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S. T. Nunev

Angel Kanchev University of Ruse,  
Associate Professor, Doctor of Science of Social Work,  
Bulgaria

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3414-0733>

## CREATING CONDITIONS IN THE SUPERVISION WITH SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS FOR ASSOCIATION OF THE VALUES OF PROFESSION AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT

**Abstract:** The article presents a research on a current problem in the field of social work supervision in practical training with 252 social work students from the Bachelor's and Master's degree programs at the University of Ruse, Bulgaria, in the period 2014 – 2018. The purpose of the research is to identify the respondents' attitudes towards the social work supervision for their association to the values and traditions of the profession and the creation of conditions for value, cognitive, professional and personal development. A methodology consistent with the purpose of the research is used. The analysis of the results reveals a steady positive tendency of the respondents' attitudes towards the social work supervision with students in the researched field. The contribution and importance of the realized supervision with students to their association with the values and the mission of social work, identification with the specialty and professional community of social workers is proved. In synthesis, they have important contribution for the value, cognitive, professional and personal development of students and for improving the quality and effectiveness of their educational preparation and professional realization.

**Key words:** supervision; supervision of social work students; attitudes towards conducted supervision; values of social work; identification with the specialty and profession; development of social work students.

**Language:** English

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### Introduction

Supervision in social work practical training is one of its essential components, representing a structured and interactive process, which is coordinated with the whole training and is characterised by partnership. It involves monitoring, facilitation, consultation, assistance in the process of learning and gaining experience, as well as encouraging students' activity and development [2; 7; 8; 9; 13; 14]. In accordance with the concept adopted by the educational teams, this supervision is implemented through various models with an emphasis on providing an educational environment and conditions for students to take part in supervision regularly, actively, deliberately and responsibly for: acquisition of values, knowledge, skills and good practical experience in certain spheres of social work;

integration of theory and practice and making a transfer between the two fields; analysis of the work and conduct of their own, of their clients and the staff; use of a critical analysis of emerging difficulties and problems, reflection and studying through reflection; improving competence and independence and achieving a change, growth, as well as professional and personal development; identifying with the professional community of social workers; association with the values, mission and traditions of social work; promotion and encouragement for implementing supervision into the training process and into the future professional activity [1; 4; 5; 6; 11; 18; 17].

Supervision in social work practical training of students in Bulgaria is an issue which has not been researched sufficiently [3; 12; 14; 15]. The first in-

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depth research project on this topic in Europe was realised at seven universities in countries with different experience (The Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Spain, Belgium, Croatia, Slovenia) in 2010 from the Supervision in Social Work Education in Europe network [10]. To a certain extent, it serves as a starting point in researchers' efforts to establish and develop this activity in training and education in social work.

Our research interest is directed towards studying the effect of supervision of social work students on their association with the values and traditions of the profession and on the creation of conditions for value, cognitive, professional and personal development. This topic field and complex issue is of significant importance for forming a value orientation and students' association with the university programme and profession which have an important contribution to the quality and efficiency of their educational training and professional realisation.

### **Research on identifying the attitudes of students towards the implementation of social work supervision for their association with the values and traditions of the profession and on the creation of conditions for value, cognitive, professional and personal development**

#### ***Purpose of the research***

Identifying the attitudes of students from the bachelor and master programmes in social work towards the contribution of the supervision in social work practical training for their association with the values and traditions of the profession and the creation of conditions for value, cognitive, professional and personal development.

#### ***Participants in the research***

The research was conducted among 225 students (N = 225) from the Bachelor's social work programme (88%) and Master's programme (12%) at University of Ruse between 2014 and 2018. The total number of students from the two programmes over the whole period of research is 252, which reveals that 89.29% of them have chosen to take part in it. The sample is unintentional and random. It provides equal opportunities for participation to all students from both educational qualification degree programmes. A small non-representative sample has been chosen in compliance with the following factors: cognitive and social orientation of the research and specific character of the interaction in the context of supervision as an activity with certain content, functional, role and technological characteristics; contribution of the implemented supervision to the formation in students of attitudes for their association with the values and traditions of the profession and the creation of conditions for value, cognitive, professional and personal development; place, role

