

CONSUMER ATTITUDES ABOUT SUPERVISION AS A SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, supervision as a service has become part of professional practice and also education in many professions. Nevertheless, organisations are short of information about it, and this explains the rationale of this research. When hearing the words “supervision, supervisor”, the employees of the organisations have different emotionally evaluating attitudes, and, for many of them, these may associate with in-service training, monitoring, and mentoring. Depending on the knowledge of consumers and their attitudes towards supervision, the demand for it will develop in future. This why a study was conducted to research the attitudes of consumers towards supervision as a service. A survey developed by the author and containing three dimensions (cognitive, affective, behavioural) was used in the study for finding out the attitude of consumers towards supervision as a service. 173 respondents participated in the survey. The survey was attended by 32% of respondents who are managers and 68% of respondents who are not managers, who have previous experience in supervision (49%) and those without experience in supervision (51%). The results of the study show that the attitude of consumers towards supervision is positive and that there are statistically significant differences between managers and non-managers and between those who have participated in supervision, and who are not only in the cognitive dimension. It may be concluded that managers and those who have participated in supervision have more knowledge about supervision and more positive attitudes towards it.

Keywords: attitudes, supervision as service, customers

INTRODUCTION

In our days when lifelong education is a matter of course, supervision has become an important component of professional activities in a number of professions, in particular those aimed at provision of aid. For a number of professionals, such as psychotherapists, psychologists and art therapists, it has become an integral part of the acquisition and maintenance of their professional status, including certification and re-certification.

The Latvian Association of Supervision is admitting more and more members every year. In 2018, website of the Latvian Association of Supervision counts already 89 members, compared to 66 members in the beginning of 2016; such increase indicates to rapid growth of popularity of supervision service [10].

The concept of attitude is popular; it is widely studied and described in scientific literature, described by different interpretations and definitions. Studies

of attitude are taking place not only in social psychology but also in marketing, in particular event marketing [5], or the attitude of Latvian consumers towards genetically modified bodies [1]. Studies of attitude are also present in business science, for example, the impact of situation on consumers' attitudes and behaviour [2]; the study of consumers' attitude towards plastic money [4].

According to the theory, attitude forms from three ingredients that can be defined as three components or dimensions of attitude; they present the ample spectrum of expression of attitudes [7], called the ABC model in modern marketing theories [9].

There are countless studies into possibilities for changing attitudes. Studies into attitudes date back to the fifties of the last century and their popularity has been increasing ever since. The EconPapers.org database of scientific publications contains information about thousands of scientific studies into attitudes and changing them, and also publications dating back to 1940. During the last few years, several research studies into the attitudes of various groups of consumers towards supervision have been conducted in Latvia as well [11] [12]. Although the consumer studies show that the attitude towards supervision is positive, consumers are still not ready to purchase the service themselves and expect active involvement and financial support from their organisations. This may be indicative of the changing nature of attitudes and shortage of information about supervision as a service.

Already in the middle of the last century, a team of scientists created a model of attitude change [3] after long-term research, paying attention to the components of the process of communication: who, to whom, what, when. According to this model, the change of the attitude of an individual may be influenced if information is provided to the target group (to whom) via a communication channel (how) it uses during the provision of the information (when), and the information is provided by a person who is an authority among the target group (who).

However, attitude can be changed most successfully by a person who is considered to be an expert, reliable, popular and personable. Conveying a message may become even more efficient if it is not perceived as a direct attempt of influence, if the message creates fear or if the message is more likely an evaluation, not a fact [6]. It is important to note that, in order to convey a comparatively simple message and to influence people, it is better to use a video, but a more complex material should be provided to the individual/consumer in writing. Another theory of changing attitude explains the reasons why positive attitudes do not turn into behaviour. For instance, consumers have positive attitudes towards supervision, but there is no demand for the service, and the consumer is not ready to pay for it.

