthermore, according to Menichetti et al. (2019), healthcare professionals identify continuous meetings and ongoing training as key activities for strengthening relational abilities, tailoring care to individual patient needs and implementing patient engagement support interventions.

These relational aspects are often not adequately covered by structured approaches aimed at integrating new interventions into routine care practice.

Staempfli and Fairtlough (2019) also find that intervision serves as a valuable tool for incorporating peer-led reflective practice. The students—who later became social work practitioners—interviewed in their study reported that intervision provided emotional containment, broadened their perspectives and enhanced the skills necessary for peer supervision. Commitment among participants and the facilitators' ability to model the intervision process contributed to the diversity of experiences and the enrichment derived from them. The authors also identified several positive impacts on professional development and practice, including critical reflection on relationships with colleagues and workplace professional cultures, as well as opportunities to discuss broader issues. Moreover, they conclude that intervision groups, as autonomous peer-led organisational structures, create spaces for decision-making, peer-led reflection and self-management.

Akhurst and Kelly (2006) outline various opportunities and advantages of peer supervision identified by different authors and explore ways to optimise peer supervision groups (PSG) for psychology trainees. Peer supervisory practice has been linked to the development of a greater sense of self-efficacy, as individuals engage in participatory decision-making and gain autonomy and control (Conger & Kanugo, 1988). Additionally, Hardcastle (1991, p. 65; in Akhurst & Kelly, 2006, p. 5) argues that, in social work, peer supervision promotes "greater worker responsibility, authority and accountability" while mitigating potential dependency issues that dyadic supervision might encourage, thereby enhancing professionalism. The absence of formal evaluation allows for more open feedback, conflict resolution and the development of new ideas, as well as skill enhancement through mutual observation and critique. This environment also fosters morale, as peers provide encouragement and support within a less anxiety-laden context where all participants hold equal status and collaboratively determine the group's structure, roles and functions (Akhurst & Kelly, 2006; p. 9). In PSGs, group solidarity develops, leading to changes in case management and workplace dynamics. Additionally, these groups offer an empowering, supportive and less hierarchical supervisory experience, helping individuals feel less isolated in facing professional challenges.

Finally, Kyndt et al. (2009) highlight the importance of creating conditions for peer counselling and feedback as essential for both formal and informal workplace learning. Krajncan (2021) further emphasises that —in addition to self-reflection and supervision— intervision should be a fundamental element of any institution or residential centre. He argues that intervision should be conducted periodically to ensure an in-depth, comprehensive and multifaceted analysis of professional practice.

In this research, our aim was to explore in depth the considerations social work professionals have regarding intervision in terms of OAB. The research questions guiding this study are outlined in the following interview description.

Methodology

Sample

For this exploratory study, five women and one man were recruited from a range of services and residential care centres (detailed below) for in-depth interviews. They belonged to organisations dedicated to the care and welfare of people in socially disadvantaged situations or at risk. All participants were from the region of Catalonia, Spain, and held various functions and job positions.

This was an intentional sample, as it had been predetermined that participants must have taken part in intervisions in a sustained manner within their centres and work teams. Their diversity and profiles were selected by the interviewer, regardless of whether intervisions were still ongoing at the time of the interview or had been discontinued. From the group of organisations, centres where intervisions had been carried out for an extended period were chosen, with a focus on professionals who had participated regularly or over long periods. Their collaboration with this research was entirely voluntary and they were fully informed of its purpose. In addition, the participation of an individual who had previously undertaken advisory and supervisory tasks in the implementation of intervision with several teams was also sought.

Some information on the selected profiles is provided below:

Person 1 (P1): She has served as director for several years of a support service for autonomy at home for people with mild intellectual disabilities and for individuals with mental disorders who, although capable of living independently, require various supports. She has participated in all intervisions conducted continuously since their implementation more than ten years ago.

Person 2 (P2): A social educator with five years' experience working with children and adolescents under guardianship in a residential educational centre, and a further five years in an intensive educational centre with adolescents requiring more sustained and in-depth intervention. In recent years she has held the positions of assistant director and director at the latter facility. She has participated in intervisions since their inception more than ten years ago.

Person 3 (P3): A social educator who has worked for more than eleven years in a residential educational centre for children aged 0 to 12, he has participated in intervisions on a regular basis since their inception eleven years ago.