and importance of supervision of students as an interactive and pedagogical environment for analysing and coping with emerging problems and for improving the quality and efficiency practical training in social work; carrying out a research of a problem of great importance for the value, cognitive, professional and personal development of students, their professional identity and association with the values and traditions of the social work profession; encouraging and motivating students by including them in supervision to accomplish set tasks and deal with emerging difficulties with a high level of responsibility and competence; the specifics of the subject of research in the context of practical training in social work and the processes and dynamics related to its implementation; the purpose and subject of the research and the possibility for efficient work with the sample.

#### ***Methods***

The research is carried out with a tool created by the author - 'Questionnaire for a study on the attitudes of students from the bachelor's and master's degree social work programme towards implementing supervision in their social work practical training', which has been approbated, validated and which includes 7 subscales with 25 items. It is anonymous and is completed from a distance using an online form. In accordance with the purpose of the research, an analysis will be made of the respondents' answers from the subscale for attitudes towards the implementation of supervision in social work practical training for their association with the values and traditions of the profession and the creation of conditions for value, cognitive, professional and personal development. The analysis will be combined with the data from the additional question about the expected results from the use of supervision in the practical training and from the conducted interview, which is linked thematically to the questions from the research tool. Respondents' answers about their attitudes are registered using a five-point Likert scale. To verify the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ) has been used for the sample surveyed (N = 225) through an analysis of the seven subscales. The reliability of the questionnaire is  $\alpha = 0.746$ , which reveals very good consistency of the questions. The study is conducted with informed consent and is voluntary and anonymous. The instructions for completion of the questionnaire include explanations of the terms used and their content and methodical specifics in conducting supervision in the practical training in social work.

***Analysis of the results from the research in Subscale 7G "Association of supervised students with the values and traditions of the profession and creation of conditions for value, cognitive and personal development" from the research tool***

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The subscale consists of items for finding out the attitudes of respondents towards the implementation of supervision in social work practical training in the following fields: the creation of conditions during supervision for introduction of supervisees to the values and traditions of social work and the professional community of social workers; supporting and promoting the value and cognitive development of supervisees through active and regular participation in supervision; contribution of supervision to the personal and professional development of supervised students; encouraging, mobilising and motivational function of supervision for solving set tasks with a high level of responsibility; contribution of supervision to the research and analysis done by supervised students of emerging problems and dealing with resulting challenges and difficulties. In their value, content and methodical aspect, the items included in the subscale represent important components of supervision in social work practical training connected with introduction of students during supervision to the values and traditions of the professional community of social workers and creation of conditions for value, cognitive, professional and personal development.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data in Subscale 7G of the research tool provides an opportunity for drawing the following main conclusions:

A. Over the research period 2014 – 2018, high numerical values were registered of shares of responses with positive attitudes in the items from the subscale, which are characterised by distribution within the 83.11% - 88.89% range for responses with a firmly expressed agreement (“I entirely agree”) and with lower values of the positive and hesitant responses (“I’m inclined to agree”), ranging from 9.78% to 15.11% (Table 1; Figure 1). According to the data in the subscale, there are low values of shares of responses representing neutral positions within the 1.33% – 1.78% range and a lack of responses with negative attitude. The data provided by the quantitative and qualitative analysis allows drawing a conclusion that there is an expressed high degree of firm responses and agreement with statements about positive attitudes resulting in the formation of stable trend with positive orientation.

