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Bachelor Thesis

**Organizational factors contributing to burnout among child
 protection workers: A systematic literature review**

By

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Abstract

English

Child protection workers are mandated to protect children in vulnerable home situations. In the work of a child protection worker work-characteristics are challenging, but child protection workers also experience organizational pressures. These pressures can have a negative impact on the professionals. This systematic literature review identified which organizational factors contributed to burnout among child protection workers. From the academic databases (PsychInfo, SocIndex, MedLine) studies were included by April 16, 2024, when the inclusion criteria were met.

The review followed the PRISMA protocol. Twelve studies met the inclusion criteria. Zotero and Rayyan were used for reviewing the studies. For data extraction, a data extraction sheet described the study characteristics (Torgerson, 2003). Additionally, Atlas.ti was used for thematic analysis.

The twelve studies focused on child protection workers and measured burnout with various burnout inventories. From all the studies, twenty-five organizational factors were identified, forming the themes: work pressure, job control, client contact, fulfillment and recognition, support, and management practices. This review highlights the diverse array of organizational factors influencing burnout risk among child protection workers. These findings support the importance of a high-quality work life for child protection workers (Canto, 2023). Limitations included potential subjectivity bias, and restriction of studies in other languages.

This review suggests implementing policies for role and organizational expectations in child protection services to decrease burnout rates. Also, analyzing organizational factors will guide child protection services to determine areas for improvement. Additionally, future research should explore the interventions specifically designed to mitigate burnout risk among child protection workers.

Dutch

Jeugdbeschermers hebben de verplichting om kinderen te beschermen. Echter kent dit werk ook veel factoren, die de psychische gezondheid van jeugdbeschermers kunnen verminderen. Dit systematische literatuuronderzoek identificeerde organisatorische factoren die bijdragen aan de ontwikkeling van burn-out onder jeugdbeschermers. Uit de academische databases (PsychInfo, SocIndex, MedLine) werden uiterlijk 16 april 2024 studies opgenomen, die aan de inclusiecriteria voldeden.

De review volgde het PRISMA-protocol. Twaalf onderzoeken voldeden aan de inclusiecriteria, hiervoor zijn Zotero en Rayyan gebruikt ter beoordeling van de onderzoeken. Een data-extractie formulier is gebruikt om de kenmerken van de studies te beschrijven (Torgerson, 2003). Daarnaast werd Atlas.ti gebruikt voor thematische analyse.

De twaalf onderzoeken richtten zich op professionals in de jeugdbescherming en onderzochten burn-out met verschillende burn-out-inventarisaties. Uit alle onderzoeken zijn vijftientig organisatorische factoren geïdentificeerd, die de thema's vormden: werkdruk, werkcontrole, client contact, voldoening en erkenning, ondersteuning en managementpraktijken. De bevindingen van dit onderzoek benadrukken de uiteenlopende organisatorische factoren die van invloed zijn op een burn-out onder jeugdbeschermers en ondersteunen het belang van een hoogwaardig werkomgeving voor jeugdbeschermers (Canto, 2023). Beperkingen in de review waren onder meer: mogelijke subjectiviteit bias en mogelijke niet meenemen van onderzoeken in andere talen dan het Engels.

Een aanbeveling voor het verminderen van burn-out onder professionals, is het implementeren van beleid voor rol- en organisatorische verwachtingen in de jeugdbescherming. Ook zal het analyseren van organisatorische factoren de jeugdbescherming helpen bij het vaststellen van verbeterpunten. Tot slot zou toekomstig onderzoek interventies moeten onderzoeken die specifiek zijn ontworpen om het risico op burn-out onder jeugdbeschermers te verminderen.

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1. Introduction

In 2023, the Dutch youth protection services issued a total of 28.000 child safety precautions (Farisi et al., 2023). By issuing these precautions professionals working in child protection are mandated to protect children. The professionals navigate complex situations, often visiting families experiencing abuse, mental illness, violence, poverty, and neglect (Ellett et al., 2007). In these families, child protection workers are demanded to visit the homes of the involved children for assessment of the situation. Being in the home requires a different level of assessment. The child protection worker has to be aware of their own safety and assess the safety of the children involved. This can put a high level of stress on the child protection workers, which compromises a worker's assessments of children's safety and the decisions the professional has to make (Ellett et al., 2007). In these assessments, the child protection worker needs to make life-changing decisions that can impact children and families in a permanent way. This can be a demanding and difficult job for the child protection worker (Schelbe et al., 2017).

Additionally, child protection workers face organizational pressures. Child protection workers experience intense time pressure, a high workload, frequent disruptions to their daily schedules (Chan et al., 2020), a sense of role conflict, role ambiguity, feelings of isolation (Lewandowski, 2003) and a lack of recognition (Drake & Yadema, 1996). These working conditions contribute to increased feelings of work-stress (Maulik, 2017). Work-stress is an incongruence between the job demands and the capabilities of the worker (Molek-Winiarska & Kawka, 2022).

When the feelings of stress caused by the organization are too much for child protection workers, this can lead to physical fatigue and emotional exhaustion (Győri & Perpék, 2021). In turn burnout can be defined as a state of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Emotional exhaustion can be described as feeling drained, depersonalization is a feeling of distancing from work, or others and, personal accomplishment is in relation to burnout the lack of feeling positive about the outcome or commitment to work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). According to Drake & Yadema (1996), Leiter & Maslach (2005) and McGee (1989), the organizational factors described above can all be related to higher levels of burnout among child protection workers.

These factors are described as organizational factors, since these factors are part of the organizational structure. The organization has the social responsibility to contribute to the quality of work life (QWL) of child protection workers (Canto, 2023). Organizational factors can help influence the well-being among workers. When child protection workers feel burned out by organization factors, the more likely they are to turnover (Leake et al., 2017) and the more likely they are to experience lower productivity, which has a negative impact on the care provided to families and children (Green et al., 2013).

