

Using a working alliance monitor as a professional tool for joint reflection in one-to-one supervision with a mandated client

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Outline

Introduction:

- Theory & aim
- Working Alliance for Mandated Clients Inventory (WAMCI)
- Research design

Preliminary results: focus on perceived relevance and usability

Conclusion & future plans



Theoretical framework

In the field of *counseling & psychotherapy*:

- Relationship between practitioner & client is a vital component of the therapeutic process (e.g. Lambert and Barley, 2002; Binder, Holgersen and Nielsen, 2009; Norcross, 2011)
- The professional relationship as a 'vehicle for change' that can lead to personal growth (Rogers, 1957)

In the field of *community supervision*:

- Relationship between practitioner & client is not 'therapeutic' in its essence
- It is framed by the legal mandate of a third party (a court)
- Practitioners have a dual role

Theoretical framework

However, strong & supportive relationships are also necessary in the process of desistance from crime (Burnett & McNeill, 2005)

To capture the specificity of professional relationships in community supervision: pan-theoretical concept of the '*working alliance*' (Bordin, 1979)

Translated to the field of community supervision, the WA consists of:

- A *bond* reflecting the nature of the professional relationship
- An agreement on the *goals* of supervision
- An agreement on the *tasks* that need to be completed to achieve these goals (DeLude, Mitchell & Barber, 2012)

Theoretical framework

Goals, tasks & bond are present in every process of community supervision and are primarily shaped by conditions imposed by a legal mandate (Hart & Collins, 2014)

In brief:

- Professional relationships (bond) are also important in community supervision, BUT...
- Emphasis is on the collaboration between practitioners and clients to perform common tasks & reach shared goals that determine the nature of the bond that needs to be developed.

Working Alliance for Mandated Clients Inventory (WAMCI)

Using the theoretical framework of the working alliance, a new instrument has been developed to measure the quality of the working alliance in community supervision: the Working Alliance for Mandated Clients Inventory (Menger & Donker, 2013; Menger et al., 2013)

Purpose: to collect valid and reliable information about the quality of the working alliance in community supervision (and how it evolves over time)

Working Alliance for Mandated Clients Inventory (WAMCI)

In therapeutic relationships, joint reflection and collecting client feedback can have a positive effect on treatment outcome (Miller, Hubble & Duncan, 2007; Lambert & Shimokawa, 2011)

Especially when a *standardized feedback instrument* is used:

- Psychological problems are less likely to deteriorate;
- Lower risk for dropout;
- More likely to achieve positive change;
- Potential problems in the therapeutical relationship are more easily detected and addressed.






Idea: can the WAMCI also be used as a professional tool to help clients and professionals in community supervision to (periodically) discuss the quality of their working alliance?

Working Alliance for Mandated Clients Inventory (WAMCI)






- 19 parallel items
- 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree)

Client	Probation officer
My PO trusts me to be open and honest towards him or her	I trust him or her to be open and honest with me
My PO and I agree on what has to change with me	My client and I agree on what should change with him/her.
During our discussions, I argue with my probation officer a lot.	My client argues with me a lot during our discussions.

Werkalliantiemonitor 2.2 (Vlaamse versie) – vragen voor de cliënt

Lees de zinnen hieronder Omcirkel achter elke zin uw mening	Helemaal oneens	Beetje oneens	Niet eens, niet oneens	Beetje eens	Helemaal eens
					
1. Mijn justitieassistent legt altijd duidelijk uit wat er van mij verwacht wordt.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Mijn justitieassistent en ik hebben samen bepaald aan welke doelen ik werk tijdens mijn probatieperiode.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Mijn justitieassistent en ik bespreken altijd duidelijk wat ik voor het volgende gesprek moet doen.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Ik durf open en eerlijk te zijn tegenover mijn justitieassistent.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Mijn justitieassistent denkt dat ik belangrijke zaken niet aan haar/hem vertel.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Mijn justitieassistent vertrouwt erop dat ik altijd open en eerlijk ben tegenover haar/hem.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Ik merk dat mijn justitieassistent mij waardeert.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Ik vind dat mijn justitieassistent echt naar mij luistert.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Ik vind het moeilijk om mij aan de opgelegde voorwaarden te houden.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Mijn justitieassistent is enthousiast en optimistisch in de contacten met mij.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Mijn justitieassistent spreekt me erop aan als ik me niet aan de afspraken houd.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Mijn justitieassistent en ik zijn het eens over de doelen die we willen bereiken tijdens mijn probatieperiode.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Tijdens onze gesprekken ga ik veel tegen mijn justitieassistent in.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Mijn justitieassistent respecteert mij, zelfs als ik iets doe wat zij/hij niet goed vindt.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Ik zeg tegen mijn justitieassistent dat het goed gaat, ook als dat niet zo is.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Ik durf de dingen die mij bezighouden te bespreken met mijn justitieassistent.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Na de gesprekken met mijn justitieassistent vergeet ik snel waarover we hebben gepraat.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Mijn justitieassistent vertrouwt mij.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Mijn justitieassistent en ik zijn het eens over wat er bij mij zou moeten veranderen.	1	2	3	4	5

