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Asylum seeker mothers and their well-being

Perspectives for family work

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<p>Followed by the rapid increase in the amount of asylum seekers in Finland in 2015, the Finnish Immigration service detected a need to improve services for families who live in the reception centers. Therefore, a post of a family and crisis worker was opened in reception centers around Finland, including the Helsinki reception center. Thus, the thesis research seeks to explore the well-being of asylum seeker mothers, who are clients of Helsinki reception center. Additionally, it is also discovered, how the family work conducted in the center can promote the well-being of the mothers.</p> <p>The theoretical framework is conducted by the capabilities approach by Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaum identifies 10 central capabilities that are essential in terms of leading a life worthy of human dignity. However, as the perspective on this thesis is enhancing participation as an important component on well- being, the focus on this thesis is on further exploring the capabilities of “affiliation”, “play” and “control over one’s environment”.</p> <p>The research was conducted by qualitative methods. Data was collected through semi-structured focus interviews, and analysed by thematic analysis. The results indicate that the actualisation of the capabilities varies. The mothers feel free of discrimination, and free to choose if they want to practice their culture or not. All of them have meaningful relationships in their lives, yet only one has friends outside the family circle. Leisure time is important for all the mothers in terms of well- being. However, only two of the mothers say that they get to spend leisure time. The mothers find it more important to be able to influence and control their own behaviour than take part in societal influence- making. The mothers are also not aware of the arenas where they could make societal impact. Working is important for all of the mothers, yet none of the mothers is working due their life situation.</p> <p>The mothers tell that have received help from the family worker. They are more in contact with the surrounding society since the family work has started. As a further suggestion, more attention could be paid to arranging more leisure time to the mothers. As a long- term improvement, the family worker could facilitate discussion in the decision- making arenas about the right for state provided day care places for children of asylum seekers, as it could have a positive impact on the well- being of both the mothers and their children.</p>	
Keywords	Asylum seeker, family work, participation, well- being, capabilities approach

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<p>Suomeen tuli vuonna 2015 suuri määrä turvapaikanhakijoita, mikä johti siihen, että Maa- hanmuuttovirastossa huomattiin tarve kehittää turvapaikanhakija perheille suunnattuja so- siaalipalveluita. Tästä syystä vastaanottokeskuksiin alettiin perustaa kriisi- ja perhetyönte- kijän toimia, mukaan lukien Helsingin vastaanottokeskus. Opinnäytetyössä tutkaillaan Hel- singin vastaanottokeskuksen asiakkaina olevien turvapaikanhakija äitien hyvinvointia, ja perhetyön yhteyttä siihen.</p> <p>Työn teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu Martha Nussbaumin toimintamahdollisuuksien teori- asta. Teoriassa on määritelty 10 peruskyvykkyyttä, joiden toteutuminen on ihmisarvoisen elämän ja hyvinvoinnin edellytys. Opinnäytetyössä keskitytään hyvinvointiin osallisuuden näkökulmasta. Tästä syystä työssä perehdytään tutkailemaan kolmea peruskyvykkyyttä: osallisuus, leikki ja ympäristön kontrolli.</p> <p>Tutkielma toteutettiin laadullisin menetelmin. Tutkimusdata kerättiin puolistrukturoitujen teemahaastattelujen avulla, ja analysointiin teemoitellen. Tulosten mukaan äitien perusky- vykkyudet toteutuvat vaihtelevasti. Äidit kertoivat tuntevansa olevansa vapaita syrjinnästä, ja voivat toteuttaa kulttuuriaan vapaasti niin halutessaan. Kaikilla äideillä oli myös merki- tyksellisiä ihmissuhteita elämässään, tosin vain yhdellä äideistä oli ystäviä perheverkoston ulkopuolella. Kaikki äidit pitivät vapaa-aikaa tärkeänä osana hyvinvointia, mutta vain puolet äideistä kokivat, että heillä on vapaa-aikaa. Äidit kertoivat kokevansa omaan hyvinvointiin ja käyttäytymiseen vaikuttamisen tärkeämpänä, kuin vaikuttamisen ympäröivässä yhteis- kunnassa. Äidit eivät myöskään olleet tietoista verkostoista, joissa yhteiskunnallinen vai- kuttaminen tapahtuu. Työskentely oli äitien mielestä tärkeää hyvinvoinnin kannalta, mutta kukaan äideistä ei ollut työelämässä elämäntilanteensa vuoksi.</p> <p>Äidit kokivat saaneensa apua perhetyöstä. Perhetyöllä on ollut positiivinen vaikutus eten- kin äitien osallisuuteen. Tulevaisuudessa perhetyössä olisi hyvä kiinnittää enemmän huo- miota äitien vapaa-ajan toteutumisen edistämiseen. Pitkällä aikavälillä perhetyöntekijä voi- si vireyttää päättäjille suunnattua keskustelua, edistääkseen turvapaikanhakija lasten oi- keutta osallistua kunnan tarjoamaan päivähöitoon. Näin voitaisiin lisätä sekä äitien, että lasten hyvinvointia.</p>	
Avainsanat	Turvapaikanhakija, perhetyö, osallisuus, hyvinvointi, peruskyvykkyudet

