



ORIGINAL ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

How 'the System' Affects job Satisfaction and Intention to Stay or Leave—A Qualitative Study Among Child Welfare and Protection Workers in Norway

Kristel Høie Nilsen¹  | Camilla Lauritzen¹  | Svein Arild Vis¹  | Anita Iversen²¹Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway | ²Centre for Faculty Development, Faculty of Health Sciences, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway**Correspondence:** Kristel Høie Nilsen (kristel.h.nilsen@uit.no)**Received:** 19 December 2023 | **Revised:** 30 September 2024 | **Accepted:** 1 December 2024**Funding:** This work was supported by Norges Forskningsråd.**Keywords:** child welfare | employee retention | leadership | motivation | reflexive thematic analysis | turnover

ABSTRACT

This article presents the findings of a study examining the factors that influence the intentions of Norwegian child welfare and protection workers to either remain in or leave their positions. It explores the elements that sustain their motivation and commitment, as well as those that contribute to their sense of challenge during difficult times. The study involved group interviews with 11 experienced workers, all of whom expressed a profound, idealistic passion for child welfare and protection as the primary driver for their continued engagement in a demanding and intricate field. Concurrently, they voiced their frustration with systemic inefficiencies that obstruct their ability to perform their duties effectively. The study highlights the significance of effective leadership and collegial support as key factors that help these professionals cope with the challenges posed by an underperforming system.

1 | Introduction

The field of Child Welfare and Protection (CWP) has been subjected to significant scrutiny and criticism from both the public and political spheres across various countries, intensifying the challenges faced by CWP agencies and their personnel. This criticism predominantly addresses the perceived inadequacies in service quality, which are often attributed to insufficient expertise and alleged misconduct by child protection and welfare entities. A body of literature, encompassing contributions from multiple authors, has highlighted specific areas of concern regarding quality within the CWP sector. Notable works by Befring (2000, 2009), Berger and Slack (2020), Munro (2011), The Norwegian Health Authority (2012), and Olsen et al. (2017) have identified critical issues such as a lack of professional competence, service inconsistencies, and flaws in the documentation processes of assessments. These identified deficiencies

underscore the urgent need for systemic improvements and reliability of CWP services.

The quality of services is critically linked to outcomes for both service users and employees. Employee engagement and retention are vital, influencing both organizational effectiveness and client results (Collins 2016; Collins-Camargo, Ellett, and Lester 2012; Griffiths et al. 2020; Williams and Glisson 2013). Creating and enhancing a supportive work environment can lead to improved organizational outcomes, including performance and staff retention (Zhenjing et al. 2022), as well as client outcomes, such as achieving permanency (Collins-Camargo, Ellett, and Lester 2012; Gotvassli 2020).

Numerous studies have highlighted factors that contribute to the quality of CWP work, with many of these factors detailed in a comprehensive literature review on decision-making

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2024 The Author(s). *Child & Family Social Work* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

during investigations following reports of concern (Lauritzen, Vis, and Fossum 2018). Lauritzen, Vis, and Fossum (2018) discovered that the influence of individual caseworkers is subordinate to the organizational culture and that the availability of services and resources plays a pivotal role in determining whether a case is dismissed or subjected to further investigation (Lauritzen, Vis, and Fossum 2018). Similarly, findings from a Norwegian research project on child welfare investigations indicate that the provision of supportive measures and resources are significant determinants in the decision to pursue or dismiss a report of concern (Vis, Lauritzen, and Fossum 2016).

In 2021, the United Kingdom initiated a comprehensive review of its children's social care system. The final report delivered a stark verdict, stating, 'Without a dramatic whole system reset, outcomes for children and families will remain stubbornly poor' (MacAlister 2022). Echoing this sentiment, a report by the US General Accounting Office (2003) linked the substandard quality of CWP services to the high turnover and poor retention of employees. Burnout is identified as a significant factor contributing to turnover in CWP (Baugerud, Vangbæk, and Melinder 2018; Leake, Rienks, and Obermann 2017; Varghese et al. 2020).

A Canadian research initiative, 'Creating Conditions for Good Practice', revealed that CWP workers across Canada felt that their ability to practise effectively was frequently obstructed by challenges within their work environments and by a sense of powerlessness to effect change (Herbert 2007). Similarly, Brazil et al. (2023) studied how child protection social workers' perspectives of the social policy and agency processes influence their work and their experience of their work and found that workers experienced having to struggle to sustain themselves and keep going while fighting a system of unrealistic expectations.

In 2022, the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs (Bufdir) conducted a comprehensive national research investigation to explore the causes and characteristics of high turnover rates within child welfare services and institutions. The investigation involved gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. Upon analysing the qualitative feedback regarding the causes of turnover, Bufdir identified five primary categories under which the individual responses could be grouped. These categories are framework conditions, management, professional working environment, psychosocial working environment and individual factors.

Key issues identified include excessive work pressure and inadequate compensation relative to the responsibilities and stresses of the job. Challenges associated with management practices also emerged as significant contributors to turnover. Specifically, the lack of adequate routines for debriefing and supervision, coupled with insufficient support and recognition from managers, was highlighted as critical areas of concern. Furthermore, a notable discrepancy between professional ideals and the realities of case processing and implementation of measures was identified as one of the most significant factors driving turnover over the past year (Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs 2022).

International studies investigating the factors that motivate CWP workers to remain in the field have identified a combination of organizational, personal and case-related factors. Leadership and social support from both managers and peers are crucial in enabling social workers to persist in their roles (Brazil et al. 2023; Tham and Strömberg 2020). Gotvassli (2007) suggests that organizational belonging is particularly strong among knowledge workers, whose work is closely tied to their identity. This is especially true for child welfare employees who integrate their personal selves into their professional roles. Despite often experiencing fatigue and burnout, this profound commitment can also drive CWP workers to continue their efforts, finding motivation and job satisfaction in the face of challenging work conditions (Pösö and Forsman 2013).

Organizational structures and policies are frequently cited as sources of stress and anxiety for CWP workers (Antonopoulou, Killian, and Forrester 2017; Wilberforce et al. 2014). Worker stress is a well-documented predictor of an increased intention to leave a position, whereas elevated levels of motivation and engagement are associated with stronger organizational commitment and a reduced likelihood of turnover. Within the field of organizational psychology, motivation and engagement are considered crucial elements for analysing how organizations function and for understanding the dynamics of employee retention.

To this end, organizational psychology has been applied to assess the state of CWP services through interviews with CWP workers. The research seeks to understand the factors influencing their job performance and to identify what can be done to enhance motivation and retention. Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation and the Theory of Self-Determination are utilized as interpretive frameworks for the study's findings.

Although some research has been conducted on turnover within Norwegian CWP services, with a focus on the extent, prevalence and experiences of newly employed workers (Skjeggstad, Slettebø, and Sørensen 2022), there is a gap in our understanding of what motivates seasoned CWP workers in Norway to remain in their roles or what factors contribute to their contemplation of departure. This current study was therefore set up to explore turnover and retention within the Norwegian CWP services.

2 | The Norwegian Child Welfare and Protection System

Norway's child welfare system is family-oriented and child-focused, with the 'best interests of the child' as an overarching principle that should form the basis for the child welfare service's decisions. However, it is an unclear decision premise requiring employees to specify what is in the best interests of the child in each individual case, making sure to also adhere to the three fundamental, sometimes contradictory, principles of Norwegian child welfare: the biological principle, the principle of least intrusive intervention and the child's right to participation (Misund 2023).