B. The empirical data in Subscale 7G represent high average numerical values of statements from answers to questions about positive attitudes in all items over the whole period of research (2014 – 2018). The firmly expressed positions (“I entirely agree”) for the period 2014 – 2016 have a numerical value of 86.49%, while those responses with hesitantly expressed positive statements (“I’m inclined to agree”) – a numerical value of 86.49%. The neutral opinions are characterised by a low average value of 1.51% while no expressed negative positions were registered (Table 1; Figure 1). The presented positive

trend in respondents’ attitudes over the next stage of the research (2017 – 2018) is upgraded and developed and we can notice a significant increase by about eight percent of the share of responses with firmly expressed agreement with statements with positive attitudes (94.25%), as well as a decrease in the values of shares of hesitantly expressed positive statements (8.05%) and in the answers with a neutral opinion (0.46%) (Table 3; Figure 3). The demonstrated positive change in the analysed subscale represents a high degree of dominance of firmly expressed agreement with statements with positive attitudes and a stable upward trend of the values of their shares. In parallel with this, there is a decrease in the numerical values of the hesitantly expressed positive statements and of the expressed neutral opinions, as well as a lack of negative positions. The quantitative and qualitative analysis provides an opportunity for making a conclusion about the existence of a dynamic, which represents a positive development of respondents’ answers regarding the possibilities of supervision for introducing supervised students to the values and traditions of the profession and creation of conditions for value, cognitive, professional and personal development. The statement formulated in the previous paragraph about noticeable positive trend in respondents’ answers is corroborated and it provides an opportunity for proving a statement about stable positive trend.

C. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data in Subscale 7G allows for presenting information about an expressed by respondents high degree of agreement with statements with positive attitudes related to:

- creating conditions in supervision for introducing supervisees to the values and traditions of social work and the professional community of social workers (Item G1). In the analysed element for the period of research from 2014 to 2016, a high numerical value of 87.68% was identified of the share of answers with firmly expressed agreement with statements with positive attitudes (“I entirely agree”), which is combined with low values of statements with positive attitudes expressed with a certain degree of hesitation (“I’m inclined to agree”) (10.15%) and of expressed neutral opinions (2.17%) (Table 2; Figure 2). No negative answers were registered. The presented quantitative information and its qualitative analysis allow drawing the conclusion that there is a high degree of firmly expressed agreement with the stated positions and the positive attitudes connected with them. The registered positive trend is upgraded and developed over the second period of the research (2017 – 2018). It is characterised by an increase by about three percent of the numerical value of the relative share of answers with a firmly expressed agreement (“I entirely agree”) with statements with positive attitudes (90.80%), a decrease in the value of the share of hesitantly expressed positive answers

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("I'm inclined to agree") (9.20%) and lack of answers with a neutral opinion (Table 3; Figure 3). The dynamic in the development of positive attitudes of respondents ascertained in this item confirms the general positive trend about the role of supervision in social work practical training for introducing students to the values and traditions of social work and the professional community of social workers;

- assisting and encouraging the value and cognitive development of supervisees through an active and regular participation in supervision (Item G2). The registered relative share of respondents' answers with a firmly expressed agreement ("I entirely agree") with statements with positive attitudes in the given item over the period 2014 – 2016 has a high numerical value of 84.78%, while the shares of answers with statements with positive attitudes expressed with certain hesitation ("I'm inclined to agree") (13.05%) and with a neutral opinion (2.17%) are characterised by low numerical values (Table 2; Figure 2). No answers with expressed negative positions were recorded. The empirical data drawn from this as well as their analysis represent a positive trend which is confirmed, upgraded and developed over the second period of research (2017 – 2018). A confirmation of this are the increase by about nine percent of the numerical value of the share of responses with a firmly expressed agreement with statements with positive attitudes ("I entirely agree") (93.10%) and a significant decrease in the values of shares with hesitantly expressed positive answers ("I'm inclined to agree") (5.75%) as well as answers with an expressed neutral opinion (1.15%) (Table 3; Figure 3). No explicit negative positions were recorded over this period. The presented quantitative information and its qualitative analysis allow drawing a conclusion about a stable positive trend in respondents' attitudes towards assisting and encouraging their value and cognitive development through an active and regular participation in supervision;

