

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Faculty of Social Sciences

Institute of Social Studies

Master's Programme of Social Work and Social Policy

Kirsi Anneli Vimpari

**ESTONIAN CHILD PROTECTION WORKERS'  
EXPERIENCES OF CLIENT VIOLENCE**

Master's Thesis

Supervisors: Karen-Pauliin Konks, MSc

Marju Selg, MSW

Tartu 2023

I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this thesis have been referenced.

Kirsi Anneli Vimpari

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Estonian child protection workers' experiences of client violence**

The aim of this Master's thesis is to find out about the types of violence the child protection workers in Estonia have been exposed to by clients and in what way they describe the aftermath and effects of that violence. The research questions were formed as follows:

1. According to the child protection workers, what are the types of violence by clients they have been exposed to at work?
2. How do the child protection workers describe the consequences/effects of the client violence they experienced?
3. According to the child protection workers, what were the measures taken at the workplace by superiors and/or workplace after the incidents?

To conduct this qualitative research, eight Estonian child protection workers were individually interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Content analysis was used to analyse the research material. The interviewees represent different sizes of local governments from smaller municipalities to bigger cities and are geographically located unevenly almost throughout Estonia. The interviews took place during April of 2022.

The results show that Estonian child protection workers are exposed to client violence, mainly to psychological violence including threats. The negative consequences of the client violence can be versatile and even devastating on the well-being, health, and the person's ability to work. Some positive outcomes also came up, the main outcome being a positive effect on professional and personal growth. Most of the child protection workers acknowledged little or no support from the management in conjunction with client violence, yet some brought out the excellent level of management who have offered all the support needed. The vital and appreciated role of collegial support came up strongly throughout all the interviews.

Keywords: child protection, client violence, social work

# KOKKUVÕTE

## **Eesti lastekaitsetöötajate kogemused klientidepoolse vägivallaga**

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärk on selgitada, milliste erinevate klientidepoolse vägivalla liikidega on Eesti lastekaitsetöötajad kokku puutunud, ning kuidas nad kirjeldavad kogetud vägivalla mõjusid. Lähtudes töö eesmärgist püstitati kolm uurimisküsimust:

1. Missugust klientidepoolset vägivalda on lastekaitsetöötajad oma töös kogenud?
2. Kuidas kirjeldavad lastekaitsetöötajad kogetud vägivalla mõjusid?
3. Milliseid meetmeid rakendasid lastekaitsetöötajate juhid pärast klientidepoolse vägivallaga seotud juhtumeid?

Käesoleva uurimistöö andmed on kogutud individuaalsete poolstruktureeritud intervjuude abil. Intervjuud toimusid 2022. aasta aprillis ning kokku intervjueriti 8. Eesti lastekaitsetöötajat. Uurimismaterjali analüüsimiseks kasutati sisuanalüüsi. Intervjueeritavad esindavad erineva suurusega kohalikke omavalitsusi - väiksematest valdadest suuremate linnadeni, mis paiknevad geograafiliselt erinevates piirkondades üle Eesti.

Tulemused näitavad, et Eesti lastekaitsetöötajad puutuvad kokku klientidepoolse vägivallaga, peamiselt psühholoogilise vägivallaga, sealhulgas ähvardustega. Klientidepoolse vägivalla negatiivsed tagajärjed võivad olla laiapõhjalised mõjutades inimese heaolu, tervist ja töövõimet. Intervjuudest selgusid ka mõned positiivsed tagajärjed, millest peamine oli positiivne mõju just tööalasele ja isiklikule kasvule. Enamus intervjuudes osalenud lastekaitsetöötajad ei tundnud oma juhtide toetust, kuid mõned intervjueritavad tõid esile väga hea kogemuse enda juhiga, kes oli pakkunud vajaminevat tuge. Lastekaitsetöötajad hindasid väga sotsiaalvaldkonnas töötava kolleegi tuge ja nägid selles olulist mõju.

Märksõnad: lastekaitse, klientidepoolne vägivald, sotsiaaltöö

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	2
KOKKUVÕTE.....	3
FOREWORD .....	6
INTRODUCTION .....	7
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	10
1.1. Violence.....	10
1.1.1 Workplace violence and client violence .....	10
1.1.2 The consequences of violence .....	13
1.1.3 The legislation in Estonia regarding workplace violence.....	16
1.2 Child protection.....	16
1.2.1 Child protection in Estonia .....	18
1.2.2 Leadership and work management in social work and child protection in Estonia .....	19
1.2.3 Issues previously brought up on child protection in Estonia.....	20
1.2.4 International examples of workplace violence in child protection.....	21
1.3 Research problem, aim of the research and research questions .....	23
2. METHODOLOGY .....	24
2.1 Study design .....	24
2.2 Sampling.....	25
2.3 Data collection and analysis .....	26
2.4 Procedures .....	27
2.5 Ethical considerations.....	29
2.6 Reflection .....	30

3. RESULTS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS .....	31
3.1 The participants .....	31
3.2 The types of violence being exposed to .....	32
3.2.1 Physical violence .....	32
3.2.2 Sexual violence .....	33
3.2.3 Psychological violence .....	33
3.3 The experienced consequences of the client violence .....	36
3.4 Possible changes, reactions at workplace .....	40
4. DISCUSSION .....	45
4.1 Different types of violence exist, and one is the most common.....	45
4.2 About the consequences of client violence .....	46
4.3 Does the managerial system in Estonia need a reform? .....	47
4.4 Winds of change and the hope for a safer future .....	48
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.....	51
REFERENCES.....	53
APPENDICES .....	64
APPENDIX 1 Invitation to participate in the study (in Estonian and in English) .....	64
APPENDIX 2 The structure of the interview (in Estonian and in English).....	66
APPENDIX 3 Quotes from the interviews (in Estonian and English).....	71

## **FOREWORD**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone giving their precious time and effort into the process of writing this thesis. All the teachers and fellow students during our studies deserve a special thanks. I also thank all my friends and family members who helped and supported along the way.

In the beginning, my wish was to focus on social workers, but my first supervisor, Marju, convinced me to change it to solely child protection workers. Sadly, Marju passed away during the time I have been writing my thesis, and mainly out of respect for her and her passion to protect and give something tangible to the child protection workers in Estonia, I wanted to keep the focus on child protection, even though it meant I needed to give up my own idea of focusing solely on social workers. Dear Estonian child protection workers, please know that you are very appreciated and thought of, and there are many wishing you a safer future.

The most profound gratitude I will give to the child protection workers who let me in their lives and allowed me to hear a part of their life's journey which is painful and not at all beautiful. Thank you for sharing your experiences with us. I wish I could have included everyone willing to participate, but hopefully the pieces now shared with the world will make a difference.

*“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment to improve the world.”*

-Anne Frank

## INTRODUCTION

Why does one willingly put a considerable amount of time and effort into writing a master's thesis? I am inclined to think that many of us do it to achieve the end result of our studies, the Master's degree. Yet there is a hope of making a difference, even a small one. In my opinion, in our line of studies majoring in social work, one needs to possess two realities at the same time: a clear conception of the brutal world we live in, and a hopeful prospect of making a difference, even if it is a small one.

I ended up with child protection workers and violence at workplace by clients whilst doing research for the course concerning writing a Master's thesis. During my studies I came across many questions as a foreigner in Estonia, on issues that perplexed and confused me as being totally different from what I am accustomed to. In the end, I came across many studies across the world of social work concerning the topic of workplace violence in social work and found out that in Estonia no one had officially studied what happens at workplaces within this specific theme. In fact, it seems that this has been studied very little in the Baltic states. I was told that there is no point in studying whether workplace violence occurs, as it is obvious that it occurs, and nobody will claim otherwise. But further questions need to be and can be asked and clarified.

Violence is almost never a timely topic as we are usually not comfortable talking about it or dealing with it, at least in public. Yet, the numbers concerning violence taking place in our homes and workplaces are alarmingly high. Maybe we are just avoiding uncomfortable themes or finding more alarming topics to focus on. However, in my opinion, the Estonian child protection workers are worth getting their say on the matter. They are worth raising the topic of a matter that should not be tolerated in any civilised society. Every person should be able to feel safe both at home and at work.

A piece of news on the Finnish media YLE (Finnish national public broadcasting company) caught my eye in October 2021, where the Finnish social and crisis care was on headlines after the social and crisis workers were in a situation where gunshots were fired during a



house call in September 2021 in Hämeenlinna, Finland. The article states that for the first time in Kanta-Häme area's history a firearm was used in a manner that it threatened the safety of the professionals on scene. General mention of violence being more and more common in social sector affirmed my thoughts on the development and general course of the matter (Korpela, 2021). Although this piece of news was clearly shocking, the fact that they just brought the increased use of firearms so casually into the article made me think. How are we reacting and preparing to these events, or are we just expecting things to get better on their own?

During the final stretch of my thesis writing process, I came across another interesting news on the internet. It was about the study being conducted during spring 2022 by Statistics Estonia about interpersonal relations focusing on safe relationships within families, at work and outside home (Eesti Statistika, 2022). Freely translating the study is named "Relationship study reveals the underwater part of the iceberg". According to that piece of news, this is the first time in Estonia when a population study is being made including other forms of violence than only physical violence and harassing, which were called respectively the tip of the iceberg. In this study, also e.g. sexual, financial, and emotional forms of violence are being taken into account (Eesti Statistika, 2022).

Workplace violence is a broad concept, and in international studies the use of terms varies. This is also brought up by Boyle & Wallis (2016), stating that there is no consensus outlining the definitions or concepts within the health sector.

In this thesis I chose to concentrate on the violence by clients and/or their associates. In terminology the terms workplace violence, work violence, occupational violence and client violence occur, and differentiating is important. As also colleagues and other staff can initiate violence, it is essential to keep in mind that in this thesis, the focus is on violence initiated by clients and/or their close associates.

As there is no previous research done in Estonia on the matter of client violence within social work or child protection, the centre of my research problem focuses on the client violence amongst child protection workers. My aim for this research is to find out about the types of

violence the child protection workers in Estonia have been exposed to by clients and in what way they describe the aftermath and effects of that violence.

The study questions are as follows:

1. According to the child protection workers, what are the types of violence by clients they have been exposed to at work?
2. How do the child protection workers describe the consequences/effects of the client violence they experienced?
3. According to the child protection workers, what were the measures taken at the workplace by superiors and/or workplace after the incidents?

This Master's thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of the theoretical framework in order to introduce the main themes. Methodology as a second chapter describes the choices ending up in a qualitative study, and the semi-structured interviews used with a selection of content analysis. Respectively I describe the process leading to the interviewees, the interviewees, the continuing steps made within the progression of the study with ethical considerations. The methodology chapter ends with reflection. The third chapter brings about the analysis of the data collected. Finally, the fourth chapter consist of discussion. Summary and conclusion including recommendations will finish this thesis.

# **1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## **1.1. Violence**

Violence is considered a universal term that contains the vastness of different forms of abuse (Milczarek, 2010: 16). As WHO (the World Health Organisation) defined violence in their World report on violence and health in 2002, they still define the problem of violence similarly (WHO, 2022; Krug et al., 2002): "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation." Violence is being categorised as a context-dependent phenomenon, with varying definition of what is considered violence in a certain time or place (Husso et al., 2021: 5).

Continuing with the broad typology of violence, the WHO divides violence in the World report of violence and health (Krug et al., 2002: 6) into three categories: self-directed (e.g. suicidal behaviour and self-abuse), interpersonal (family and intimate partner violence and community violence between individuals who are unrelated, and in addition may or may not know each other) and collective violence (social, political, or collective violence). Further categories by the WHO according to the nature of the violence are physical, sexual, psychological, or involving deprivation or neglect (Rutherford et al., 2007).

### **1.1.1 Workplace violence and client violence**

The International Labour Office ILO defines the terms workplace violence, work-related violence, and violence at work by "any action, incident or behaviour that departs from reasonable conduct in which a person is assaulted, threatened, harmed, injured in the course of, or as a direct result of, his or her work" (ILO, 2004: 4). As Milczarek, (2010:16) bringing

out the range in different definitions of violence at work, majority of the definitions include homicide, assault, threats, mobbing and bullying, and actually including all behaviour that is humiliating, degrading or damaging to a person's well-being, value and dignity.

Workplace violence can be divided into two categories, to internal and external workplace violence (ILO, 2004 as cited in Chappel & Di Martino, 2006: 10). Internal workplace violence takes place between workers (this includes supervisors and managers), external workplace violence takes place between workers and any other persons present at the workplace (ILO, 2004 as cited in Chappel & Di Martino, 2006: 10).

Chappel & Di Martino (2006: 16) point out in their book "Violence at Work" that it is a great challenge to define workplace violence when taking into consideration the entire range of different behaviours covering the title workplace violence whilst also considering the perceptions of what is regarded as violence in different cultures, and the borderlines of acceptable behaviours, which vary significantly.

Violence at work can take place many forms, for example bullying, mobbing, victimising, battering, threats, intimidation, physical attacks, kicking, punching, swearing, stalking, making rude gestures, hostile behaviour, shouting, name calling or deliberate silence (Chappel & Di Martino, 2006: 16, Virkki 2007). There is variation in how often violence occurs, for some workers it happens daily, as others face it only rarely (Virkki 2007).

It is basically common knowledge that workers in social services are exposed to violence, and this is supported by many studies, e.g., Enosh et al. (2012), stating that workers in the public sector, especially in social services, are constantly under the threat of aggressive clients. Explaining factors for the prevalence of workplace violence in the field of social work for some parts are the control, monitoring and the option to intervene the individual's life (Padyab & Ghazinour, 2015).

