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## BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS BETWEEN COUNSELLOR AND CLIENT – RESEARCH FINDINGS

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**ABSTRACT** *The article focuses on the presentation of the results of empirical research in counsellors in the field of social counselling and psychological counselling. The research focused on the factors that are important for the development of boundary violations, on the perception of boundary violations on the side the counsellor side and on the client side, on measures/procedures that counsellors took in solving problems of boundary violations between counsellor and client.*

**KEY WORDS:** *client, client relationship, boundary violation*

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## **DEFINITION OF BASIC TERMS**

Counselling has been increasingly in demand and provided in various areas of human care (psychological, social, tax, financial, career, economic etc.) and thus, helps to solve the problem situation more successfully and faster.

Based on the fact that counselling is a set of activities, it includes several characteristic features (Gabura, Tokárová, Schavel, Oláh, Žilová, Novotná), which have an interdisciplinary character, as several scientific disciplines participate in solving counselling tasks. The multi-sphere and multi-consumption nature of counselling is based on the fact that counselling helps a wide range of persons seeking assistance, cooperates with various ministries, e.g. education, healthcare etc. Counselling is institutionalized in its nature, as it is provided in specific institutions that are authorized, according to the applicable legislation, to perform specialized counselling activities. The professional nature indicates the need for professionally trained staff who is theoretically and practically prepared to perform consulting activities. The basic condition for good counselling is an equal relationship between the counsellor and the client. The counsellor should accept the client's differences and respect their authenticity. He or she should encourage and support the client to change, be able to empathetically understand their current situation and help them find the optimal pattern of behaviour and functioning in the world (Mydlíková et al.) and at the same time be congruent.

In social work, **social counselling** began to develop especially in the period when social problems began to arise and grow and the number of people who are dependent on state aid increased. Even today, people find themselves in social or material need, without the ability to solve the situation on their own. The effective way of developing social work and social counselling, both in theory and in practice, is the cooperation of public and private care, which should cooperate and encourage each other and effectively build on the assistance already provided (Levická, 1999). At present, we can say that we have *"a completed system of counselling, which means that there is/are:*

- a) uniform understanding of counselling according to particular scientific field,*
- b) developed methodologies and techniques,*
- c) own theoretical research as well as research of foreign experts,*

- d) determined who and under what conditions may provide counselling,*
- e) external attributes, which include legislation, the existence of a professional organization, are completed” (Levická).*

In the system of social assistance, social counselling is provided to a person, which according to Baumruková et al.(1997) should ensure:

- full information on the possibilities of solving the problem, as well as the claims that arise from the legal norms governing the social protection system. This assistance is provided by the state administration, municipality or non-state entities with the help of social and other workers,
- full assistance provided by professional counselling, including social therapy.

The essence of counselling is the counselling process itself, which is based on the active cooperation of the social counsellor and the client. The counselling process presupposes the establishment of an optimal counselling relationship between the counsellor and the client based on empathy, congruence, assertiveness and cooperation, which should be based on rules already agreed when starting the cooperation and mutual respect of all participants.

The social counsellor – client relationship is influenced by both participants in social counselling, especially their individual and professional characteristics. Depending on what dominates in the social counsellor - the client relationship, we can distinguish several types of relationships:

- a relationship based on a partnership approach, where the social counsellor approaches the client as an expert who respects the client as a partner for cooperation,
- a relationship based on an expert approach, where the social counsellor is considered to be an expert with an exceptional ability in solving client problems. The counsellor-client relationship works on the basis of the counsellor’s professional superiority,
- relationship based on a practical approach, where the social counsellor works with the client on the basis of personal experience and does not recognize theoretical knowledge, i.e. prefers a pragmatic approach (modified by the authors: Levická (2007)).

In connection with this, we believe that the nature, form and violations of the relationship between the social counsellor and the client are also influenced by the counsellor's theoretical approach to the client, on which it is based, as well as his or her personality and personal approach to the client.

When working as a social counsellor, it is ideal to accept anyone as a client. However, it is certain that this requirement cannot be met in practice. Anyone who could implement this criterion would be an extraordinary person. It is necessary to accept as a fact that not everyone can work efficiently with anyone and that every counsellor will meet a client who is unlikable to him or her or for whom he or she could not feel any empathy. There is a lot of truth in this statement. But the role of a social counsellor is first and foremost to make contact and build a relationship. The basic premise here is the ability and effort to accept the client the way they are. The basic affection for the client as a person must exist independently of all the measures that the social counsellor will take and implement.