- contribution of supervision to the personal and professional development of supervised students (Item G3). The relative share of respondents' answers with a firmly expressed agreement ("I entirely agree") with statements with positive attitudes in the given item for the period 2014 – 2016 has a relatively low numerical value of 78.98% for the subscale (Table 2; Figure 2). The shares of answers expressing positive attitudes with hesitation ("I'm inclined to agree") (18.12%) and a neutral opinion (2.90%) are characterised in a comparative plan as well as in the context of the subscale with high values. No answers with explicit negative positions were recorded. The presented qualitative information and its analysis reveal a presence of a minimal dynamic in the attitudes of students. It does not change the general positive trend and we may assume that it is caused by insufficient conviction and controversies among

respondents regarding the contribution of taking part in supervision to their personal and professional development. In this train of thought, it is recommended to take action for overcoming deficits and for improving the organisation and active, regular and responsible participation in methodically resourced and competently conducted supervision, which, on the basis of acquired experience, first-hand experience and achieved results, will lead to conviction about the benefits of supervision for the professional and personal development. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data allows drawing a conclusion about a positive trend in the respondents' attitudes in the given item. The trend with the positive orientation is upgraded, developed and confirmed during the next period of the research (2017 – 2018), as the numerical value of the share of answers with a firmly expressed agreement ("I entirely agree") with statements with positive attitudes is increased significantly by about nine percent and reaches 89.66%, while the value of the share of positive answers expressed with hesitation ("I'm inclined to agree") is reduced by eight percent (10.34%) and no answers with an expressed negative position are recorded (Table 3; Figure 3). The distribution of the values of relative shares of responses about various types of attitudes in the assessment scale of the questionnaire presents distribution of the majority of them at high points of the positive sector representing positive attitudes;

- a stimulating, mobilising and motivating function of supervision for solving set tasks with a high level of responsibility by supervised students (Item G4). The relative share of respondents' answers for the period 2014 – 2016 with a firmly expressed agreement ("I entirely agree") with statements with positive attitudes in the given item has a relatively high numerical value of 84.06% (Table 2; Figure 2). The share of answers with hesitantly expressed positive attitudes ("I'm inclined to agree") is represented by 14.49% and is combined with a low value of responses with a neutral opinion (1.45%) (Table 2; Figure 2). No answers with explicit negative positions were recorded. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data allows drawing a conclusion about a positive trend in the respondents' attitudes in the given item. This is confirmed and becomes stable during the next period of research (2017 – 2018), when the numerical values of the share of answers firmly expressed agreement ("I entirely agree") with statements with positive attitudes (91.95%) increases by approximately seven percent, while the hesitantly expressed positive answers ("I'm inclined to agree") (6.90%) is decreased by about seven percent (Table 3; Figure 3). A slight decrease was also recorded in the numerical value of the share of answers with a neutral opinion (1.15%). The distribution of the values of relative shares of responses about various types of attitudes in the



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assessment scale of the research instrument presents distribution of the majority of them at high points of the sector connected with positive attitudes;

- contribution of supervision for research and analysis by supervised students of emerging problems and dealing with challenges and difficulties arising from them (Item G5). In the given item for the first period of research (2014 – 2016), a numerical value of 81.16% was identified of the share of answers with firmly expressed agreement with statements with positive attitudes (“I entirely agree”), which is combined with relatively low values of statements with positive attitudes expressed with a certain degree of hesitation (“I’m inclined to agree”) (16.67%) and of expressed neutral opinions (2.17%) (Table 2; Figure 2). No answers with expressed negative positions were recorded. The presented quantitative information and its qualitative analysis allow drawing the conclusion that there is a relatively high degree of firmly expressed agreement with the stated positions and the positive attitudes connected with them. The registered positive trend is upgraded, confirmed and developed over the next period of the research (2017 – 2018), which is characterised by an increase by about ten percent of the numerical value of the relative share of answers with a firmly expressed agreement (“I entirely agree”) with statements with positive attitudes (91.95%), a decrease by approximately eight percent in the value of the share of hesitantly expressed positive answers (“I’m inclined to agree”) (8.05%) and a lack of answers with a neutral opinion (Table 3; Figure 3). The dynamic found in the given item has a clearly outlined focus on the development of positive attitudes of respondents and it confirms the general positive trend about the contribution of supervision to the research and analysis by supervised students of emerging problems and to the coping with challenges and difficulties caused by them, their introduction to the values and traditions of the profession, as well as their value, cognitive, professional and personal development.