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1 Introduction

In 2015, 32 476 people applied for asylum in Finland (Finnish Immigration Service 2016). Most of the asylum seekers arrived from Iraq (20 485), Afghanistan (5 214) Somalia (1981) and Syria (877). An asylum seeker is a person who is seeking protection in a foreign country. If a person is granted an asylum, they are granted with a refugee status (Finnish Immigration Service, 2019). Many of the asylum seekers who came to Finland were sole men, but there were also families and couples among them.

Following the rapid rise of asylum seekers in Finland, by 2017 The Finnish Immigration Service had identified a need for making a survey about the challenges concerning parenthood and intimate partner relationships during the asylum process. The need was detected due to the increased amount of the family related issues that had been reported to the Finnish Immigration Service by the reception centre staff since 2015. Since the numbers of reported issues regarding families and intimate partner relationships started to rise, the Finnish Immigration Service wanted to distinguish, what are the main areas where asylum seeker couples and families need help with. (Rönkkömäki 2018, 4.)

In 2019, the Finnish Immigration Service initiated that a family and crisis worker's post should be opened in some of the reception centres in Finland, including the Helsinki reception centre. As the post of the family worker in the centre is new, there is currently a need for developing the concept of family work. Thus, the aim of the thesis is to explore, how do the mothers perceive their well- being, and how the work conducted with the family worker can promote their well- being. The notion of well- being is broad and can be viewed from several perspectives. However, in this thesis research, the theoretical framework for well- being is formed by the capabilities approach by Martha Nussbaum. The reason why the capabilities approach is chosen as the main theoretical framework is that it connects strongly with social justice and enhances societal participation as a component of human well- being. Furthermore, it bears the idea that in a good society, opportunities should be promoted so that the individuals can decide for them selves, which freedoms they choose to exercise (Nussbaum, 2011, 18). The freedom of choosing is diminished for the asylum seekers, for instance, due to many legislative aspects. However, it is worth discovering how the asylum seekers, and in the case of this study, asylum seeker mothers, perceive their current life situation in terms of well- being.

2 Families seeking asylum

The chapter explores the working life need for the thesis, and presents the operations of Helsinki reception centre. Additionally, an overview of family work is included. The challenges that asylum seeker families encounter in the Finnish society are also discussed, focusing on the challenges concerning mental health and cultural aspects.

2.1 Helsinki reception center

Helsinki reception center operates under the supervision of The Finnish Immigration Service and the City of Helsinki. The main duty of a reception center in Finland is to organize statutory services for the people who are seeking for international protection in the country. Such services include accommodation, food, small financial allowance, as well as social and healthcare services. In practice this means that the asylum seekers meet nurses and social workers in the reception centers, because they are not entitled to the services of the municipality in the same way as residents of the municipality are. The statutory services that asylum seekers are entitled to, are legislated on the Act 746/2011 (§ 13), which is the Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection and on the Identification of and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (Finlex, 2019). Helsinki reception center operates in two units. One unit provides both reception services and accommodation for the asylum seekers, and has the capacity to accommodate up to 200 hundred people. The other unit provides the statutory reception services for asylum seekers, who are staying in private accommodation. What staying in private accommodation means for an asylum seeker is that they are not living in a reception center, but have organized housing for them selves. They may live, for instance, in the apartments of friends, family members, relatives, or in some cases with people who are part of voluntary, unofficial housing networks. The clientele on both units consists of sole men and women, as well as families. However, the two units do not provide services for unaccompanied minors.

Helsinki reception center has been operating for more than 20 years. Thus, working with asylum seeker families is familiar for the social workers, advisors and nurses who are working in the center. However, the opening of the family worker's post created the need for a closer observation of the implementation of family work in the centers. It is the family workers wish that the thesis research focuses on mapping out the expectations of the families towards the work. Thus the working life need for this thesis research is evident.

