



ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT & TURNOVER INTENTION

Kim, A., & Mor Barak, M.E. (2015). The mediating roles of leader–member exchange and perceived organizational support in the role stress–turnover intention relationship among child welfare workers: A longitudinal analysis. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 52, 135-143.

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This article explores the roles of leader–member exchange (LMX, or the relationship between supervisor and caseworker) and perceived organizational support (POS, or the relationship between caseworker and organization) to help **mediate role stress and turnover intention to leave among child welfare staff**. Using three waves of child welfare workforce data, this study aimed to expand the knowledge base of turnover intention research by developing and testing a conceptual model in which the relationship between role stress and turnover intention is mediated by LMX and POS as social exchange variables.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

- Child welfare organizations have been struggling with high turnover rates in the child welfare workforce for decades. Turnover has a negative effect on the quality of services to vulnerable children and families, and also reflect job dissatisfaction that weakens organizational performance and health.
- Studies on retention have explored turnover intention (intention to leave) because it can be a precursor to actual workforce turnover and an indicator of job dissatisfaction among the workforce. Taking a longitudinal approach to examining turnover intention is also crucial because caseworkers’ attitudes and outcomes can fluctuate based on changes in organizational environments over time.
- The literature consistently has indicated that a stressful work environment is a primary factor that increases turnover intention among child welfare caseworkers. Findings from this study suggest:

ITEM	KEY FINDINGS
Overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child welfare caseworkers maintained high stress levels over time.
Supervisor-supervisee relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LMX was higher than other variables over time. Participants perceived a relatively well-balanced relationship with their supervisors at baseline, and the level of LMX slightly increased over time.
Caseworker-organization relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> POS among respondents was lower than LMX at baseline and decreased at the 6-month follow-up. The level of POS slightly rose at the 1-year follow-up but remained low. A discernible decrease in POS and a notable increase in turnover intention were found during the first 6 months. Change patterns in POS and turnover intention support a negative relationship between change in POS and change in turnover intention during the first 6 months.
Turnover Intention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants’ turnover intention was low at baseline but increased from baseline to 6 months before leveling out at the 1-year follow-up.
Role Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role stress was negatively related to LMX and POS and positively related to turnover intention. Higher role stress was linked to lower quality of LMX and lower POS. Lower quality LMX and lower POS were directly connected to higher turnover intention.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

To reduce turnover and improve organizational performance, child welfare agency leaders should focus on **ways to diminish the role stress experienced by their caseworkers**. In addition to attending to heavy workloads and low salaries, agencies should focus on lower cost strategies designed to create more supportive work environments and provide individual support to their caseworkers through effective supervision.