The client comes to the social counsellor mostly in a time of having long-term stress. They are often passive and expect help. In such situations, K. Kopřiva (1997) advises to observe criteria that will allow to maintain the relationship between two independent, autonomous persons:

- ask what the client needs, talk to them about their needs. The social worker/counsellor should avoid judgment and conviction. The client is responsible for themselves, even if they often (or during the first contacts with the social worker) do not want to identify with it,
- not accept such requests for assistance from the social client which, in the opinion of the social worker/counsellor, would not help the client or on which the social worker has not yet been able to make a responsible decision,
- define the conditions under which assistance may be provided to the client. Do not change or circumvent these conditions without good reason,
- maintain affection for the client even if they do not comply with the agreed rules or other principles, conventions. Respond to violations of these rules by taking measures and inform the client about them.

When observing the above principles of the relationship with the social client, the social counsellor should not feel disappointed with the results of his or her work, if the client is not willing to cooperate or for different reasons (which the social counsellor does not have control of) no solution is found to the client's problem situation. And if he or she feels disappointed, it's his or her problem and they have to solve it on their own.

The whole system in society and also in nature is based on certain conditions and boundaries, which results in the absence of chaos and the creation of a certain "order". Similarly, interpersonal relationships are formed by certain boundaries, which can also be observed in the helping professions in the counsellor-client relationship. The boundaries here serve to create a professional nature of the relationship and their goal is to prevent abuse of the client or counsellor during their cooperation. *"The boundaries of a relationship include defining roles, meeting conditions, providing information about oneself, one's privacy and other circumstances. They help to create a sense of safety, consistency, security and clarity,"* (Čerešník, 2012).

In connection with the boundaries of the counselling relationship, the boundaries may be violated by social counsellor but also by the client. In practice, this means the need to divide professional roles, because if the boundaries were not clear, it would have destructive consequences for the relationship between the counsellor and the client, their working alliance and also on the final result of counselling (Levická, 2007). There may be situations of a different nature that are affected by problems with boundaries, such as the ambiguity of boundaries, their crossing or their violation.

Žilová et al. (2010) in the case of violations on the part of the client states that "this is behaviour towards a social worker by which the client wants to intentionally or unintentionally disrupt communication and process of building a relationship between them and the social worker". When defining boundary violations by the client, we believe that when defining them, we can base the definitions on the behaviour of individual types of clients. When characterizing boundary violations in the counsellor-client relationship, we will focus only on violations by social counsellor, as we believe that the counsellor as a professional has the ability to detect boundary violations in the relationship rather than the client and thus prevent them, eliminate them or alert the client

in time and set the boundaries for effective cooperation. The social counsellor should avoid violating the boundaries in relation to the client as part of the counselling work, which is also part of his professional honour and work ethic.

One of the most common mistakes is the **excessive help of a counsellor** when he or she tries to solve everything on their own. This deprives the client of the opportunity to cope with the burden in the current situation, but also in the future. They can also be deprived of their own ability to handle the situation. **Merging** is a situation where the social counsellor considers the client's problems to be his or her own. In this case, it is necessary to separate empathy from sympathy. **Making a sacrifice** for the client does not respect the client's autonomy and makes them an independent person. **Boundary impermeability** is also not a positive phenomenon, it tends to occur more often on the client's side. In the case of a social worker, it is characterized by a cold attitude and antipathy. Kopriva (2006) talks about other boundary violations on the part of the counsellor as tendencies to **extend of one's own boundaries**, which is characterized by excessive involvement of the social counsellor, when he or she tries to help the client too much, the counsellor extends the boundaries of their own personality to the client. The counsellor compensates for his or her own lack of self-confidence and loneliness by organizing life for others. **Inadequate control** over the client is manifested by non-respect of the autonomy of the client, who is not respected, cannot comment on the problem and their rights are thus violated. **The obligatory approach** is manifested in those social counsellors who do not do their job out of personal interest or inner conviction but as a routine. The approach to clients indifferent, careless, reluctant and arrogant. As a result, there is a huge gap in cooperation, a lack of trust and the goals are not met. **Devaluation**, as one of the counsellor's failures, is described by Lemon (Pribula, Pala, 2006), who states that *"the most common devaluation manifestations include: failure to say hello, ignorance, passive listening and disinterest, tactlessness and insensitivity, ruthlessness, insult and unnecessary criticism, secrecy violation, official tone, underestimation, contempt, sarcasm, irony, preferring one over the others in a group, bringing the client into embarrassing situations, questioning abilities and common sense, falsehood, slander, defamation and lying, stereotypical phrases and clichés, interruption of the client's speech,*