The potential consequences of burnout indicate the necessity to identify organizational factors that contribute to burnout among child protection workers. By identifying the organizational factors, organizations will be able to identify the organizational factors that contribute to burnout among their child protection workers. In turn, organizations in child protection can influence the organizational factors by promoting a healthy work-environment.

1.1 Aim and research question

This systematic literature review aims to gather and synthesize the organizational factors that contribute to burnout among child protection workers in academic literature from 2010 to 2024. By expanding the research around this topic more knowledge is gathered and can provide a foundation for future research about interventions to decrease burnout among child protection workers.

The research question for this thesis is:

“What organizational factors contribute to the development of burnout among child protection workers?”

1.2 Structure overview

This thesis consists of four main sections. The first section serves as the introduction, outlining the critical role of child protection workers and its association with developing burnout. The second section details the research methodology. In this section a step-by-step explanation of the research process is provided. Section three presents the results of the systematic literature review. This section is further divided into subsections that explore the various organizational factors that contribute to the development of burnout among child

protection workers. In the fourth section a discussion of the research findings and their implications is established. Finally, a conclusion section forms the fifth section.

2. Methodology

This thesis provides a systematic literature review. Systematic literature reviews can synthesize scientific evidence in a transparent and reproducible way. This method allows us to explore all evidence available about a particular topic and appraise the quality of this evidence (Lamé, 2019). In this thesis, the PRISMA protocol is followed, which consists of a checklist for the implementation of the literature review (Page et al., 2021).

2.1 Information sources

The academic databases used in this literature review were PsychInfo, SocIndex and MedLine. PsychInfo was used because it provides literature about psychology-related literature (Alexander et al., 2017). SocIndex provides literature about sociological-related literature (Mellone, 2010), whereas Medline provides literature about health-related literature (Harrison, 1997). These academic databases provided literature for answering the research question. On April 1, 2024, the first search took place, and the last search on April 16, 2024.

2.2 Eligibility criteria

2.2.1 Search limits

For the systematic literature review some search limits have been set up. This is done because irrelevant studies can be taken out in advance by following the search limits. These search limits are not seen as inclusion or exclusion criteria, with room for leeway. The first search limit is only peer-review studies will be searched. These peer-reviewed studies must be written in English (second search limit). Peer-reviewed studies give greater reliability. The search for only English articles was done because otherwise there would be high translating costs. The last search limit contains the statement that articles must not be older than 2010, due to the relevance of the recent articles.

2.2.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

For inclusion, articles should meet the following criteria:

1. Articles that focus on professionals in child protection or child welfare.
2. Articles that focus on organizational factors.

3. Articles that focus on burnout as outcome measurement.
4. Articles that focus on empirical research in academic journals.

For the first inclusion criteria it is important to note that also supervisors in child protection or child welfare will be included. These professionals can give valuable information because of their work in child protection. Supervisors also report similar levels of burnout as professionals working on a case (Leake et al., 2017). Studies with interns or students as the target population are excluded. Professionals in other work fields are excluded.

Looking at the second inclusion criteria articles will be excluded if organizational factors are not related to a burnout (inclusion criteria three).

For the third inclusion criteria, it is important to note that burnout should be described as outcome measurement. If burnout and other outcome variables are described in the reviewed article, the researcher will assess if organizational factors are clearly related to burnout. Because the relation of organizational factors and burnout is of great importance. If so, the article is included.

Articles that partially meet the above criteria will be manually assessed for relevance. Priority will be given to studies that address the three core criteria (1, 2, and 3). If an article meets these criteria, it will be included in the thesis, because it can be of valuable worth.

2.3 Search strategy

For creating a relevant search string, the research question was divided into three main topics, which can be found in the three mainly important inclusion criteria (inclusion criteria 1, 2 and 3). The three main topics were child protection workers, organizational factors, and burnout. For the topic's 'child protection workers', 'organizational factors' and 'burnout' relevant keywords were found.

Keywords for the topic 'child protection worker' were found by using Thesaurus as a starting point. The use of Thesaurus was done to identify commonly used terms in academic literature for this topic. Commonly used terms were Protective Services or Social Services. By using the term Social Services also social workers working with different target groups were

identified. Therefore, the decision was made to exclude this term and identify some other terms which would match the target group better. From this point, commonly used subjects were scanned to identify relevant keywords for this topic. From this scan Child Welfare came along. In titles often terms as Child welfare workers or Child protection professionals were used. For a complete overview of all literature all these terms were added. The search string for the topic 'child protection worker' consisted of "Protective Services" OR child protection professional* OR Child protection worker* OR Child Welfare Worker* OR Child Welfare professional*.

Keywords for the topic 'burnout' were found through the same process. Burnout followed out of Thesaurus. In articles also terms such as stress or occupational stress or compassionate fatigue were used. Only the terms stress or occupational stress added articles. Stress was added because it leads to physical fatigue and emotional exhaustion (Győri & Perpék, 2021). Additionally, it was important to write burnout as burn-out or burn out to add articles to the search. The search string for the topic 'burnout' consisted of burnout OR burn out OR burn-out OR stress.

Keywords for the topic 'organizational factors' were found by finding out that searching for organizational factors did not give the right amount of studies. Thus, in the search for keywords, 'factors' was a better match. From here synonyms were used to make the search string complete. The search string for the topic 'organizational factors' consists of factors OR causes OR influences OR reasons.

The whole search string consisted of: "Protective Services" OR child protection professional* OR Child protection worker* OR Child Welfare Worker* OR Child Welfare professional* AND burnout OR burn out OR burn-out OR stress AND factors OR causes OR influences OR reasons.