During the conducted interview, respondents present their opinions on the questions from Subscale 7G: e.g., “My participation in supervision during my practical training at different locations over the course of several semesters helped me to familiarise myself better with the job of the social worker, as well as the values and mission it is governed by. This is very useful to me as I realised its importance for society and the responsibility of my choice of university programme and profession”; “I participate in supervision in my social work practical training on a regular basis and in my opinion it contributes both to the successful application of theoretical knowledge in practice and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills in different conditions. These new skills and knowledge helped me get a better insight into users’ behaviour and reactions, social work in different social services and departments, as well as the

profession of the social worker”; “Supervision in social work practical training is useful for the practical and theoretical training in my university programme and this is what stimulates me to use as much as possible the possibilities for studying and development which it provides”; “Analysing difficulties and problems in supervision from the activities in practical training helps me to get a better insight into their specifics, into the causes for their origin and to deal with them more successfully”; “In some of the social services, supervision is not conducted regularly, is done formally and for only a short time, and this does not allow analysing the presented problems in depth and finding the causes and ways for dealing with them”.

Respondents’ answers from the conducted interview confirm the established positive trend in their attitudes from the quantitative and qualitative analysis in the given subscale. However, it also presents opinions for improving the organisation and for a more noticeable inclusion of an analytical component in supervision with the aim of increasing its efficiency and improving the quality of the practical training of social work students. Our view is that a significant contribution in this direction may come from the implementation of regulations in social work education and standards for supervision of social work students, which specify the content, functional, role, organisational, technological and methodological components of supervision in the practical training of students from the programmes in the Social Work direction.

### Discussion and conclusions

The reasonable evidence based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis provide an opportunity for drawing a conclusion for positioning the majority of the values of shares of respondents’ answers in the higher levels of the affirmative section of the assessment scale in the research tool connected with positive attitudes. This allows making a conclusion about the existence of a positive direction in students’ attitudes towards providing opportunities in supervision for introducing supervised students to the values and traditions of the profession and creation of conditions for value, cognitive, professional and personal development.

The trend in question is corroborated by the results from the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the additional question in the research tool for identifying respondents’ attitudes towards expected results from conducting supervision in social work practical training of social work students. They reveal positioning of the majority of values of shares of respondents’ answers in the higher levels of the affirmative section of the assessment scale in the research tool revealing positive attitudes. This allows drawing a conclusion about a stable positive orientation in students’ answers towards expected

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good and very good results from the participation in supervision in social work practical training in various fields from the social work sphere.

In this context, the general stable positive trend found in Subscale 7G and in the additional question proves the contribution of the supervision in social work practical training realised through a certain model to the positivity of students' attitudes towards creation of an environment and conditions for their introduction to the values and traditions of the profession, for the value, cognitive, professional and personal development and for achieving high results from the inclusion in supervision. This allows confirming the topicality and importance of the results and conclusions of the research, as well as the possibilities for its use in the social work training and education.

### Conclusion

Forming positive student attitudes towards the contribution of supervision in social work in their practical training to the introduction to the values and traditions of the profession, as well as to the value, cognitive, professional and personal development is