The system operates across three levels: municipal, regional and national. Municipalities serve as the initial point of contact for children and families seeking assistance from child welfare services. The municipal child welfare service is responsible for

receiving reports, conducting investigations of reports of concern and implementing measures to support children and families, aiming to help families address challenges at home and ensure the well-being of the child. At the regional level, the Office for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs (Bufetat) intervenes when specialized or comprehensive measures are required that municipalities cannot provide. At the national level, the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs (Bufdir) develops guidelines and regulations, supervises child welfare services at the municipal and state levels and promotes research and development in the field. Bufdir also plays a crucial role in implementing national policies and strategies to enhance child welfare services throughout the country.

The primary principle guiding national governance of municipalities is framework management, which mandates that national governance should allow municipalities the autonomy to select and design service provisions that best meet the needs of their residents. Consequently, municipalities are tasked with executing all responsibilities under the child welfare act that are not legally designated to a state agency.

Therefore, the responsibility for providing direct CWP services rests with the municipalities, where the majority of CWP workers are employed. The term ‘child welfare and protection services’ serves as an English equivalent to the Norwegian ‘barnevernet’, encompassing both compensatory welfare services to assist children and families and protective measures such as out-of-home care placements. The Norwegian CWP system functions as both a welfare and protection service, a characteristic commonly found in Nordic welfare models. The system offers a spectrum of services, including investigating abuse and neglect, providing compensatory measures such as parental relief, financial assistance and delivering family, parental or child counselling, and managing out-of-home care placements and support.

In 2022, Norway initiated the ‘Child Protection Reform’, aimed at strengthening child welfare services by increasing municipal efforts for prevention and early intervention for children and families in need. The reform also places a greater emphasis on competence enhancement and quality development in municipal child welfare services, including requirements for further education and ongoing training for child welfare workers, as well as a stronger focus on research-based practice. The reform underscores the importance of early, tailored assistance and knowledge as key to service quality. Additionally, amendments to the child welfare act were made to clarify municipal preventive roles, strengthen governance, implement competence requirements for both municipal and institutional CWP services and mandate professional mentoring for CWP employees. This reform represents the latest in a series of child welfare policy changes in recent years, assigning greater responsibility to municipal CWP authorities.

3 | Theoretical Framework

3.1 | Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory of Motivation

Herzberg’s two-factor theory, established in 1959 (Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman 1959), remains influential in understanding employee motivation and job satisfaction (Hur 2018).

It differentiates between motivators (satisfiers) and hygiene factors (dissatisfiers). Motivators, such as achievement, recognition and the work itself, lead to job satisfaction and are linked to intrinsic motivation, driving employees to perform better and feel accomplished (Hur 2018). Hygiene factors include salary, company policies and working conditions, which, when inadequate, cause job dissatisfaction but do not necessarily enhance satisfaction when improved (Hur 2018; Zhang, Yao, and Cheong 2011).

The theory posits that motivators and hygiene factors operate on two separate continua, with motivators fulfilling employees’ desires for psychological growth, whereas hygiene factors pertain to the work environment and prevent dissatisfaction (Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman 1959). Despite its enduring relevance, the theory has been critiqued for its binary categorization of workplace factors (Judge, Heller, and Mount 2002) and the generalizability of Herzberg’s original research findings (Bassett-Jones and Lloyd 2005). Critics suggest it oversimplifies the complex interplay between motivation and satisfaction (Judge, Heller, and Mount 2002).

To address these critiques, modern studies often integrate Herzberg’s theory with other motivational theories, such as self-determination theory (SDT), to offer a more comprehensive analysis of employee motivation. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the factors that influence workers’ decisions to stay or leave, particularly in fields like CWP, where job satisfaction and retention are critical.

3.2 | Self-Determination Theory

SDT posits that individuals have three innate needs—competence, autonomy and relatedness—that drive motivation when satisfied. Competence involves feeling capable, autonomy refers to having control over one’s actions and relatedness involves feeling connected to others (Deci and Ryan 1980). Although intrinsic motivation is central to SDT, extrinsic factors can also influence motivation (Ryan and Deci 2000).

Critiques of SDT include its focus on psychological over physiological needs, its lack of attention to the hierarchy of motivations and the potential underestimation of relatedness, especially in relational professions like social work (Perera 2020).

In analysing why CWP workers stay or leave their jobs, Herzberg’s two-factor theory and SDT are applied. Herzberg’s theory distinguishes between hygiene factors (dissatisfiers) and motivators (satisfiers), whereas SDT emphasizes the fulfilment of psychological needs. Together, these theories help to systematize CWP workers’ experiences and identify key factors influencing their job satisfaction and retention.

4 | Aim

The aim of this study was to investigate and analyse how seasoned CWP workers’ experiences of their job influence their intention to stay or leave. What aspects contribute to their continued motivation and retention, and which aspects add weight to the scales in challenging times?

5 | Methods

The method adopted in this research was inspired by theory on focus group interviews. For the current study, the interviewer aimed to encourage CWP workers, in response to a few opening questions asked by the researcher, to take the lead in a conversation about how they perceive their work and what affects their thoughts and feelings about staying or leaving the CWP occupation.

Group interview interpretations range from content-centric to interaction-centric. Belzile and Öberg (2012) note that this range reflects the researcher's philosophical approach rather than a disagreement over methods. Participants bring personal beliefs into the group, which can be expanded or constrained by the group dynamic, acknowledging that individuals cocreate meanings socially.

Data in this study are interpreted from a balanced perspective, considering both individual truths and the influence of group dynamics.

5.1 | Participants and Recruitment

Participants for the study were recruited through a post on an online forum targeting seasoned CWP workers enrolled in postgraduate education. Interested individuals were invited to reach out to the lead researcher via email or telephone.

As part of the 'Child Protection Reform', there is an effort in Norway to get CWP workers to undertake postgraduate studies and the national CWP authorities' subsidies a number of postgraduate educational programmes directed at the CWP workforce to increase competence in the workforce. We therefore believe that at present, in Norway, CWP workers attending postgraduate studies do not differ substantially from the rest of the workforce.

The inclusion criteria specified that participants must be employed in municipal CWP services and have a minimum of 3 years of experience. The final sample comprised 11 participants, organized into four groups. Two groups had two participants each, two groups had three and one participant was interviewed solo due to a group dropout.

The participants represented seven different municipalities across Norway, including both urban and rural municipalities of varying size. Experience levels varied: Six participants had 7–9 years of experience, four had 10–13 years, and one had 5 years, with an overall range of 5–13 years and an average of 8 years of experience. Among the participants, five were team leaders, and six were case workers. The group consisted of nine females and two males, with ages ranging from 30–50 years.

Seasoned workers were chosen because of their possibility to have experiences of both staying and possibly considerations of leaving at some point. We chose seasoned workers to be able to get both sides of the story from the same source. Doubtless, it would be highly interesting to get the experiences of workers who have quit, but we wanted the experiences of those who had considered leaving but persevered.

In addition to these considerations, identifying CWP workers who have left the profession presents logistical and ethical challenges. Individuals who have departed may be grappling with burnout or emotional difficulties, which we, as researchers, are not equipped to address adequately. Furthermore, those who have left and are willing to participate in research about job departure may possess biases that could result in a skewed sample.