Person 4 (P4): She worked briefly in a residential educational centre before spending several years in the technical field of labour market integration for people from at-risk or disadvantaged groups, also serving as a team leader. She participated in and facilitated several intervisions over the years with various teams to which she belonged, although these are now discontinued.

Person 5 (P5): An educational staff member who has worked for more than a decade in a residence for elderly people with intellectual disabilities who require intermittent or limited support, but who, due to associated behavioural disorders, need extensive assistance. She was responsible for shift management for several years and participated in most intervisions until six years ago, when they were discontinued at her facility.

Person 6 (P6): She has supported and supervised the implementation and monitoring of intervisions in various centres and services of the organisations during their early years. She has intermittently accompanied some teams, offering assistance and advice mainly on demand in later years, although she has not been a continuous participant as a team member.

The various teams that conducted intervisions enjoyed considerable freedom and flexibility in their implementation, management and development, managing the sessions in a self-determined manner while adhering to the basic principles of intervision as outlined by Erpenbeck (2001).

Data collection

Initially, information was gathered from records documenting various intervision experiences conducted by teams in previous years. These records had already organised part of the information in terms of difficulties, opportunities, needs and expectations (DONE) related to the practice of intervision. Based on this information and the theoretical sources cited, an interview format was developed to explore the DONE aspects further, along with other presumed advantages of intervision, in order to understand the interviewees' perspectives.

This paper analyses only the general considerations on intervision and OAB aspects.

As mentioned earlier, participation was voluntary. Interviews were scheduled and conducted remotely, with participants having been informed in advance of the research objectives and that the interviews would be recorded for later analysis.

The interviews, conducted in an open and semi-structured format, were adapted in response to participants' initial answers to allow for follow-up questions, ensuring a more detailed exploration of the topics under discussion. This approach enabled a relatively thorough examination of the requested aspects. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

Data analysis

Once transcribed, the interviews were analysed using the content analysis technique to establish the categories of analysis. From the outset, the process followed the principles of communicability, objectivity, systematicity and both quantitative and qualitative interpretative treatment of the information, which are characteristic of this type of analysis (Berelson, 1971).

The proposed categories were based on identified units of analysis (ideas, arguments, concepts), as well as the meaning and significance of participants' statements concerning relevant aspects within the thematic or contextual units analysed (Guix, 2008). These categories were developed in relation to the knowledge previously established in the first part of this study, covering the intervision process in general, its methodology, the opportunities it provides and the requirements for its effective implementation. In line with Holsti (1969; cited in Guix, 2008), inferences were drawn through the systematic and precise identification of characteristics present in participants' ideas, allowing for reflection on their conceptual and practical relationships with the previously outlined OAB aspects.

As noted, an in-depth understanding of these contextual elements was key to characterising and interpreting the meaning of the units of analysis and their categorical assignment. This process was considered inductive, as the principal aspects regarding general considerations on advisory work between team members or peers and the OAB of intervision were determined based on participants' statements (Guix, 2008). In the Discussion section, the categories are interrelated with the OAB aspects that are mentioned and reflected upon.

To facilitate analysis and further reflection, a coding system consisting of three letters and a number was assigned to each category. The various arguments and responses provided by participants were then distributed within these categories. The interviewees' arguments were abundant and sufficiently detailed to allow for clear interpretation, minimising potential ambiguity. The categorisation system developed was reviewed to ensure that it was relevant, representative, exhaustive, precise, clear, homogeneous and unambiguous, with mutually exclusive categories.

In most cases, secondary categories were identified and assigned distinct codes. These secondary categories allowed for differentiation when arguments, although addressing the same fundamental aspect, referred to different or contrasting meanings, as was frequently observed.

Results

General Considerations on Advisory Work between Team Members or Peers (GCA)

As shown in Table 1, all the professionals interviewed clearly regarded advisory work and intervision *as positive [GCA.1]*, expressing no doubts, though underlining certain nuances and conditions. They considered it a valuable means of fostering mutual understanding and facilitating learning both from and with others [GCA.1.1], allowing engagement with a broad range of issues from diverse perspectives [GCA.1.2], with this multiplicity of themes and viewpoints being one of its key strengths.