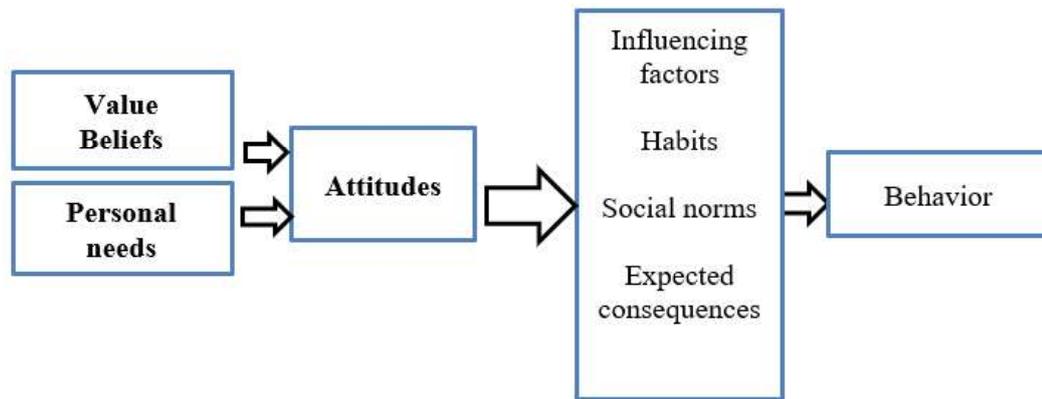


Figure 1. Factors which influence attitude [8]

People have links between convictions, values and attitudes. Attitudes are created by the personal needs. The factors which influence attitudes are habits, social norms and the expected consequences of behaviour. In order to change attitudes, it is necessary to create a need for the consumer by changing their convictions and values [8] (see Figure 1). A reason for negative attitudes is frequently shortage of information, and it is therefore essential to provide consumers with information by questioning individual views and values. This may be carried out in a group or individually as well as by involving experts in the group. Communication and types of communication are essential, as they assure positive attitudes among the beneficiaries. Creation of new needs and expectations by justifying it with the benefits to be achieved, assuring an understanding that change of attitudes may change the current environment. Also, to change the attitudes of consumers, it is necessary to understand the individual influencing factors. Change of attitudes may be used to popularise supervision.

The purpose of this study is determining the consumers' attitude towards supervision as a service.

Three research questions have been formulated for the purposes of this study: What is the attitude of consumers towards supervision? Whether or not statistically significant relations exist on the scales of attitude towards supervision? Are there statistically significant differences in attitudes towards supervisors for consumers who hold leading positions and those who hold subordinate positions? Are there statistically significant differences in attitudes towards supervision for consumers with supervisory experience and consumers who do not have experience in supervising?

Depending on the knowledge of customers and their attitudes towards supervision as a service, the demand for it will develop in future. Therefore, it is important to conduct research in this field in order to find out the attitudes of managers who make decisions in organizations to purchase supervision as a service.

RESEARCH METHODS AND RESPONDENTS

It was used data collection method: the author made survey consisted of 23 statements which were evaluated on a Likert-type scale with four value (Likert-type scales). All three dimensions of attitude towards supervision are compared in the study: emotional, cognitive and behavioural, the links between each of them. Thus, it is possible to find out the attitude towards supervision, what the knowledge of both research samples about supervision is, and what behaviours in association with supervision each of the research samples has, simultaneously finding out whether there are any differences between the results of both samples and what these differences are. 207 questionnaires were obtained in total, of which 173 questionnaires were suitable for data processing. The survey was attended by 32% of respondents who are managers (n = 55) and 68% of respondents who are not managers (n = 118), who have previous experience in supervision (n = 84) and those without experience in supervision (n = 88).

RESEARCH RESULTS

The author has conducted the study by opting for the quantitative research study strategy and, within it, using a survey regarding the attitudes of consumers towards supervision via collection and analysis of primary data. The conceptual model of the research study is provided in Figure 2.