5.2 | Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through semistructured group interviews conducted by the first author between March and May 2022. The semistructured interview consisted of open-ended questions such as 'what are your thoughts/feelings regarding your work?' and 'what affects your thoughts/feelings regarding staying in or quitting this profession?'. When the group entered discussions relating to mentoring, they were asked to elaborate on the following question: 'What are your experiences with mentoring at your office?'. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim in word format afterwards. The interviews ranged between 70 and 85 min long.

The first authors' familiarity with the CWP field could potentially bias the identification with informants (Kvale, Brinkmann, and Torhell 2014). Nevertheless, the interviewer's background in child welfare facilitated a more hands-off approach during the interviews, allowing participant dialogue to progress naturally, aided by an understanding of sector-specific terminology. This insight also enabled probing into the context of participants' narratives to discern subtleties in their accounts. Conversely, this preexisting knowledge may have inadvertently obscured certain viewpoints, resulting in uneven coverage of topics.

5.3 | Data Analyses

We conducted a reflexive thematic analysis in six steps, adhering to the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke aiming to generate themes that encapsulate shared meanings across multiple domains of the interviews. The six steps are as follows: (1) data familiarization and writing familiarization notes; (2) systematic data coding; (3) generating initial themes from coded and collated data; (4) developing and reviewing themes; (5) refining, defining and naming themes; and (6) writing the report (Braun and Clarke 2021).

The analysis began with a thorough relistening of the interviews, followed by a careful reading of the transcripts. Revisiting the audio confirmed early insights from the interview phase, and after the first coding of the transcript using NVIVO, codes were reviewed and refined. Going through the codes and notes led to the initial theme development. The first author revisited the audio throughout the process to make sure nuances were picked up, and all authors discussed the codes and themes before agreeing on the final themes. Examples for some of the codes in each theme can be seen in Figure 1 and an example of the process from data source to codes and themes in Figure 2.

This research is part of a larger project examining turnover among CWP workers in Norway, with the two previous studies being quantitative. Thus, the analytical process was informed

by an existing understanding of the subject matter, and an abductive method was employed. We iteratively cycled through data, coding, theme identification, and interpretation to ensure that our conclusions faithfully represented the participants' experiences.

5.4 | GDPR and Ethical Approvals

All participants provided their written consent before data collection and could withdraw from the study at any time. Every precaution has been taken to protect the privacy of the participants

«The work itself»	«The System»	Interpersonal factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping others • Facilitating change • Interesting professional field • Important work • Emotionally and idealistically rewarding work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWP manager • Municipal leadership • Laws and regulations • Budgets • Mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collegial support • Leadership support • Feeling valued and taken care of • Someone to talk to

FIGURE 1 | Themes and codes.

and the confidentiality of their personal information, as according to the Helsinki declaration. The Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research, SIKT, approved the study (No. 200410) in terms of the use, process and storage of personal data to ensure the participants privacy. According to Norwegian law, the project did not require ethical approval due to the nature of data collected. Through their GDPR approval, SIKT also ensured the data were not of a nature requiring elevated approvals from the Regional Ethical Committees.

6 | Results

Results show that reasons for staying or leaving are multifaceted. We identified three important themes in our analysis of the data material: 'The work itself', 'the system' and 'interpersonal factors'.

6.1 | «The work itself»

When asked about their thoughts and feelings about their job, all participants said they like the work, find it interesting and important and that their colleagues contributed to an enjoyable social environment. They also mentioned the importance of maintaining a balance between their work and personal life and the need for continuous learning and development.

Data	Codes	Theme
<p>"And now we have the whole Child Protection Reform which gives the municipality greater responsibility for child protection...and at least here, we have experienced that the municipal council and the politicians, they know almost nothing about child protection, but they have strong opinions about us and will decide a lot about us based on their incomplete understanding."</p> <p>"What the child protection manager says is more or less what goes. They don't have their own opinions further up the system, but at the same time they control the funds."</p> <p>"I think a lot of people quit because they know they can't cope. And maybe it's not about that they don't really master it, but if they had slightly different prerequisites in the system, they might have managed and endured the challenging situations."</p>	<p>Municipal leadership and management</p>	«The System»
<p>"Yes, it's hard to listen to all the stories, and it affects me, but it's not... that is not what I take home with me, what weighs me down. It's that I don't get the time to help them."</p> <p>"You put in so much effort for these kids and their families, and you can say with your hand on your heart, "Yes, I've done a good job here", but it doesn't show well enough in the child's journal, because there was never enough time to document what was done. And then you stress yourself sick a couple of times a year trying to correct it."</p>	<p>Time</p>	
<p>"Yes, it's feeling that resistance, that you don't get any help, because of the systems around the economy. "TTT" I wrote down here, things take such a long time. So, it's a bit demotivating that we live in a municipality with such a very poor economy, with so much focus on the municipal level. With everyone saving money in parallel with the increased responsibilities put on the municipalities following the upbringing reform."</p> <p>"Those of us who work in several municipalities, sometimes it's a bit frustrating. Well, that child gets follow-up on mental health, and then you drive two kilometers into the other municipality and then ... No follow up possible. The children don't get the same opportunities. We have a family counsellor at the municipal level in my municipality but in the neighboring municipality they don't."</p> <p>"When the legal system is so concerned as they are with the rights of parents..it is emphasized more than it was before. That is quite clear. But I think in some cases that maybe it is emphasized too much, because in fear of the ECHR and all that. And there are cases like this that I see that some case workers struggle to work with, when you have to enter into a visitation that you know from experience will go badly. And you know that afterwards the foster home has two months of reactions from the child that they have to deal with. Eh, and you are really only doing it because you have been told to do so from, from the legal system because you have to try to return the child to the mother and father."</p>	<p>Laws, regulations and budgets</p>	

FIGURE 2 | Example of the process from data source to codes and main theme.

The participants were unanimous when it came to ‘the work itself’, being the major contributing factor and the strongest motivation for staying in the profession. Encompassed in this term were an interesting professional field, their desire to make a difference and contribute to making a change, and a strong motivation for helping children and families in need. Despite aspects of the day-to-day work and political and economic constraints the participants pointed out as negative, they all remained employed due to a strong urge to help and make a difference for the children and families in need of CWP-services, describing a strong professional commitment to children and their families. Several of the participants talked about their work being a big part of their personality and identity as ‘helpers’.

I am very happy in my job. I have a lot of identity linked to my job. I’m a ‘helper’, always have been.

Several participants highlighted the professional field being interesting and that this was a strong motivator. There were recurring statements about making a difference and influencing change from almost all participants and the importance and necessity of CWP work. As one participant put it:

... the motivation ... that is, the importance of the work we do, and knowing that what we do makes a difference for the child. In many cases also for the parents, but mainly for the child.

This ‘helper gene’, as some of the participants put it, could be satisfied in diverse ways, both by helping children and families in need but also by helping foster parents or coworkers. The essence of assistance was defined as helping individuals to ‘flourish a bit’ and to recognize their achievements. It was also linked to people and making connections and functional relationships with others. Like one participant put it:

it’s the helper gene ... it comes out a lot in contact with children and families. Also, the feeling that you achieve contact with children, in particular, but also the parents of course. There is something about ... being a bit of a geek when it comes to making connections with other people.