Intervision was also perceived as beneficial because it enables professionals to focus on matters of concern or those requiring specific attention [GCA.1.3], within a structured framework specifically designed for this purpose, offering security to participants. Additionally, it fosters consensus-building [GCA.1.4] within teams. Two interviewees even asserted that, given its advantages, this approach is not only recommendable but essential, and should be incorporated routinely, consistently and with increasing frequency [GCA.2.1], supported by a structured framework and systematisation [GCA.2.2], which further enhances the sense of security mentioned earlier. Systematisation was identified as one of the crucial *conditions for ensuring effectiveness [GCA.2],* providing coherence and allowing intervision practices to yield meaningful outcomes. One participant noted that, while structure is necessary, intervision allows for significant flexibility, diverse perspectives and varied communication styles [GCA.1.5].

Other essential factors for ensuring effectiveness include adequate training [GCA.2.3], equipping participants with the necessary competencies and attitudes to engage fully and benefit from the process, particularly given the complexity of some of the issues discussed.

Two interviewees also acknowledged that properly implementing intervision and recognising its benefits is more complex than simply following a format or assigned roles, as its effectiveness is refined through practice [GCA.2.4].

Finally, one participant reflected on the importance of recognising intervision as a tool that should not replace other methods, such as supervision, nor be evaluated in comparison with them, as each serves a distinct purpose. Instead, intervision should be seen as a complementary process *alongside other tools and approaches* that enhance the effectiveness of team-based work *[GCA.3].*

Table 1. Categories of Analysis Related to General Considerations on Advisory Work (GCA) Between Team Members

Categories	Frequency, *n*	Relevant quotes
GCA.1. Clear positive aspects and effects GCA.1.1. Facilitates self-awareness, mutual understanding and learning from one another GCA.1.2. Encourages engagement with diverse issues from multiple perspectives GCA.1.3. Enables focus on concerns requiring specific attention GCA.1.4. Promotes consensus-building GCA.1.5. Allows broad flexibility, diverse opinions and varied forms of communication	5	*Something like a natural learning process is created, because we learn from the experiences and opinions of the group; everyone offers their own perspective on the situation. [GCA.1.2] (P4)*
GCA.2. Necessary conditions for effectiveness GCA.2.1. Integration as a routine practice, maintained and continuously expanded GCA.2.2. The provision of a structured format and operational framework GCA.2.3. Competency-based and attitudinal training and education GCA.2.4. Refinement through practice	4	*Daring to express oneself is difficult, and it is necessary to teach a team how to make it happen. As a foundation, we need to develop this ability to give and receive advice, so that people do not perceive it in a negative way. And that is what we try to do [in our intervisions]. [GCA.2.3] (P1)*
GCA.3. Other considerations: Intervision has its own distinct value and does not replace or render ineffective other tools	1	*It is a good tool or resource, but it should not replace supervision, as they both serve very distinct purposes […] everyone in the team should understand that it is just another tool, not a substitute for others, nor is it the only one. (P2)*

Opportunities, Advantages and Benefits in the Use of Intervision (OAB)

Above all, it is remarkable how many and how varied the OAB brought about by intervision have been, according to the interviewees (see Table 2).

First, all participants highlighted as a fundamental and highly valuable aspect *the opportunity to reflect deeply and systematically on issues that concern or occupy the team [OAB.1].* For example, the participant who had accompanied various teams noted that the ability to organise a structured space for discussing and presenting cases or topics in a focused manner provided a sense of security and peace of mind [OAB.1.1]. Additionally, it enabled professionals to recognise their own potential—something that becomes evident only when there is time dedicated to thinking and reflecting. This aligns with the observation that intervision allows individuals to focus on a single issue [OAB.1.2] and analyse it with a level of calmness that is rarely possible in other meetings or workspaces.

Through collective reflection on issues or situations, intervision facilitates the integration of multiple perspectives, which in turn enhances understanding and generates a greater variety of possible solutions [OAB.1.3]. In some cases, simply sharing experiences allows professionals to realise that certain challenges are common across the team [OAB.1.4]. As one interviewee noted, "*when presenting an issue, it is common to receive strong feedback and a sense of shared experience*" (P3).