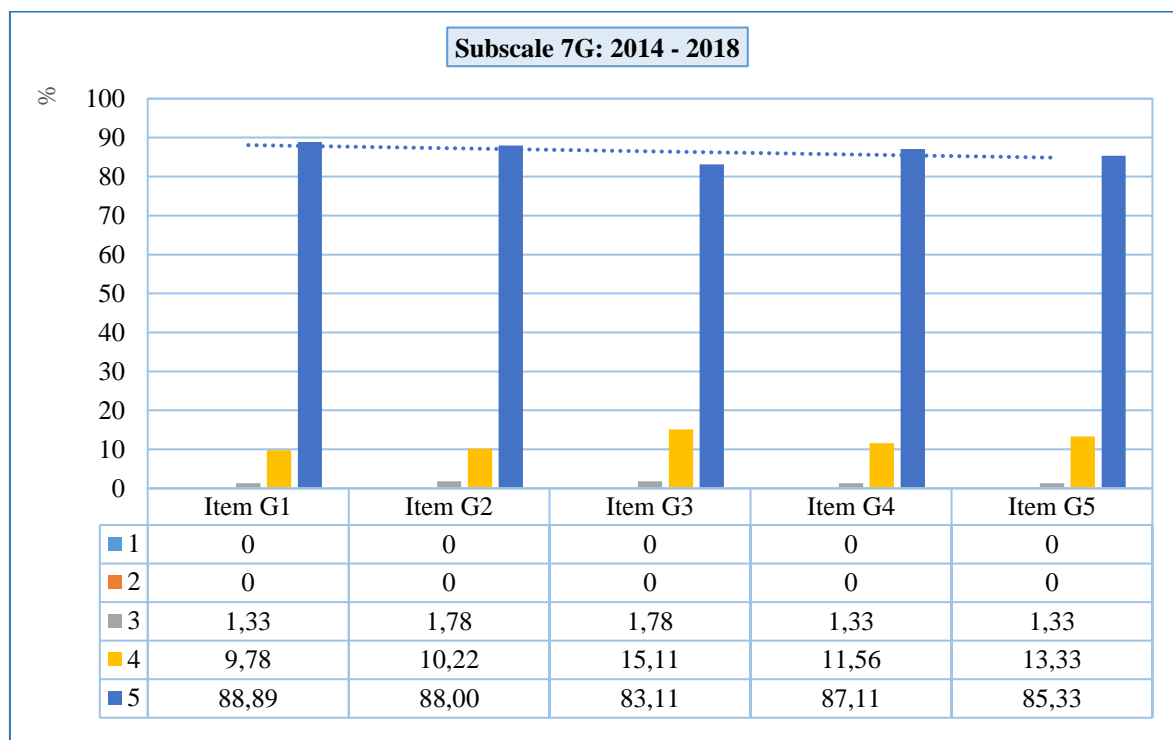
one of the main emphases which encourages and motivates students to make full use of the environment, conditions and opportunities for studying, gaining good experience and development, and which simultaneously determines the quality of the achieved results and efficiency of the realised activity. In the current conditions in Bulgaria characterised by an accelerated development of the system of social services and by orientation towards improving their quality and efficiency, the need emerges for introduction of regulations in social work training as well as standards of supervision of social work students. They must ensure the training of competent experts who associate themselves with the profession, who have a clear vision and responsible attitude and conduct towards supervision as a key factor setting the quality and efficiency of catering for clients/users and their development as agents of a social change and development.

**Table 1. Values of the relative shares of respondents' answers on the Likert's 5-point scale in Subscale 7G: 2014 – 2018**

Item	Values of the relative shares of respondents answers Subscale 7G: 2014 – 2018 (%)				
	I entirely disagree	I'm inclined to disagree	I have no opinion	I'm inclined to agree	I entirely agree
Item G1	0	0	1.33	9.78	88.89
Item G2	0	0	1.78	10.22	88.00
Item G3	0	0	1.78	15.11	83.11
Item G4	0	0	1.33	11.56	87.11
Item G5	0	0	1.33	13.33	85.33
Average value	0	0	1.51	12.00	86.49

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**Figure 1 – Values of the relative shares of respondents' answers on the Likert's 5-point scale in Subscale 7G: 2014 – 2018**

№	Evaluation of respondents' answers on the Likert's 5-point scale	Conditioned annotation of the answers
1	I entirely disagree	1
2	I'm inclined to disagree	2
3	I have no opinion	3
4	I'm inclined to agree	4
5	I entirely agree	5