*postponing solving problems*". Levická et al.(2007) further characterizes the **dual relationship** as one of the inappropriate elements in cooperation. She describes it as a relationship between a social counsellor and a client which has nothing to do with the help process. The result is conflicts between professional duty and other relationships which the social counsellor and the client have.

**Research outcome** – the experience of social consultants with the violations of boundaries in a consulting process

Consulting is an interpersonal activity based on a partnership and professional-personal relationship between a consultant and a client; we assume that in this relationship the same laws are applied as for other interpersonal relationships. These laws as well as boundaries and violations of relationships are being dealt with by many experts in a research field. In our research we focused on how these boundaries and their violations as well as overall violations of a relationships are perceived by consultants and what their practical experience is (Holíková, 2017).

The research object has been the experience of social consultants with boundaries violations in a consulting process. In qualitative research, the participants have been consultants operating in various social spheres. It has been our intentional choice with the following criteria: providing social consulting. The participants have been 4 women at the age of 30 – 40, with the university degree in social work / social consulting, with minimum 3-year practice in the field. Participant 1 (P1) is a consultant working in Retirement Home in L., participant 2 (P2) is a consultant in Crisis Centre in M., participant 3 (P3) is a consultant in Centre of Pedagogical-Psychological Counselling and Prevention in R., and participant 4 (P4) works as a consultant at Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in U.

To collect the empirical data we have used a semi-structured interview with an audio record, followed by transcription, coding, sorting, analysis, synthesis, generalization and others. The data provided by the participants were processed via the enshrined theory of Glaser and Strauss (Gavora, 2007).

**FACTORS THAT SOCIAL CONSULTANTS SEE AS CRUCIAL  
IN THE FORMATION OF THE VIOLATIONS  
IN THE RELATIONSHIP A CLIENT – A CONSULTANT**

In the research, we have focused on the knowledge about the reality / views / experience in various areas based on the aims of the research. One of those areas has been finding out the **reasons for the formation of boundaries violations in the relationship a consultant – a client** according to the social consultants, where they have replied in the following way:

Participant 1 has replied that *"due to the incompetence of a consultant, their unprofessionalism, low-quality providing of information, lack of interest in a client or an effort to terminate the case as quickly as possible"*.

Participant 2, *"within a vague communication and subsequent false expectations on the side of a client"*.

According to participant 3 *"if the boundaries that not only provide safety for a client but also protection for a consultant are not considered and defined in advance, everything is violated..."*.

Participant 4 has stated that *"it depends on the state of client's or consultant's emotions as well as on their current physical and mental state, it can be further affected by insufficient professionalism, competence of a social advisor to handle stressful situations or by an excessive help towards a client"*.

The great importance and focus on the side of the participants is given on the competence and professionalism of a social consultant, which is crucial for handling possible issues.

Then the participants have answered the question, **"How do consultants find out that they deal with the violation of boundaries in the relationship between them and their client?"**, where they have replied in the following way:

According to participant 1 it is *"when a client behaves inappropriately, they are too demanding and do not obey the rules"*.

For participant 2, adhering to the agreement is crucial, and she replied that it is *"once the agreed terms are not kept either on the side of a consultant or a client, in case of phone calls to a consultant out of hours or when avoiding any contact"*.

Participant 3 has said that it is *"as soon as I see a shift from common norms of consulting or a therapy"*.



According to participant 4, it is *"when either a client or a consultant goes beyond the given boundaries, when a client do not control themselves, react violently, show no interest, behave inappropriately, or when a consultant is burnt out or when both, a consultant and a client, are too emotional"*.

