

Measuring the Occupational Well-being of Child Protection Social Workers: Challenges and Opportunities

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Challenges in Child Welfare Work

- High levels of sick leave due to psychological distress (e.g. burnout, traumatic stress, emotional exhaustion)
- Role ambiguity, role conflict
- Job demands and organizational characteristics cause ethical and moral stress among workers
- Employee turnover is high
- Recruitment is difficult

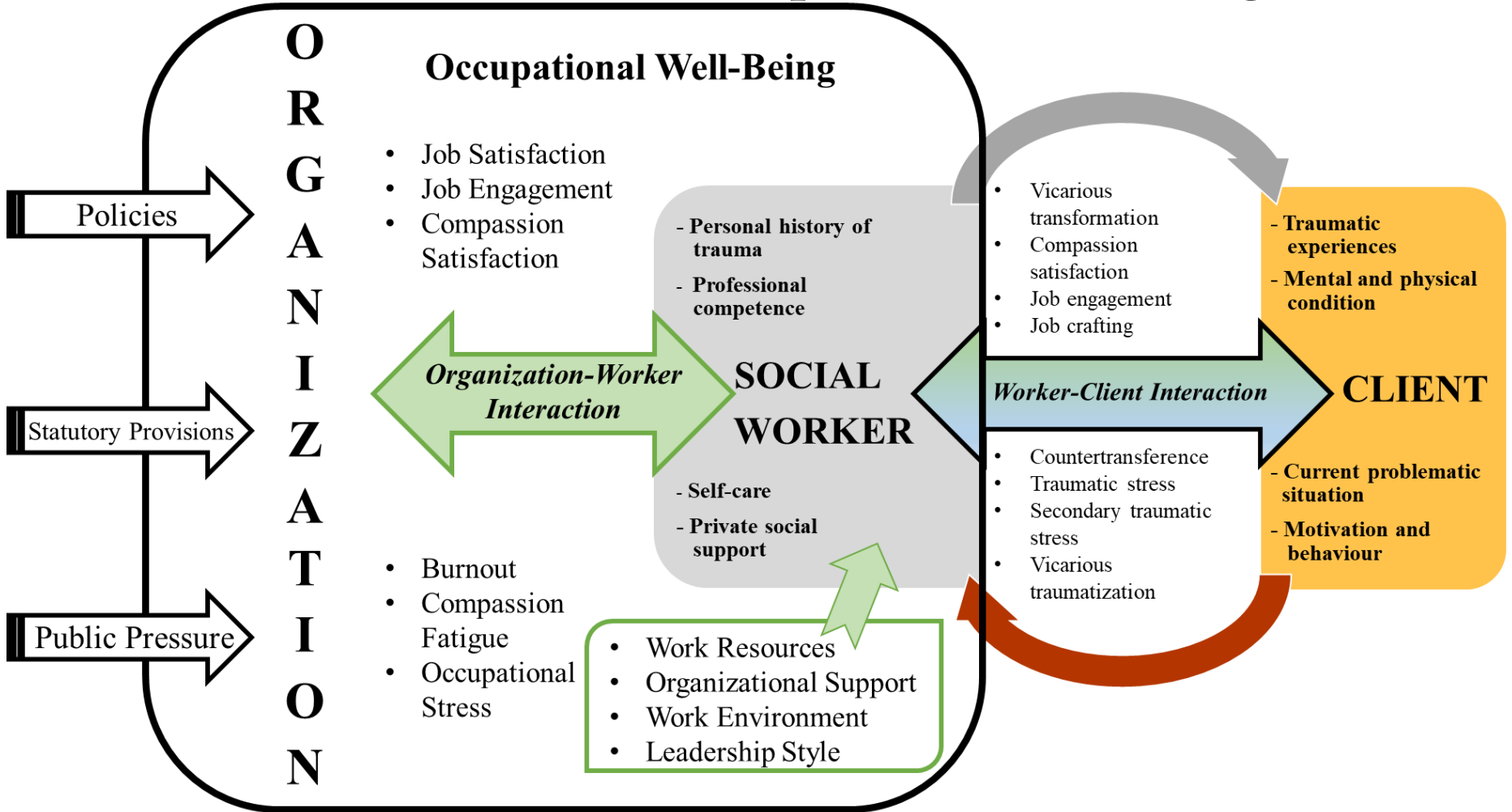
Challenges in Assessing Child Welfare Workers' Occupational Well-being