The participants described this dedication and motivation for the work as something more than just a job. One participant said:

... working with child protection is in many ways perhaps more of a lifestyle than a job. Precisely because it is not just to put the work away when you leave at 16:30, and then pick it up at 08:00 the next day.

At the same time, when they are not able to fulfil the role of the helper bringing about change, it affects their motivation negatively:

... working on a case for a long time without any particular result, not seeing any change. Feeling powerless in relation to bringing about change, that

what you are doing is pointless, because it leads to nothing. Feeling a lack of mastery, not measuring up, makes me consider quitting.

Nevertheless, there is a clear distinction that the work itself is not what is draining; everything around it affects how well they can do their work.

a child talking about abuse, or ... well, it’s tough, but I can process it and deal with it ... but if I don’t get to put in some supportive measures or help that child, for me that is harder than getting the story. Unfortunately, we know it happens.

6.2 | ‘The System’

All participants acknowledged moments when they contemplated resigning, recounting specific instances that prompted them to weigh the decision to stay or depart. They reported that constraints such as limited time and financial resources often led to feelings of exhaustion and demotivation. The term ‘the system’ was commonly cited as a factor in their considerations to leave. This term encompassed a broad range of organizational elements, from agency management to governmental policies, representing the various levels that establish the boundaries and restrictions impacting their work performance. Although all participants acknowledged the complexity and high demands of their job, they concurred that the actual nature of the work was not the most taxing aspect. One participant stated:

Yes, it’s hard to listen to all the stories, and it affects me, but it’s not ... that is not what I take home with me, what weighs me down. It’s that I don’t get the time to help them.

A feeling of not doing enough, not being enough, because time and constraints do not allow them to do the job properly resonated throughout the interviews:

I think a lot of people quit because they know they can’t cope. And maybe it’s not about that they don’t really master it, but if they had slightly different prerequisites in the system, they might have managed and endured the challenging situations.

The one thing all participants highlighted as the most valuable resource in their work was time. Their quest for quality in their work was often hindered by a lack of time.

You put in so much effort for these kids and their families, and you can say with your hand on your heart, ‘Yes, I’ve done a good job here’, but it doesn’t show well enough in the child’s journal, because there was never enough time to document what was done. And then you stress yourself sick a couple of times a year trying to correct it.

The participants experienced a sense of ambivalence regarding the time allocated to documentation. They acknowledged the importance of recording their work but simultaneously noted the substantial amount of time consumed by this task—time they believed could be more beneficially spent engaging with children and parents:

No, I'm ambivalent. We have to document, and it's vitally important, and we need to get even better at it, at least get the assessments in ... but ... in a world of priorities it's often ... I rather prioritize meeting the parents and the kids and doing what I must, and then I think: 'Yes, but writing it down, I'll do that tomorrow'. And then tomorrow, something else comes up and then ... well, that emergency meeting, and then ...

Several participants questioned the system regarding the competence with those allocating resources and funds:

And now we have the whole Child Welfare and Protection Reform which gives the municipality greater responsibility for CWP ... and at least here, we have experienced that the municipal council and the politicians, they know almost nothing about CWP, but they have strong opinions about us and will decide a lot about us based on their incomplete understanding.

The participants in the study voiced concerns that an incomplete understanding among those overseeing CWP contributes to systemic shortcomings, which in turn impact their work and motivation. One participant encapsulated this sentiment by stating that there is no equality for the law in the child protection field and exemplified this by pointing out the lack of equal access to supportive services across the country or even between neighbouring municipalities. This observation underscores a perceived lack of uniformity and fairness in the provision of CWP services, with disparities in support even between adjacent localities. Additionally, the participants pointed to the absence of a holistic approach in efforts to improve preventive services for children as a notable deficiency. This shortfall not only hinders the effectiveness of the services but also dampens the motivation of those dedicated to the welfare of children:

It's a bit demotivating, that we are supposed to get so much better at prevention now after the reform (Child Welfare and Protection Reform), and then health nurse positions are being cut, mental health is being cut ... so, yeah ...

The importance of competence with the CWP-manager due to this incomplete understanding further up the system was pointed out:

What the CWP manager says is more or less what goes. They don't have their own opinions further

up the system, but at the same time they control the funds.

Another common description was the importance of guidance as a tool to offer professional support to CWP workers. There was shared frustration that the increased focus on offering mentoring to alleviate psychological strains associated with CWP work, promoting personal and professional development and assuring quality in the work has increased the last couple of years, seemed to be only skin deep:

The mentoring scheme is supposed to be, mentoring and follow-up of newly employed, but there is no requirement that the mentor must have any kind of formal mentoring competence, and that annoys me a bit, because ... How can the municipality use the word mentoring, when the person performing it don't need to know anything about what mentoring is? I'm a bit annoyed by the wording because it shows that those above the child welfare managers, who work in our local authority, don't know enough about what is involved in mentoring. And it doesn't seem like they're willing to get into what it is either.

In response to what this incongruence in theory and practice regarding important resources for CWP workers did to them, participants described both feeling demoralized, and at the same time, it ignited a feeling of having to fight:

I thought about giving up, but this is too important to me! So almost every day I work consciously to influence my own organization.

The participants' work experience seemed to help them cope with everyday life at the job, for example, when it came to making progress in the casework that was somewhat dependent on management approving the next step. As one participant put it:

I'm asking for forgiveness rather than permission in a way, because I've been here so long that I feel safe in proceeding without waiting for my team manager to approve

Also, their experience had a balancing effect on the perceived instability and shortcomings within the agency. One of the groups concluded that

After all, we've been through it twice before, so we sit calmly to not rock the boat and wait for what happens, what they decide.

But in the end, the demands and constraints poised on their beloved profession made them consider leaving it, as illustrated by the following quote:

I feel so good where I am, but those periods of extreme pressure ... How long can you remain in a job that demands so much from you?

6.3 | Interpersonal Factors

Another prominent theme among the participants was the importance of interpersonal factors, with a particular emphasis on peer support and leadership. The participants talked about the value of professional friendships and leadership and how these factors acted as weight on the scales, solidifying their desire to stay or contributing to frustration and inciting a desire to leave when absent or inadequate. One participant explained how the support from a colleague, who later became her department manager, helped her through a challenging period:

She recognized the stress that I was under and the feelings that I had, so ... I felt very seen. And at the time, she wasn't even my team manager. But she somehow managed to see it and put it into words so ... when you get that recognition and that professional support, you get through it.

Other participants highlighted how it affected them when management was not able to fulfil that role, especially in times of high work pressure and stress:

I had a team manager who wasn't particularly good at listening, so that going to her to discuss a case, or bring up a matter, drained more energy than it gave.

Another participant explained how a change in leadership was necessary for an alteration in how things were done and prioritized, which contributed to her being pulled of the ledge of an unhealthy work situation:

... that (working nonstop) was how I did it for the first three years as well. I almost lost my memory. I think that if it had continued like the first six months, I don't think I would have been here. But fortunately, there was a change in management and mentoring scheme, at that time. So, my improvement was mainly due to a change in management.

Also, when the participants talked about instability and struggles with the system, for example, budget cuts, how leadership acted and communicated made a considerable difference to how destabilizing it felt:

... fighting spirit is a good term, because when the leader says: 'well, I may not be able to achieve all we want, but I'm fighting on, I'll keep trying', then at least we stand together.