2.4 Eligibility and quality assessment

From the search string a total of 441 articles were retrieved from the academic databases, 234 from PsychInfo, 99 from SocINDEX, and 107 from MEDLINE. In the academic databases only the search limit of year could be attached to the search string for exporting to Zotero. Zotero is an exportation tool for articles from academic databases (Idri, 2015). Zotero was

used to identify duplication in the retrieved articles. A total of 120 duplicates were removed. After this, Rayyan was used as a selection tool for the right articles, because Rayyan is a screening and reviewing tool for articles (Harrison et al., 2020). In Rayyan, first articles were screened on relevance for the review based on their title and abstract. A total of 160 articles were excluded because the studies did not relate to the population of this review or aimed for different outcomes. After this screening the remaining articles were screened on language and review type. After this screening a total of 121 articles remained and were reviewed on population, outcome measurement and independent variables. A total of twelve articles remained for inclusion. For a more detailed overview of the article selection process, see figure 1. Note that this process was done by one reviewer.

2.5 Data extraction and analysis

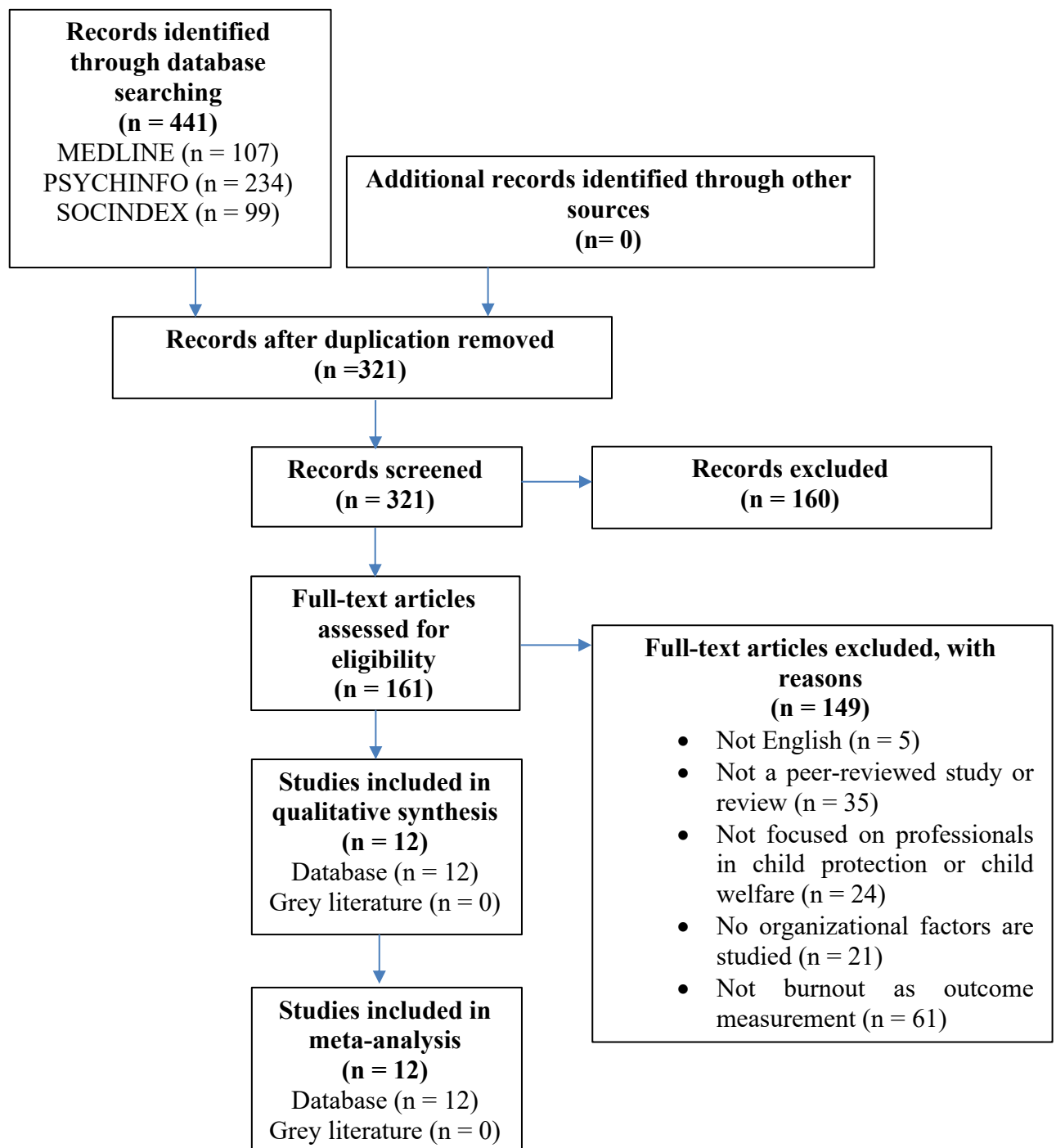
Data extraction and analysis was done by the researcher only.

First, a data extraction sheet from Torgerson (2003) was used to summarize all the content of each article (see appendix A). In this data extraction sheet the following points were described: study reference, study setting and design, study sample, outcome measurement, relevant examined factors, and results with effect size.

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes within the extracted data. This process involved thematically coding the studies in Atlas.ti. This method offered the possibility to represent recurring themes in the studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis resulted in the following key themes related to burnout among child protection workers: work pressure, job control, client contact, fulfillment and recognition, support, and management practices. By synthesizing the information extracted under these themes, the research question regarding the organizational factors contributing to burnout can be answered.

Figure 1

Prisma 2020 flow diagram



3. Results

3.1 Overview findings

This review examined the characteristics of the twelve studies included. The research designs employed, participant demographics, study focus, and study outcome are described. For a more detailed overview of the included studies, see table 2 Appendix A.