- Child protection social workers' occupational well-being is complex and multi-dimensional
- Several concepts are used for describing the phenomenon
- Most concepts focus only on one part of the whole
- Measurement instruments usually are puzzled together and are difficult to compare
- A field specific instrument for assessing the occupational well-being is missing
- Need for a specific measurement tool that takes into account the special nature of child protection work

The Special Nature of Child Protection Social Work

- Working with children and families means working with emotions
 - High responsibilities and personal liability (social workers decision can make the difference between life and death of a child!)
 - Family and their home are protected areas (acting in a protected areas means continuously violating private borders)
 - High professional secrecy
 - Continuously exposure to traumatized clients
 - Child protection work is dangerous
- ❖ Despite those conditions social workers are engaged and motivated!

The Structure of Occupational Well-Being



Implications from Studies on Child Welfare Workers' Work-Related Well-being

➤ Improving Organizational Factors:

- Organizational structure and resources
- Organizational and supervisory support, supervision
- Supportive and encouraging leadership
- Working conditions, organizational climate
- Creating a safe, comfortable and enjoyable physical work-environment
- Balanced and mixed caseloads
- Rewards and Recognition (salary, promotion possibilities)

Implications from Empirical Studies on Child Welfare Workers' Work-Related Well-being

➤ Improving Personal Factors:

- Team climate, team work, peer support
- Reducing role ambiguity and role conflict
- Autonomy, control over work, self-efficacy
- Participation on decisions
- Training, professional skills, self-care skills, healthy work-life balance
- Enhancing job satisfaction
- Mindfulness and Emotion differentiation

The Finnish Public Sector Study

10-Town study

**Includes
employees from
11 municipalities**

**and 6 hospital
districts**

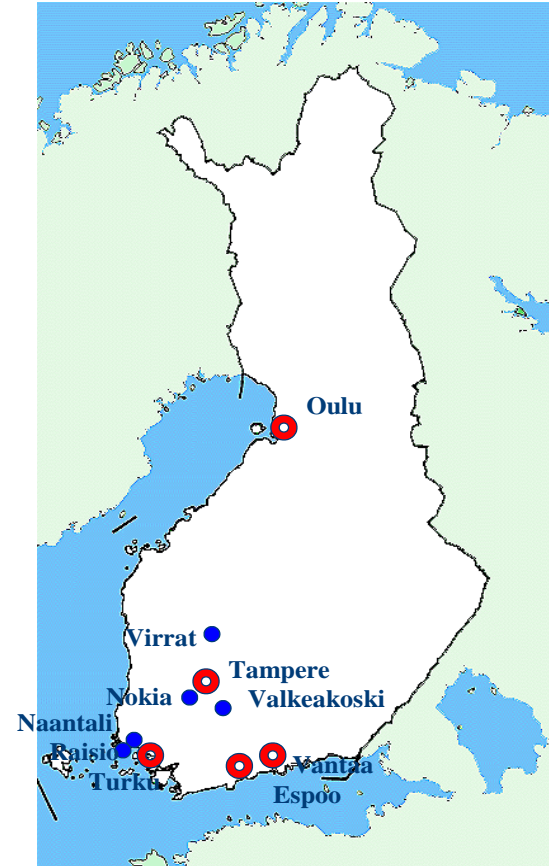
**20% of the public
sector employees
in Finland**

**1220 social
welfare employees**

- 364 CPS

- 529 SW

- 327 SI



**Finnish Institute of
Occupational Health**

The Questionnaires

- Ten Town Study baseline follow-up survey conducted in 2014 regularly used for the ongoing longitudinal cohort study distributed to all public sector employees in the participating municipalities, comprising 35 questions/scales
- Survey questionnaire distributed in 2015 exclusively to social workers comprising 21 questions/scales
- Self-mastered questions and validated scales
ProQOL (Stamm, 2010), Work Time Control (Ala-Mursula et al. 2002), the Demand-Control Model (Karasek, 1979), the Effort-Reward Imbalance Model (Siegrist 1996), questions based on the Organizational Climate Scale (West 2001, Patterson et al. 2005)

Findings and Factors Associated with Occupational Well-being among Child Protection Workers