The participant emphasized the importance of the coworker's recognition and support and the expectation and importance

of a manager doing this. Lack of competence and instability in management was highlighted by several of the participants as a contributing factor to turnover:

But I also believe that stable and good management is important to prevent that turnover, so ... if I think about the periods of turnover we've had, it was always simmering in the management at the same time.

Despite encountering stress, systemic constraints and frustration with an imperfect system, the participants portrayed their roles as both interesting and challenging. Strong peer support and professional friendships, a fulfilling sense of making a difference and being essential, contributed to their decision of staying.

The findings of this study indicate that 'the work itself' and 'the system' are consistent themes that affect the motivation and job satisfaction of CWP workers. Whereas interpersonal factors serve as a dynamic influence, when positive, they can be a key factor in employee retention; conversely, when lacking, they may drive employees to consider leaving.

6.3.1 | Visualized Presentation of Findings

Overall, the results showed which aspects the participating CWP workers considered to be important contributors to motivation to continue their work and what contributes to their consideration of leaving the CWP services. Below is a visualized representation of the results that will be further discussed.

7 | Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate and analyse how CWP workers' experiences of their job influence their intention to stay or leave. What aspects contribute to their continued motivation and retention and which aspects add weight to the scales in challenging times?

Several themes were identified; most prominent was 'the work itself', 'the system' and interpersonal aspects. Based on the participants statements, it seems that 'the work itself' is what influences their decision to stay whereas 'the system' is what makes them consider leaving the profession. Interpersonal aspects seem to be what tips the scales when deliberating staying or leaving (Figure 3).

'The work itself' emerged as the primary motivator for remaining in CWP services. The participants highlighted the professional interest and the significance of aiding children as key aspects of 'the work itself', suggesting that intrinsic aspects of the job motivate CWP workers to stay. This finding echoes Pösö and Forsman (2013), who observed that the intrinsic nature of CWP work—encompassing human care, service provision and making a difference in children's lives—motivates social workers to persevere and cope with job demands. They also found that such motivation and commitment can even help social workers surmount work-related stress and conflicts (Pösö and Forsman 2013).

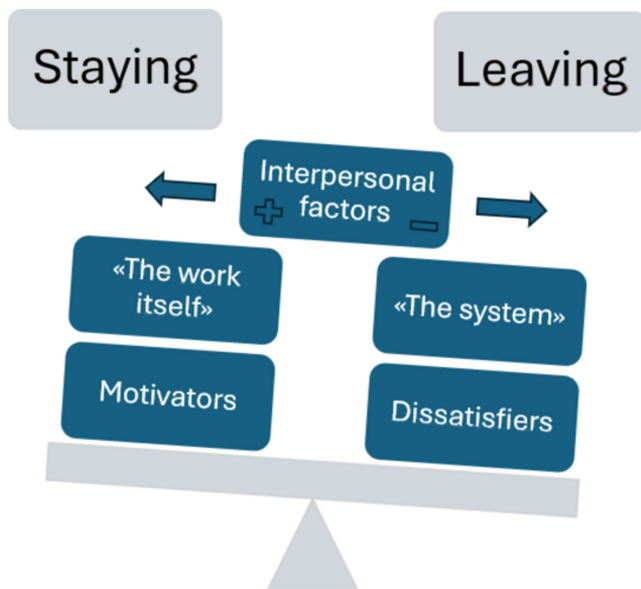


FIGURE 3 | Visualized presentation of findings.

The motivation of the CWP workers seemed to be deeply rooted in an idealistic vision of their role as agents of the public welfare system, dedicated to improving the lives of children in need. When discussing ‘the work itself’, negative aspects are notably absent, with none of the participants citing job stress as an inherent part of their work. This could suggest a disconnect between their idealistic drive and the practical realities they face. Pösö and Forsman (2013) highlight that although social work with vulnerable children is a paid profession, it transcends the notion of being ‘just a job’; it is, as one participant described, akin to a lifestyle. For seasoned professionals, this commitment often evolves into a moral obligation to care for children, resembling a ‘calling’ or ‘mission’. Although this idealistic perspective can be a source of strength, enabling workers to manage the intrinsic stress of their roles, it can also lead to frustration, a sense of being overwhelmed and a feeling of incompetence if not tempered with realism.

Interpersonal factors in the workplace encompass both formal structures, such as leadership and informal structures, like the relationships and support among coworkers. Leadership was a central theme that emerged during the interviews. It appears to fulfil a dual role: representing and embodying the system, while also providing crucial interpersonal support and maintaining professional standards. This dual nature underscores the significance of leadership in efforts to enhance retention rates within CWP services. Moreover, it underscores the multifaceted nature of leadership in this field, corroborating the complexities identified in previous research (Brazil et al. 2023; Tham and Strömberg 2020).

Effective leadership is characterized by the ability to grant autonomy, offer professional support, facilitate personal and professional growth and provide constructive feedback, all of which contribute to an employee’s sense of competence (Gotvassli 2020). Participants in the study shared how their functioning and well-being were positively affected when their leaders recognized their efforts and challenges. Feedback and support from both leaders and colleagues foster a sense of

relatedness, which enhances feelings of emotional closeness, understanding, respect and value (Ryan and Deci 2000).

The participants underscored the importance of competent and consistent leadership by linking periods of high turnover with instability within the leadership team. Effective management can create a functional work environment where employees feel competent and efficient and have a sense of control and self-direction.

Peer support is also deemed essential for managing the emotionally challenging and complex nature of CWP work. All participants highlighted the importance of having confidants—whether friends, spouses, neighbours or colleagues—to discuss their experiences with. Some of the participants even said it was crucial to their performance and job retention. The ability to ‘unload’ emotional burdens is a form of self-care that can mitigate the risk of burnout (Baugerud, Vangbæk, and Melinder 2018). This is particularly crucial in scenarios where formal support systems for employee well-being are lacking. Organizations that prioritize the well-being, growth and engagement of their employees are more likely to cultivate an environment that promotes job satisfaction and reduces staff turnover.

The effectiveness and well-being of CWP workers are significantly shaped by the overarching system in which they function. Various systemic factors can influence CWP services and their personnel, such as budgetary limitations that may restrict their capacity to deliver essential support and services, leading to resource scarcity and fostering sentiments of frustration and powerlessness within the workforce. Furthermore, policies at the local and state levels can dictate the calibre of services provided to children and families. For example, a policy emphasis on family reunification over child safety can place workers in difficult situations and lead to detrimental outcomes for the children involved. Statements concerning these areas, as well as statements regarding leadership, were made within the theme of systemic shortcomings when the group discussions centred in on what frustrated them and made them want to leave.

An element that may influence CWP workers’ perceptions of systemic shortcomings is the scarcity of and unequal access to effective, evidence-based intervention strategies, as was pointed out by one of the participants. Vis, Lauritzen, and Fossum (2016) discovered that organizational characteristics, such as the availability of supportive services and resources, significantly impacted the decision-making process regarding whether a concern referral was dismissed or warranted further investigation. Specifically, a dearth of available intervention strategies influenced the outcomes of referral assessments and led to a disconnect between the investigative efforts and the interventions implemented. When resources are ample and a wide array of support services is accessible, CWP workers exhibit a higher threshold for initiating care orders. They also emphasized that resources, organizational culture, structural constraints and staff significantly affect the management and investigative processes of referrals. Thus, to enhance these procedural elements, a focus on organizational development is crucial (Lauritzen, Vis, and Fossum 2018).