As Antikainen-Juntunen points out (2009: 41-42), client-based violence violating the worker's professional skills or reputation is considered psychological violence, and this can occur e.g. as pressuring or blackmailing the worker, and continues that in addition, a situation

is considered psychological violence when the worker is afraid, and their physical immunity is threatened. Harassment via telecommuting is also violence, including threatening and insinuating phone calls, messages, or emails (Antikainen-Juntunen, 2009: 41-42). Psychological violence can surface in many ways. Psychological violence can take place through words, gestures or expressions, e.g., name calling, making accusations about suing to court or suicide, sexual remarks or suggestions and making untrue statements about the worker (Antikainen-Juntunen, 2009: 41-42).

There is a multitude of studies made internationally about workplace violence within the field of social work. They outline the reality of the vastness and variability of the situation, and this will be described within the next paragraphs.

In Finland, Talentia (the Union of Professional Social Workers) made an inquiry about the experienced violence by clients in social work, and according to the results every fifth trained social work professional had experienced violence or felt the threat of violence at work (Talentia, 2016). In a study about workplace violence with Swedish and Iranian social workers they found that workplace violence is almost as common in both countries; in Sweden 72% and in Iran 68% of the social workers participating in the study had experienced violence at work (Padyab & Ghazinour, 2015).

In Portugal, the study of client violence in social work revealed that at least half of the participants were victims of clients' violence and verbal aggression (Sousa et al., 2014). Enosh et al. (2012) state in their study from Israel that workers in social services are constantly exposed to aggressive behaviour by clients. When Australian social workers were questioned about their experiences on workplace violence, 67% of them replied having experienced at least one form of violence during the last year (Koritsas et al., 2010).

As for the closest countries to Estonia, the other Baltic states Latvia and Lithuania, there are some studies to be found on the subject. In a Lithuanian study within the field of social work by Bičkutė & Liobikienė (2011) it was found that the most frequent type of aggression from clients is verbal aggression, sexually aggressive behaviour of clients was mentioned as less frequent, and physically aggressive behaviour of clients the least frequent form of violence.

In an article published in 2019 in the “Social work in Latvia” Alksnis states in the foreword that all social workers in Latvia receive verbal and emotional threats and aggressive behaviour from clients, their relatives and also from workers from other institutions (Alksnis, 2019: 52).

Whilst it is vital to scan the wider picture internationally on the matter of workplace violence and client violence, it is important to keep in mind that assessment between studies and countries is challenging. There is no standardised definition of workplace violence or scales for that matter, and this makes comparison between different studies fairly impossible (Robson et al., 2014). In addition, the numbers on the matter can be unreliable. Virkki (2008: 248) mentions that it is probable that prevalence of client violence is higher than what we see now in the statistics. As Virkki also states (2008: 248), client violence is often left unreported, since being exposed to client violence leads to feelings of guilt and shame.

### **1.1.2 The consequences of violence**

Violence has mainly negative outcomes. For example, the Ministry of Justice in Estonia has published an agreement preventing violence for years 2021-2025 (Justiitsministeerium, 2021), where it is outlined how the effects of violence have an impact on people throughout their lives. The possible effects are many, covering a multitude of problems and challenges within education, social and health sector, and not just in childhood but also having an impact on adults via causing not only physical traumas but also mental health issues, even resulting in exclusion from society and inability to work (Justiitsministeerium, 2021).

In a critical commentary by Robson et al. (2014) the researchers brought up that it was common to use verbal aggression and threats towards child and family social workers, and those had the most damaging consequences, and, in addition, they were the hardest to identify and to cope with. Physical assaults were identified as being relatively rare, and all acts of violence proved to have an impact on well-being and practice, though not constantly a negative one (Robson et al., 2014).

A study by Holmes et al. (2012) brings up the consequences of workplace violence which are far-reaching, and include absenteeism, injury, high staff turnover, lower quality of service, and decreased satisfaction at work. They also bring up the additional effects, which include impacts on the patient and their network, for example partners and family members (Holmes et al., 2012).

It has been reported that the consequences of psychological violence, including threats, seem to surface as inner unwellness, feeling negative and self-shame, whereas the consequences of physical violence bring out also feelings of hate towards clients, as well as unwillingness to work (Yliruka et al., 2009: 49) It is also worth noting that being imposed to a threat of physical violence can have as devastating and stressful effects as an actual physical attack (Winstanley & Whittington, 2004).

The reported consequences of workplace violence in a study on healthcare workers were multiple effects on their emotional sphere, effects on lifestyle including an increased use of tobacco, food and sleep disorders, distress, changes from social relationships to social isolation and avoidance of certain places (Cannavò et al., 2019: 110). The study by Enosh et al. (2012) on social workers identified numerous negative effects of client aggression, such as impacts on emotional, cognitive, and behavioural levels and with both short-term and long-term consequences. The previous impacts can surface for example as feelings of stress, humiliation and fear, and also present symptoms of burnout (Enosh et al., 2012). These consequences affect the worker who was attacked, and the effects echo throughout the organisation (Enosh et al., 2012).

Emotional consequences of violence against child protection workers come up in several studies. Feelings of anxiety, fear, shock, and anger were reported in the study by Littlechild (2005a), feeling stressed, humiliated, and moody in the study by Enosh et al. (2013) and Laird (2013). Client violence against child protection workers has been associated with increased burnout symptoms and decreased job satisfaction (Enosh et al., 2012). And in the most horrible cases, there have been client violence incidents which have resulted in a death of the child protection worker (Hunt et al., 2016; Laird, 2013).

In a Swedish victimology study, it has been stated that work-related violence within health and social services is so frequent that 80% of workers consider violence as a part of the job (Estrada et al., 2010: 51). This is also supported by other studies, like Littlechild (2005a) and Laird (2013) who point out that not only the child protection workers, but also the organisations employing them have the tendency to view client violence as being a part of the job.

There are even some positive outcomes of violence, or the risk of violence, described in the literature. Žibėnienė & Mikniūtė (2016) bring up the effects for some of the social workers as working more efficiently, and the state of heightened risk can give more confidence and serve as a motivation factor to work with courage and responsibility. Robson et al. (2014) point out that in certain cases, as an outcome of the incidents of violence, the workers and services were prompted to use the ability to learn and help the policies and training to develop.

Continuing on the more positive consequences, there are some examples of developing positive practices such as becoming authoritative, meaning e.g. setting limits and being firm but fair (Newhill, 2003). Tzafirir et al. (2015) describe how some social workers, after being faced with violence, re-evaluated their values and changed their practices concerning personal safety and setting limits. The positive coping is a further topic to study, as more information is needed on the matter with child protection workers when considering violence prevention and organisational policies (Vogus et al., 2016).

What comes after the violent incidents is meaningful. Andersen et al. (2021) found that if the supervisors supported the social workers after violent incidents, the social workers' level of commitment (e.g. better performance and reduced burnout and fatigue) was enhanced.



### **1.1.3 The legislation in Estonia regarding workplace violence**

In Estonia, the Occupational Health and Safety Act (2022, came in to force on July 26, 1999) is the basis for the protection of employees providing the laws for the occupational health and safety, and for the promotion of the physical, mental and social well-being of the employees. Within the Estonian occupational health and safety system, the executive authority belongs to the Ministry of Social Affairs entirely, and two of its structural units (the Working Life Development Department and the Health Care Department) are directly involved in occupational health and safety-related policy-making (EU-OSHA, 2023).

The Occupational Health and Safety Act § 9 (2022) details the psychological threats at work as repetitive work or work not corresponding to the abilities of an employee, poor work organisation, working alone for a prolonged amount of time, and other comparable factors that may progressively cause changes in the mental state of an employee. As the Estonian Labour Inspectorate deepens this, the psychological threats include work that has risks of accidents or violence, unequal treatment, bullying and harassment at work, and other factors of leadership, work organisation and working environment that can have an effect on the mental or physical health of the worker, amongst other issues be the cause of work stress (Tööinspektsioon, 2022).

As of January 1, 2023 a significant addition was made to the Estonian legislation concerning occupational diseases, as psychosocial danger factors were added to the legislation (Soobik, 2022). This enables the employees to apply for compensation in cases when health issues are deriving from psychosocial danger factors, such as work with threat of violence or accidents (Soobik, 2022).

## **1.2 Child protection**

The origins of the first ideas of child protection are interesting and versatile. Hämäläinen (2016) brings out in his article about the development of the concept of child protection that

the origins and traditions concerning child protection have country-specific characteristics and the origins are rooted in various belief and value systems. Hämäläinen (2016) continues that in many countries, thinking of the idea of child protection within the political dimension, the idea was moulded by a combination of patriotic, religious, humanistic, and scientific values.

Spratt et al. (2015) state that development of child protection has had multiple factors including industrialisation and urbanisation. As Spratt et al. (2015) continue, industrialisation and urbanisation were key factors in making families more vulnerable to the dangers being brought to life by industrial capitalism, as this made children more visible to the people outside the family, and lead to increasing concerns of their moral and physical welfare.

In a large-scale statement by the European Union in their strategy on the rights of the child it is written: “Every child in Europe and across the world should enjoy the same rights and be able to live free of discrimination, recrimination or intimidation of any kind” (European Commission, 2021). Children are still victimised by different forms of violence, they suffer from socio-economic exclusion and discrimination (especially based on their sex, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability of their own or of their parents), children are not sufficiently being listened to or their views are not taken into consideration (European Commission, 2021).

Child protection did exist before 1989. This year, however, has been marked in history, as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was formulated and the treaty has become the most ratified human rights treaty in history, and thereafter has had a major role in changing children’s lives around the world for the better (Unicef, 2023). The main focus of the treaty contains the profound statement of children being individuals and human beings with their own rights, and specifying childhood as a protected time (Unicef, 2023). Child protection concentrates specifically on supporting the subsistence of the families in raising children and childcare and protecting children’s rights and guaranteeing their welfare (Viira, 2017).

### **1.2.1 Child protection in Estonia**

The previously mentioned Convention on the Rights of the Child has found its way to be the basis for current child protection in many countries, including Estonia who signed it in 1991 (Civitta, 2022). Following the overall view on child protection, in Estonia child protection is focused on work with children and families with children, and this is viewed as a part of social work (Viira, 2017). The current Child Protection Act (2023) passed November 19, 2014, and was first in force January 1, 2016.

The Child Protection Act § 17 defines the functions of the local government, which include matters such as following the principles ensuring the rights and well-being of children, developing programmes and projects ensuring the rights and well-being of children, preventing and decreasing risks that endanger children, when becoming aware of a child needing assistance making sure that immediate assessment takes place and appropriate measures are taken for assisting the child, and so on. The legislation also includes exercising state supervision on the matters that are defined in the Act.

The Estonian legislation regarding workers in child protection is laid out in the Child Protection Act (2023), and the § 19 states that the child protection officials need to be competent in the profession of a social worker with specialisation in child protection within two years, calculating from the date of starting the work. The Child Protection Act § 18 states the child protection officials as a worker at the unit of the local government or as officials in the Social Insurance Board, with main focus being ensuring the rights and well-being of children.

The aim of the Estonian Child Protection Act is to create an environment that supports the child, to design behaviour and lifestyle within society that appreciate the child and their development, to put the child's interests first, to improve the child's quality of life, to support the child's comprehensive development, and also to guarantee the timely and appropriate help and custody for the child who is in a risky situation (Civitta, 2022).

There are approximately 275 child protection workers in Estonia, and a little over 40% of them work in the capital Tallinn or in the surrounding county Harjumaa (Sotsiaalkindlustusamet, 2023b). The Social Insurance Board (Sotsiaalkindlustusamet, 2023b) mentions the main themes within child protection as the need for help deriving from the health condition or disability of the child, risk behaviour and problems arising from educational or other special needs.

### **1.2.2 Leadership and work management in social work and child protection in Estonia**

Local Government Organisation Act § 2 (2021) defines the local government as the right, authority and duty of the bodies of power of a local authority, whether it is a rural municipality or city. Local government organises and manages independently local life that is subordinate to the legislation, and according to § 6, this includes the provision of social services (Local Government Organisation Act, 2021). In other words, organising and managing the child protection services at the local government level for safeguarding the rights and welfare of the children is left up to the municipalities and cities (Sotsiaalkindlustusamet, 2023a).

As for additional support at work, there are three possibilities for support via the services for the child protection workers from the Social Insurance Board of Estonia (Sotsiaalkindlustusamet, 2022): individual mentoring (a fairly new possibility), counselling service for individual cases and supervision as a group format in three categories (group supervision for child protection workers, group supervision for the managers in child protection services and network supervision).

Kütt's Master's thesis from 2016, in which she interviewed Estonian social workers regarding the support they receive at workplace, led her to the conclusion that the social workers need vocational support at work, but they are insufficiently supported by their managers in leadership and guidance. Yet the social workers have more motivation and dedication at work when they feel that the direct manager or boss supports them (van Ewijk,

2015:70). Van Ewijk (2015: 70) also states that the social workers would need such a management at work that is able to understand, direct, support and motivate the social workers.

### **1.2.3 Issues previously brought up on child protection in Estonia**

In a fresh analysis on certain aspects of the child protection in Estonia (compiled by Civitta, 2022, commenced by the Social Insurance Board of Estonia), several important issues are brought up there. As by the Child Protection Act §17 lg 2, the local government is responsible for creating the conditions for the child protection work, and the local government is responsible for all the tasks defined within the Act, yet in many cases this is regarded as the child protection workers themselves would be responsible for carrying them out (Civitta, 2022: 23-24). In many local governments, most of the legally binding tasks of child protection are in reality being delegated to the child protection workers, and the workers as officials are being held responsible for carrying out all the legal duties, instead of holding the local government responsible (Civitta 2022: 23-24).

As problematic concerns, which are described as “bottle necks” in the analysis, several large issues are mentioned, such as the insufficient amount of child protection workers to guarantee the tasks that are legally appointed to the local governments, and too big a workload, with only 16% feeling the workload was normal and 70% feeling the workload was high or too high (Civitta, 2022).

As continuing with the issues at child protection within Estonia, themes arose about the management of local governments not having understanding or appreciation of the work of child protection. In addition, issues rose with the management not having perception of the difficulties and strain of the child protection work, which leads to the workers feeling not supported enough (Civitta, 2022).