- Highest levels of burnout and secondary traumatic stress (CPS compared with other social work employees)
 - Emotional satisfaction!
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- Age but not work experience
 - Team work, supervision
 - Control over work time
 - Participation, level of acceptance of changes in the workplace
 - Specialised training, professional commitment

Characteristics of a Specific Instrument

- Taking into account the special nature of child protection social work
- Taking into account the special needs of child protection social workers
- Enables the assessment on individual level, team level, supervisor/manager level and organizational level
- Generates information to improve organizational processes and workers' occupational well-being
- Comprehensive and replicable

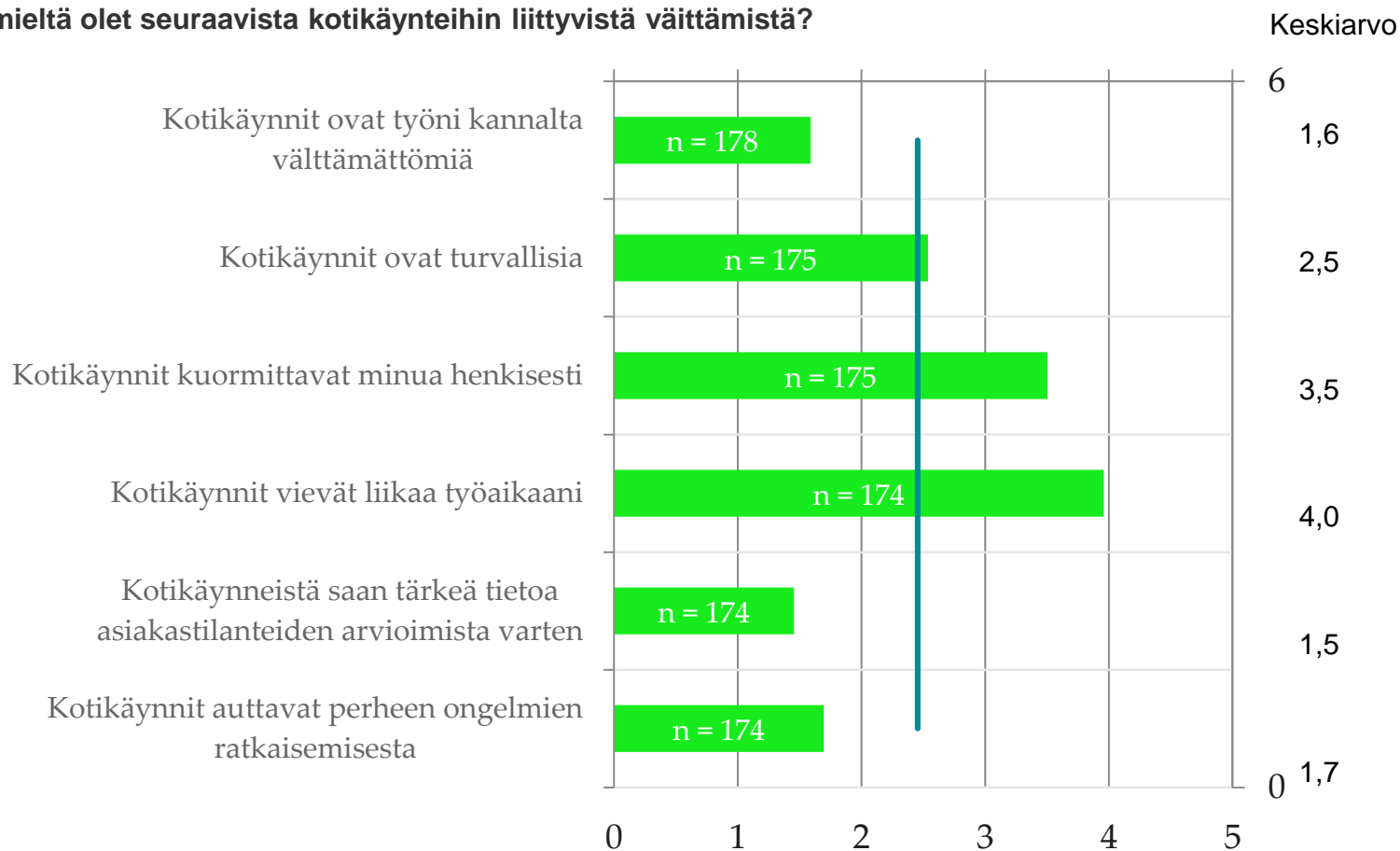
The Social and health care renewal dialogues –project