The decentralization of responsibilities from regional to local levels could potentially result in a more varied provision of services across municipalities, potentially fostering perceptions of increased inequality. The manner in which municipalities execute these responsibilities is influenced by several factors. These include the political priorities of the municipality, the resources available to the child welfare service and the manner in which employees apply their professional judgement within the legal framework (Misund 2023). Following up on how the decentralization of responsibilities following the reform affects decision making and service provision should therefore be prioritized.

Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation delineates between motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators, such as challenging work and recognition, inherently encourage job satisfaction and motivate employees to work harder. In contrast, hygiene factors, which include aspects like company policies, supervision quality, salary and working conditions, do not in themselves provide satisfaction. Instead, their adequacy prevents dissatisfaction, and their inadequacy causes dissatisfaction. The role of 'the work itself' as a motivator and 'the system' as a source of dissatisfaction aligns with this. The informants in this study were clear in their depiction of 'the system' as a dissatisfier due to it not functioning in a satisfactory manner.

In the realm of CWP, 'the system' encapsulates a myriad of hygiene factors. These range from bureaucratic procedures that may delay or complicate service delivery to insufficient resources that hinder the workers' ability to meet the needs of children and families effectively. For instance, when budget cuts lead to reduced staffing, the remaining workers face increased caseloads and work hours, potentially compromising the quality of care and service they can provide. This scenario does not motivate workers but rather pushes them towards dissatisfaction due to increased stress and decreased job efficacy.

Moreover, the systemic issue of misaligned policies can significantly impact worker satisfaction. Policies that prioritize administrative outcomes over client welfare can create ethical dilemmas for workers, placing them in positions where they feel they must choose between policy adherence and what they believe is best for the child or family. Considering that the motivation of the CWP workers in this study, and in previous research, seem to be deeply rooted in an idealistic vision of their role, this misalignment can lead to moral distress that can cause a profound form of dissatisfaction that can drive CWP workers to contemplate leaving the profession.

It is also important to consider the psychological impact of systemic issues on CWP workers. Constant exposure to systemic inefficiencies can lead to workers feeling powerless to effect change and in turn may become passive and disengaged.

It would be tempting to suppose that an optimally functioning system would therefore increase motivation, but that is not necessarily the case. Herzberg posits that dissatisfiers primarily prevent dissatisfaction rather than promote satisfaction. When adequate, they do not enhance motivation but merely prevent dissatisfaction. So, even though bettering system factors would be positive, they would not in themselves increase retention.

Interpersonal elements, such as relationships with colleagues and supervisors, are traditionally categorized as dissatisfiers as well. However, findings from this study suggest that interpersonal factors may also play a significant role in motivation. Interpersonal dynamics appear to motivate when they are positive and functional yet contribute to dissatisfaction when they fall short within a disappointing system. This observation aligns more closely with SDT, which posits that individuals are driven by the intrinsic needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. The participants' drive to help and 'make a difference' reflects their need for relatedness, whereas their aspiration to effect change resonates with their need for competence. Nonetheless, insufficient resources and support may impede the fulfilment of these needs, leading to job dissatisfaction and the inclination to depart (Deci and Ryan 1980; Ryan and Deci 2000).

Time emerged as the most coveted resource for being able to do a good job, with participants reflecting on the allocation of their time. The ambivalence regarding the time spent on documentation and other bureaucratic tasks is consistent with findings from a study on managers' perceptions of their roles, which underscored the heightened administrative demands in child welfare (Tham and Strömberg 2020). In a 2023 article titled 'State Steering and Local Room for Action in the Norwegian Child Protection Services', the author examines state documents related to the child welfare reform and explores how the shift of responsibility from the state to the local level might impact municipal CWP services (Misund 2023). Misund concludes that the reform 'will likely result in child welfare services spending more time on written case processing and reporting to the state, leading to a probable increase in the bureaucratization of municipal child welfare services'.

It is plausible that societal expectations extend into the education system, influencing what is taught and expected of students in child welfare. This might inadvertently produce graduates who are ill-prepared to navigate the intricate realities of CWP work. This would align with research suggesting that CWP students are often unprepared for the realities of the field upon completing their studies, leading to a clash between their ideals and the practicalities of the job (Befring 2009). It follows that when the job becomes more stressful, stable resources become more important. Organizational resources such as professional mentoring and healthy leadership may help employees regulate short-term fatigue, so they avoid enduring burnout and remain in their profession.

Exploring motivators and dissatisfiers further could identify aspects of the job that are within control and can be optimized. A retention strategy might involve recognizing and reinforcing motivating factors by ensuring CWP workers have the necessary time and resources to engage in the work that inspires them. This could involve reducing the administrative burdens that have been shown to negatively impact workload (Tham and Strömberg 2020).

The participants in the study expressed concerns about the decision-making processes of their superiors, particularly pointing out that the 'higher ups' may lack a comprehensive understanding of CWP operations. For example, they criticized decisions to reduce mentoring programmes or the apparent lack of clarity regarding the objectives and structure of

mentoring in child welfare. These critiques were often linked to discussions about the critical role of mentoring in managing the emotionally taxing elements of their work. Organizational literature, as noted by Herbert (2007), consistently indicates that front-line service providers often harbour scepticism regarding the understanding and decision-making of those who orchestrate and manage CWP services. This scepticism is mirrored in participant remarks concerning the decision-making authority and its disconnect from the front-line experience. The participants emphasized that without established routines to support staff well-being, the risk of burnout increases. High-quality mentoring is seen as a potential solution to this issue.

This perspective aligns with the findings from the national survey conducted by the Directorate of Children, Youth and Families (Barne-, Ungdoms- Og Familiedirektoratet, 2022) which indicated that insufficient mentoring, debriefing routines and a lack of support and acknowledgment from management significantly influence CWP workers' intentions to leave their positions. The categorization of themes from this report is also comparable to the themes derived in the current study.

Herzberg's two-factor theory posits that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction stem from two distinct sets of factors—motivators and hygiene factors—each operating on its own continuum rather than as opposites on a single scale. This study's findings reinforce this theory, with participants distinctly identifying the factors that encourage them to remain in their roles versus those that trigger a desire to exit. The participants exhibit a profound intrinsic motivation for CWP work, rooted in both their professional commitment and a deep-seated desire to effect positive change in children's lives. This motivation sustains their engagement in the field, despite significant frustration with systemic dysfunctions that impede their performance and the quality of their work.

In the demanding field of CWP, where the work's nature and the governing system are relatively fixed, interpersonal factors play a pivotal role, serving as either motivators or sources of dissatisfaction depending on their quality. Despite the robust intrinsic motivation that drives CWP workers, they often face a system that hinders their ability to fulfil their roles as they see fit. The clash between their idealistic goals and the complex realities of the job can lead to cognitive dissonance, which must be justified for them to remain in the profession. Professional mentoring could be key in bridging the gap between the workers' motivators and dissatisfiers, offering a pathway to navigate the complexities of the system and their roles more effectively.

7.1 | Strengths and Limitations

One limitation is the relatively small groups. Ideally, larger groups would have been preferable, as they might have provided a broader range of perspectives and added depth to the discourse.

Furthermore, the composition of the sample presents a constraint in terms of the interpretability of the findings. All participants

had a minimum of 5 years of experience, which could potentially narrow the breadth of insights obtained. The perspectives shared are those of 11 veteran CWP workers in Norway, and it is plausible to surmise that individuals with less tenure or who are newly employed might assess their experiences differently. Also, CWP workers who have actually left might have diverse perspectives.