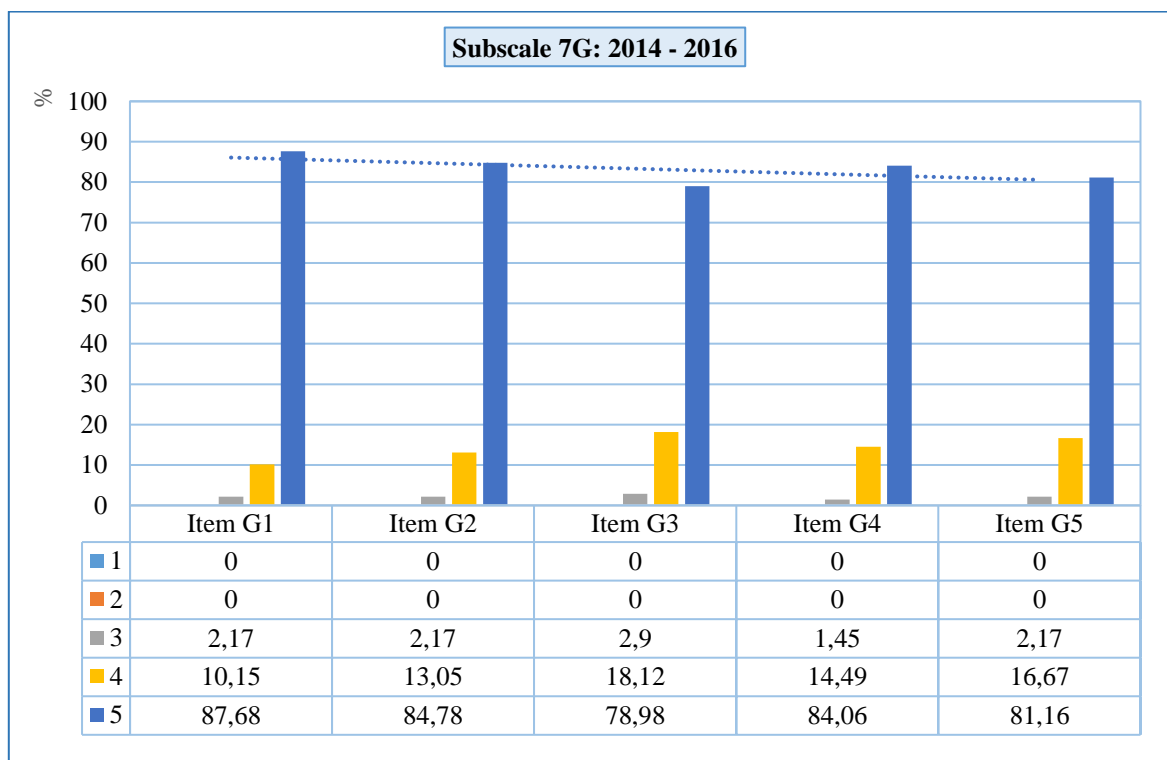
**Table 2. Values of the relative shares of respondents' answers on the Likert's 5-point scale in Subscale 7G: 2014 – 2016**

Values of the relative shares of respondents answers  
Subscale 7G: 2014 – 2016 (%)

Item	I entirely disagree	I'm inclined to disagree	I have no opinion	I'm inclined to agree	I entirely agree
Item G1	0	0	2.17	10.15	87.68
Item G2	0	0	2.17	13.05	84.78
Item G3	0	0	2.90	18.12	78.98
Item G4	0	0	1.45	14.49	84.06
Item G5	0	0	2.17	16.67	81.16
Average value	0	0	2.17	14.49	83.34

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**Figure 2 – Values of the relative shares of respondents’ answers on the Likert’s 5-point scale in Subscale 7G: 2014 – 2016**

№	Evaluation of respondents’ answers on the Likert’s 5-point scale	Conditioned annotation of the answers
1	I entirely disagree	1
2	I’m inclined to disagree	2
3	I have no opinion	3
4	I’m inclined to agree	4
5	I entirely agree	5

**Table 3. Values of the relative shares of respondents’ answers on the Likert’s 5-point scale in Subscale 7G: 2017 – 2018**