The reviewed studies employed three research designs: cross-sectional survey (n = 11), a single longitudinal cohort study, and a single longitudinal survey study. All studies were written in English, although the participant demographics varied geographically. The predominant demographic of participant in the included studies, focused on child protection workers in the USA (n = 5). The remaining seven studies included participants from Denmark (n = 2), Norway (n = 2), Finland (n = 1), South Korea (n = 1), Canada (n = 1), and Northern Ireland (n = 1).

The child protection profession varied across the included studies. The majority of studies mentioned child protection workers (n = 7). The remaining studies mentioned child welfare workers (n = 4), and professionals specializing in supporting survivors of child abuse (n = 2). Sample sizes varied across the studies, which are further detailed in table 2 Appendix A.

The influence of organizational factors on burnout among child protection workers was explored in all reviewed studies. The number of factors analyzed within each study ranged from two to ten factors. A total of twenty-five distinct organizational factors were identified as contributing to burnout among child protection workers. Table 1 presents an overview of the prevalence of these factors within the identified themes.

All reviewed studies included measures of burnout. The burnout inventories used vary across studies. First, in six studies the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was employed. Of these six studies, four studies utilized the MBI subscales (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) as separate variables, while the remaining studies reported only the overall mean score of the MBI. The MBI results revealed a pattern of high emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment scores, alongside lower depersonalization scores.

Additionally, the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OBI) was employed in two studies and one study used the Client-burnout Inventory (CBI). The OBI and CBI consistently reported high levels of burnout among child protection workers. Finally, the Professional Quality of Life Inventory (ProQoL) was used in three studies and the mean scores indicated burnout within the average range for child protection workers.

Table 1
Table showing the prevalence of factors in the included studies

| Theme | Organizational factors | Prevalence (number of studies) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Work pressure | Job stress | 5 |
| | Workload | 3 |
| | Work predictability | 1 |
| | Job satisfaction | 1 |
| Job control | Work time control | 1 |
| | Work intensity control | 1 |
| | Influence | 5 |
| | Fairness | 4 |
| Client contact | Home visit frequency | 1 |
| | Safety | 2 |
| Fulfillment and recognition | Participation | 1 |
| | Mastery | 1 |
| | Reward | 1 |
| | Value | 1 |
| Support | Supervision | 8 |
| | Support from colleagues | 5 |
| | Organizational social support | 1 |
| | Teamwork | 2 |
| | Community | 1 |
| | Trust | 3 |
| Management practices | Leadership | 3 |
| | Organizational culture | 1 |
| | Organizational commitment | 5 |
| | Organizational practices | 1 |
| | Policies | 1 |

3.2 Work pressure

In the analyzed studies organizational factors, in the category work pressure, were identified. These organizational factors consisted of job stress, workload, and work predictability. All these factors can be placed in the category work pressure, because of the experienced demands of the work among child protection workers. All these organizational factors contributed to burnout among child protection workers.

Five studies reported job stress as a factor to influence burnout. Job stress consisted of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload (Boyas & Wind, 2010; J. F. Boyas et al., 2012; Boyas et al., 2013; Baugerud et al., 2017; Chung & Choo, 2019). Role conflict describes the perception of child protection workers to handle conflicting demands. In child protection workers higher levels of role conflict and higher levels of role overload are related to a higher level of emotional exhaustion (Chung & Choo, 2019). Role overload is described as the perception of child protection workers to meet job responsibilities. According to Baugerud et al. (2017) higher levels of role conflict and role overload are also related to higher levels of depersonalization. Job ambiguity is the perception of child protection workers' job clarity. According to Chung & Choo (2019) role ambiguity did not predict emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Increased emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were predicted through job stress and job stress was higher under younger workers in comparison to older workers (Boyas et al., 2012). Job stress also predicted increased emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in child protection workers with less than 3 years of work experience. Job stress was not related to depersonalization in child protection workers with more than 3 years of work experience (Boyas et al., 2013).

Furthermore, high experienced workload was also related to higher levels of burnout among child protection workers (Baugerud et al., 2017). Workload is the experienced feeling of work demands. According to McFadden et al. (2017), a manageable workload is associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion and higher feeling of personal accomplishment. This contributes to lower levels of burnout. Additionally, work predictability was mentioned by Baugerud et al. (2017) to have an impact on burnout among child protection workers, but no associations were mentioned in this study.

3.3 Job control

Job control also consisted of organizational factors analyzed in the reviewed studies, which can be associated with burnout among child protection workers. These organizational factors consisted of the factors: work time control, work intensity control, influence, and fairness. All these factors can be placed in the category job control, because of the experienced sense of control among child protection workers in their work-environment.

The organizational factor influence is described as the control a child protection worker has in the work environment. According to Louison Vang et al. (2020) lower influence predicted exhaustion. Influence also predicted more depersonalization and lower personal accomplishment (McFadden et al., 2017). These findings are more complicated according to Boyas & Wind (2010); Boyas et al. (2012); Boyas et al. (2013). These studies noted that higher levels of influence are associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion and higher levels of depersonalization (Boyas & Wind, 2010). Among workers with more than 3 years of experience lower levels of emotional exhaustion was related to high influence levels, but this was not true for workers with less than 3 years of experience (Boyas et al., 2013). In contrast, among younger and older child protection workers higher levels of influence were associated with higher levels of emotional exhaustion (Boyas et al., 2012).

If the feeling of control is more specifically specified for the control of time spent on work, child protection workers experience higher rates of work time control than professionals not involved in child protection. These higher levels of work time control are related to lower levels of burnout (Baldschun et al., 2017). In contrast, if workers experience a sense of control of work intensity there could not be found a relation with burnout (Baugerud et al., 2017).