Although we believe the participants are representative of the seasoned child welfare workforce in terms of characteristics such as gender, age, geographical location and agency size, we cannot discount the possibility of some bias. This is because those who volunteer for studies like this may be individuals who are particularly committed, either positively or negatively.

Nonetheless, the consistency observed among participants' viewpoints across the various groups lends credibility to the research. Despite its limitations, the study makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing dialogue aimed at comprehending and addressing the persistently high turnover rates within CWP services. Additionally, our findings are in alignment with the large national survey conducted in Norway by the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs and those reported by Brazil et al. (2023), who investigated social workers' perceptions of the social policies and agency procedures that shape their experiences within CWP services. This concurrence underscores the broader relevance of our study's insights and contributes to the growing body of evidence that systemic factors play a pivotal role in shaping the professional experiences of those in the CWP sector.

7.2 | Practical Implications

The national child welfare authorities must recognize that the system managing this complex workplace can seem cumbersome and out of sync with the field of practice. Additionally, the strong intrinsic motivation of child welfare employees to fulfil their roles should be met with appropriate framework conditions, rather than being taken for granted by assuming their recruitment and retention regardless of the conditions provided. Providing a solid foundational education and opportunities for further education that are compatible with full-time employment, alongside a salary that mirrors the significance of their work, is crucial. Furthermore, prioritizing a competent, experienced and healthy child welfare workforce as the premier resource for supporting vulnerable children and youth is likely to improve service quality and reduce turnover rates.

Although a complete overhaul of the system may not be feasible or desirable, the perception among CWP workers that 'the system' serves as a major dissatisfier calls for immediate action. Competent leadership could significantly contribute to addressing and alleviating some of the negative aspects of a fragmented system. Enhancing transparency and promoting open communication throughout the organization could help in early identification and resolution of grievances related to the system.

The role of experience in mitigating some of the adverse effects of a constantly evolving system highlights the importance of

supporting newly employed workers. Providing sufficient support will enable them to stay in their roles long enough to gain the necessary experience to effectively navigate and endure within the system.

Implementing professional mentoring and ensuring that all employees can participate could be a cost-effective method to partially address these challenges.

8 | Conclusion

The analysis of the three principal themes reveals that ‘the system’ exerts a significant influence on the other two: the nature of the work and interpersonal dynamics. An underperforming system adversely affects both the work itself and the relationships among colleagues, which in turn impacts the motivation of CWP professionals to stay in their roles. Effective leadership and robust interpersonal relationships have the potential to mitigate some of the detrimental effects that systemic issues can have on the motivation of CWP-workers. The departure of seasoned CWP workers from the field can result in the erosion of valuable institutional knowledge and expertise, as well as an increased burden on the remaining staff. Therefore, the well-being and retention of CWP workers are critical societal concerns, as they directly influence the quality of services provided to the most vulnerable populations, making it a vital indicator of societal welfare.

Author Contributions

The first author designed the study in collaboration with the other authors. Interview guide and consent forms were developed by the first and second author. The first interview was conducted by the first and fourth author, whereas the remaining three interviews were conducted by the first author alone. The first author had the main responsibility for analyses, but all authors listened to the audio files and were presented the written transcripts and contributed to solidifying the codes and themes. The first author drafted the manuscript, but all authors contributed to the final draft. All authors agree to be accountable for the content of the work.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge funding from the Research Council of Norway.

Ethics Statement

This study is approved by SIKT, the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

References

Antonopoulou, P., M. Killian, and D. Forrester. 2017. “Levels of Stress and Anxiety in Child and Family Social Work: Workers’ Perceptions

of Organizational Structure, Professional Support and Workplace Opportunities in Children’s Services in the UK.” *Children and Youth Services Review* 76: 42–50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.02.028>.

Bassett-Jones, N., and G. C. Lloyd. 2005. “Does Herzberg’s Motivation Theory Have Staying Power?” *Journal of Management Development* 24, no. 10: 929–943. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710510627064>.

Baugerud, G. A., S. Vangbæk, and A. Melinder. 2018. “Secondary Traumatic Stress, Burnout and Compassion Satisfaction Among Norwegian Child Protection Workers: Protective and Risk Factors.” *British Journal of Social Work* 48, no. 1: 215–235. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx002>.

Befring, E. 2000. “Barnevernet i Norge: Tilstandsvurderinger, nye Perspektiver og Forslag til Reform: Utredning fra Utvalg Oppnevnt ved kgl. res 29. Januar 1999: Avgitt til Barne- og Familiedepartementet mai 2000: Vol. NOU 2000: 12.” [Child protection in Norway: Assessments of the situation, new perspectives and proposals for reforms: report from a committee appointed by royal decree 29 January 1999: submitted to the Ministry of Children and Families May 2000: Vol. NOU 2000: 12.] Statens forvaltningstjeneste, Informasjonsforvaltning. <http://www.regjeringen.no/id117351>.

Befring, E. 2009. “Kompetanseutvikling i Barnevernet: Kvalifisering til Arbeid i Barnevernet Gjennom Praksisnær og Forskningsbasert Utdanning: Utredning fra Ekspertutvalg Oppnevnt av Barne- og Likestillingsdepartementet 14. April 2008: Vol. NOU 2009:8.” [Competence development in child protection: Qualification for work in child protection through practice-based and research-based education: report from an expert committee appointed by the Ministry of Children and Equality 14 April 2008: Vol. NOU 2009:8.] Departementenes servicesenter, Informasjonsforvaltning. <http://www.regjeringen.no/id558007>.

Belzile, J. A., and G. Öberg. 2012. “Where to Begin? Grappling With how to use Participant Interaction in Focus Group Design.” *Qualitative Research* 12, no. 4: 459–472. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794111433089>.

Berger, L. M., and K. S. Slack. 2020. “The Contemporary U.S. Child Welfare System(s): Overview and Key Challenges.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 692, no. 1: 7–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716220969362>.

Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2021. “One Size Fits all? What Counts as Quality Practice in (Reflexive) Thematic Analysis?” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 18, no. 3: 328–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>.

Brazil, C., L. Nolte, B. Rishworth, and B. Littlechild. 2023. ““Fighting the Invisible System”: A Grounded Theory Study of the Experiences of Child Protection Social Workers in England.” *Child & Family Social Work* 29: 526–537. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.13110>.

Collins, S. 2016. “The Commitment of Social Workers in the UK: Committed to the Profession, the Organisation and Service Users?” *Practice* 28, no. 3: 159–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09503153.2015.1074668>.

Collins-Camargo, C., C. D. Ellett, and C. Lester. 2012. “Measuring Organizational Effectiveness to Develop Strategies to Promote Retention in Public Child Welfare.” *Children and Youth Services Review* 34, no. 1: 289–295. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.10.027>.

Deci, E. L., and R. M. Ryan. 1980. “Self-Determination Theory: When Mind Mediates Behavior.” *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 1, no. 1: 33–43.

Gotvassli, K. A. 2007. “Kunnskaps- og Prestasjonsutvikling i Organisasjoner: Rasjonalitet Eller Intuisjon og Følelser? [Knowledge and Performance Development in Organisations: Rationality or Intuition and Emotions?] Tapir Akademisk Forlag.” https://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-nb_digibok_2020022807076.