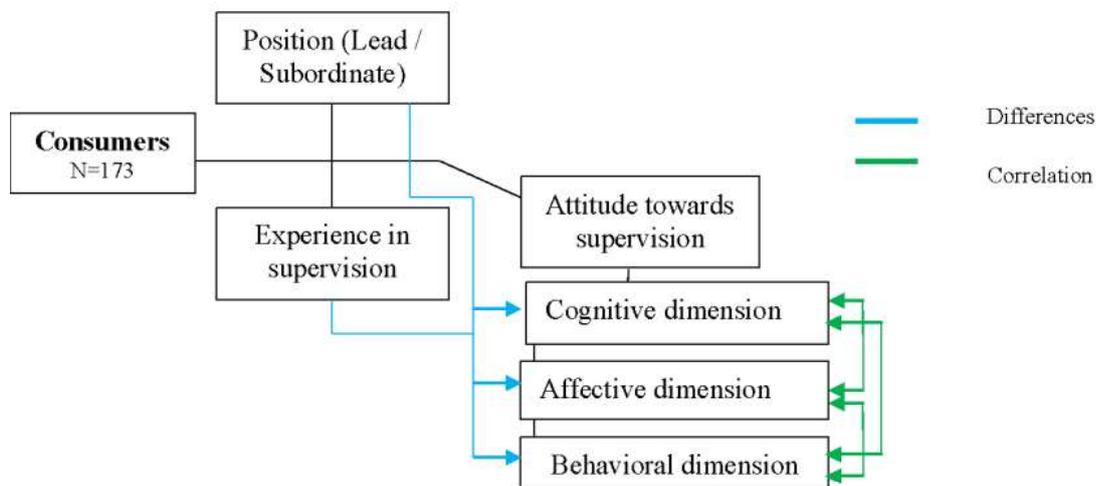


Figure 2. The conceptual model of the research (developed by the author)

Analysis of the results of attitudes towards supervision

To verify the credibility of the designed questionnaire regarding supervision, the Cronbach's Alpha (or the Consistency Coefficient) was calculated. It shows whether the statements are adequately and mutually consistent within each particular scale and within the entire survey (see Table 1).

Table 1. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the questionnaire regarding attitude towards supervision (developed by the author)

Scale	Cronbach's alpha	Number of statements
Affective dimension	0.618	6
Cognitive dimension	0.754	11
Behavioural dimension	0.708	6

The Pearson correlation factor was calculated to determine whether or not statistically significant correlation exists between attitude scales because, in spite of the fact that the data deviate from the normal distribution, all three scales in which the correlation factor is calculated are within the interval scale.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation coefficients in the attitudes dimensions (developed by the author)

		Cognitive dimension	Emotional dimension	Behavioural dimension
Cognitive dimension	Correlation coefficient		0.355**	0.482**
	Sig.	---	0.000	0.000
	N		173	173
Affective dimension	Correlation coefficient	0.355**		0.713**
	Sig.	.000	---	.000
	N	173		173
Behavioural dimension	Correlation coefficient	0.482**	0.713**	
	Sig.	.000	.000	---
	N	173	173	

According to the Pearson correlation factors, statistically significant correlations exist between all three attitude scales. The strongest correlation is observed between behavioural and affective scales (0.713) and the weakest one – in cognitive scale; the Pearson correlation factor between cognitive and affective scales is 0.355, and 0.482 between cognitive and behavioural scales respectively (see Table 2).

To answer the research questions about whether there are statistically significant differences in attitudes towards supervision between consumers representing various groups (managers, consumers with experience in supervision), the author has conducted a study of differences. Since, generally, the attitude scales do not correspond to the normal distribution, non-parametric methods have been used to determine the differences, by determining the Mann-Whitney U test values.

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U test values for consumers who hold managerial offices and consumers with subordinate job positions (developed by the author)

Attitude dimensions	Manna-Whitney U Test	Significance
Cognitive dimension	2645.00	0.050
Affective dimension	2765.00	0.114
Behavioural dimension	3015.00	0.449

There are statistically significant differences between the consumers who hold managerial offices and the consumers who hold subordinate job positions on only one of the three scales, i.e., on the cognitive scale where the significance (ρ) is less than or equal to 0.05 (see Table 3).