As for the safety of child protection workers, Sarapuus's (2021) Estonian research found that half of the child protection service workers participating in her research did not have emergency access away from the desk in the work room in case of a physical threat. Sarapuu (2021) also felt that most of the local governments probably had not agreed on measures of reacting if the child protection workers are faced with threat at work.

Several suggestions from the child protection workers helping with the current issues in child protection were made in the analysis compiled by Civitta (2022): the local governments should appoint support to the mental health of the child protection workers in order to avoid burnout, the state could support the workers well-being and mental health e.g. by funding individual psychological services (guaranteed for all, not depending on geography or the financial situation of the local government), and in addition they suggested that universities should offer better preparation for coping with a large workload and an emotional profession (a so-called mental health tool box), and lastly, when starting out as a child protection worker, there should be better access to additional training.

#### **1.2.4 International examples of workplace violence in child protection**

Within the field of social work, it has been concluded that child and family social workers are the ones most at risk (Newhill & Wexler, 1997; Shin, 2011). It has been brought out that the nature of the child protection work could offer an explanation to this increased risk, also because they regularly work with involuntary clients (Lamothe et al., 2018: 309). The interventions in child protection can have disagreeable outcomes for the families (such as child being taken away or investigations), and this may offer some explanation for some of the reactions of the clients (Laird, 2013; Shin, 2011).

Threats and violence by clients towards child protection workers is a well-known phenomenon (Littlechild et al., 2016: 2). It is characteristic to child protection to set restrictions to persons rights to self-determination, and this is a feature increasing the risk of violence at work (Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö, 2014: 33).

In a web survey in Britain by Littlechild et al. (2016) with child protection workers mainly all being social workers, of all the answers (590) half brought up working with aggressive and threatening parents at least once a week. During the past six months over half of the workers had been threatened by a client, and almost fifth of the workers had been targeted with physical violence (Littlechild et al., 2016).

Robson et al. (2014) gathered experiences for seven separate studies from child and family service workers from a 30-year-period (1994-2011) including social workers from the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and South Korea. They report that according to the participants of the studies, client violence is clearly a problem within social work, and all the participants of the studies have experienced some form of violence, or experienced violence at least once (Robson et al., 2014).

It has been established that aggressive parents can in certain situations dominate and direct the intervention and the client relationship in child protection, and the effect of the aggressive parents to the child protection worker can prove out to become a significant factor in the outcome for the family and the child (Hunt et al., 2016:7).

In a Finnish research Vesa (2021) found that the most common types of violence experienced by child protection social workers were psychological violence and various kind of threats, often carried out via a variety of communication equipment. Physical violence by clients was rarer, yet its consequences were more severe (Vesa, 2021). Another Finnish research by Manninen (2018) shows similar results with child protection social workers experiencing mainly psychological violence and being threatened, and with some experiences of physical violence.

Unfortunately, there is no research data about client violence within child protection either from Latvia (personal communication December 7, 2022 with Mārtiņš Moors, vice chairman of the Latvian association of social workers) or from Lithuania (personal communication December 8, 2022 with Sigita Makčinskienė, unfortunately I was unable to reach the Lithuanian association of social workers despite of several attempts). As Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania form the Baltic countries and share not only geographical similarities and

connection but also a strong historical and present-day bond, I put considerable effort in finding some research data.

### **1.3 Research problem, aim of the research and research questions**

It has been stated widely that within the sector of social work, work-related violence and client-based aggression and violence occur (Alksnis, 2019; Enosh et al., 2012; Enosh, & Tzafrir, 2015; Honkala, 2006; Koritsas et al., 2010; Matikka, 2017; Mustonen, 2021; Padyab & Ghazinour, 2015; Respass & Payne, 2008; Sousa et. al., 2014; Syväoja-Kokko, 2017; Tirkkonen, 2014; Vigren, 2020; Zelnick et al., 2013). Narrowing the perspective to child protection, there is also a wide range of studies deepening the view of the workers' experiences on client violence (Horowitz, 2006; Kim & Hopkins, 2015; Koivu, 2019; Koivuluhta, 2021; Lamothe et al., 2018; Littlechild, 2002; Littlechild, 2005a; Littlechild, 2005b; Littlechild et al., 2016; Manninen, 2018; Nutt & Backoff, 2022; Nykänen, 2020; Shin, 2011; Vesa, 2021).

The problematic situation affects the professionals with mainly negative consequences; for example, exposure to client violence can lead to feelings of guilt and shame (Virkki, 2008:248), can have negative effects on quality of life, for example in the form of sleeping disorders, social isolation and relationship changes (Cannavò et al., 2019: 110), and can have an impact in the form of injury, high staff turnover, decreased satisfaction at work (Holmes et al., 2012). The rippling effect of negative consequences can proceed from the worker throughout the organisation (Enosh et al., 2012).

There is no previous research done in Estonia on the matter of client violence within social work or child protection, and this is in the centre of my research problem. My aim for this thesis is to find out about the types of violence the child protection workers in Estonia have been exposed to by clients and in what way they describe the aftermath and effects of that violence.



The study questions are as follows:

1. According to the child protection workers, what are the types of violence by clients they have been exposed to at work?
2. How do the child protection workers describe the consequences/effects of the client violence they experienced?
3. According to the child protection workers, what were the measures taken at the workplace by superiors and/or workplace after the incidents?

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter will present the way I designed this study and how it was implemented as a process. Respectively, ethical considerations and reflective self-evaluation will follow.

### **2.1 Study design**

As the starting point for qualitative research is describing real life including the idea of reality being versatile (Hirsjärvi et al., 2005: 152), it suits best for the purposes of this study. Creswell & Creswell (2018: 4) define qualitative research as a method through which individuals or groups can figure out a meaning to a social or a human problem. Whilst deepening the idea, Hirsjärvi et al. (2005: 155) point out that data collection of a qualitative study prefers such methods that it is possible to hear the voice and bring out the positions of the participants. As my main wish on the subject of experienced workplace violence of the child protection workers in Estonia was to give a voice to the child protection workers themselves, the study design is well justified.

In a study focusing on the experiences, the main focus is not to produce objective data or give explanations, but to understand the experiences of the people. The used perspective of experiences also contains quite often an emancipatory interest in giving a voice to such groups who are not that often heard in our society. (Jokinen, 2021.) As Miles et al. (2014: 93) point out, the major point of field research is revealed in the map being born by the researcher of what is happening and why.

## **2.2 Sampling**

Keeping in mind the aim of my study, I started asking from my fellow students if they had contacts to Estonian child protection workers nationwide. It turned out one had access to the e-mail list for all the workers, and I chose to use e-mail as a primary tool to reach as many child protection workers as possible. On all accounts this means I chose to find the participants of the study in the most comfortable way I could, and this is also described by Laherand (2008) as a way of finding the specific group of people fitting in the criteria of the study in a certain time in the easiest way possible. Naturally, there are always e-mail addresses that are old or the person just changed positions, and it also turned out that many municipality e-mail servers block e-mails from Google-based servers completely. As a result, the information reached only those who had working e-mails, were not on holiday or another leave in the beginning of February 2022, whose e-mail actually allowed my mail to go through, and so on.

The e-mail served as an invitation to participate to a study (appendix 1) where I explained the main aim of the study, timetable, and practicalities of participating in the study including ethical considerations, as well as introduced myself shortly. I was happy to receive positive answers straight away, and the intended amount of five to eight interviews was filled out quickly, reaching eight in two days. Within a few days more volunteers emailed, and in the end, I had to decline 14 people who would have been willing to be interviewed.

Due to practicalities I chose to do the interviews via MS Teams, only recording a sound file of the interview. Generally, the last years with the covid19 pandemic have taught us all to be electronically smarter, and using the computers also removed some geographical limitations that would have occurred otherwise (even though Estonia is not that big a country, some destinations would have required a day or two of travelling). As a result, even though I would have preferred non-virtual environment for our interviews, I still find many advantages ending up with virtual interviews, also saving time with a chance to conduct many interviews in a shorter period of time. The virtual environment allows us to see each other and have at least some aspects of meeting someone in person, making it more layered compared, for example, to a phone interview. In addition, finding a fairly silent and peaceful location for the interviews would have been a challenge. In addition, this allowed the interviewees to select a place for the interview themselves, and for my part I was able to create similar circumstances for all.

My study did not have other geographical criteria besides Estonia, or for that matter limitations for many participants from the same municipality or work unit. However, as a result for the invitation I got child protection workers from a broad spectrum in both geographical and municipal sense. In a way this made the study group more heterogenous than for example sampling participants from a smaller area like Tartu County or Northern Estonia, but as Estonia is a fairly small country, I feel the final group of participants represents the group of Estonian child protection workers very well. Having participants from across the country also gives more tools of protecting participants' anonymity.

### **2.3 Data collection and analysis**

Although the international studies concerning the topic of workplace violence or more specifically client violence among child protection workers and social workers have been conducted as group interviews, I was firmly shown to another direction during our social work studies in Tartu University. When I presented the topic and my plan to implement the

interviews during a course about conducting a Master's thesis, I was strongly advised to do personal interviews with the Estonians because of the sensitivity of the matter. As a foreigner in Estonia, I wanted to hear their voice and experience, and hence chose to do personal interviews with all the participants.

As Rubin & Rubin (2012: 31) describe, the semi-structured interview is usually an extended conversation between the interviewee and the researcher, the researcher has a specific topic to learn about, the researcher prepares the questions in advance, and plans to ask follow-up questions. I felt this was an appropriate choice for my study.

For the analysis of the interviews, I chose content analysis. In content analysis, the focus is on the language, in the characteristics of the communication, the content or the meaning of the text (Laherand, 2008: 290). Content analysis aims at describing the phenomenon being studied in a concise and generalised form (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018: 117).

## **2.4 Procedures**

As Tooding (2015: 11) describes, a study based on data forms a chain of steps, where in the beginning an aim for the study is formed, next step is acquiring the appropriate data, after which the data is fixed up and converted, and finally the data is processed and interpreted. Even as this describes qualitative study, I still feel it is quite applicable to qualitative studies as illustrating steps.

The original idea of the theme for this study dates to 2019 and to my social work studies within the university. Due to many personal reasons, including studying abroad for six months, a few longer sick leaves, and working full time as well, the time of writing this thesis has been considerably longer than intended. From early on I chose to write this thesis in English, as I have earlier experienced doing bachelor's level degree in English, and because there is a possibility of a wider public to be able to view the thesis. All the materials and

discussions with the participants of the study were conducted in Estonian, and from the appendices the materials are found both in Estonian and English.

The invitations to participate in the study were sent out on April 6, 2022, and the interviews were carried out in the following week. Since MS Teams has only a video format file saving, I used a separate device near the computer to save the audio file. For backup copy I saved the full interview with all the information relating to the study, and for the transcribing process I used a shorter audio file not only to save time from transcribing the same information from all the interviews, but to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees during the transcribing and data handling.

For transcribing the interviews, I asked an Estonian friend working at the University of Tartu for help. Although I am on an excellent level of understanding Estonian and able to use it freely in communication, I felt reassured that a native Estonian speaker would be transcribing the material which would lessen my possible effect of interpreting words falsely. And her being employed by the university also gave a good base for maintaining good ethics throughout the process. The interviews were processed via the Estonian Speech Recognition and Transcription Editing Service (Olev & Alumäe, 2022) and then manually checked, completed, or altered accordingly.

I also conducted a pilot interview a few days before starting the interviews to test out the interview scheme and to have feedback of the planned interview. This helped me formulate a few details and gave reassurance of the scheme and plan. For me it was also notable that whilst conducting the pilot interview with a friend, for some parts it was emotionally challenging to stay in the professional role of an interviewer and a scientist. This was a good reminder of why it is best and beneficial in this case to have interviewees I do not have a strong personal connection to. In addition, I was able to mark some technical points down to being able to take as many things into account as possible during the actual interviews, for example ensuring the video is working both ways, having volume on full for better sound quality and making sure everything works well with the backup recording too.

The shortest interview lasted 21 minutes and the longest 56 minutes, average duration of an interview was 37 minutes. We had technical difficulties with only one of the interviews, where it proved impossible to have a video connection for some unknown reason. But since the interviewee was willing to proceed happily without the video connection, we carried out the interview. For other interviews no major technical difficulties appeared. Interviews were marked from H1 to H8, respectively.

For a tool in data handling and coding I used NVivo (released in March 2020) in the first phase, the final tables I constructed manually.

After coding you can categorise or do analytic reflection (Saldaña, 2013: 14). As codes being the labels giving symbolic significance to the information (Miles et al., 2014: 70), as next step one can move on to formulating descriptions and categories for the analysis (Creswell et al., 2018: 194).

## **2.5 Ethical considerations**

As (O'Leary, 2004: 50) states, the researcher is absolutely liable for the integrity of the research processes. I can assure that I have made every effort to ensure the integrity of my study.

I followed ethical principles with the participants of the study during all the phases starting out from the invitation to participate, carrying on in the beginning of the interview and concluding at the end of the interview. The main points being the aim of the study, asking permission to use sound recording, the principles of processing the material from the interview anonymously and making sure none of the specific information from the final thesis can be linked to a specific person.

In addition, I informed them of their right to stop the interview at any point, and their possibility to drop out of the study up to the point of the thesis being ready. I also brought up the possibility to add or change details or parts at any point or later on after the interview and gave a possibility to ask any questions during the interview or later even after the interview. Whilst doing the data analysis and using the data in my final version of the thesis, I used code names for the participants, the same codes from H1 to H8 as mentioned before.

## **2.6 Reflection**

During the prolonged process of writing this thesis I also faced the fact that the topic of my thesis revolving around violence was putting me off at certain times and even prohibiting me from continuing at other times. From some personal experience being exposed to both verbal and physical violence I feel the need to bring up the subject, since I also feel not enough is done to make this world a safer place for us all at home and at work. And since no one has control on all the world, I feel we need to choose the place where we can have some influence.