An interesting fact is the answer of participant 1, who perceives the violation of boundaries more on the side of a client, based on their behaviour. The question, however, is if she was able to notice getting beyond the boundaries on her side as a consultant during an advice process with a client.

Regarding this, the consultants have also answered the question, **"How the violations of the boundaries affect the course of an advice process?"**, where participant 1 has replied, *"I have come across some manipulation and blackmailing on the side of a client, which, logically, affected our cooperation a lot. Or it was in case of excessive involvement of a consultant with the aim to excel during the process, to solve the problems instead of a client or when they get to the point when a consultant sees the client's problems as their own"*.

Participant 2 has also experienced some manipulation by a client, stating *"it brings mistrust, loss of detached view of a consultant, worsen cooperation of a client or an attempt to manipulate a consultant"*.

On the contrary, according to participant 3, *"getting beyond the boundaries need not to hurt client, it can even enrich an advice process, however, at the same time, it includes huge risks as well – if the boundaries are overstepped under wrong circumstances and to an unbearable extent – this threatens the consulting, a consultant and a client"*.

Participant 4 has stated that *"if the violations have already been formed, the cooperation is more difficult, and if a client finds out I have done something extra for them or instead of them, they are likely to expect the same next time... like a kind of manipulation"*.

The consultants have mostly agreed that clients and their effort to manipulate a consultant significantly affect the course of an advice process and the formation of boundaries violations in the relationship.

As a reply to the question **"When do you articulate the boundaries in the relationship?"**, participant 1 has stated that *"at the beginning of the process when we define competences, rules of cooperation and when our relationship is being formed"*.

Similarly, participant 2 has replied that *"in the first interview, when further meetings are needed, with long-term clients. With one-time clients, the basic boundaries are given when defining the terms of consulting"*.

Participant 3 has said that *"at the beginning of the cooperation with a client, together with a client"*.

Participant 4 has also stated that *"of course at the beginning of the first meeting it is essential to give instructions and lead the process in the right direction"*.

All the participants jointly agreed that it is essential to articulate the boundaries or rules of cooperation together with a client at the very beginning, while they expect the right direction of an advice process.

By a follow-up question we have attempted to find out, if the consultants **consider it essential to form the boundaries in a relationship at the very beginning of the cooperation.**

According to participant 1, *"good mutual relations, clearly stated rules of cooperation, it is also important, I think, to clearly set the demands of a client"*.

Participant 2 has stated that *"within a correct relationship, it is good to communicate openly, however, not to judge a client or their situation, but to ask openly what a client expects and how a consultant can help them to solve their current situation"*.

According to participant 3, it is important to set, at the beginning of the cooperation, *"clear rules, security, trust, comprehensible order – what a client really wants"*.

Similarly, participant 4 has stated that *"the trust is essential, when a client feels they can trust us, the conversation is smooth and it makes the cooperation easier. I think that a social worker should be empathetic and assertive from the beginning – they should listen to a client actively, provide the information clearly. In case a client does not understand, explain again what is expected from them"*.

A great emphasis is put, according to the consultants, on the building of trust and clearly defined rules of cooperation via open communication which is a key to the efficiency of an advice process.

**The consultants have also characterized an optimum relationship in a consulting process.** Participant 1 has said that it is *"built on obeying the rules"*.

According to participant 2, it is important to leave some responsibility for a client, stating that *"trust in a client's potential is important, it helps a consultant not to overtake the activity that is not meant for them, they should consider accompanying a client within a distribution, crisis intervention beyond consulting hours, making a phone call instead of a client, etc."*.

Similarly, participant 3 has replied it is *"the existence of the atmosphere of trust, security, respect, when both a client and an advisor are aware of the goals. A client is lead by a consultant to seek the solutions and there is clear feedback"*.

According to participant 4, it is *"essential to consult without limits, there should also be a given optimum time limit for an interview within a communication, active listening on the sides of an advisor and a client, creating an open and good atmosphere, and, eventually, ending the relationship after achieving the goal. It is important to lead a client themselves to a help to self-help"*.

It is obvious from individual answers that, according to the consultants, in a relationship, trust, clearly given rules of cooperation, shifting of initiative on a client are important. Here, the role of a consultant is to direct a client towards reaching their goals.