2.2 Family work

Family work can be conducted by several different professionals in varied working environments. Therefore, there are many definitions and orientations for family work. For instance, family work can be conducted as a part of municipal social services, religious congregations, or as services provided by the third sector. Also, family work can be viewed from the perspective of which domain of life the services are targeted: for instance, schools and day-care centres, mental health services or child protection. Additionally, family work can be defined according to the starting point for the work: it can be guidance of families, home services, or more in-depth interference with the harmful living conditions of the family (Rytkönen et al. 2010, 27). At the core of family work are the needs of the families. The needs may be related to parenthood support, guidance in child raising, education on children's developmental challenges, or reorganising the living conditions of the children.

Family work can be divided into three categories, depending on the nature of help that the family requires: preventative family work, crisis work and remedial family work (Rytkönen et al. 2010, 32). Preventative family work aims to support the family in a way that increases their well-being. The focus is on both diminishing and preventing existing problems from escalating. Therefore, recognising problems and risks in the family dynamics or living conditions is at high importance on the preventative work.

Crisis family work entitles supporting families during acute crisis, when the coping skills of the family are temporarily diminished. Such crisis may be caused for instance by divorce, or illness or death of a family member. The aim on the crisis work is to help the family to adjust into their changed every-day life, and restore their coping skills. (Rytkönen et al. 2010, 32).

Remedial family work entails a rehabilitative aspect. The work orientation aims to help families that suffer from harmful, often prolonged life situations, caused by domestic violence, mental health issues or substance abuse. Child protection is usually involved, because remedial work can only be carried out by a referral of a social worker. Remedial family work can consist of the assessment of the family's need for child protection, and mapping out their need for support. Crucial in remedial work is to stop the worsening of the family's harmful life situation. (Rytkönen et al. 2010, 34).

The family work in Helsinki reception centre is of preventative nature. However, the work also entails crisis family work, because being an asylum seeker is often a crisis in itself; families have fled war, lost family members, and have been forced to migrate from their home country. The work is aimed for families that are assessed to benefit from additional support. There are various reasons why the families may be in need of the family work. For instance, there may be challenges in the interaction between the parents and the children. The need for the support may also stem from mental or physical illnesses in the family, or from changes in the family situation. In a nutshell, the services of the family worker are there to ensure the actualisation of the right of the children for safe growing environment and receiving adequate care according to their developmental stage. The need for the support is assessed by a multi-professional team, which consists of social workers, nurses, family worker and in some cases, representatives of the advisor team. The work with the families is based on a plan, which is drawn together by the social worker, family worker, and the family. When making the plan, the workers and the family decide together about the goals for the work, as well as a fixed-time period for the work (Niinikangas, S-M. 2019).

2.3 Challenges of families seeking asylum

It is obvious that immigration, especially forced immigration, is a stressful change both for the individuals in the family, and for the family as an entity. Before, and often during the flight, many families have experienced traumatizing events: war, persecution, violence, hunger and the loss of family members or relatives. Settling into a new country and its culture, customs and language also puts families and individuals under a lot of pressure. Despite the traumatizing events that the families have experienced, there are families that do have adequate resources for taking care of their children without the interference of the social workers of the reception center. However, there are many reasons, why parenthood may be especially challenging during the asylum seeking process, and such interference might take place. The challenges vary depending on the families. In the literature concerning families who are seeking asylum, there are two factors that stand out; mental health issues and matters related to the cultural differences between the asylum seeker's home country and the receiving country.

2.3.1 Mental health

Both asylum seeking adults and children may suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Sourander, 2007). Sourander also states that many families are still in a

traumatic state during the period of the asylum process. Prolonged processes, uncertain nature of the future, and the traumatizing experiences of the past all affect the well-being of the family members, and the family as an entity. Also, the distress resulting from adapting to the culture and habits of the receiving country adds its own challenges. In his study in 2003, Sourander interviewed 10 families and their 40 family members living in reception centers. The interviews were repeated several times over the course of 6 months. The results indicated that adults in particular suffered from symptoms such as depression, hopelessness, nervousness and changes in their mood during the waiting period. Self-destructive thoughts or behavior was also detected among the parents. Family members also told about having disagreements with each other. Spouses had difficulties in their relationships, and parents, especially the ones with small children, had difficulties maintaining their roles as parents. For instance, the school aged children of asylum seekers are obligated to go to school in Finland, and therefore they might adapt to the Finnish society faster than their parents. The children also in many cases learn the language faster, which can distort the roles in the family so that the children are given responsibilities that actually belong to the parents (Schuber. C, in Alitolppa- Niitamo et. al. 2013, 71).