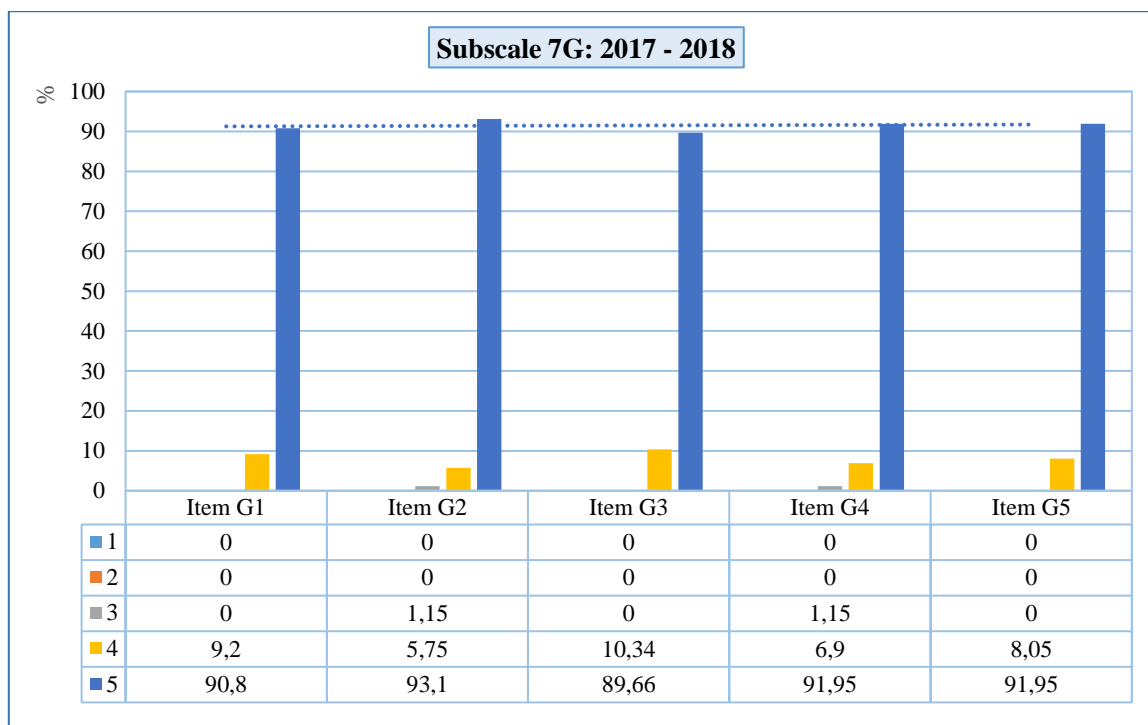
Values of the relative shares of respondents answers  
Subscale 7G: 2017 – 2018 (%)

Item	I entirely disagree	I’m inclined to disagree	I have no opinion	I’m inclined to agree	I entirely agree
Item G1	0	0	0	9,20	90,80
Item G2	0	0	1,15	5,75	93,10
Item G3	0	0	0	10,34	89,66
Item G4	0	0	1,15	6,90	91,95
Item G5	0	0	0	8,05	91,95
Average value	0	0	0,46	8,05	91,49



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JIF = 1.500	SJIF (Morocco) = 5.667	OAJI (USA) = 0.350



**Figure 3 – Values of the relative shares of respondents' answers on the Likert's 5-point scale in Subscale 7G: 2017 – 2018**

№	Evaluation of respondents' answers on the Likert's 5-point scale	Conditioned annotation of the answers
1	I entirely disagree	1
2	I'm inclined to disagree	2
3	I have no opinion	3
4	I'm inclined to agree	4
5	I entirely agree	5

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**Impact Factor:**

**ISRA (India) = 3.117**  
**ISI (Dubai, UAE) = 0.829**  
**GIF (Australia) = 0.564**  
**JIF = 1.500**

**SIS (USA) = 0.912**  
**PIHHI (Russia) = 0.126**  
**ESJI (KZ) = 8.716**  
**SJIF (Morocco) = 5.667**

**ICV (Poland) = 6.630**  
**PIF (India) = 1.940**  
**IBI (India) = 4.260**  
**OAJI (USA) = 0.350**

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