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U test values for consumers with and without experience in supervision (developed by the author)

Attitude dimensions	Manna-Whitney U Test	Significance
Cognitive dimension	2203.50	0.000
Affective dimension	3622.50	0.820
Behavioural dimension	3690.50	0.986

In the determination of the differences between the consumers with and without experience in supervision, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test show statistically significant differences on the cognitive scale (significance = 0.000). The median range indicators in this test show that the consumers with experience in supervision have higher scores on the cognitive scale, i.e., the attitude differs based specifically on this scale. Also, for these samples, the Mann-Whitney U test shows no statistically significant differences on other attitude scales (see Table 4).

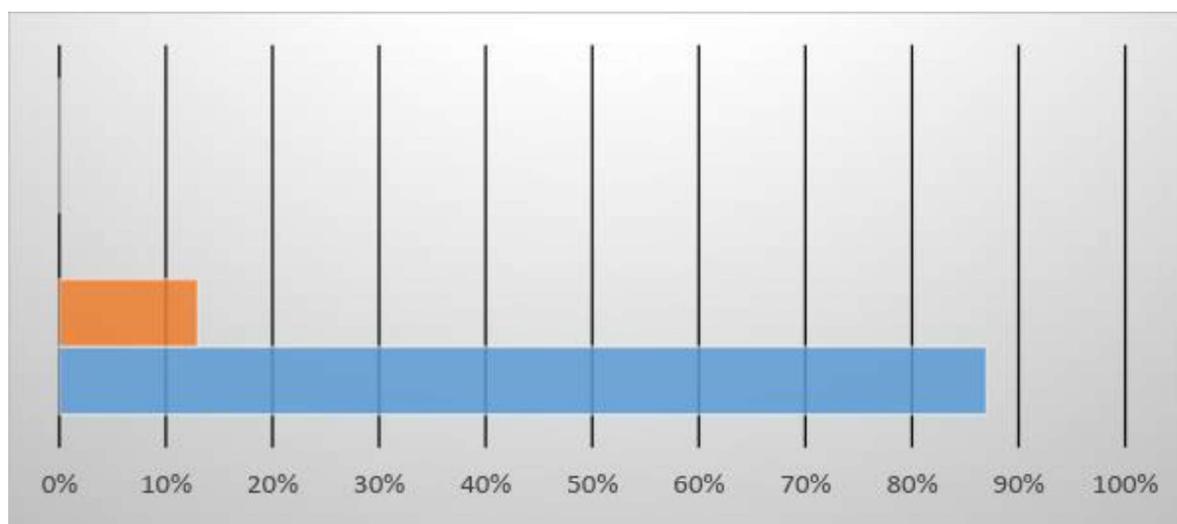


Figure 3. Attitude towards supervision (developed by the author)

Summary of responses to the statement “I have positive attitude towards supervision” regarding the attitude towards supervision service, affirmative responses have been made by 87% of respondents or major part or them. Though the statement is express, examination of the results shows that the respondents have made similar responses to negatively formulated statements, and therefore the responses can be considered credible (see Figure 3).

CONCLUSIONS

What is the attitude of consumers towards supervision? Most of the respondents have positive emotionally estimating attitude towards supervision and positive experience of it. Still, there are consumers (13%) with a negative emotionally evaluating attitude towards supervision, which is suggestive of certain negative experience or obscurity with regard to supervision.

Whether or not statistically significant correlation exists in attitude towards supervision? Statistically significant correlation exists in all attitude scales, and therefore the formation of attitude comprises closely related awareness, emotions and behaviour. The given correlation would mean that, the more favourable is the consumers’ emotionally estimating attitude, the higher is their willingness to apply for supervision. On the other hand, favourable attitude towards supervision would indicate to understanding and awareness of supervision as a useful service among respondents from different areas, both in managerial and non-managerial positions.

Are there statistically significant differences in attitudes towards supervisors for consumers who hold leading positions and those who hold subordinate positions?

Statistically significant differences exist only in the cognitive dimension. This suggests that managers have more knowledge about supervision than those who do not hold managerial job positions.

Are there statistically significant differences in attitudes towards supervision for consumers with supervisory experience and consumers who do not have experience in supervising?

Statistically significant differences exist only in the cognitive dimension. Experience in supervising the formation of knowledge about supervision. This suggests presence of knowledge about supervision in those who have participated in supervision.

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