(SoteDialogit - www.projects.tuni.fi/sotedialogit)

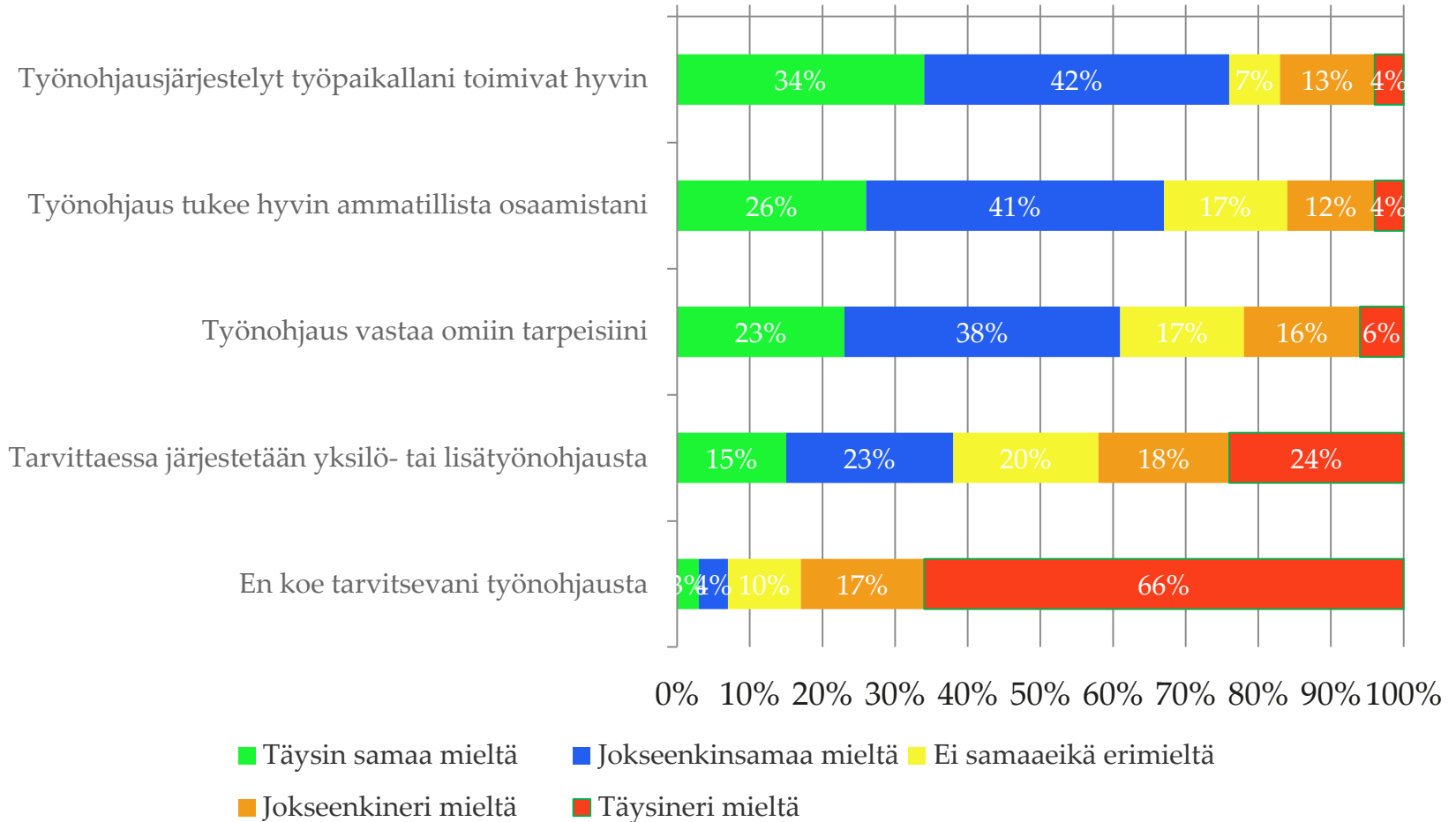
- Background questions
- General job characteristics and job satisfaction
- Work stressors, psychosocial risks, conflict management
- Organizational climate, team work, communication
- Feedback, support, reward
- Values, responsibilities, possibility of participation, leadership, work-environment, resources
- Learning, development
- Work-related satisfaction
- Child protection related questions

Exemplary Results

Mitä mieltä olet seuraavista kotikäynteihin liittyvistä väittämistä?