Another significant opportunity provided by intervision is the chance to *give and receive feedback, learn from others and exchange different work-related resources [OAB.2].* Meeting together enables professionals to open themselves up mentally and emotionally [OAB.2.1] to new perspectives, alternative ways of thinking and, ultimately, the broadening and enrichment of their own approaches. A service manager emphasised that intervision allows for deeper understanding of situations and forces individuals to step beyond their own limits [OAB.2.2], making its *multiplying* effect particularly transformative in this respect.

Regarding feedback, one service structured its intervision sessions around the process of team members sharing how they perceived the presenter or organiser of the session. One participant recalled, "*it was really nice because, in the end, I received pros and cons about how I work as a director*" (P1) [OAB.2.3]. Other interviewees remarked that meeting and reflecting with colleagues served as a mirror, revealing shared experiences and allowing individuals to recognise that their own concerns and emotions were not isolated [OAB.2.4]. The act of sharing, therefore, fosters a sense of being heard, helps individuals to relativise their own perspectives through feedback and encourages the emergence of working hypotheses [OAB.2.5].

Intervision also provides a space for discussing doubts, exploring different viewpoints on problems and collaboratively searching for solutions. This "construction" based on shared understanding [OAB.2.6] benefits from the input of all participants, particularly within interdisciplinary teams.

Furthermore, intervision enables the transmission of knowledge about different working methods, tools and intervention strategies [OAB.2.7] for delivering care as needed by the people. These are techniques that professionals may not otherwise share spontaneously, or may hesitate to introduce. This exchange contributes not only to individual professional development but also to personal growth and enrichment (as mentioned for OAB.2.1). The influence of intervision extends beyond the sessions themselves, impacting the way professionals approach various work situations and fostering a more dynamic, adaptive approach in other contexts [OAB.2.7].

Another key benefit of intervision is that it promotes *the improvement of diverse human aspects [OAB.3]*, such as caring for others, empathy, cohesion and horizontality. The sessions encourage attentiveness towards colleagues, reinforcing the importance of mutual support beyond the formal exercise of intervision roles. Meeting and sharing experiences help maintain team cohesion [OAB.3.2], while simultaneously strengthening support networks [OAB.3.1].

Empathy plays a crucial role in establishing connections and raising awareness of shared needs, worries and other emotions, creating a more heightened sense of companionship. This, in turn, strengthens bonds between people and reinforces a stronger sense of togetherness and belonging among groups members [OAB.3.3]. Three interviewees further noted that intervision serves as a type of interaction where those in management or in senior roles can engage more closely with staff, and vice versa. Observing managers share their thoughts and emotions within the sessions helped normalise vulnerability and created a more balanced dynamic, leading to mutual understanding. This process, as one participant described, breaks down rigid hierarchical structures, humanising all team members within intervision sessions and beyond. It results in a workplace culture where hierarchies remain functional but are perceived as less authoritarian [OAB.3.4].

A fourth advantage of intervision is that it provides a valuable opportunity to *analyse and assess the situation within teams and services [OAB.4]*. This includes gaining insight into the emotions and experiences of workers and service users [OAB.4.1], questioning aspects of the service model [OAB.4.2] and becoming aware of the overall team climate and interpersonal relationships [OAB.4.3]. One service manager noted that intervision offers a direct and focused way of understanding how workers and their interactions are evolving. This type of analysis is crucial as it ultimately contributes to improving daily interventions with service users.

Additionally, the transparent and horizontal nature of intervision allows professionals to step back, relax and adopt a more detached, analytical perspective on the challenges faced by the team. This, in turn, facilitates the identification of solutions and alternative interpretations of situations [OAB.4.4]. Sharing concerns within the group also encourages openness among other team members [OAB.4.5], leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the collective situation and responses within the team.

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Related to this, interviewees noted that intervision serves as a tool for *modifying team dynamics and introducing new practices [OAB.5].* This results from examining team interactions, structures and implicit norms. Intervision offers a platform that lays out initiatives and criteria for group members to be able to propose changes to aspects such as scheduling, organisation and work procedures [OAB.5.1]. Beyond structural adjustments, intervision also encourages reflection on attitudes and behaviours, leading to modifications in daily workplace interactions [OAB.5.2], set aside from more fixed elements of operations. In some cases, addressing conflicts or interpersonal challenges within intervision has resulted in lasting and meaningful change [OAB.5.3]. One participant recalled a particularly transformative experience: "A colleague felt attacked when we pointed out that her communication style could be offensive, but in the end, it was one of the most positive meetings we had… From that moment on, communication within this team changed significantly." (P5).