I have previous experience with semi-structured interviews that I gathered during my bachelor's studies while conducting the interviews for my thesis (Vimpari, 2014), and I found that extremely helpful while planning the interview process for this study.

From the experiences of my fellow students, I knew that sometimes finding the interviewees can be a struggle. On one hand, it was a positive surprise to have interviewees volunteering so quickly, and on the other hand, it is sad that so many have experiences to share within the topic of client violence. One clear motivation that most of the interviewees brought up voluntarily without prompting was the importance of the subject of my study. I got a very clear picture that they appreciate this topic being discussed and that an attempt is made to make a difference in their work environment and culture. "You are the first person to ask these questions" came up multiple times.

As a special trait I also want to bring up something that happened with most of the interviewees in the end of the interviews. The supporting words and gestures for me to support my finishing of this study and getting everything done was really touching. I feel this is also quite unique, since even though I have been in somewhat similar situations before with other people and groups, the support from the participants of the study was really lovely, and in my opinion reflects the overall spirit of the people working in the child protection field in Estonia.

### **3. RESULTS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS**

The aim of this chapter is to present the results deriving from this research. An overview description of the participants of the research can be found in the beginning of this chapter, consisting of the rough demographics, work experience within child protection and gender. This will be followed by describing the types of violence the child protection workers have been exposed to at work, the experienced consequences of that violence the interviewees describe and if there were measures taken by the superiors after the incidents in order to achieve answers to the research questions. Finally, I will present the thoughts and ideas deriving from the interviews for a safer future within child protection.

#### **3.1 The participants**

The participants who were willing to be interviewed are all women. They have worked in child protection on the average for nearly three years, ranging from one year to four years and four months. The most eastern parts of Estonia are without representation, but otherwise the interviewees cover Estonia geographically. Some work in smaller municipalities, and some in the bigger towns in Estonia.



Five out of eight child protection workers have a degree in social work, and half of the interviewees already have the Estonian Qualification to work in child protection.

To maintain good ethics in preserving anonymity, I made the decision not to describe other degrees of the child protection workers besides degrees in social work, and also not to include any more detailed information on their geographical locations.

## **3.2 The types of violence being exposed to**

This chapter presents the results of this thesis answering the research question about the different types of violence the interviewed child protection workers describe having been exposed to.

### **3.2.1 Physical violence**

Two out of eight had experienced physical violence, out of them one person was pushed, and one person got attacked by hitting with an object. The threat of physical violence is more common than actual physical violence. What is also described by the child protection workers is how they prevent or handle possible threats of physical violence by analysing the situations beforehand and making certain arrangements in advance (e.g. choice of location for meeting the client, laying out different scenarios for outcomes).

*"...I was pushed like... like they wanted to push me down the stairs."*

*"Well, direct physical violence we've experienced once, six months ago, when in the process of separating the child, she came with an object, i.e. a book; so the child's great-grandmother came at me."*

### **3.2.2 Sexual violence**

Amongst the interviewees, experiences of sexual violence were rare. Only one mentioned sexual violence, and that occurred in a verbal manner.

*"Then things like, well, "Why can't I touch your breasts?" and "Allow me to touch and I'll leave." Well, like, well... Of course, there are also more obscene things here, right, until I don't know... up till sharing a bed together. Well, things like that"*

Even though experiencing sexual violence seems to be on the rare side, it still needs to be taken into account when working with clients. The subject of sexual violence has arisen as a topic to be aware of and brings to mind the skills of facilitating discussions to a more preferred direction like one interviewee brought up:

*"I have not experienced sexual violence, but it must be taken into account in the case of male clients who have a great need for dominance."*

### **3.2.3 Psychological violence**

By far, the most common type of violence that came up during the interviews is psychological violence. In this chapter I will lay out the division of different types of experienced psychological violence that arises from the research interviews. While analysing the interviews these categories come up and I decided to use them for the purposes of this thesis. For clarity, the categories are marked in bold.

#### **Manipulation and blaming**

According to the child protection workers, a considerable amount of blaming is being imposed on them from certain clients, for example in the context with the parent not getting a favourable decision in their view or the child protection worker imposing some restrictive measures.

*"However, there's mental [violence] all the time - especially this manipulation and then blaming"*

For the verbal communication by clients that was perceived as manipulative by the child protection workers the reasons derived from the same source as for the blaming. By trying to influence the child protection worker in a manipulative verbal manner there is something to be gained or a direction to go to for the client, some interviewees brought up.

*"Manipulation like that, well, it's like that - manipulation is like super strong by clients, super strong."*

## **Threats**

According to the child protection workers, it is common to be threatened by a client. The threat can be e.g. something to do with personal safety in the future, harming the person physically or even killing them. Several workers brought up a client making a threat including harming family members of the worker, such as their children. This was in some interviews described as innuendo of potential physical harm in the future. Furthermore, many clients use manipulative skills to employ fear as a tool to gain something from the worker, such as a favourable outcome for them of the case in conjunction with threats.

*"..that she has such a hunch that she starts to look over her shoulder, behind her back, in the evenings. That they can manipulate you like that. That you start to be really afraid."*

Some workers described extremely intimidating situations where the client has made a direct threat to kill the child protection worker.

*"When I go to KLAT [Closed Child Care Institution Service] and I get out, I will come and smash you to pieces."*

As described in the interviews, the threats can include making the child protection worker look bad in the eyes of the public, for example via social media. This concerns shaming the

worker with accusations of being incompetent as a professional, or other negative personal remarks that come to the mind of the client. Not only social media is used, but some clients decide to share their side and views of the story for example to certain newspapers or other media.

*"For example, the insides of my office, me, were filmed with a phone. While threatening to post on social media. That, well, like "I'll share it. Then everyone will see what you do and don't do here.""*

*"..what we are very often threatened with is the media."*

Making complaints to the authorities of the child protection worker is a commonly used method according to the interviewees. This is used as a threat and an actual working technique as well, and this will be discussed more in the next part.

*"Making official complaints about me to the other authorities... so to threaten."*

### **Attacking the person**

Several child protection workers illustrated the experienced verbal violence as the client purposefully using very personal techniques to shame the worker or trying make them feel inadequate or incapable. This was described in a sense of not necessarily only shaming the worker and their professional qualities, but attentionally trying to find the workers' weak spots as a person.

*"But that kind of mental violence - so shouting, cursing, maybe that certain kind of humiliating."*

In some cases, the client does not draw the limit on making negative personal comments to the workers themselves but continues the path to the manager and colleagues with false accusations, as one of the interviewees described in a powerful way. In connection to this, the worker mentioned the habit of making the complaints, demands and accusations to the

manager or even higher level or some authority. This was brought up by other interviewees as well, threatening the worker with complaints or actually making it happen by taking action and making complaints to authorities or in some cases, even taking the worker to court.

*"This constant writing, this constant insisting. When he didn't get his way - belittling me, ruining my reputation, telling lies in front of my colleagues...my superiors."*

One interviewee described how some of her clients have revealed a special technique to manipulate and harass the child protection worker. The client had told that they look for books that have instructions and hints on how to perform such individual manipulative procedures that they get the desired end result or cause distress to the worker.

### **3.3 The experienced consequences of the client violence**

In this chapter, I will lay out the effects of the experienced client-based violence that the child protection workers described in the interviews. I will start with the negative effects and conclude with the ones that were experienced as bringing about some positive outcomes.

#### **Negative effects**

All interviewees described some negative effects that can be classified as psychological effects. These include disrupted thinking, emotional tiredness, lowered self-esteem, depression (perceived symptoms and also clinically diagnosed), insomnia and the variety of burnout like symptoms. In addition, a few child protection workers mentioned their colleagues or predecessors leaving the profession as an outcome of burnout.

*"Actually, I still take such things very seriously and personally. And it does bother me - it often makes me powerless."*

*"Nevertheless, this situation affected me to such an extent that I developed, well... all these symptoms of burnout, so to speak."*

*" Well, at home it's exactly like... Well, I'm still disturbed, right? Like my thoughts are disturbed and all. That I don't know, I still haven't mastered this superpower in this respect, that I finish work at half past four and then that's it. You are still emotionally exhausted, emotionally tired. That... and it will definitely come home with you to some extent. "*

Many of the negative effects also have somatic outcomes, ranging from feeling tired to severe somatic symptoms of burnout. Amongst the interviewees there are workers that have experienced severe consequences from the experienced violence by a client.

*"We don't give up our cases easily, but then I already screamed for help - that I can't cope anymore. That something physical will happen to me soon... my body is giving up. I was left alone..."*

*"Let's say that it was like that time when I was also taking this medication, that actually he also affected me physically. Because I was still constantly tired, I had to take leave. "*

As for a topic of sick leave and leave it came out during the interviews that some workers have used their own annual leave days to recuperate from the aftereffects of client violence. I recognise this as more as a local Estonian practice differing e.g. from the practice in Finland, as I feel that in Finland this matter would almost without exception lead to taking sick leave and not using personal annual leave days. This can have a major impact on interpreting the statistics regarding the reasons for sick leave and other matters, such as needs for professional interventions of occupational safety.

One interviewee made a clear remark on how the work can leave you with symptoms of compassion fatigue:

*"They have the biggest influence on me mentally, because I have had such feelings like, perhaps of guilt several times, because I feel sorry for these children. I'm sorry that the*

*parents don't understand what they are doing to the children, or well... such a shame, so to speak."*

Majority of the interviewees described how they intentionally work with themselves to diminish the effects of psychological violence or aggression by clients. It comes out from the interviews as a vital manner to learn to be able to continue the work within child protection without ending up with burnout. In my opinion, this effect of intentionally mentally working towards better capabilities of dealing with different situations can be seen as a positive effect as well.

*"But this mental violence is the one that gnaws at you unnoticed from the inside all the time. And if you let it go on for a while, so that you are not dealing with this problem, then the burnout will also come very, very quickly."*

The experience of client violence can have effects on child protection workers behaviour, some described it as avoiding certain places and people (for example certain shops or surroundings that clients use regularly), and it also came up as a factor altering the behaviour of the worker at home. Several workers described the effect of altered behaviour or state of mind deriving from needing to think the day through or having something specific still in mind. One description of alteration in behaviour from a worker is the effect of avoiding certain situations at home, specifically involving confrontational outcomes as wanting to maintain a situation without conflict.

*"I avoid these conflicts, because sometimes at home I also push down... my wishes or things, as it is... as if I push down, right? Because I just want everything to be fine and well at home."*

One negative consequence is getting used to the violence and thinking it is only part of the job. This manner of thinking that violence towards child protection workers actually comes with the job came up in a couple of interviews.

*"Naturally I've been threatened to be killed, it like comes with the job."*

The interviewees described the time having to experience individual client aggression or violence from individual meetings to over ten years. Even though none of the interviewees have been working in child protection for that long, they have learned at the workplace of the clients their colleagues have been working with, and the cases are passed on. A few interviewees mentioned that with certain clients the particular behaviour pattern continues as long as the person is a client of child protection.

### **Positive effects**

Positive effects of the experienced client violence came mainly up in a context of learning professionally, one interviewee even mentioning how glad they are that the violent events occurred.

*"Yes... but in short, I have actually learned a lot from it professionally. It's been a very good experience and I'm glad it all happened."*

Some of the more severe consequences, as one interviewee talked about having to take a leave and needing medical assistance also in form of depression medication, have been ending up with a more upbeat note and with the worker being able to gain something positive out of the experience.

*"Because it was a very good experience to go through depression by myself. That in this respect I am very grateful for this experience. And I certainly also understand the people I work with better."*

Not all the child protection workers had very serious cases of client violence and effects of it, and one person even concluded that there is nothing bad for them in this, as an opposite they feel positive effects of professional and personal growth. Within the other interviews professional growth comes up as a theme as well, where the workers describe the path of starting child protection work, learning, and how they are professionally handling the situations in a different manner now a bit later in their career.



*"It's not like anything bad, and I think it's more like giving me more. That I have grown with my work and my personal life."*

To finalise this chapter, I wish to bring out the situation that came up strongly in some of the interviewees, namely the workers realising that in order to stay healthy and avoiding burnout, they need to take better care of themselves. This came up e.g. by emphasising the importance of actually having a lunch break and keeping that up, having hobbies that bring joy, having a proper time off or holiday and having time for family. In addition, there were mentions of taking this practice of taking better care of oneself to colleagues, and some attempts to change structures at the workplace for a more sustainable way of working. Even though these changes in behaviour or structures stem from negative situations, I feel they represent positive outcomes that can have a lasting good effect on the persons' lives both at work and at home.

### **3.4 Possible changes, reactions at workplace**

This chapter will give answers to the third research question of possible changes or reactions at the workplace. The chapter is roughly divided into sections of where support was given or positive measures taken, and into instances with no or little support from management level.

#### **Support was given**

In the cases described by child protection workers where positive support was offered by the manager or the superiors the range of different methods of support is fairly vast. Supervision and work counselling were mentioned, and some had even been offered psychological counselling. A few even brought up not only getting help or support at the time of the incident, but also the positive effects reaching further and being useful later on at work, for example, via a better cooperation network.

*"But the employer was also very supportive. Offered me both supervision and therapy and so on."*

*"Offers supervision, work counselling if necessary, psychological counselling - that we, like these services, have everything guaranteed for employees."*

*"So I felt like this huge support. We found a very good lawyer, who has become a very good network member for me today also for other cases."*

Support was given not only by the managers, but also by the colleagues. As some have child protection workers as colleagues and some are the only child protection worker at their work unit, all have colleagues if not from the specific line of work, at least colleagues from the field of social work. The collegial and human support is described as important and vital and in a positive light.

*"That we support each other here, yes... we say here with the social workers all the time. Otherwise, it wouldn't hold up either. Colleagues are awesome."*

### **Little or no support**

Unfortunately, the main line of answers about the support given or possible changes made at the workplace after the incidents was not encouraging. Several child protection workers described how they were left without support and the incidents were not dealt with.