Werkalliantiemonitor 2.2 (Vlaamse versie) – vragen voor de justitieassistent

Lees de zinnen hieronder Omcirkel achter elke zin uw mening	Helemaal oneens	Beetje oneens	Niet eens, niet oneens	Beetje eens	Helemaal eens
					
1. Ik ben altijd duidelijk tegenover deze cliënt over wat er van hem/haar verwacht wordt.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Mijn cliënt en ik hebben samen bepaald aan welke doelen hij/zij werkt tijdens zijn/haar probatieperiode.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Ik bespreek met deze cliënt altijd duidelijk wat hij/zij ter voorbereiding van het volgende gesprek moet doen.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Ik denk dat deze cliënt zich vrij voelt om de zaken die hem/haar bezighouden te bespreken.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Ik denk dat mijn cliënt bepaalde zaken voor zich houdt en hierover niets wil vertellen.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Ik vertrouw erop dat mijn cliënt open en eerlijk is tegen mij.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Ik merk dat mijn cliënt mij waardeert.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Ik probeer echt goed te luisteren naar mijn cliënt.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Ik denk dat het voor deze cliënt moeilijk zal worden om zich aan de opgelegde voorwaarden te houden.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Ik ben enthousiast en positief in mijn contacten met deze cliënt.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Als deze cliënt zich niet aan de afspraken houdt, dan spreek ik hem/haar daarop aan om herhaling te voorkomen.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Mijn cliënt en ik zijn het eens over de doelen waaraan we werken tijdens zijn/haar probatieperiode.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Mijn cliënt gaat veel tegen me in tijdens de gesprekken.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Mijn cliënt voelt zich door mij gerespecteerd, ook als hij/zij iets doet wat ik niet goedkeur.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Mijn cliënt stelt de zaken beter voor dan ze eigenlijk zijn.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Mijn cliënt lijkt zich veilig genoeg te voelen om open en eerlijk te zijn tegenover mij.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Mijn cliënt is snel na ons gesprek alweer vergeten waarover we gepraat hebben.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Ik denk dat ik mijn cliënt kan vertrouwen.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Mijn cliënt en ik zijn het eens over wat er zou moeten veranderen bij hem/haar.	1	2	3	4	5

Aim of the study

To gain insight into joint reflection with the WAMCI in mandated context and its perceived relevance by probation workers and their clients

Research questions:

- How to use the WAMCI as a tool for reflection in one-to-one offender supervision?
- How do probation workers and clients experience the process of joint reflection with the WAMCI?

Initial research design

Research group	Pre-test	Intervention	First evaluation	Second evaluation & post-test
Experimental 1	X	X	X	X
Control 1	X	-	-	X
Experimental 2	-	X	X	X
Control 2	-	-	-	X

Client criteria for participation:

- Suspended sentence
- Started less than three months ago (min of 1 and max of 5 contacts)

Phase	Measures	When?
Pretest	Questionnaire: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived level of WA quality • Client's life events 	Within 3 months after start supervision
<i>Intervention: joint reflection using the WAMCI approximately 3 months after pre-test</i>		
1st evaluation	Short structured telephonic interviews on perception of relevance and usability	Within a week after intervention
2nd evaluation & posttest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephonic interviews • Questionnaires as Baseline + WAMCI 	Approximately 3 months after intervention

Suggested method for joint reflection

- **First step:** Answering the WAMCI individually
- **Second step:** Compare and discuss your answers for each item

[Afterwards: No need to save the used WAMCI]

Results: dyads of participants (the Netherlands)

Research group	Pre-test		Intervention	First evaluation		Second evaluation & post-test	
	PO	CL	Dyads	PO	CL	PO	CL
Experimental 1	33	26	34	19	11	12	9
Experimental 2	-	-		15	9	10	6

Results: dyads of participants (Belgium)