In connection to the violations of boundaries on the side of a client, we have asked the participants / consultants **"what type of a client is likely to violate the boundaries in an advice process?"**

Participant 1 has said that *"most often a manipulative kind of a client. Difficult to say, it is also affected by the type of a problem, willingness to solve it, aggression and impatience in their behaviour, but also mental illnesses of a client"*.

According to participant 2, these are *"the clients undergoing psychiatric treatment or the clients out of a Roma community"*.

Participant 3 has stated that it is *"a demanding, impatient client, who, forcefully, wants to achieve their goals, or a client with some personality disorders"*.

Participant 4 has replied that it is *"a client who is aggressive or manipulative, but also older clients or resistant clients"*.

According to the single replies of the consultants and their experience, the clients that are likely to violate the boundaries in a relationship vary, depending on their personalities, and, therefore, it is individual.

Based on the replies of the individual participants, we have found out that:

- the reasons for boundaries violations in the relationship a consultant – a client on the side of a consultant are their lack of professionalism, incompetence and excessive help for a client;
- the reasons for boundaries violations in the relationship on the side of a client are the lack of interest of a client to cooperate, false expectations or attempts to manipulate a consultant.

The fact that it is possible for the boundaries violations to occur is, according the consultants, caused by disobeying the rules of cooperation, not keeping the agreed terms of meetings, and inappropriate behaviour of clients.

The violations of boundaries in a consulting process have certain impact on an overall cooperation, atmosphere and the final effect of the solution of a client's problem, which is the result of negative elements they are accompanied by.

In the end, violations in an advice process threaten both a client and a consultant, it is therefore essential to articulate the rules at the beginning of a cooperation, which can affect the course of a consulting process, that should lead to improving the situation of a client, not to making it even more complicated.

According to the participants, an advice relationship should be based on trust, empathy, assertiveness, respect, clearly defined rules of cooperation, and leading a client with help to self-help, which can be characterized as an optimum advice relationship towards which an advice process should be directed.

### **SOLVING ALREADY EXISTING BOUNDARIES VIOLATIONS IN A RELATIONSHIP BY SOCIAL CONSULTANTS IN A CONSULTING PROCESS**

In the presented research, we have also studied **what they think is important to be done to eliminate the violations in a relationship.**

Participant 1 has stated that *"self-reflection, supervision and the ability to diagnose a problem are needed"*.

According to participant 2, *"clear, open and fair communication with a client from the very first contact is important"*.

Participant 3 has said that it is essential *"to do as much as we can as a prevention of ethically unclear situations, to agree on the terms and ways of cooperation, to clarify the expectations or orders of a client"*.

And according to participant 4, it is important *"to approach a client empathically, or, alternatively, explain them if they go beyond the relationship boundaries. We let a client relax and try to find the best solution together. We ask for consultations with or supervision from our colleagues as we are working on expanding our own professional training, which supports the mobilization and activity of a client"*.

It is easier to prevent possible problems as well as the violations of boundaries than to address their consequences, although it is not always possible. It is very important to keep working on the consultant's own competence and professionalism and care for obeying the rules of cooperation.

Subsequently, the consultants have answered the question, **"What is expected from you when solving already existing violations in a relationship?"** Participant 1 has stated that they are expected *"to reveal, realize their existence and consequences in time, to improve the situation to avoid negative impacts in further cooperation"*.

According to participant 2, they are expected to *"analyze the situation and come up with a solution and accomplish a change. Either on their side if they have made a mistake, or they communicate the situation with a client. In such case some supervision can help"*.

Similarly, participant 3 has said that it is necessary to *"bring the situation back to a common flawless course of an advice process as soon as possible and then cooperate with a client using a different method and try to avoid making the same mistakes"*.

According to participant 4, they are expected to *"maintain a professional approach and lead a client with help to self-help, show them how to solve their problems, or manage the client. They are also expected to be able to handle*

*the situation and create a functioning professional relationship, to orientate and set new methods, and to restore the relationship again".*

The consultants have mostly agreed on the relevance of a prompt intervention and changes that are anticipated to direct a consulting relationship towards an optimum level.

We have also been interested in the **approach the consultants have chosen to solve the formed violations of boundaries**. Participant 1 has stated that it is *"a humanistic approach, it means to adopt such an attitude that is beneficial to the both sides of a relationship"*.