*"And no, that [support] did not come from there. Rather, I don't remember that there was any kind of reaction."*

*"That at the moment there is no support from here."*

*"It wasn't discussed at that time."*

Some of the child protection workers described the overall attitude at the workplace as non-sympathetic where there is no real understanding either of the amount of strain the work can bring nor the severe effects the work can have on the individual. There is also a note to be

found of how the management includes the client violence to be part of the job of a child protection worker.

*"That insults and humiliations and everything are somewhere in the salary, aren't they."*

*"But at the same time, there is no full understanding of how difficult this work is, like mentally. That how it can completely ruin you."*

A few interviewees brought up that in their opinion something serious needs to happen before this is taken seriously by the manager, the local government, or anyone else for that matter.

*"Well, we're also talking among ourselves here that something very serious has to happen before someone actually reacts, so..."*

### **3.5 Thoughts and ideas from the interviewees for a safer future**

During the interviews, several suggestions or remarks rose out from the child protection workers concerning the topic of making risks of violence smaller or changing something, to anticipate possible dangers or diminish them.

When combining the results, three structural levels at the workplace can be seen. The levels are colleagues and immediate work partners, management and local government, and the state.

For the state level, it was specified that it would make the greatest difference if these topics of work safety in child protection would be brought into public discussion, with the intention of protecting the workers and making an attempt to raise awareness of certain types of client behaviour and making that unacceptable. The state level is seen as the highest possible, and the change starting from up and revolving downwards was described the most effective.

*"In other words, when people start talking about it being a problem at the national level. As long as they don't, I don't know... The evening newspaper here writes for a while to pass the time, right, so then... until then, it's nothing."*

Estonia has chosen a political system to the managerial level within the local governments, and according to the interviewees, there is a large spectrum in the level of expertise on social work and child protection. Mainly this arose as a problematic situation in the interviews, for example, when your work is led by a person who is mainly motivated by political agendas, rather than a person who is an expert within social work and equipped with leadership skills.

Some brought up the excellent support they have had from the upper management level from the local government, so there seems to be a considerable variation between the different local governments. As a result, I would suggest there is a need to be met with more educated people on the managerial level, in this instance the education being social work and child protection, and in addition some focus placed on the managerial skills. This applies to both levels, the upper management at the local government level, and the direct management of the child protection department.

As for the importance of the support from the manager and management that came up earlier in the results, it also came up as a factor in improving safety. Some brought up very positive remarks on their management, yet sadly this is not the case everywhere. As it was mentioned, it is an important factor whether you can trust your manager to have your back in all situations, or if you have doubts or you know you will have to stand for your own rights. Also, many safety issues at the work communities, such as safety alarms and certain work arrangements, are in the hands of the managers, and this is one key factor in violence prevention.

*"This support from the management is important and of course to use these supervisions and such to support yourself, because it is a skill in itself in child protection work."*

Most of the interviewees gave praise to their colleagues or work mates at the same work communities (many are working closely with social workers), which came up as giving

advice on more complex matters, being a so-called safety watch (has the information about the child protection workers whereabouts e.g. while doing home visits, or if potentially dangerous clients are with the worker at their office) and acting accordingly if something alarming comes up. The most appreciated attribute was the capability and willingness to listen and share, and on the other hand, some interviewees missed this a great deal when they did not have the fortune to have this type of people in their work community. As it is not a practice throughout all workplaces to have colleagues with these practices or traits, there may be room for developing more accommodating work environments if these matters were raised in a national discussion.

All the interviewees mentioned the collaboration with the local police, as they share the same clients in several cases. These remarks were mainly in positive context with cooperation being on a good level and the police willing to guarantee and promote safety to the child protection workers in different situations. Some have geographical limitations with police getting around if needed urgently; 45 minutes is a long time to wait when you would need help immediately. The practices were seen somewhat unequal in some cases, since the level of collaboration varies within the country and local areas, and this raised a remark of the possible lack of a national policy.

As almost everyone lacked an office space with a safety plan, this definitely rose as one of the remarks from the interviews. Only a few had tested and in working order safety buttons, with the knowledge of who comes and within what time if the button is pressed. Some had the safety buttons but no idea of how they work and who would come, and some knew the buttons are out of order. Bringing the physical safety measures up to date with a good usability would benefit the workers.

As the counselling services and the use of those was mentioned earlier in a positive sense in the quote, there were more mentions alike. Yet, the topic of individual psychological support came up in the interviews multiple times and would be one important area of support.

*"Well, here I am getting back there, so that somehow such psychological support could still be more available."*

There were ideas expressed for more training, specifically on the matters of personal safety, self-defence and reading the certain signs from the client and changing one's own behaviour accordingly. A significant suggestion in my opinion was the view of having the safety issues already included in the social work studies.

*"In my opinion, it should be like in the curriculum for a social worker... there should already be a self-defense course in it, right, for how you do it"*

To conclude this chapter, the concept of creating a personal safety plan for each potentially aggressive or violent client came up specifically in one interview. Similar practices came up with other interviewees also e.g. when describing choosing certain shoes to guarantee good running capabilities in case of needing to physically escape. Forming a specific safety plan with taking into consideration the different sides and possibilities with a certain client seems like an excellent idea for a general practice within the social work sector.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

In this chapter I will discuss the findings of my research in relation to the main themes that arose from the research material. Limitations of this research will conclude the chapter.

### **4.1 Different types of violence exist, and one is the most common**

The results of this research confirmed what I was told in the preparation phase of this thesis about client violence taking place within child protection. By this I mean that client violence is a serious phenomenon within child protection also in Estonia. Some professionals need to deal with it more often than others, but all are affected by this.

The child protection workers have profession and office that is legally based, involves working with some of the most vulnerable people and their difficulties, and in addition to the

demanding task they probably will face violent client behaviour at some point in their career. As Chappel & Di Martino (2006: 16) and Virkki (2007) state, the violence can take many forms ranging from shouting and name calling to battering and physical attacks.

The interviewed child protection workers brought up a few experiences of sexual and physical violence, and as expected, psychological violence with its many varieties came up as the most common type of violence. This lines up, for example, with the Finnish research by Vesa (2021) where it is acknowledged that the most common types of violence experienced by child protection social workers were psychological violence and various kind of threats.

## **4.2 About the consequences of client violence**

As the psychological violence is the most common form of client violence, its consequences need to be reckoned with. In my opinion, in some cases these consequences can be mixed with other issues or traits that can come up in a similar manner as the consequences of psychological violence. And by this, I mean for example the symptoms of burnout, which can be in some instances belittled in a terrible manner and be put down to some personal traits of the worker, or the worker can be labelled as a weak and unprofessional person who is unable to handle the demands of the work.

I feel that psychological violence can sometimes be difficult to pinpoint or realise, and this is also confirmed by Robson et al. (2014). But of course, in many situations when the forms like name calling, making accusations about suing to court, or sexual remarks are made (Antikainen-Juntunen, 2009: 41-42), it is more obvious to realise what is taking place.

The range of consequences of violence is widespread and can cause physical traumas and severe mental health issues, even people ending up in exclusion from the society and unable to work (Justiitsministerium, 2021). The damaging and devastating consequences of client violence are being described widely in the literature (such as Cannavò et al., 2019, Enosh et

al., 2012, Robson et al., 2014), and the wide range of the consequences the interviewees describe can be overwhelming.

All this can be thought separately, like one specific case at a time when violence takes place, and the aftereffects are these. Yet, however, when thinking about the bigger picture, majority of the symptoms or consequences the interviewees described, fit in the general description of burnout or the symptoms of burnout. As the danger of burnout has been brought up generally as something one hopes to avoid with child protection workers (Civitta, 2022), I feel the experiences of the interviewees should function also as a warning sign.

One could hope that there would be more positive effects of client violence, yet it is notable that some positive effects are mentioned by the interviewees. Like Tzafrir et al. (2015) describe how the violent incidents directed some of the social workers to re-evaluate their values and change some of their practices, some interviewees of this research tell of professional and personal growth. Even in one specific case with client violence causing depression, the worker manages to find the positive effects that they can use with clients.

It is such a shame that in many ways and at many levels the occurrence of client violence is regarded as part of the job as in an obvious part of the work and there is nothing to be done about it. This is a severe personal and structural consequence and would need to be dealt with. Again, this is not taking place only in Estonia, but elsewhere too, like it is mentioned by Laird (2013) and Littlechild (2005a) who point out that not only the child protection workers, but also the organisations employing them have the tendency to view client violence as being a part of the job.

### **4.3 Does the managerial system in Estonia need a reform?**

To give a quick response, in my view the answer is yes. It is concluded that the Estonian social workers would need more vocational support at work, as they are insufficiently supported by their managers (Kütt, 2016). In the analysis by Civitta (2022) several issues are



brought up, such as the management of local governments not having understanding or appreciation of the work of child protection or the management not having a proper perception of the difficulties and stress of the work. This is in line with the matters brought up within the research material of this thesis, such as not having professional (in social work or child protection) leadership in management, the management being mostly politically selected and motivated and acting accordingly, and general indifference of matters of the child protection workers.

When taking into account the recent study by Andersen et al. (2021) where the managers' support to the social workers after violent incidents was significant, as enabling better performance at work and reduced burnout and fatigue, it feels as praise for those managers that come up within the interviews offering all the support when needed. On the other hand, the managers and managements that do not offer support to their workers are left with questions. Why are the workers left without support, why would the management not wish for better work performance from the workers or for them to have less negative symptoms?

Even if all this research did not back up the better outcome after violent incidents, it is common sense to have a management that stands by and behind its staff. It has also been reported that client violence is often left unreported, since being exposed to client violence leads to feelings of guilt and shame (Virkki, 20008: 248). When working in a work community without proper managerial support, it is not a far-fetched thought to leave the experienced client violence unreported.

#### **4.4 Winds of change and the hope for a safer future**

I find the suggestions and remarks of the child protection workers about improving safety at work worth taking forward. The safety issues could be addressed more profoundly at the state level, via Social Insurance Board and other instances. The local governments could take more action in protecting their own staff, for example making sure they have a functioning safety

plan and reporting system, and all possible measures are considered in order to improve the safety of the employees.

As the use of media came up in the interviews more in context with the clients' making threats of using different medias, there is also the matter of the professionals in the media. The reporters and employees of different media channels have a considerable amount of power in influencing what is being discussed and how it is discussed and from what angle. Not all reporters or writers take care of gathering all the facts, in many cases their job is to publish something that gathers attention.

The analysis by Civitta (2022) included several shared suggestions with the participants of this research for improving the safety of the child protection workers, such as guaranteeing personal psychological services for all and better safety training already at the university.

When we consider client violence as “part of the job” or “it’s in the pay”, in my opinion we have already lost greatly. When attitudes like this can be found both on worker and managerial level it not as neutral in its carelessness as it might sound, but it has a negative effect on multiple layers. By this I mean how it can possibly affect not only the worker and the work environment, but also the system in a wider sense within the local government and its people and as a wider policy of conduct even at state level. In addition, the client is left with their behaviour under the impression that it is acceptable to behave in such a manner, or if not as positive as acceptable, but tolerable. Either way, there is an agreed way of conduct in our society, and if there are no consequences or even feedback when breaking the conduct, there will probably always be a next time and the next person who is mistreated.

To finish this chapter, I will choose a positive and optimistic approach and believe that at least one of the good ideas for making child protection work safer would find its way to practice somewhere in Estonia. Making the reality of the dangers of working within child protection more visible is an important topic.

## **4.5 Limitations**

All research made by a human is possibly affected by human error. Even though I gave my best effort to remain objective, analyse the data with depth and precision, there still is a possibility for something to be left out or something to be more emphasised. And since the typology of violence is wide, I could have included a more detailed division. The research data is quite wide, and I made the choice of remaining with the simple division for the purposes of my research.

Even though conducting the interviews in MS Teams remotely gave certain benefits, such as having participants from more distant locations, it still changes the interviews from the ones conducted in person. Personal interaction within the same space would give a better possibility for more in-depth interviews, in my opinion. And even though Estonians themselves said group interviews will not work with this specific theme with their countrymen, I would still like to see the day somebody would give that a chance, since hearing other people's experiences might trigger something from your own experiences that does not come up in a personal interview.

In my opinion, the theoretical background of my thesis is very basic, and it does set limitations for the rest of the thesis. As learning along making the thesis, I would choose another type of method for the analysis, like thematic analysis, to deepen the results. It also needs to be noted that the number of interviewees is restricted, and further research could be made in order to find out the more comprehensive situation.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The aim of this thesis was to find out what kind of experiences the Estonian child protection workers have on client violence, especially the types of violence they have been exposed to, what kind of effects that violence has had on them and what has followed at the workplace after. As this has not been researched in Estonia before it felt as a fresh and important topic to explore.

The study questions were:

1. According to the child protection workers, what are the types of violence by clients they have been exposed to at work?
2. How do the child protection workers describe the consequences/effects of the client violence they experienced?
3. According to the child protection workers, what were the measures taken at the workplace by superiors and/or workplace after the incidents?

The child protection workers participating in the research all had experiences of client violence. All the participants had experiences of psychological violence by clients (threats included), some also brought up experiences of sexual and physical violence.

The child protection workers described the negative consequences of the client violence affecting their physical and mental health and overall wellbeing, family life and ability to work. Yet some positive outcomes were also mentioned by the interviewees, the main outcome being positive effect on professional and personal growth.

As for the management level and their possible measures taken after the incidents, most of the child protection workers acknowledged little or no support from the management in conjunction with client violence. Some of the child protection workers did bring up the professional and superb actions of management, as they described the variety of support covering the needs of the child protection workers in the situation.

As the majority of the child protection workers described the support from their managers fairly weak or non-existent, the importance and meaning of their colleagues, both the fellow child protection workers and social workers, came up very strongly throughout all the interviews.

Finally, the worth of this study lies, in my opinion, in the possibility that the voice of the child protection professionals who participated in this research on the matter of client violence would be heard by those who have the power to improve the situation.