Finally, fairness, the feeling of justice in an organization, was also related to components of burnout. Higher levels of fairness were related to lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Boyas & Wind, 2010; McFadden et al., 2017), even if age and experience were considered (Boyas et al., 2012; Boyas et al., 2013). According to McFadden et al. (2017) fairness is positively associated with personal accomplishment. So, if child protection workers experience a higher sense of fairness in the organization they experience higher levels of personal accomplishment.

3.4 Client contact

The organizational factors of home visit frequency and safety are categorized in the category of client contact. These organizational factors are related to the development of burnout among child protection workers in the studies included in this review.

Safety was studied in two studies and found to influence burnout among child protection workers. According to Chung & Choo (2019), higher levels of personal safety concerns are

associated with higher levels of emotional exhaustion. To prevent high levels of burnout, safety can be influenced on competency and organizational level (Whitt-Woosley & Sprang, 2023). Not only safety concerns had a negative impact on child protection workers, but also home visits had a negative impact on burnout. When child protection workers visit homes of clients more than once a month their burnout rates will be higher (Baldschun et al., 2017).

3.5 Fulfillment and recognition

Fulfillment and recognition is a category of organizational factors analyzed in the reviewed studies which contribute to burnout among child protection workers. Participation, mastery, reward, value and job satisfaction form this category, because they all are related to a feeling of recognition or fulfillment in child protection workers.

High levels of participation were associated with high levels of occupational well-being, which in turn is associated with low levels of burnout (Baldschun et al., 2017). A high feeling of mastery was also associated with a high level of compassion satisfaction. High levels of compassion satisfaction were related to low levels of burnout. As child protection workers experience a higher feeling of competence, they experience lower levels of burnout (Baugerud et al, 2017). This was also the case for reward, the recognition for work. Higher rates of rewards were associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and higher rates of rewards were associated with higher levels of personal accomplishment. The same association was found for value. Value could be described as the meaning of the work to a professional (McFadden et al., 2017). According to Chung & Choo (2009) job satisfaction is also an organizational factor which is directly related to a diminished sense of personal accomplishment. Job satisfaction can be described as the experienced satisfaction with the work demands and work-environment.

3.6 Support

Several organizational factors, categorized in support, play a significant role in influencing burnout among child protection workers. These factors include supervision, colleague support, teamwork, and trust.

Supervision was the mainly studied factor in the reviewed studies. According to Boyas & Wind (2010) increased supervision is associated with higher levels of emotional exhaustion.

Among more experienced workers this association was stronger than among less experienced workers (Boyas et al., 2013). Younger workers mentioned higher levels of supervisory support, which increased emotional exhaustion. For older workers this relationship was not found (Boyas et al., 2012). The higher levels of burnout through supervision were also found for supervision on personal impact of working with children at risk. But supervision on case specific characteristics did not relate to higher levels of burnout (Skar et al., 2023). Baugerud et al. (2017) and Nielsen et al. (2023) also mentioned that low supervision was associated with high burnout. In line with these findings, sufficient supervision was related to low burnout rates, but it is noteworthy to mention that more than 50% of the child protection workers described insufficient supervision or no supervision at all (Baldschun et al., 2017).

Not only supervision was associated in most reviewed studies with lower levels of burnout, but also more colleague support was related to lower levels of burnout (Nielsen et al., 2023; Baugerud et al., 2017). In contrast, Boyas et al. (2013) mentioned high levels of coworker support were associated with higher rates of emotional exhaustion among child protection workers with more than 3 years of experience. Another form of coworker support is teamwork in the organization. High levels of teamwork are associated with low levels of burnout among child protection workers (Baugerud et al., 2017; Baldschun et al., 2017).

Additionally, a sense of community among child protection workers is a form of support in the organization. This factor was not directly associated with burnout (McFadden et al., 2017). According to Nielsen et al. (2023), low organizational support was associated with high levels of burnout. In relation to organizational support, trust was studied. Trust is the expectations of professionals in the organization that social norms and roles are clear and a professional will act fairly. Younger professionals with a high level of trust experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion (Boyas et al., 2012).

3.7 Management practices

Organizational characteristics is a category, which consist of leadership, organizational culture, organizational commitment, organizational practices, and policies. In the reviewed studies these organizational factors were related to burnout among child protection workers.

One of the organizational characteristics is leadership. Transformational leadership is the capability of a leader to engage, motivate, and inspire workers. High rates of experienced

transformational leadership contributed to lower levels of emotional exhaustion, but not to lower levels of depersonalization and higher levels of personal accomplishment (Rittschhof & Fortunato, 2015). According to Whitt-Woosley & Sprang (2023), low levels of leader practices were associated with high levels of burnout. These findings indicated that leaders who are perceived as competent, empowering, inspiring, and who foster trust can impact the experience of child protection workers of job burnout (Rittschhof & Fortunato, 2015). It is striking that Baugerud et al. (2017) did not describe a relationship between burnout and leadership, even though they do mention this factor.

Besides leadership, Baugerud et al. (2017) described organizational culture. Organizational culture was negatively related to burnout. Additionally, higher organizational practices and policies were associated with lower levels of burnout (Whitt-Woosley & Sprang, 2023). In contrast, higher feelings of organizational commitment were related to higher levels of burnout among child protection workers (Baugerud et al., 2017). Boyas and Wind (2010) related the three factors, emotional exhaustion, lack of personal accomplishment, and depersonalization, to organizational commitment. In contrast with Baugerud et al. (2017), this article reported that higher levels of organizational commitment were related to lower levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. The workers' attachment to the organization had a stronger effect on more experienced workers than on workers with less experience (Boyas et al., 2013). Looking at older and younger workers, higher levels of organizational commitment were associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion and lower levels of depersonalization, but older workers experienced more organizational commitment compared with younger workers (Boyas et al., 2012). Rittschhof & Fortunato (2015) looked further in the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment by conceptualizing organizational commitment in affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Affective commitment refers to professionals' emotional attachment and identification with the organization. Normative commitment could be described as a professionals' feeling of obligation to remain with the organization. Continuance commitment is the professionals' perception of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Low levels of affective and normative commitment related to high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment, but not with continuance commitment.