Participant 2 has carried out *"an open communication and fixation of objective expectations on the side of a client as well as on their side as a consultant. Together with a client we have, once again, gone through the rules of a consulting process"*.

Participant 3 has suggested *"to return to what was or should have been at the beginning of an advice process, so-called negotiation about work possibilities and ways of cooperation"*.

Participant 4 has said that *"non-directive at first"*.

A consultant should choose such an approach that would be beneficial to both participants of an advice process to make their cooperation efficient.

Another area of our interest was **"With what type of a client do you suppose to be able to solve the violations in a relationship more easily?"** where participant 1 has replied that *"with such a client who wants to work on themselves or cooperate on solving their problem"*.

Participant 2 has answered in a similar way, *"with a cooperating client, motivated to work on their situation"*.

Participant 3 has stated that *"with a client who is ready to listen"*.

Participant 4 also assumes a prompt solution of violations *"with a client who cooperates, cares for a change and tries to change things"*.

The results of cooperation and the efficiency of a consulting process can only be seen when a client cooperates actively and is motivated to improve their situation.

We have also studied **"when, according to the consultants, clients begin to realize the boundaries in a relationship have been violated"**. Participant 1 has replied that it is *"when a consultant indicates that. When a client has come*

*involuntarily and has kept on violating an advice process but has changed their mind later on, then it can be seen".*

Participant 2 has said that it is *"when a consultant provides some feedback"*,

According to participant 3, *"during a repeated specification of an order and during an interview with a client when we talk about it"*.

Participant 4 has stated that it is *"as soon as communication begins to stagnate or when this fact is pointed out by a consultant themselves"*.

The answers make it clear that clients rarely realize they are violating the boundaries and that prompt feedback from a consultant is crucial to avoid the deepening of boundaries violations as well as other negative phenomena.

In relation to this, we have been trying to find out **"how, according to the consultants, clients approach to mutual solution of boundaries violations in a relationship"**. Participant 1 has replied that *"it is highly individual, either an agreement is made, they admit they have made a mistake and they accept the suggested solution, or we stagnate"*.

According to participant 2, *"after consulting the boundaries violations and the subsequent sanction from a consultant to quit an advice process and thus not to solve an adverse social situation of a client, the client who is motivated to solve the matter realizes the violation of boundaries, that might have arisen due to the client's increased anxiety"*.

Participant 3 has stated that *"it depends on the type of a client, some clients do not realize or are not willing to realize that, others do, especially during an interview"*.

And according to participant 4, clients' reactions are *"mostly negative because only few of them admit they do something wrong, it would be humiliating for them, but this is, of course, individual. It depends on the type of a client and the kind of a problem"*.

Client's attitude toward a mutual solution to boundaries violations depends, again, on the type of a client, and is highly individual.

The consultants have also answered the question **"How do you explain your clients they have been violating the boundaries?"**

Participant 1 has stated, *"I explain, demonstrate the consequences of their behaviour and doing so we prevent communication blocks"*.

Participant 2 has replied, *"I specifically name the things that do not belong into a consulting relationship or that I do not wish for and that violate our cooperation"*.

Participant 3 explains to the client *"the agreed rules of cooperation, and there must exist certain principles that will be respected by both sides"*.

According to participant 4, *"some guidance is always appropriate. Communication is the basis, I explain through a dialogue"*.

Open communication is the basis and so is, through it, the clear explanation of certain facts to a client.

The next question was aimed at finding out **"what is, according to the consultants, an appropriate and permanent solution to ensure that the boundaries violation in a relationship does not recur"**. Participant 1 has replied that *"it differs from case to case, different methods work with different clients, but everything depends on the attitude of a social consultant"*.

Participant 2 has stated that it is *"the clear definition of rules"*.

According to participant 3, the solution is *"negotiation about what a cooperation should look like and what its subject will be. Order specification from a client can reveal its incompatibility with consultant's competences or their role. A consultant themselves decides to what extent they will get involved"*.

Participant 4 has replied that a suitable solution is to *"set the boundaries at the beginning of an advice process which can prevent the formation of violations. A client will understand what to avoid. However, this is not a rule. Clients differ and so do situations, sometimes we cannot affect that in advance"*.