Suggestions for further research and actions:

- For research:
  - The Estonian local government managerial system within social work and/or child protection.
  - The resilience of the child protection workers
- Actions
  - Resources and individual therapies/supervision equally available to all child protection workers nationally for the aftercare
  - Better and more equal local government level managing
    - realistic and usable safety plans and measures
    - action for prevention of client violence
    - more professional expertise of social work to managerial level
  - Social Insurance Board
    - specific training/courses/supervision/info package about work safety and client violence
    - instruction package/training for people within social work sector on constructing personal safety plans
  - The higher education for social work and child protection
    - Studies to include more in-depth information on challenging clients (e.g. with high manipulative skills) and safety training

## REFERENCES

- Alksnis, E. (2019). Rīgas Sociālā dienesta pieredze darbinieku aizsardzībā no agresīviem klientiem. *Sociālais darbs Latvijā*, (2), 52-56. [https://www.socialwork.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Socialais\\_darbs\\_Latvija\\_Nr2\\_2019.pdf](https://www.socialwork.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Socialais_darbs_Latvija_Nr2_2019.pdf)
- Andersen, L.P., Elklit, A. & Pihl-Thingvad, J. (2021). Work-related violence and difference?. *Int Arch Occup Environ Health* 94, 1645–1657. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.ezproxy.utlib.ut.ee/10.1007/s00420-021-01749-0>
- Antikainen-Juntunen, E. (2009.) Työturvallisuus. In publication Yliruka, L., Koivisto, J. & Karvinen-Niinikoski, S. (ed.) *Sosiaalialan työolojen hyvä kehittäminen. Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja* 6, 40-58. Retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/198187923.pdf>
- Bičkutė, A. & Liobikienė, T. L. (2011). Socialinio darbuotojo ir agresyviai besielgiančio kliento sąveika socialiniame darbe. Interaction between social worker and aggressively behaving client in social work. *Socialinis darbas. Patirtis ir metodai*, (7), 89-111, 202-203. <https://etalpykla.lituanistikadb.lt/object/LT-LDB-0001:J.04~2011~1367175764255/J.04~2011~1367175764255.pdf>
- Boyle, M.J. & Wallis, J. (2016). Working towards a definition for workplace violence actions in the health sector. *Safety in Health* 2, 4. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40886-016-0015-8>
- Cannavò M., La Torre F., Sestili C, La Torre G. & Fioravanti M. (2019). Work Related Violence As A Predictor Of Stress And Correlated Disorders In Emergency Department Healthcare Professionals. *Clinica Terapeutica*. Mar-Apr;170(2):e110-e123. DOI: 10.7417/CT.2019.2120
- Civitta. (2022). *Tānapāevase lastekaitse juhtumikorralduse, andmevahetsue ja e-teenuste analüüs*. Sotsiaalministeerium. Retrieved from <https://sm.ee/uudised-ja-pressiinfo/andmed/uuringud-ja-analuusid#sotsiaalvaldkonna-uuringud-ja-analsid>

Chappell, D. & Di Martino, V. (2006). *Violence at Work* (3.ed). Geneva: International Labour Office.

Child Protection Act (10.11.2022). *Riigi Teataja I*. Retrieved from <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/511012019009/consolide>

Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research design. Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: SAGE.

Eesti Statistika. (2022, April 4). *Suhteuring paljastab jäämäe veealuse osa*. Retrieved from <https://www.stat.ee/et/uudised/suhteuring-paljastab-jaamae-veealuse-osa>

Enosh, G, Tzafirir, S. S. & Gur, A. (2012): Client Aggression Toward Social Workers and Social Services in Israel. A Qualitative Analysis. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28(6), 1123–1142. Sage Publications. DOI: 10.1177/0886260512468230

Enosh, G. & Tzafirir S. S. (2015). The scope of Client Aggression Toward Social Workers in Israel. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 24(9), 971-985.

Estrada, F., Nilsson, A., Jerre, K. & Wikman, S. (2010). Violence at Work. The Emergence of a Social Problem. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 11(1), 46-65. Routledge.

EU-OSHA. (2023). European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. *Estonia*. Retrieved from <https://osha.europa.eu/en/about-eu-osha/national-focal-points/estonia>

European Commission. (2021). *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS EMPTY. EU strategy on the rights of the child*. Retrieved from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0142>

Ewijk, H. van. (2015). Sotsiaaltöötajate juhtimine. Translated by Kristi Raffai. *Sotsiaaltöö*, (1), 70-72.

- Hirsjärvi, S, Remes, P. & Sajavaara, P. (2005). *Uuri ja kirjuta*. Tallinn: Kirjastus Medicina.
- Holmes H., Rudge T. & Perron A. (eds). (2012). *(Re)thinking violence in health care settings: A critical approach*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Honkala, P. (2006). *Väkivallan uhka -Sosiaalialan mörköpeikko*. Master's thesis. Retrieved from <https://trepo.tuni.fi/handle/10024/93448>. Tampere University, Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences.
- Husso, M., Karkulehto, S., Saresma, T., Laitila, A., Eilola, J & Siltala, H. (eds). (2021). *Violence, Gender and Affect. Interpersonal, Institutional and Ideological Practices*. Palgrave Studies in Victims and Victimology. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hunt, S., Goddard, C., Cooper, J., Littlechild, B., Wild, J. (2016). "If I feel like this, how does the child feel?" Child protection workers, supervision, management and organisational responses to parental violence. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 30, 5–24.
- Hämäläinen, J. (2016). The origins and evolution of child protection in terms of the history of ideas. *Paedagogica Historica*, 52(6), 734–747. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.utlib.ut.ee/10.1080/00309230.2016.1240210>
- ILO (2004). *ILO ode of practice: Work-related violence in services sectors and measures to combat this phenomenon*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Jokinen, A. (2021). *Laadullisen tutkimuksen näkökulmat*. In book: Jaana Vuori (ed.) *Laadullisen tutkimuksen verkkokäsikirja*. Tampere: Yhteiskuntatieteellinen tietoaarkisto. Retrieved from <https://www.fsd.tuni.fi/fi/palvelut/menetelmaopetus/>
- Justiitsministeerium. (2021). *VÄGIVALLAENNETUSE KOKKULEPE 2021–2025*. Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Justice. [https://www.just.ee/sites/www.just.ee/files/vagivallaennetuse\\_kokkulepe\\_2021-2025\\_0.pdf](https://www.just.ee/sites/www.just.ee/files/vagivallaennetuse_kokkulepe_2021-2025_0.pdf)



Kim, H. & Hopkins, K. M. (2015). Child welfare workers' personal safety concerns and organizational commitment: The moderating role of social support. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, 39(2), 101–115.

Koivu, V. (2019). *Miksi lähteä ja miksi jäädä? : lastensuojelun sosiaalityöntekijöiden vaihtuvuus, syyt työpaikan vaihtamiseen ja työhön sitoutumista edistävät tekijät työssä*. Master's thesis. Retrieved from <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:ju-201909264260>. Jyväskylä University, Social Work, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Koivuluhta, E. (2021). *"Väkivallan uhka on aina läsnä" : tutkimus lastensuojelun sosiaalityöntekijöiden kokemasta asiakasväkivallasta*. Master's thesis. Retrieved from <https://www.utupub.fi/handle/10024/151846>. Turku University, Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Koritsas, S., Coles, J. & Boyle, M. (2010). Workplace Violence towards Social Worker: *The Australian Experience*. *British Journal of Social Work* 40, 257-271. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcn134>

Korpela, E. (2021, October 28). Ampumatapaus nosti esiin sosiaali- ja kriisipäivystyksen työntekijöiden turvallisuuden – päivittäinen väkivallan uhka vaikeuttaa työntekijöiden löytämistä. *YLE uutiset*. <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-12157349>

Krug, E. G., Dahlberg, L. L., Mercy, J. A., Zwi, A. B. & Lozano, R. eds. (2002). *World report on violence and health*. World Health Organization. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9241545615>

Kütt, E. (2016). *Sotsiaaltöötajate tööalase toetuse kogemused ja kutse taotlemine*. Master's thesis. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10062/52027>

Laherand, M.-L. (2008). *Kvalitatiivne uurimisviis*. Tallinn: OÜ Sulesepp.

Laird, S.E. (2013). *Child protection: Managing Conflict, Hostility and Aggression*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Lamothe, J., Couvrette, A., Lebrun, G., Yale-Soulière, G., Roy, C., Guay, S. & Geoffrion, S. (2018). Violence against child protection workers: A study of workers' experiences, attributions, and coping strategies. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 81, 308–321.

Littlechild, B. (2002). The effects of client violence on child-protection networks. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 3(2), 144–158. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.utlib.ut.ee/10.1177/15248380020032004>

Littlechild, B. (2005a). The nature and effects of violence against child-protection social workers: Providing effective support. *British Journal of Social Work*, 35, 387–401.

Littlechild, B. (2005b). The stresses arising from violence, threats and aggression against child protection social workers. *British Journal of Social Work*, 35, 61–82.

Littlechild, B., Hunt, S., Goddard, C., Cooper, J., Raynes, B., & Wild, J. (2016). The Effects of Violence and Aggression From Parents on Child Protection Workers' Personal, Family, and Professional Lives. *SAGE Open*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015624951>

Local Government Organisation Act (18.10.2021). *Riigi Teataja I*. Retrieved from <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/530082021001/consolide>

Manninen, M. (2018). *Asiakasväkivalta lastensuojelun sosiaalityössä*. Master's thesis. Retrieved from <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-201803211804>. Jyväskylä University, Social Work, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Manninen, S. (2017). *Asiakasväkivallan jälkikäsittely sosiaalialalla : jälkikäsittelyn yleisyys ja sen yhteys työhyvinvointiin*. Master's thesis. Retrieved from <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-201801291367> Jyväskylä University, Social Policy, Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy.

Matikka, J. (2017). *Kokemuksia väkivallasta. Sosiaalityöntekijöiksi opiskelevien henkilökohtaisten väkivaltakokemusten merkitys alan valintaan*. Master's thesis. Retrieved

from <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:uta-201711012662>. Tampere University, Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M. & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis. A Methods Sourcebook*. USA: SAGE Publications.

Milczarek, M. (2010). *Workplace Violence and Harassment: a European Picture*. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Mustonen, M. (2021). *Takataskun teatteriarsenaalit: Työntekijöiden kokemuksia asiakasväkivallasta sosiaali- ja terveysalalla*. Master's thesis. Retrieved from <https://erepo.uef.fi/handle/123456789/26159>. University of Eastern Finland, Social Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Business Studies, Department of Social Sciences.

Newhill, C.E. (2003). *Client Violence in Social Work Practice: Prevention, Intervention, and Research*. Guildford Press.

Newhill, C. E., & Wexler, S. (1997). Client Violence toward Children and Youth Services Social Workers. *CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES REVIEW*, 19(3), 195–212.

Nutt, P. C., & Backoff, R. W. (2022). “Business as Usual”: Child Protective Services Workers’ Perceptions and Experiences of and Responses to Client-Perpetrated Violence. *Crafting Vision. Journal of Management Inquiry*, 37(3–4), 308–328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105649269764007>

Nykanen, J. (2020). *Asiakasväkivallan muodot, ennakointi ja ennaltaehkäisy – tapaustutkimus lastensuojelun sijaishuoltoyksiköstä*. Master's thesis. Retrieved from [https://www.utupub.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/150360/Nykanen\\_Jenna\\_opinnayte.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://www.utupub.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/150360/Nykanen_Jenna_opinnayte.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) Turku University, Social Work, Department of Social Sciences.

Occupational Health and Safety Act. (01.01.2022). *Riigi Teataja I*. Retrieved from <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/528122021001/consolide>

- O'Leary, Z. (2004). *The Essential Guide to Doing Research*. Trowbridge: SAGE.
- Olev, A. and Alumäe, T. (2022). Estonian Speech Recognition and Transcription Editing Service. *Baltic J. Modern Computing*, 10(3), 409–421. <https://doi.org/10.22364/bjmc.2022.10.3.14>
- Padyab, M., & Ghazinour, M. (2015). A comparative study of experiences of client violence and its impact among Iranian and Swedish social workers. *European Journal of Social Work*, 18(1), 129–139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2014.883367>
- Pollack, D. (2010). International Legal Note: Social work and violent clients: An international perspective. *International Social Work*, 53(2), 277–282. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.utlib.ut.ee/10.1177/0020872809357285>
- Respass, G. & Payne, B. K. (2008). Social Services Workers and Workplace Violence, *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 16:2, 131-143. DOI: 10.1080/10926770801921287
- Robson A., Cossar J. & Quayle E. (2014). The impact of work-related violence towards social workers in children and family services. *British Journal of Social Work*, 44, 924-936.
- Rubin, H. J. & Rubin I.S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: the art of hearing data*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: SAGE.
- Rutherford A., Zwi A.B., Grove N.J. & Butchart A. (2007). Violence: a glossary. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. Aug;61(8), 676-80. doi: 10.1136/jech.2005.043711
- Sarapuu, K. (2021). *Lastekaitespetsialistide vaade oma töökeskkonnale läbi külastajate silmade*. Master's thesis. Retrieved from <https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/73608>. Tartu University, Master's Programme of Social Work and Social Policy.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: SAGE.