Intervision has been particularly effective in reinforcing teamwork by promoting stability, comfort and a sense of security among team members [OAB.5.4], ensuring that concerns that may otherwise go unaddressed have a dedicated space for discussion and resolution.

As previously mentioned, intervision offers professionals the opportunity to express their emotions and assess the team's overall situation. In this regard, many interviewees highlighted its role in *detecting and addressing discomfort, misunderstandings and conflicts* [OAB.6]. One participant explained that, unlike standard team meetings—which tend to be more pragmatic and solution-oriented—intervision incorporates an emotional component, making it particularly effective in preventing misunderstandings. Across different services, teamwork generally follows a similar structure: formal meetings focus on operational and procedural matters, whereas intervision enables deeper analysis and reflection.

At times, discomfort or conflicts themselves become the direct focus of intervision, allowing team members to gain a deeper understanding of each other, the situations they face and the dynamics in which these challenges arise. Addressing such issues helps individuals to contextualise and manage their own anxieties, while also facilitating the development of new communication, relational and procedural strategies. These adjustments help prevent similar challenges from recurring in the future.

Finally, three interviewees emphasised that intervision plays a key role in *maintaining the principles guiding their services* and *upholding high standards of quality and clarity in terms of their work-related aims* [OAB.7]. Some professionals encounter difficult interactions with service users, and intervision provides a space to explore strategies and working methods that align with ethical work practices [OAB.7.1].

From a slightly different perspective, one interviewee noted that service users often perceive when professionals feel uncertain, uncomfortable or hesitant in coping with their circumstances. In this sense, intervision serves as a valuable tool for refining responses, developing protocols and improving intervention strategies in time [OAB.7.2]. Another interviewee highlighted

the fact that intervision has been instrumental in preserving the philosophy and approach of the service [OAB.7.3], despite frequent staff turnover.

Table 2. Categories of Analysis Related to Opportunities, Advantages and Benefits (OAB) Derived from the Application of Intervision

Categories	Frequency, *n*	Relevant quotes
[OAB.1] Deep reflection on key topics [OAB.1.1] Presenting cases or topics from a distance gives security and peace of mind. [OAB.1.2] Creates the opportunity to pause and analyse a single case or problem in depth. [OAB.1.3] The multiplicity of views enhances understanding and facilitates the search for solutions. [OAB.1.4] Sharing experiences in a group setting highlights their commonality.	6	*If you do not share these situations in a group, challenges such as struggling to find the right answers or feeling overwhelmed by an intervention remain personal burdens. You may think it only happens to you, but that is not true. By speaking about it, you often receive deeply empathetic feedback and a sense of shared experience. [OAB.1.2; 1.4] (P3)*
[OAB.2] Reflection between members to learn and exchange resources [OAB.2.1] Facilitates openness to different realities and ways of thinking, expanding and enriching personal perspectives. [OAB.2.2] Encourages moving beyond personal limitations to better understand and accept colleagues. [OAB.2.3] Raises awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of one's own work approach. [OAB.2.4] Helps team members recognise shared challenges and normalise their experiences. [OAB.2.5] Feedback fosters the emergence of intervision work hypotheses. [OAB.2.6] Encourages collective problem-solving through the integration of diverse areas of knowledge. [OAB.2.7] Facilitates the sharing of knowledge, work methods, tools and intervention strategies applicable in different settings.	6	*The moderator is given the opportunity to facilitate and energise the process… to take on roles that are not always possible in daily practice and apply them in real life. For example, a participant may not be a caregiver, but through intervision, they engage in that perspective; someone may need to improve time management skills and intervision helps them develop this ability. Similarly, preparing and presenting a case can be challenging for some, pushing them to enhance their communication skills. [OAB.2.1; 2.2] (P6)*