Gotvassli, K. A. 2020. *Kunnskap, Kunnskapsutvikling og Kunnskapsledelse i Organisasjoner*. (2. Utgave ed). [Knowledge,

- Knowledge Development and Knowledge Management in Organizations (2nd edition)]. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Griffiths, A., C. Collins-Camargo, A. Horace, J. Gabbard, and D. Royle. 2020. "A New Perspective: Administrator Recommendations for Reducing Child Welfare Turnover." *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance* 44, no. 5: 417–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2020.1786760>.
- Herbert, M. 2007. "Creating Conditions for Good Practice: A Child Welfare Project Sponsored by the Canadian Association of Social Workers."
- Herzberg, F., B. Mausner, and B. B. Snyderman. 1959. *The Motivation to Work*. New York: John Wiley & Sons. <https://books.google.no/books?id=JFhztAEACAAJ>.
- Hur, Y. 2018. "Testing Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation in the Public Sector: Is It Applicable to Public Managers?" *Public Organization Review* 18, no. 3: 329–343. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-017-0379-1>.
- Judge, T. A., D. Heller, and M. K. Mount. 2002. "Five-Factor Model of Personality and Job Satisfaction: A meta-Analysis." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 87, no. 3: 530–541. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.3.530>.
- Kvale, S., S. Brinkmann, and S.-E. Torhell. 2014. *Den Kvalitative Forskningsintervjuen*. [The Qualitative Research Interview]. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Lauritzen, C., S. A. Vis, and S. Fossum. 2018. "Factors That Determine Decision Making in Child Protection Investigations: A Review of the Literature." *Child & Family Social Work* 23, no. 4: 743–756. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12446>.
- Leake, R., S. Rienks, and A. Obermann. 2017. "A Deeper Look at Burnout in the Child Welfare Workforce." *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance* 41, no. 5: 492–502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2017.1340385>.
- MacAlister, J. 2022. "The Independent Review of Children's Social Care Final Report."
- Misund, B. I. 2023. "Statlig Styring og Lokalt Handlingsrom i Barnevernet [State Governance and Room for Local Action in Child Protection.]" *Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift* 39, no. 4: 142–158. <https://doi.org/10.18261/nst.39.4.2>.
- Munro, E. 2011. "The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report—A Child-Centred System|ChildHub - Child Protection Hub." (2011, May 11). <https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/munro-review-child-protection-final-report?language=uk>.
- Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs. 2022. "Turnover Blant Ansatte i Barnevernet—Hvorfor Slutter sa Mange? En Nasjonal Omfangsundersokelse. [Turnover Among Employees in Child Protection—Why Do so Many Quit? A National Scoping Study]." https://www2.bufdir.no/globalassets/global/nbbf/barnevern/turnover_blant_ansatte_i_barnevernet_hvorfor_slutter_sa_mange_en_nasjonal_omfangsundersokelse.pdf.
- Olsen, A.-K., D. Ø. Nordanger, G. S. Braut, et al. 2017. "Svikt og Svik: Gjennomgang av Saker Hvor Barn har Vært Utsatt for Vold, Seksuelle Overgrep og Omsorgssvikt: Utredning fra et Utvalg Oppnevnt ved Kongelig Resolusjon 13. November 2015: Avgitt til Barne- og Likestillingsdepartementet 22. Juni 2017: Vol. NOU 2017:12." [Failure and betrayal: Review of cases where children have been exposed to violence, sexual abuse and neglect: report from a committee appointed by royal decree 13 November 2015: submitted to the Ministry of Children and Equality 22 June 2017: Vol. NOU 2017:12.] Departementenes sikkerhets- og serviceorganisasjon, Informasjonsforvaltning. [https://www.nb.no/search?q=oaaid:"oai:nb.bibsys.no:999919880464302202"&media type=bøker](https://www.nb.no/search?q=oaaid:).
- Perera, K. D. R. L. J. 2020. "Alternatives and Limitations of Self-Determination Theory: Perspectives of Different Literature."
- Pösö, T., and S. Forsman. 2013. "Messages to Social Work Education: What Makes Social Workers Continue and Cope in Child Welfare?" *Social Work Education* 32, no. 5: 650–661. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2012.694417>.
- Ryan, R. M., and E. L. Deci. 2000. "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions." *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25, no. 1: 54–67. <https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1020>.
- Skjeggstad, E., T. Slettebø, and T. Sørensen. 2022. "Er det Sammenhenger Mellom Barnevernledelse, sykefravær og Turnover Blant Fagansatte i Barnevernet? [Are There Connections Between Child Welfare Management, Sick Leave and Turnover Among Professional Staff in Child Welfare?]." *Tidsskriftet Norges Barnevern* 99, no. 4: 242–258. <https://doi.org/10.18261/tnb.99.4.6>.
- Tham, P., and A. Strömberg. 2020. "The Iron Cage of Leadership—The Role of First-Line Managers in Child Welfare." *British Journal of Social Work* 50, no. 2: 369–388. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcz156>.
- The Norwegian Health Authority. 2012. "Oppsummering av Landsomfattende Tilsyn i 2011 med Kommuntalt Barnevern—Undersøkelse og Evaluering (Vol. 2/2012) [Summary of nationwide inspections in 2011 of municipal child protection—Investigation and evaluation (Vol. 2/2012)]." [https://www.nb.no/search?q=oaaid:"oai:nb.bibsys.no:991204557814702202"&mediatype=bøker](https://www.nb.no/search?q=oaaid:).
- US Government Accounting Office. 2003. "Child Welfare: HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff Retrieved May 30, 2024, From Child Welfare: HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare ... - United States." General Accounting Office - Google Books.
- Varghese, L. S., A. P. Rogers, L. Finkelstein, and L. K. Barber. 2020. "Examining Mentors as Buffers of Burnout for Employees High in Neuroticism." *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 31, no. 3: 281–300. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21390>.
- Vis, S. A., C. Lauritzen, and S. Fossum. 2016. "Barnevernets Undersøkelsesarbeid- Oppsummering av Hovedtrekkene i Forskningslitteraturen. Delrapport 1.[Child Welfare's Research Work—Summary of the Main Features in the Research Literature. Interim Report 1.] Regionalt Kunnskapssenter for Barn og Unge Nord." <http://hdl.handle.net/10037/26889>.
- Wilberforce, M., S. Jacobs, D. Challis, et al. 2014. "Revisiting the Causes of Stress in Social Work: Sources of Job Demands, Control and Support in Personalised Adult Social Care." *British Journal of Social Work* 44, no. 4: 812–830.
- Williams, N. J., and C. Glisson. 2013. "Reducing Turnover Is Not Enough: The Need for Proficient Organizational Cultures to Support Positive Youth Outcomes in Child Welfare." *Children and Youth Services Review* 35, no. 11: 1871–1877. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.09.002>.
- Zhang, Y., X. Yao, and J. O. Cheong. 2011. "City Managers' Job Satisfaction and Frustration: Factors and Implications." *American Review of Public Administration* 41, no. 6: 670–685. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074010392212>.
- Zhenjing, G., S. Chupradit, K. Y. Ku, A. A. Nassani, and M. Haffar. 2022. "Impact of Employees' Workplace Environment on Employees' Performance: A Multi-Mediation Model." *Frontiers in Public Health* 10: 890400. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.890400>.