Shin, J. (2011). Client Violence and Its Negative Impacts on Work Attitudes of Child Protection Workers Compared to Community Service Workers. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(16), 3338–3360. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260510393002>

Sotsiaalkindlustusamet (laste heaolu osakonna nõustamisteenuste meeskond). (2022). *Sotsiaalkindlustusameti tugi kohalike omavalitsuste lastekaitsetöötajatele*. Korraldus 21.12.2022. Retrieved from <https://tai.ee/et/sotsiaalto/sotsiaalkindlustusameti-tugi-kohalike-omavalitsuste-lastekaitsetootajatele>

Sotsiaalkindlustusamet. (2023a). Child protection. Retrieved from <https://sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee/en/family-and-child-protection/child-protection>

Sotsiaalkindlustusamet. (2023b). *Lastekaitsjate lood*. Retrieved from <https://sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee/et/lastekaitsjate-lood>

Sousa, S., Silva, I.S., Veloso, A., Tzafrir, S. & Enosh, G. (2014) Client's violence toward social workers. *Tékhne* 12(1), 69–78.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tekhne.2015.01.006>

Spratt, T., Nett, J., Bromfield, L., Hietamäki, J., Kindler, H. & Ponnert, L. (2015). Child Protection in Europe: Development of an International Cross-Comparison Model to Inform National Policies and Practices. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 45 (5), 1508–1525, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcu109>

Yliruka, L., Koivisto, J. & Karvinen-Niinikoski, S. (ed.) (2009). *Sosiaalialan työolojen hyvä kehittäminen*. Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: 2009:6. Retrieved from <http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/73395>

Soobik, R. (2022). Töökeskkonnast alguse saanud vaimse tervise probleeme hakatakse käsitlema kutsehaigustena. Retrieved from <https://www.sm.ee/uudised/tookeskkonnast-alguse-saanud-vaimse-tervise-probleeme-hakatakse-kasitlema-kutsehaigustena>

Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö. (2014). *Väkivallan uhka työelämässä. Työturvallisuussäännöksiä valmisteleva neuvottelukunta Väkivallan uhka- jaoston raportti. Raportteja ja muistioita 2014:17.* Retrieved from <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/74694>

Syväoja-Kokko, S. (2017). *Sosiaalityöntekijä -teetkö työtä henkesi edestä?* Master's thesis. Retrieved from <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:uta-201706021796>. Tampere University, Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Vesa, K. (2021). *Tutkimus lastensuojelun sosiaalityöntekijöiden asiakaskohtaamisissa kokemista riski- ja uhkatilanteista.* Master's thesis. Retrieved from <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2021092347039>. University of Lapland, Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Vigren, I. (2020). *Asiakasväkivalta sosiaalityössä: Työhyvinvoinnin ja turvallisuuden edistämisen näkökulma.* Bachelor's thesis. Retrieved from <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:tuni-202003052565>. Tampere University, Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Viira, A. (2017). *Kohaliku tasandi lastekaitsetöö tulemuslikkuse suurendamine ja jätkusuutlik arendamine.* Sotsiaalministeerium. Retrieved from [https://www.sm.ee/sites/default/files/contenteditors/Ministeerium\\_kontaktid/Uuringu\\_ja\\_analuusid/Sotsiaalvaldkond/kohaliku\\_tasandi\\_lastekaitsetoo\\_tulemuslikkuse\\_suurendamine\\_ja\\_jatkusuutlikarendamine.pdf](https://www.sm.ee/sites/default/files/contenteditors/Ministeerium_kontaktid/Uuringu_ja_analuusid/Sotsiaalvaldkond/kohaliku_tasandi_lastekaitsetoo_tulemuslikkuse_suurendamine_ja_jatkusuutlikarendamine.pdf)

Vimpari, K. (2014). *Startteri-valmentautujien kokemuksia työpajatoiminnan vaikutuksista elämänhallintaan : "..on tullu itekin mietittyä enemmän, että mihin mää tässä oon menossa...".* Bachelor's thesis. Retrieved from <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/77832>. Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Degree Programme in Social Services.

Virkki, T. (2007). Gender, Care, and the Normalization of Violence. Similarities between Occupational Violence and Intimate Partner Violence in Finland. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 15(4), 220-232. London: Routledge.

Virkki, T. (2008). Habitual Trust in Encountering Violence at Work. Attitudes towards Client Violence among Finnish Social Workers and Nurses. *Journal of Social Work* 8:(3), 247-267. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Vogus, T.J., Cull, M.J., Hengelbrok, N.E., Modell, S.J. & Epstein, R.A. (2016). Assessing safety culture in child welfare: Evidence from Tennessee. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 65, 94-103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.03.020>

Talentia. (2016). *Väkivalta sosiaalialalla liian yleistä – tavoitteena nollatoleranssi*. Retrieved from <https://www.talentia.fi/uutiset/vakivalta-sosiaalialalla-liian-yleista-tavoitteena-nollatoleranssi/>

Tirkkonen, J. (2014). *Väkivallan uhka ja väkivalta – osa sosiaalityötä?* Master's Thesis. Retrieved from <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:uta-201501161031>. Tampere University, Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Tooding, L-M. (2015). *Andmete analüüs ja tõlgendamine sotsiaalteadustes*. Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.

Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. (2018). *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi*. Helsinki: Tammi.

Tööinspektsioon. (2022). *Psühhosotsiaalsed ohutegurid*. Retrieved from <https://tooelu.ee/et/67/psuhhosotsiaalsed-ohutegurid>

Unicef. (2023). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention>

WHO. (2022). *Definition and typology of violence*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/groups/violence-prevention-alliance/approach>

Winstanley, S. & Whittington, R. (2004). Aggression towards health care staff in a UK general hospital: variation among professions and departments. *Journal of Clinical*

*Nursing* 13(1), 3–10. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.utlib.ut.ee/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2004.00807.x>

QSR International Pty Ltd. (2020). NVivo (released in March 2020), <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home>

Zelnick, J. R., Slayter, E., Flanzbaum, B., Butler, N. G., Domingo, B., Perlstein, J. & Trust, C. (2013). Part of the Job? Workplace Violence in Massachusetts Social Service Agencies. *Health & Social Work*, 38(2), 75–85, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hsw/hlt007>

Žibėnienė, G. & Mikniūtė, A. (2016). Socialinių darbuotojų, dirbančių su socialinės rizikos šeimomis, požiūris į profesinę riziką. Approach to occupational risk of social workers working with social risk families. *Socialinis darbas*, 14 (2), 148-161. <https://etalpykla.lituanistikadb.lt/object/LT-LDB-0001:J.04~2016~1495548760302/J.04~2016~1495548760302.pdf>



## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1 Invitation to participate in the study (in Estonian and in English)

Lugupeetud lastekaitsetöötaja,

Õpin Tartu Ülikoolis sotsiaaltööd ja kirjutan magistritööd lastekaitsetöötajate kogemustest klientide poolsest tööalasest vägivallast (kõik vägivalla vormid võetakse arvesse, mitte ainult füüsiline). Eestis ei ole varem seda teemat uuritud. Oma magistritöö jaoks olen kogunud eelteadmisi ja teooriaid just Soomes läbiviidud uuringutest, sest seda teemat on seal väga mitmekesiselt uuritud.

Kõik intervjuud toimuvad individuaalselt MS Teams keskkonna kaudu. Kõikidele uurimuses osalejatele tagatakse täielik anonüümsus. Intervjuu salvestatakse helifailina, lisaks võtan arvesse kõik turvalisuse ja eetikaga seotud aspektid, mistõttu ei ole uurimuses võimalik konkreetset isikut tuvastada (nt ei too välja isikuga seonduvaid kohanimesid, konkreetseid äratuntavaid juhtumeid jm).

Minu peamine motiiv uurimuse teema valikus on anda avalik hääl Eesti lastekaitsetöötajatele selle raske teema puhul.

Eelistatud intervjuude toimumisaeg on aprilli alguses (valik olemas allpool, kokkuleppel ka väljaspool graafikut). Jään Teie vastust ootama esimesel võimalusel, hiljemalt 11.04 kell 10:00!

Suur tänu Teile abi eest!

Lugupidamisega

Kirsi Vimpari

Kontaktinfo:

Dear child protection service worker,

I am studying social work in the university of Tartu and I am writing my Master's thesis on the subject of client violence at work towards child protection workers (all forms of violence are accounted for, not just physical). This theme has not been studied earlier in Estonia. For my thesis I have been gathering info and previous studies mainly from Finland, since they have studied the matter profoundly.

All interviews will take place via MS Teams. Anonymity will be guaranteed for every participant. The interview will be recorded as a sound file, and in addition I will take into account all safety and ethical measures. It will not be possible to identify the participants from the final study (eg I will not bring up place names or incidents relating to certain individuals which would lead to recognising the person and so on).

My personal main motive for conducting a study with this specific and difficult theme is to give a public voice to the workers of child protection services in Estonia.

The preferred time for the interviews would be in the beginning of April (timetable to be found here, and when agreed outside the timetable). I will wait for Your answer, at the latest 11.4. at 10 o'clock.

Thank you very much for Your help!

With respect,

Kirsi Vimpari

contact information:

## APPENDIX 2 The structure of the interview (in Estonian and in English)

### INTERVJUU KAVA

Aitäh, et tahtsite selles uurimuses osaleda ja panuse selleks anda.

Mina olen Kirsi Vimpari, õpin Tartu Ülikoolis sotsiaaltöö magistris ja minu lõputöö teemaks on klientide poolne vägivald, millega lastekaitse töötajad on kokku puutunud oma töö käigus.

Selle uurimuse käigus püüan selgitada, milliseid kokkupuuteid teil on olnud klientidepoolse vägivallaga oma ametis lastekaitsetöös. Soovin anda lastekaitse töötajatele avaliku hääle selle teema suhtes, et seda teemat ja inimeste kogemusi oleks rohkem võimalik ka avalikult esile tõsta.

Kõigepealt küsin, et kas lubate selle vestluse helifailiks salvestada ja seda uurimuses kasutada? Seda faili ja infot käsitlen anonüümselt, ja uuringust teid pole võimalik sealt tuvastada.

Selle intervjuu kava on järgmine: alustame paari taustainfoga, siis lähme sammhaaval teema juurde, ja viimasena mõtleme võimalikke ettepanekuid tulevikus sarnaste olukordade vältimiseks. Lisaks teil on igal hetkel võimalik lisada või täiendada, kui tuleb meelde et midagi ununes või jäi ära, mida sooviksite mainida. Ka lõpus on selleks veel võimalus.

Teil on ka igal hetkel võimalik loobuda uuringus osalemisest, ka pärast intervjuud kuni töö valmimiseni.

### TAUSTAINFO JA SOOJENDUS

- Palun öelge enda nimi ja ametikoht ja ametikohal olnud aeg
- Palun kirjeldage enda tööülesanded
- Mis on teie haridustase? Kas teil on olemas lastekaitsetöötaja kutse?
- Palun kirjeldage, mis on teie jaoks klientide poolne tööalane vägivald?

### I osa: KOGEMUSED TÖÖKOHAL JUHTUNUD KLIENTIDE POOLSEST VÄGIVALLAST

- Millist vägivalda olete kohanud oma töös?
  - Kui tihti?
  - Millal seda kogesite, kaua see kestis?

- Vajadusel täpsustus: Palun kirjelda erinevaid vägivallega seotud kogemusi oma töökohal?
- Millised sündmused eelnesid ja millised tegurid mõjutasid vägivalga toimumist?

## II osa: KUIDAS VÄGIVALD MÕJUTAS TÖÖTEGIJA JA TÖÖKOHTA

- Palun kirjeldage vägivallega seotud kogemust mõju endale nii töös ja kui soovite, ka isiklikus elus
- Kuidas juhtunud asja käsitleti töökohal?
- Kuidas turvalisus oli arvesse võetud enne / pärast?
- Kui turvaliselt tunnete ennast töökohal?
- Kuidas juhtunud on mõjutanud teie enda elu kodus ja vabaajal?

III osa: Avame veel klientide poolse vägivalga mõiste, mis toimub siis väljaspoolt töökeskkonda isiku poolt (näiteks klient, patsient, teenuse kasutaja või kliendi lähedane).

Peamiselt klientide poolne vägivald on võimalik jagada nelja kategooriasse: füüsiline vägivald, varaline kahju, verbaalne ähvardamine ja seksuaalne häirimine.

Kui see tekitab teie uusi mõtteid või tuleb meelde midagi muud, soovi korral võite lisada ja täiendada

## IV osa: VÕIMALIKUD MÕTTED ENNETAMISE KOHTA

Kas teil on ettepanekuid, mõtteid või ideid selleks et kuidas ennetada või tõrjuda et sarnaseid juhtumeid tulevikus ei juhtuks?

Täpsustus: pärast sündmust, kas töökollektiivi ülemus või juhtkond muutis midagi?

## LÕPUINFO

- Vaba sõna, kui midagi tuli veel meelde tai tahate midagi lisada või täiendada

- Kas ma võin küsimuste korral uuesti teie poolde pöörduda? Lõplik töö on valmis loodetavasti juunis 2022, või hiljemalt jaanuaris 2023. Saadan Teile info valminust tööst kui see on avalikult saadaval.
- Aitäh veelkord, et osalesite selles uurimuses ja andsite enda panuse sotsiaaltöö uurimuse arendamiseks!
- Kui teil tekib küsimusi või tahate midagi veel hiljem täpsustada, palun võtke ühendust minuga.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEW

Thank you for taking part in this study and giving your input.

My name is Kirsi Vimpari, I am studying in Tartu University in the social work programme and the topic of my master's thesis is the violence child protection workers are experiencing by the clients while working.

During the study I am aiming to find out what kind of experiences you have had on client based violence in your time working in child protection. I wish to give the workers in child protection a public voice regarding this theme, so there would be a better chance to raise these matters of experiences and themes publicly.

I will ask you now, do I have your permission to record this interview as a sound file and use it in my study? This file and the information given I will handle with anonymity, and it will not be possible to identify you from the final thesis.

We will proceed as follows: in the beginning we will cover some background information, then we will proceed step by step to the actual theme, and in the end, we will consider possible suggestions for future to avoid similar incidences. In addition, at any moment you will have a chance to add information, if it comes to mind that something was forgotten, or you would like to add something more. At the end of the interview there is also a chance for that.

You have an opportunity to resign from taking part in the study at any given time, also after the interview up until the final thesis is ready.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND WARM UP

- Please tell me your name and workplace/profession and the time on that profession
- Please describe your duties at work

- What is the level of your education? Do you have the professional standard of child protection worker?
- Please describe, in your opinion, what is workplace violence by clients?