For the consultants, the solution is to set the rules of cooperation, however, the formation of boundaries violations cannot be wholly avoided. It is, thought, essential to do everything to ensure a high-quality cooperation and make it meaningful.

The question about evaluating the reality, **when and how a social advisor is able to realize that they themselves are causing the violation of boundaries**, was answered by the consultants as follows:

Participant 1 has replied that it is *"when we start to realize that a client is keeping the distance, is not cooperating, is aggressive or can even flatter a consultant in order to affect them"*.



According to participant 2, *"by verbalization on the side of a client and their false expectations for a consultant, by manipulating a consultant into such activities that do not fall within their competences and a client is misusing it"*.

Participant 3 has stated that it is *"when an advice process is not progressing, moving anywhere, and then I go for some supervision"*.

Participant 4 is able to realize a boundaries violation *"when I feel disinterest in solving a client's problem, when I do not pay enough attention to it, and excessive emotions can also make a cooperation more complicated"*.

It is essential for a consultant to be able to judge objectively that they themselves have made a mistake and, as an expert, to admit that a client's attitude is a kind of feedback to a consultant's attitude and that they, too, can make mistakes that need to be corrected.

Related to this, the consultants have answered the question, **"Have you as a consultant violated a relationship? What did you do next?"** Participant 1 has replied that *"once, due to the lack of sympathy for a client. I sifted the client to a colleague"*.

Participant 2 has answered similarly, *"Yes, I discussed with the client that my approach was not right, in order to maintain the cooperation we will do it differently"*.

Participant 3 has said, *"Yes, I have. However, it is very important to realize it in time and process all in favour of a client within work efficiency"*.

On the contrary, participant 4 has stated, *"I am not able to assess that"*.

The answers have enabled us to state that violating the boundaries is possible and common also on the side of a consultant, however, it is essential to realize it in time, prevent its recurrence to maintain an efficient cooperation.

At the end of the interview we have tried to find out **"how the consultants would proceed in case the boundaries violation repeats on their side as an advisor"**, where participant 1 has replied, *"definitely self-reflection, work on myself, it is also necessary to create the ability to depersonalize and be objective and sensitive towards client's signs and hints, to learn continuously, carry out supervision, maintain the ability to diagnose and accept a client the way they are"*.

Participant 2 has also stated that *"in my opinion, supervision is the best solution"*.

Participant 3 has answered in the same way, saying to *"opt for supervision immediately which I consider essential in consulting"*.

Participant 4 has also remarked that *"supervision definitely is appropriate"*.

The consultants have all agreed on supervision as the solution to the situation when boundaries violations recur on their side as consultants.

Resulting from the provided views of the consultants, we are able to state that: the cooperation of a consultant with a client as well as the existence of violations can be influenced at the beginning of the work with a client via, as we have mentioned above, the mutual definition of the rules and subsequent cooperation while both a consultant and a client are aware of their roles.

Related to this, the consultants state that to eliminate the boundaries violations, an open communication with a client from the very beginning of the cooperation is essential as well as consultations with colleagues and clarifying the expectations and terms of cooperation.

In case the violations already exist, it is necessary to reveal them in time and bring the situation back to a common flawless course of an advice process as soon as possible, using some other methods or an open dialogue with a client.

Often clients are not aware of the existence of boundaries violations until a consultant points out and they talk it over. Everything depends on the type of a client. It is obvious that not always we can avoid the formation of violations, however, the consultants themselves are well aware of this fact. It is mainly when an advice process is not moving in any direction, which gives the feedback that an advice process is not efficient and it requires some supervision as the most appropriate solution.

In relation to the research outcome and the number of the participants we cannot generalize the outcome for all consultants. The way the violations of relations are formed depends on the situation, the type of a client and also on the attitude and professionalism of a consultant, therefore we cannot generalize the outcome. We are able, however, to state that consultants often come across the boundaries violations, which they solve through an open dialogue with a client, working together to improve the situation. The experience of the consultants with the boundaries violations in a relationship is a frequent phenomenon, and at the same time it is a common part of an advice process. Due to this, a consultant should be prepared sufficiently to handle such situations when the boundaries and the relationship with a client are being violated.

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