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The consequences of turnover among social workers described by social work supervisors

Turnover among social workers has been discussed for a long time. Previous studies have focused on the causes of turnover from the social workers' perspective, whereas this study considers the consequences of turnover described by social work supervisors. Our research data consist of eight thematic interviews conducted in Finland in early 2020. The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis. Our results show that the turnover of social workers burdens clients, workers, supervisors, and organisations. According to the supervisors, turnover among social workers also impairs the quality and effectiveness of social work services. Moreover, turnover erodes the foundations of the social work profession and undermines the implementation of professional ethics and missions. Whilst turnover may sometimes have positive consequences, in this study the social work turnover was mostly defined as dysfunctional and problematic. In the light of our results, there is an urgent need to find a solution to the avoidable turnover of social workers.

Keywords: turnover, consequences of turnover, social work, social worker, social work supervisor