#### PART I: EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE BY CLIENTS

- What kind of violence you have experienced at work?
  - How often?
  - When did it happen, how long did it last?
- Specification if needed: Please describe the different events that included violence at your workplace?
- What preceded the incident and what were the influencing factors to the violence?

#### PART II: THE EFFECTS OF THE VIOLENCE BY CLIENTS ON THE WORKER, AND ON THE WORKPLACE

- Please describe the effects of the violent experience to yourself at work, and if you wish also in your personal life.
- How was the incident dealt with at the workplace?
- How were safety factors taken into account before/after?
- How safe do you feel at workplace?
- What are the effects of the incident to your personal life at home and during free time?

PART III: We will open the concept of client violence, which means violence that is initiated by a person not part of the staff (e.g. client, patient, service user or a close one of a client)

Mainly client violence is categorized in four groups: physical violence, verbal abuse, economical violence or sexual harassment.

If this brings up thoughts or something else comes to mind, you can freely add and complement.

#### PART IV: ANY THOUGHTS ON FUTURE TO PREVENT VIOLENCE ON WORKPLACE

Do you have any recommendations, ideas or thoughts for preventing or stopping any further incidents in the future?

Adding: after the incident, did the boss/supervisor or the management change anything?

#### TO FINISH THE INTERVIEW

- Free word, if anything came to mind or you want to add anything.
- Can I approach you again if I have any questions? This thesis will be ready hopefully in June 2022 or in January 2023. I will inform you when it is available online.
- Thank you again for taking part in the study and making an input in developing the academic field of social work!
- If you have any questions or want to specify something later on, please contact me.

APPENDIX 3 Quotes from the interviews (in Estonian and English)

*"...I was pushed like... like they wanted to push me down the stairs."*

*"...mind tõugati nagu noh... nagu oleks tahetud trepist alla tõugata."*

*"Well, direct physical violence we've experienced once, six months ago, when in the process of separating the child, she came with an object, i.e. a book; so the child's great-grandmother came at me."*

*"No füüsilist vägivalda otseselt oleme kogenud ühe korra, pool aastat tagasi, kus lapse eraldamise käigus tuli siis esemega ehk raamatuga; tuli kallale mulle siis lapse vanavanaema."*

*"Then things like, well, "Why can't I touch your breasts?" and "Allow me to touch and I'll leave." Well, like, well... Of course, there are also more obscene things here, right, until I don't know... up till sharing a bed together. Well, things like that"*

*"Siis sellised nagu noh „Miks ma ei või su rindu katsuda?“ ja „Luba ma katsun ja ma lähen ära.“ No et nagu noh... Siin on muidugi ka veel nilbemaid asju, üks ole, kuni ma ei tea... sinna ühise voodijagamiseni välja. No selliseid asju"*

*"I have not experienced sexual violence, but it must be taken into account in the case of male clients who have a great need for dominance."*

*"Seksuaalset vägivalda ei ole kogenud, aga sellega peab arvestama meesklientide puhul, kes on suure domineerimisvajadusega."*

*"However, there's mental [violence] all the time - especially this manipulation and then blaming"*

*"Küll aga vaimselt on kogu aeg - et eriti seda manipuleerimist ja siis süüdistamist"*



*"Manipulation like that, well, it's like that - manipulation is like super strong by clients, super strong."*

*"Niisugune manipulatsioon, noh, see on nagu see - manipuleerimine on nagu ülitugev klientide poolt, ülitugev."*

*"..that she has such a hunch that she starts to look over her shoulder, behind her back, in the evenings. That they can manipulate you like that. That you start to be really afraid."*

*"..et tal on sihukene tunne, et hakka või õhtuti üle nagu õla vaatama, selja taha. Et nad suudavad niimoodi ära töödelda sind. Et sa hakkadki nagu reaalselt kartma."*

*"When I go to KLAT [Closed Child Care Institution Service] and I get out, I will come and smash you to pieces."*

*"Kui mina lähen KLAT-i ja ma sealt välja saan, siis ma tulen ja taon su tükkideks."*

*"For example, the insides of my office, me, were filmed with a phone. While threatening to post on social media. That, well, like "I'll share it. Then everyone will see what you do and don't do here."*

*"Telefoniga filmitud näiteks minu kabineti sisu, mind. Sealjuures ähvardades sotsiaalmeediasse postitada. Et noh, et à la „Panen üles. Siis kõik näevad, mis te siin teete ja mis te ei tee.“ "*

*"..what we are very often threatened with is the media."*

*"..millega meid väga tihti ähvardatakse on meediaga."*

*"Making official complaints about me to the other authorities... so to threaten."*

*"Kaebamine nagu minu peale siis teistesse ametiasutustesse... et ähvardamine."*

*"But that kind of mental violence - so shouting, cursing, maybe that certain kind of humiliating."*

*"Et aga selline vaimne vägivald - et karjumine, sõimamine, võib-olla selline alandamine."*

*"This constant writing, this constant insisting. When he didn't get his way - belittling me, ruining my reputation, telling lies in front of my colleagues...my superiors."*

*"See pidev kirjutamine, see pidev nõudmine. Kui ta oma tahtmist ei saanud - minu alavääristamine, minu maine rikkumine, minu kolleegide... minu ülemuste ees valede jagamine."*

*"Actually, I still take such things very seriously and personally. And it does bother me - it often makes me powerless."*

*"Ma võtangi tegelikult ikkagi väga-väga hinge selliseid asju. Ja see häirib - viib mind tihtipeale rivist välja."*

*"Nevertheless, this situation affected me to such an extent that I developed, well... all these symptoms of burnout, so to speak."*

*"See olukord ikkagi mõjutab mind ikkagi nii sellisel määral, kus mul tekkisid, noh... kõik need läbipõlemise nii-öelda tunnused."*

*" Well, at home it's exactly like... Well, I'm still disturbed, right? Like my thoughts are disturbed and all. That I don't know, I still haven't mastered this superpower in this respect, that I finish work at half past four and then that's it. You are still emotionally exhausted, emotionally tired. That... and it will definitely come home with you to some extent. "*

*" Noh, kodus ongi täpselt see, et... Noh, eks ma ikka olen häiritud. Nagu mu mõtted on häiritud ja kõik. Et ma ei tea, mina veel päris selles suhtes seda ülivõimet ei ole omastanud, et mul pool viis töö lõpeb ja siis on kõik. Sa oled ikkagi emotsionaalselt kurnatud, emotsionaalselt väsinud. Et... ja see tuleb kindlasti ka koju kaasa mingil määral."*

*"We don't give up our cases easily, but then I already screamed for help - that I can't cope anymore. That something physical will happen to me soon... my body is giving up. I was left alone..."*

*"Me ei loobu kergesti oma juhtumitest, aga siis ma juba karjusin appi - et ma ei tule toime enam. Et muga varsti juhtub midagi füüsi... endal mul - keha ütleb üles. Ma jäin üksi..."*

*"Let's say that it was like that time when I was also taking this medication, that actually he also affected me physically. Because I was still constantly tired, I had to take leave."*

*"Ütleme, et siis oli nagu see aeg, kui ma neid ravimeid ka võtsin, et siis ta mõjutas mind ka füüsiliselt. Sest ma olin ikkagi pidevalt väsinud, ma pidin võtma puhkuse."*

*"They have the biggest influence on me mentally, because I have had such feelings like, perhaps of guilt several times, because I feel sorry for these children. I'm sorry that the parents don't understand what they are doing to the children, or well... such a shame, so to speak."*

*"Ta mõjutab nagu vaimselt kõige rohkem seda, et mul on mitmeid kordi tekkinud võib-olla endal sellised süümetunded, sest mul on nagu kahju nendest lastest. Mul on kahju see, et vanemad ei mõista, kuidas nad ise nagu teevad lastele või noh... nagu kahju nii-öelda."*

*"But this mental violence is the one that gnaws at you unnoticed from the inside all the time. And if you let it go on for a while, so that you are not dealing with this problem, then the burnout will also come very, very quickly."*

*"Aga see vaimne vägivald on see, mis sind seestpoolt närib kogu aeg niimoodi märkamatu. Ja kui sa korra seal lased lõdvaks, et sa ei tegele selle probleemiga, et siis tuleb ka see läbipõlemine väga-väga kiiresti."*

*"I avoid these conflicts, because sometimes at home I also push down... my wishes or things, as it is... as if I push down, right? Because I just want everything to be fine and well at home."*

*"Ma väldin neid konflikte, et kodus teinekord ka oma sihukese... oma soovid või asjad, nagu see on.. surun nagu allapoole, eks ju. Sest ma lihtsalt tahaks, et mul oleks kodus kõik väga hästi."*

*"Naturally I've been threatened to be killed, it like comes with the job."*

*"Et maha on ikka lubatud lüüa, see on nagu käib asjaga kaasas."*

*"Yes... but in short, I have actually learned a lot from it professionally. It's been a very good experience and I'm glad it all happened."*

*"Jaa... aga ühesõnaga, ma olen sellest tegelikult tööalaselt tohutult palju õppinud. See on väga hea kogemus olnud ja mul on hea meel, et need juhtusid."*

*"Because it was a very good experience to go through depression by myself. That in this respect I am very grateful for this experience. And I certainly also understand the people I work with better."*

*"Sest väga hea kogemus oli enda nahal depressioon läbi teha. Et selles suhtes ma olen hästi tänulik sellele kogemusele. Ja ma kindlasti mõistan ka neid inimesi paremini, kellega ma töötan."*

*"It's not like anything bad, and I think it's more like giving me more. That I have grown with my work and my personal life."*

*"Midagi halba ei ole nagu ja ma arvan, et see on pigem just nagu juurde andnud mulle ka. Et ma olen kasvanud oma tööga ja oma isikliku eluga."*

*"But the employer was also very supportive. Offered me both supervision and therapy and so on."*

*"Et aga tööandja oli ka väga palju toeks. Pakkus mulle nii supervisiooni kui ka teraapiat ja nii edasi."*

*"Offers supervision, work counselling if necessary, psychological counselling - that we, like these services, have everything guaranteed for employees."*

*"Pakub supervisioone, vajadusel töö nõustamist, psühholoogilist nõustamist - et meil on nagu need teenused ka kõik töötajatele tagatud."*

*"So I felt like this huge support. We found a very good lawyer, who has become a very good network member for me today also for other cases."*

*"Et ma tundsin nagu tohutut tuge. Me leidsime väga hea advokaadi, kellest on saanud mulle väga hea võrgustiku liige täna ka teiste juhtumite tarbeks."*

*"That we support each other here, yes... we say here with the social workers all the time. Otherwise, it wouldn't hold up either. Colleagues are awesome."*

*"Et me toetame üksteist siin, jah... ütleme siin sotsiaaltöötajatega kogu aeg. Muidu ei peaks vastu ka. Kolleegid on jumala super."*

*"And no, that [support] did not come from there. Rather, I don't remember that there was any kind of reaction."*

*"Ega ei, seal ei tulnud seda [tuge]. Pigem ma ei mäleta, et seal oleks olnud nagu mingi reageering."*

*"That at the moment there is no support from here."*

*"Et praegusel hetkel siitpoolt nagu tuge ei ole."*

*"It wasn't discussed at that time."*

*"Tollel hetkel küll ei käsitletudki."*

*"That insults and humiliations and everything are somewhere in the salary, aren't they."*

*"Et solvangud ja alandused ja kõik on kuskil seal palganumbri sees, eks ole."*

*"But at the same time, there is no full understanding of how difficult this work is, like mentally. That how it can completely ruin you."*

*"Aga samas seda täit mõistmist ei ole, et kui tegelikult... kui raske see töö on nagu vaimsel. Et kuidas see võib sind täitsa ära rikkuda."*

*"Well, we're also talking among ourselves here that something very serious has to happen before someone actually reacts, so..."*

*"Et noh, eks me siin ise omakeskis ka räägime, et ega siis enne peab midagi väga tõsist juhtuma, kui päriselt keegi reageerib, et..."*

*"In other words, when people start talking about it being a problem at the national level. As long as they don't, I don't know... The evening newspaper here writes for a while to pass the time, right, so then... until then, it's nothing."*

*"Ehk siis, kui riigi tasandil hakatakse rääkima, et see on probleem. Senikaua, kuni me seda, ma ei tea... Õhtuleht siin kirjutab korraaks ajaviiteks, on ju, et siis... senikaua see ei ole midagi."*

*"This support from the management is important and of course to use these supervisions and such to support yourself, because it is a skill in itself in child protection work."*

*"See juhtkonna toetus on oluline ja muidugi kasutada neid supervisioone ja neid enese toetamiseks, sest ega see on ka oskus eraldi kohe lastekaitsetöös."*

*"Well, here I am getting back there, so that somehow such psychological support could still be more available."*

*"Noh, siin ma jõuan sinna tagasi, et kuidagi selline psühholoogiline tugi võiks olla ikkagi rohkem tagatud."*

*"In my opinion, it should be like in the curriculum for a social worker... there should already be a self-defense course in it, right, for how you do it"*

*"Et minu arust peakski olema nagu sotsiaaltöötaja õppekavas... peaks juba sees olema üks enesekaitse kursus ka, on ju, et kuidas sa seda teed."*

Non-exclusive licence to reproduce the thesis and make the thesis public

I, Kirsi Anneli Vimpari,

1. grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright, my thesis

“ESTONIAN CHILD PROTECTION WORKERS’ EXPERIENCES OF CLIENT VIOLENCE”

supervised by Karen-Pauliin Konks, MSc and Marju Selg, MSW.

2. I grant the University of Tartu a permit to make the thesis specified in point 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives, under the Creative Commons licence CC BY NC ND 4.0, which allows, by giving appropriate credit to the author, to reproduce, distribute the work and communicate it to the public, and prohibits the creation of derivative works and any commercial use of the work until the expiry of the term of copyright.

3. I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in points 1 and 2.

4. I confirm that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons’ intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

Kirsi Anneli Vimpari

23/01/2023