[OAB.3] A space to enhance diverse human connections and teamwork [OAB.3.1] Encourages mutual care and support within and beyond the intervision space. [OAB.3.2] Shared concerns and emotions foster empathy and a sense of companionship [OAB.3.3] Strengthens team cohesion, unity and interpersonal relationships [OAB.3.4] Bridges hierarchical gaps, humanising team members and promoting equality and horizontality	5	*It is a way of building the team, of realising that you matter to others and that they matter to you… the level of connection is something that intervision naturally enhances. [OAB.3.1] (P4)*
[OAB.4] A tool for reviewing and analysing work teams and services [OAB.4.1] Enhances understanding of the emotional and professional experiences of the different parts involved [OAB.4.2] Encourages questioning and reassessing aspects of service models and centre projects [OAB.4.3] Increases awareness of team dynamics and interpersonal relationships [OAB.4.4] Improves interpretations of team behaviours and facilitates group solutions [OAB.4.5] The openness of team members to share concerns and points of contention provides a more comprehensive understanding of the collective situation	5	*Without this intervision space, as a director I would miss a great deal of what happens between the two professionals and the other individuals as a whole. Some of this also filters through in team meetings, but intervision allows us to be much more attentive to our current state and dynamics. [OAB.4.3.] (P1)*

Table 3. Categories of Analysis Related to Opportunities, Advantages and
Benefits Derived from the Application of Intervision (continued)

Categories	Frequency, *n*	Relevant quotes
[OAB.5] Modifying operations and introducing new practices [OAB.5.1] Organisational structures and scheduling [OAB.5.2] Everyday behaviours that influence interactions and team dynamics [OAB.5.3] Establishing enduring relational and intervention guidelines [OAB.5.4] Strengthening the stability, cohesion and comfort of teamwork	4	*There was discomfort regarding schedule flexibility. I expressed what needed to be said, emphasising the importance of reaching a consensus—identifying what we liked, what we did not like, and what aspects of others' behaviour bothered us. [OAB.5.1; 5.2] (P1)*
[OAB.6] Identifying and addressing discomfort, misunderstandings and conflicts	4	*One participant was able to voice that she was uncomfortable working with her colleague. By daring to express it, we recognised that such situations can arise and that, as a result, it is necessary to establish guidelines or communicate certain matters openly. (P1)*
[OAB.7] Maintaining principles, work quality and clarity of service goals [OAB.7.1] Facilitates the identification of resources and approaches aligned with work ethics [OAB.7.2] Supports the development of guidelines and protocols [OAB.7.3] Helps preserve the philosophy and working approach of the service despite staff turnover	3	*Intervision helps when doubts arise or in handling special cases. It is interesting—those who have been part of the team longer notice how much it has changed, yet the essence remains the same. We all continue working in the same way… Intervision supports this continuity, which is very important. [OAB.7.3] (P1)*

Discussion

Overall, intervision has clearly proven to be a positive, constructive and rewarding experience for all the professionals interviewed. However, despite its benefits, various shortcomings, obstacles and challenges exist, requiring further reflection and appropriate solutions.

The influence of working together extends beyond team members themselves, impacting almost all areas and situations addressed through intervision. These effects are subsequently reflected in professional practice with service users and in other collaborative workspaces.

The perspectives of the study participants have highlighted numerous benefits generally associated with peer advisory work, including enhanced self-knowledge and understanding of others, increased mental openness, enriched problem-solving approaches and greater flexibility and diversification in communication.

They have also highlighted, however, the fact that certain conditions are needed when contextualising the advice for these potential benefits to materialise. Above all, a structured framework and operating format (such as that provided by intervision) are necessary, along with sustained practice that allows professionals to develop expertise and adequate preparation. The particularities, benefits and constraints of intervision must be understood in relation to other practices aimed at improving professional work.

Both intervision and peer-supervised groups complement individual and group supervision (Akhurst & Kelly, 2006), meaning that intervision can be considered part of a broader set of group practices and dynamics. Altogether, these contribute to meaningful benefits for both the group as a whole and its individual members.

Based on the analysis, recommendations for effectively implementing peer assessment within work teams should include reflecting on its benefits, addressing key aspects that require attention before meetings (which not all teams do) and undertaking an introspective evaluation of one's own openness, willingness and *attitude* towards participating. Salinsky (2009) identifies these as core elements in case analyses.

Additionally, developing conditions for the successful implementation of intervision is an essential, albeit substantial task (Erpenbeck, 2001). This includes systematising its practice, establishing settings and structured follow-up mechanisms, creating clear documentation processes for standardisation and providing training in fundamental areas that may be unclear, underdeveloped or unacknowledged.