4. Discussion

4.1 General interpretation of results

The current study examined organizational factors that contributed to burnout among child protection workers. The review identified average to high levels of burnout among the child protection workers in the included studies. These burnout rates were influenced by twenty-five organizational factors, organized in six categories. The clusters work-pressure, job control and client contact consistently contributed to burnout risk. The results of Jiang & Jiang (2022) and Chan et al. (2020) were in line with these findings. Jiang & Jiang (2022) mentioned that child protection workers experienced higher role stress, which leads to reduced effectiveness in undertaking daily tasks. Chan et al. (2020) highlighted the high workload faced by child protection workers. Additionally, limited control over work hours and decision-making processes emerged as risk factors. While some studies indicated a positive association between influence and burnout (particularly among younger workers), the overall trend suggests a need for empowerment and autonomy to mitigate burnout risk among child protection workers. These findings suggest a need for interventions that address work-pressure management and job redesign to enhance worker well-being.

Furthermore, several other organizational factors contributed to burnout among child protection workers. Low levels of participation, mastery, reward, and value (category fulfillment and recognition) related to higher levels of burnout. These factors contribute to a sense of purpose and meaning in work, which buffers against burnout (McFadden et al., 2017). Job satisfaction was also linked to burnout among child protection workers. Job satisfaction linked to low personal accomplishment, suggests a disconnection between worker effort and perceived value of their work (Maslach & Jackson, 1986)

The findings on support were mixed, highlighting the complexity of this factor. According to Olaniyan et al. (2020), workplace support is the experienced support from colleagues and supervisors in the workplace. In line with the study of Olaniyan et al. (2020), this review also found the complex influence of workplace support on burnout rates among child protection workers. High case supervision, but not personal supervision, increased burnout. However, personal supervision emerged as a protective factor. Supervisory styles could play a role in this distinction. Low colleague support, organizational support, and teamwork generally

increased burnout risk, but one study found high colleague support to be detrimental for experienced workers. Interestingly, Langelaan et al. (2006) mentioned the impact of social support in mitigating feelings of isolation, which aligns with the observed association between low support and burnout. Finally, high trust rates were associated with burnout risk for younger workers. These findings underscore the need for multifaceted support systems considering both quality and quantity of support.

The review identified a negative association between burnout and management practices including leadership, organizational culture, organizational commitment and organizational practices and policies. Inadequate organizational practices and policies, and a low affective and normative commitment among child protection workers, contributed to burnout. Building on the work of Canto (2023), who emphasized the organization's responsibility for worker well-being, these findings suggest a need for improvement of leadership practices, creating a supportive organizational culture, and implementing practices to reduce burnout risk.

Overall, this review highlights a diverse array of organizational factors contributing to burnout among child protection workers. The majority of the identified factors related negatively with burnout. According to Canto (2023), the organization has the responsibility to promote high quality work life. These findings indicate the need for organizations to promote a high-quality work life. Organizations need to focus on the organizational factors contributing to burnout, so interventions for improving work conditions and organizational practices can be prioritized. By doing so, the organization strengthen their child protection workers and ultimately improve the service delivered to vulnerable children and families (Chan et al., 2020)

4.2 Strengths and limitations

A strength of this article is the use of three different academic databases to create a broad overview of organizational factors that increased burnout among child protection workers. Because the population in this review was very specific, the use of three different databases with specific search terms was necessary. With these databases twenty-seven organizational factors could be identified, with their own influence on burnout.

Nevertheless, in this review a few limitations could be identified. The extraction and screening were solely done by the researcher. This can potentially create a subjectivity bias.

Noteworthy, in the screening of the articles some articles used the same sample in their study. So, possibly the diversity of the population was not represented enough in this review. Besides the overlap in population, three studies were written by the same author and identified the same factors, but with different splitting criteria of the population. Another limitation is that only English and journal studies were included, in this way relevant factors could be missing in this review. By choosing only English articles non-western cultures were excluded. The results are therefore only representative for the western world. Besides these limitations, burnout was chosen as an outcome variable for the organizational factors, but no research was done for the overlap in organizational factors for other outcome variables that investigated well-being of child protection workers. It could be possible that some organizational factors overlap.

The limitations of this review were a product of the method chosen for this bachelor thesis. This method was necessary because of the manageability of the thesis.

4.3 Implications for policy, practice, and future research

This review mentioned twenty-five organizational risk factors which contribute to burnout among child protection workers. From these findings, organizations need to focus on the quality of work-life to prevent burnout among their professionals.

4.3.1 Policy

For a better quality of work-life child protection services need to develop a way to decrease burnout. According to Boyas & Wind (2010), J. F. Boyas et al. (2012), Boyas et al. (2013), Baugerud et al. (2017), and Chung & Choo (2019), the levels of job stress are high among child protection workers, because they experience an uncertainty about their role demands and expectations. By implementing policies with clear role expectations in child protection services child protection workers ambiguity is minimized and control is enhanced.

Additionally, organizational policies can promote organizational commitment. By providing clear organizational expectations, child protection workers will feel involved in the organization.

4.3.2 Practice

For organizations significant changes need to be made. First, child protection services need to implement procedures for self-evaluation of burnout among their professionals. By identifying organizational factors through validated tools, organizations can look for a way to increase well-being in the child protection services. Analyzing organizational factors allows child protection services to determine areas for improvement.