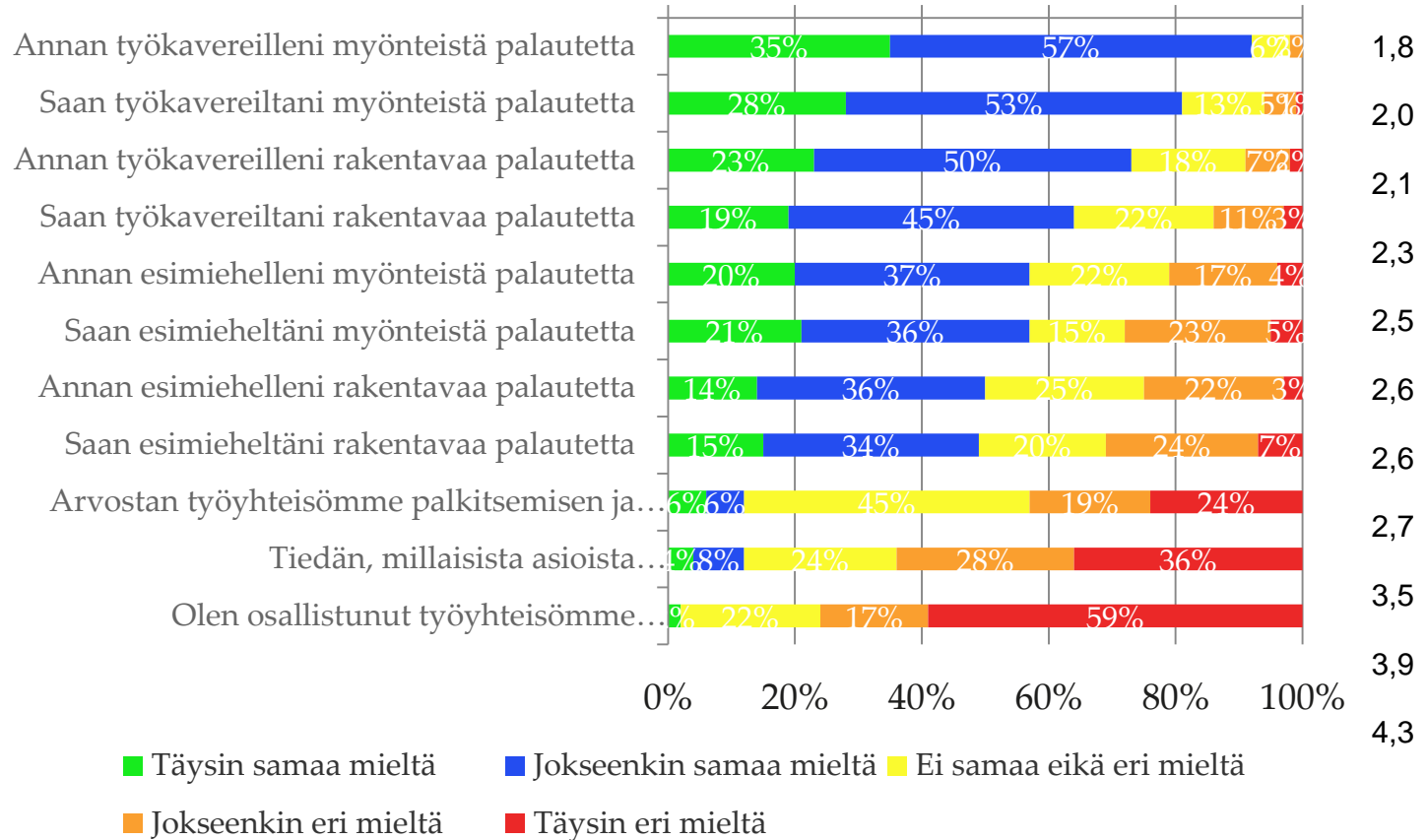
Exemplary Results



Exemplary Results

Mitä mieltä olet seuraavista palautteeseen ja palkitsemiseen liittyvistä piirteistä?

Keskiarvo



Exemplary Results

Henkilöstö- ja sosiaalitulojen toimivuus (ruokailu, kulkeminen, inen jne.)



Thank you!



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