Most interviewees identified multiple opportunities, advantages and benefits associated with intervision. They all considered it a valuable context for engaging in in-depth reflection on key issues that contribute to improving their work. Specifically, intervision was seen as instrumental in finding solutions to problems, enhancing service provision and fostering constructive team interactions. More than half of the participants also

agreed on additional benefits, among which the most significant appear to be *the multiplication of professional resources* through collective reflection (OAB.2) and the opportunities for personal and professional development (OAB.3). These findings align with those of Wagenaar (2015) and Staempfli & Fairtlough (2019).

Related to this, it is important to highlight the significance of intervision groups in uncovering aspects that might otherwise remain hidden from participants. The findings suggest that only through interactive, collective analysis can certain work interactions be improved for the benefit of both service users and professionals. Several researchers (e.g. Staempfli & Fairtlough, 2019) suggest that intervision serves as a crucial space for this type of development.

Furthermore, all interviewees recognised the continuity between reflection and feedback within the intervision process and its outcomes—both in terms of deep, applied learning and the expansion of resources available for personal and professional growth. Thus, intervision appears to be an effective methodology for fostering development across multiple dimensions, whether personal and professional, affective and relational or pragmatic and formative, extending further beyond the more general purposes it appears to provide for. Interviewees clearly stated that intervision had enabled them to develop key skills for progress, effective intervention and self-management in group work and professional interactions (OAB.2, OAB.3 & OAB.5). Similarly, Akhurst & Kelly (2006) found that peer supervision is crucial for developing facilitation skills necessary for effective participation in intervision.

When it comes to the interactive and relational sphere, findings from the analysis indicate that intervision plays a key role in fostering mutual care, providing support, encouraging identification with colleagues' realities and sharing emotions. It promotes team unity and cohesion, enabling open discussions on an equal footing where individuals feel recognised and reflected in one another. This process strengthens group dynamics and provides a foundation for addressing challenges in a balanced and constructive manner (Losada et al., 2019).

Regarding the usefulness of intervision in addressing team-related challenges in terms of operation, interviewees' arguments confirmed that it enhances understanding of individual, relational and group dynamics that impact the team. It also facilitates the review of the service project elements that have an influence on these dynamics, and of professional practices, opening opportunities for improvement and experimentation. Participants cited various aspects of work interactions where these benefits became evident, particularly in relation to intervision's ability to help resolve or mitigate workplace challenges such as discomfort, misunderstandings and conflicts, that impinge or limit its scope. Some of the improvements achieved through intervision confirm those identified in previous research, including work environment enhancements (Erpenbeck, 2001), increased motivation and workload reduction (Sonneveld et al., 2020), and indeed improved communication and social skills (Tietze, 2010).

Finally, interviewees emphasised that intervision supports fundamental service principles such as quality, objectivity, vision and mission, ensuring that these core values continue to guide professional practice beyond individual efforts. This perspective aligns with findings from Vera et al. (2009), reinforcing intervision's role in maintaining and upholding service quality, professional standards and overarching objectives.

Limitations

Firstly, a key limitation of this study is sample size. Although qualitative research of this nature does not require a minimum number of respondents for validity, a larger sample could have strengthened the categorical structure developed. Given the diversity of services and professional roles represented, additional participants could have provided a more extensive dataset, refining or expanding subcategories without necessarily altering the core framework.

Another methodological aspect that could further validate the established categories would be conducting an inter-judge validation process (as proposed by Delval, 2018). This would involve expert reviewers independently evaluating the categories and subsequently comparing their assessments to measure convergence. Such a validation process would further reinforce the reliability of the results.

Implications and Conclusions

Overall, intervision contributes to improvements across multiple aspects, benefiting professionals personally, enhancing team functioning and supporting more effective work with service users. Given these advantages, it would be worth integrating intervision as a standard practice within social services and social work, ensuring its long-term sustainability and periodic review, while reaping all the benefits mentioned.

The arguments presented by participants strongly support the definition of intervision proposed by Erpenbeck (2001): a practice that fosters self-sufficiency and high levels of professional development within interactions, extending beyond the workplace. Intervision represents an opportunity to unlock the full potential of those who participate in it. Ultimately, its success depends on the engagement and commitment of the professionals involved, allowing them to acquire valuable knowledge, deliver high-quality services, engage in healthy and assertive communication, build strong teams and, most importantly, grow both professionally and personally.

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