Research by Green et al. (2013) highlights the impact of factors like job demands, reward and influence on professional well-being and service quality. Additionally, effective supervision support can mitigate burnout among child protection workers (Baldschun et al., 2017). At last, the child protection service organization has to create an organization of fulfillment and recognition. When the organization gives child protection workers a sense of purpose and meaning in work, they are buffered against burnout (McFadden et al., 2017). Thus, organizations need to implement procedures for effective supervision support, procedures for fulfillment and recognition, and procedures for job demands, reward and influence.

4.3.3 Future research

This review highlighted the importance of organizational factors in mitigating burnout among child protection workers. However, several areas require further research.

This review primarily focused on organizational risk factors for burnout. Future research on the moderating effects of worker characteristics, such as personality and coping styles, on the relationship between organizational factors and burnout among child protection workers would be valuable (Langelaan et al., 2006). Examining these individual factors, besides examining the organizational factors, will provide a more holistic view of the various factors that influence burnout among child protection workers. Additionally, longitudinal studies could shed light on the causal relationships between organizational factors and burnout development.

Besides focusing on burnout, studies could focus more on positive outcomes in child protection. According to McFadden et al. (2018) resilience is positively related to personal accomplishment. Thus, resilience can be a starting point for research on positive outcomes for a healthy work-environment.

In future research specific interventions designed at mitigating burnout risk in this population should be studied. Implemented interventions, which address organizational factors contributing to burnout, could help promote worker well-being and improved quality of services among child protection workers.

Finally, future research across diverse geographic contexts should investigate the influence of organizational factors on burnout among child protection workers. This provides a more comprehensive understanding of organizational factors in geographic contexts. By investigating burnout in diverse cultures and contexts, researchers can develop strategies for decreasing burnout that are effective across different settings.

5. Conclusion

A total of six themes were identified that contributed to burnout among child protection workers in this literature review. These themes consisted of a total of twenty-five organizational factors, which were discussed in the studies in this literature review. Work demands, job satisfaction, high job stress, workload, and client contact were risk factors for burnout. Additionally, low levels of participation, mastery, reward, and value were identified as contributing factors to burnout. The findings on social support were mixed.

The information retrieved from the twelve included studies provides an overview of the relevant organizational factors that contribute to burnout among child protection workers. These factors give guidance for further practices and research.

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7. Appendix

A

Table 2
Overview included studies

| Study reference | Study setting and design | Study sample (n=) | Outcome Measurement | Relevant examined factors | Results (incl. effect size) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Baldschun et al. (2017) | Finland, longitudinal cohort study | 888 social workers split into two groups: '(1)Duties do not include child protection work' (N = 524) and '(2)Duties include child protection work' (N=364). | ProQOL R-IV: ○ burnout scale ○ STS scale | Work-related work characteristics: ○ Home visit frequency ○ Work time control ○ Teamwork ○ Participation ○ Supervision | <p>Burnout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 24.9 mean (5.57 SD) ○ Low n=140 ○ Average n= 224 ○ High n=0 □ Higher than group 1 <p>Home visits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Less than one a month n= 216 ○ Once a month or more often n= 120 □ Less than one a month related to lower burnout <p>Work time control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High n= 203 ○ Low n= 160 □ High related to low burnout <p>Teamwork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High n= 216 ○ Low n= 147 □ High related to low burnout <p>Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A lot n= 10 ○ Somewhat n= 163 ○ Little n= 191 □ High level of participation related to low burnout. <p>Supervision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No or insufficient n= 200 ○ Sufficient n= 163 □ Sufficient supervision related to lower burnout <p>Leisure time support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High n= 190 ○ Low n= 173 |
| Baugerud et al., (2017) | Norway, cross-sectional survey study | 506 child protection workers | ProQOL-5 ○ STS (CS) | QPS Nordic ○ Quantitative demands | <p>Burnout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mean 24.8 (SD 4.87) ○ Low 30.8% |

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|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Burnout (CF) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Role expectations (role conflict, role clarity) ○ Work intensity control ○ Work predictability ○ Mastery ○ Social interaction & support colleagues & supervisor ○ Fair leadership ○ Organizational culture ○ Organizational commitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderate 69.2% ○ High 0% <p>Factors associated with BO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workload ○ Organizational commitment ○ Role conflict |
| Boyas & Wind (2009) | USA, cross-sectional study | 209 public child welfare workers | <p>MBI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ emotional exhaustion ○ depersonalization | <p>Employment-based social capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trust/Cooperation ○ Fairness ○ Social support ○ Organizational commitment ○ Communication ○ Influence <p>Job stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Role conflict ○ Role ambiguity ○ Role overload | <p>Emotional exhaustion: mean 27.66 (cut-off 21) Depersonalization: mean 11.72 (cut-off 8)</p> <p>Factors associated with EE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low levels of organizational commitment (b=-.328, p=.001) ○ Low communication ○ High influence (b = .498, p = .002), ○ Low fairness ○ Social support supervision (b = .541, p = .012) ○ Higher job stress (b=.279, p = .001). <p>Factors associated with depersonalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low Organizational commitment b=-.109, p=.001), ○ Low Influence ○ Low Fairness ○ High cooperation b=.715, p=.031) ○ higher job stress (b=.192, p=.001). |
| (Boyas et al., 2012) | USA, cross-sectional | 209 public child | <p>MBI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ emotional exhaustion | <p>Employment-based social capital</p> | <p>EE among young workers: mean 30.94.</p> |