Research group	Pre-test		Intervention	First evaluation		Second evaluation & post-test	
	PO	CL	Dyads	PO	CL	PO	CL
Experimental 1	33	30	24	15	10	30	28
Control 1	30	30	-	-	-	27	22
Experimental 2	-	-	36	22	19	29	28
Control 2	-	-	-	-	-	31	29

Results: perceived relevance of joint reflection

	Within a week	
	PO's (n=26)	Clients (n=15)
Useful	73,1%	53,3%
Neutral	11,5%	6,7%
Not useful	15,4%	40%

Results: perceived relevance of joint reflection

	Within a week		Three months later	
	PO's (n=26)	Clients (n=15)	PO's (n=17)	Clients (n=6)
Useful	73,1%	53,3%	82,4%	33,3%
Neutral	11,5%	6,7%	17,6%	-
Not useful	15,4%	40%	5,9%	66,7%

Useful

*Often, when I ask my clients if he or she is on the right track, they respond in a vaguely positive, surface-level-manner. Whereas, when using this tool, **the client responded with a much more in depth answer, which I liked.***

[PO, 1st evaluation]

Yes, we could see **how we viewed one another**. Also, I noticed that we are on the same page. [Client, 1st evaluation]

Not useful

*Personally, I didn't experience many benefits because **I already had a good understanding with this client**, who is also cooperative. I did not discover any surprises or faults [PO, 1st evaluation]*

*I feel it did not benefit me much since **I am on good relations with my probation officer**. However, I could see this tool being more useful for people who are not as close with their probation officer. [CI, 2nd evaluation]*

*I don't think it is relevant as **I am only there to show my improvements and not to create a great bond with my probation officer** [CI, 1st evaluation]*

Results: used method of joint reflection

- Answering individually:
 - 80% (24 of 30 dyads)
- All items discussed:
 - 94,1% (32 of 34 dyads)
- Afterwards saved the filled completed WAMCI:
 - 29% (9 of 31 dyads)

Results: perceived usability of WAMCI as professional tool for joint reflection

- Help needed to answer questions:
 - 33,3% (11 of 33 clients)
- Experienced trouble discussing some subjects:
 - 42,4% (14 of 33 PO's)

Limitations

Non-response at:	The Netherlands	Belgium
Pretest (Exp1 & Contr1)	45% (27 of 60 dyads)	52% (64 of 124 dyads)
Intervention (Exp1 & Exp2)	65% (63 of 97 dyads)	18% (16 of 73 dyads)
Posttest (all research groups)	35% (12 of 34 dyads)	22% (30 of 137 dyads)

Most frequently reasons:

- PO didn't participate after several requests (NL)
- According to PO: Not a good time or client not suitable (NL)
- Client drop-out or re-arrest (NL & BE)
- Client refused (BE)
- Practical: Casefile moved to another PO (BE)

Potential selection effect

- Probation officers
- Clients

Preliminary conclusions

- Vast majority of PO's in our sample are convinced that the *quality of the working alliance is important* in working with mandated clients;
- The idea of using a structured tool for reflection in community supervision was initially seen as 'unnatural' by PO's. In the experimental groups, there seems to be a growing consensus that using the WAMCI can have an *added value*;
- As to the question when the use of the WAMCI is most relevant, a dichotomy seems to develop amongst the PO's in our sample:
 - A group of PO's advocates the use of the WAMCI in problematic cases;
 - A group of PO's argues that the use of the WAMCI should be reserved for cases where things go relatively well.

Preliminary conclusions

Perceived relevance:

- Most PO's report perceived relevance after 1 week and 3 months later
- Perceived relevance was less among clients and seems to drop over time (from half of the clients after 1 week to one third after 3 months)

Perceived usability

- adjustments to the WAMCI might be needed
 - More simple language?
 - What to do with the difficult subjects: rephrase? Erase? Remain?

Preliminary conclusions

Overall, our preliminary findings suggest that the WAMCI has potential as a professional tool, BUT...

- Exploratory study, follow-up research is necessary;
- Possible bias in our sample: only dyads with a fairly good quality of the working alliance?
- A long way from piloting an instrument to implementing it in daily practice

Future plans

- Further analyses of the qualitative & quantitative data that were gathered in our current project;
- Comparative research: similarities & differences between Dutch & Flemish data;
- Testing our hypothesis on the possible bias in our sample;
- Expanding the research agenda on the working alliance in a mandated context:
 - Is there a link between the quality of the working alliance and recidivism?
 - Implementation research: how can we integrate the WAMCI in community supervision practice in The Netherlands & Belgium?
 - Can the WAMCI be used in other areas of social work where practitioners work with involuntary clients?
 - ...



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