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|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| | research design | protection workers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ depersonalization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trust/Cooperation ○ Fairness ○ Social support ○ Organizational commitment ○ Communication ○ Influence <p>Job stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Role conflict ○ Role ambiguity ○ Role overload | <p>EE among older workers: mean 24.23. D among younger workers: mean 13.16. D among older workers: mean 9.93.</p> <p>Influence on emotional exhaustion (younger workers):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervisory support .26 ○ Job stress .43 ○ Organizational commitment -.61 ○ Influence .24 <p>Influence on depersonalization (younger workers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Influence .26 ○ Organizational commitment -.61 <p>Influence on emotional exhaustion (older workers):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Influence .22 ○ Organizational commitment .45 ○ Job stress .51 <p>Influence on depersonalization (older workers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ job stress .37 ○ organizational commitment -.28 |
| (Boyas et al., 2013) | USA, A cross-sectional survey | 209 public child welfare employees | <p>MBI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ emotional exhaustion ○ depersonalization | <p>Employment-based social capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trust/Cooperation ○ Fairness ○ Social support ○ Organizational commitment ○ Communication ○ Influence <p>Job stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Role conflict ○ Role ambiguity ○ Role overload | <p>EE less experienced: mean 29.58. EE more experienced: mean 27.30. D less experienced: mean 11.75. D more experienced: mean 11.8.</p> <p>Less experienced workers EE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Job stress .51 ○ organizational commitment .22 <p>Less experienced workers D.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Job stress 41. <p>Job stress influenced by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervisory support -.21 |

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|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|--|---|---|
| | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ organizational commitment -.22 ○ influence -.24 ○ communication -.18 <p>More experienced workers EE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervisory support .23 ○ organizational commitment -.56 ○ influence -.18 ○ job stress .37 ○ coworker support .16 <p>More experienced workers D:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organizational commitment -.20 <p>Job stress influenced by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organizational commitment -.41 ○ influence -.14 ○ fairness -.39 |
| Chung & Choo,(2019) | South Korea, A cross-sectional survey | 268 CPS workers | <p>MBI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emotional exhaustion ○ Personal accomplishment | <p>Role ambiguity Role conflict Role overload Personal safety concerns Rapport with supervisor Job satisfaction</p> | <p>No burnout means.</p> <p>Emotional exhaustion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ high levels of role conflict ($\beta = 0.10, p = 0.025$) ○ high levels over role overload ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.000$) ○ Higher levels of personal safety concern ($\beta = 0.12, p = .014$) ○ Higher levels of STS ($\beta = 0.17, p = 0.001$) ○ Depressive mood ($\beta = 0.45, p < 0.000$) <p>Diminished personal accomplishment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ STS ($\beta = -0.17, p = 0.017$) ○ Depressive symptoms ($\beta = 0.24, p = 0.003$) ○ Resilience ($\beta = -0.17, p = 0.009$) ○ Prosocial behavior ($\beta = -0.24, p < 0.000$) <p>Lower job satisfaction increases EE & diminish sense of personal accomplishment.</p> <p>Job satisfaction is influenced by rapport with</p> |

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| | | | | | supervisor and prosocial behavior. |
| McFadden et al. (2017) | North Ireland, cross-sectional online survey | 162 social workers who held caseloads and professional accountability for risk and protection of vulnerable children and families. | MBI | AWLS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workload ○ Community ○ Control ○ Fairness ○ Reward ○ Value | <p>EE mean 24.26, D mean 4.57 and PA mean 32.8.</p> <p>Emotional exhaustion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workload -.62 ○ Control -.39 ○ Reward -.35 ○ Value -.37 <p>Depersonalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workload -.26 <p>Personal accomplishment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workload .35 <p>Positive correlations in the range .20 to .35 were also observed between five of the six AWLS subscales and PA (except for community)</p> |
| (Nielsen et al., 2023) | Norway, cross-sectional survey | 678 child welfare workers | CBI: “client-related burnout” | Social support from colleagues Social support from supervisors Organizational level social support | <p>“client-related burnout” mean 2.59.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Colleague support -.17 ○ supervisor support -.15 ○ Organizational support -.15 |
| Rittschof & Fortunato (2016) | USA, cross-sectional questionnaire | 197 CPS case managers | MBI-HSS: job burnout | Transformational leadership. Organizational commitment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Affective ○ normative ○ continuance ○ commitment | <p>EE mean 4.46, D mean 3.29 and PA 1.73.</p> <p>Emotional exhaustion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ affective commitment ○ normative commitment ○ transformational leadership <p>Depersonalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ affective commitment ○ normative commitment <p>Personal accomplishment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ affective commitment ○ normative commitment |
| (Skar et al., 2023) | Denmark, A cross-sectional survey study | 667 Danish professionals working with survivors of child abuse. | Burnout | Case supervision Personal supervision | <p>Burnout mean 37.10.</p> <p>330 worked on cases of suspected child abuse, 560 received case supervision and 334 received personal supervision.</p> <p>Emotional exhaustion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exposure to child abuse ○ Case supervision |

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|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | <p>Disengagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervision on personal impact of work <p>Those who do not received supervision were at elevated risk for emotional exhaustion.</p> |
| Louison Vang et al. (2020) | Denmark, cross-sectional Survey | 667 professionals working with survivors of child abuse. | OBI: Burnout (Oldenburg Burnout Inventory) | <p>COPSO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Demands ○ Influence ○ Social support from supervisor and colleagues | <p>Mean child centre workers 18.7. Mean municipalities workers 19.74.</p> <p>Lower Disengagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lower Control ○ Lower social support <p>Exhaustion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lower control |
| Whitt-woosley & Sprang (2023) | USA, secondary analysis cross-sectional data | 382 child welfare professionals | ProQOL-5: burnout | <p>The STSI-OA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resilience ○ Safety ○ Policies ○ Leader practices ○ Organizational practices. | <p>BO mean 24.64 (SD = 7.02), which is in the average range</p> <p>Burnout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All STSI-OA domains were found to have moderate-strong relationships, with Leadership and Policies having the strongest relationships. |