The challenges concerning parenthood are more severe among single parents, and if one of the parents had been a victim of torture. (Sourander, 2003 cited in Sourander 2007, 483). Parents with traumas in the background may lack resilience when their children are experiencing distress, which results to the parents not being able to comfort their children. This is due to the fact that agony and distress of the children reminds them of the traumatic experiences (Schechter et al., 2008). The ability to attend to the child's needs may be diminished also because the memories of the traumatizing events may enter the parent's minds persistently (Fearon et al., 2001). Parents may also be too protective over their children, because their views about the threats of the environment is not realistic, which results to them limiting their children natural need for curiosity and playfulness (Kaitz et al., 2009). Studies also indicate that the mothers who show symptoms of traumatic experiences, are more likely to have difficulties in the early interaction with their children; the interaction might be hostile and unstructured (Ee van et al., 2012).

However, Sourander states that the children who were in the asylum process together with their families, were coping far better than children who had arrived to Finland without their family. Thus, being together as a family during the asylum process serves as a

protective factor for the children, despite the distress that the family and its' members are experiencing. Sourander is not alone in his findings concerning family as a protective factor for children with refugee background. Lustig et al. (2004) had similar findings in their review about the mental health of child and adolescent refugees. According to the authors, adult family members act as the most important providers of both mental and physical protection for the children. These children show less symptoms of mental disorders than children who are fleeing without their families.

2.3.2 Culture

Culture shapes the way families are experienced and formed in different parts of the world. Immigration from a country of communal culture into a country of individualised culture, sets its own challenges for the families. Thus, in order to understand the parenthood in the asylum seeker families, it is necessary to point out the differences between the individual and the communal culture. A very general geographical divide between individual and communal cultures is that the cultures in industrial countries like European and North American countries, including Australia, lean towards individual culture, whereas communal cultures are more common in the rest of the world (Kuittinen & Isosävi in Alitolppa- Niitamo et. al. 2013, 81). Most asylum seekers come from countries that are outside of Europe, North America and Australia. Therefore a majority of asylum seekers come from a country where the dominating culture has more resemblance with the communal culture than with the individual culture.

The Finnish culture is perceived as a representative of individual culture. In Individual culture, individual responsibility of one's own actions is enhanced. Freedom of individual choices is encouraged, for instance, a person can freely choose their partner without interference of the family or relatives. Children are raised to be independent and encouraged to make their own choices. On the other hand, representatives of the communal culture tend to believe that the interests of the community are more important than the individual interests. Honor of the community is at high importance, and if one member of the community acts against the rules of the community, they bring shame for the community as a whole. Marriages can be agreements between two families, and usually marriages unite two families rather than two individuals (Kanervo & Saarinen 2004, 11; Rätty 2002, 59-60 cited in Rönkkömäki 2018, 13-14). It is also char-

acteristic for the communal cultures that the upbringing of children is not only the duty of the parents, but of the greater family and even of the whole community.

Parents transmit their beliefs, values and habits to the children both intentionally and unintentionally. The customs in raising children are a part of an entity that is formed by culture, society and the environment. These factors are guiding the natural ways of interacting with children. The cultural logic of parenthood is guiding all parents in terms of raising their children. What it means is that parents seek to comply their parenting with the needs and morals of the society. The aim of the cultural logic of parenthood is to socialize children so that they learn to survive in the surrounding society, and that they develop according to the moral perception of the society. This means that parenting seeks to support the qualities that are culturally appreciated and accepted. (Kuitinen & Isosävi in Alitolppa- Niitamo et. al. 2013, 82). The theory of cultural logic of parenthood may explain why the parenthood can be challenging for the asylum seeker parents. They have not yet learned about the cultural values and beliefs, or about the societal moral concept of the new surrounding society, due to the lack of time, opportunities, or motivation in participating in the Finnish society. In addition to this, as mentioned before, the parents and the children may be suffering from severe traumas that are causing mental health issues. Also, the children may be more integrated into to Finnish culture than their parents, for instance due to compulsory education. Then, the roles between the parents and the children may distorted. For instance, it is not unusual in the reception centers that the parents use their children as translators, even in matters that would not be appropriate to discuss in the presence of children.

Therefore, the support of the reception center staff for the families is one of the key factors when promoting the well- being of families. Besides mental health services, the families should be offered guidance in regards of cultural factors and societal norms in Finland, especially when it comes to parenthood. This is where the role of the family worker is essential. However, cultural education does not entail that the families should give up their own cultural beliefs and ways of parenting. Maintaining cultural traditions, together with the support of the cultural community has in fact been proven to prevent the depression of immigrant mothers (O' mahony et al. 2010 cited in Alitolppa- Niitamo et. al. 2013, 87).

2.4 Mothers seeking asylum

As mentioned before, it is common for the communal cultures that the responsibility of children's upbringing is not only on the parents, but also on the relatives and even on the community as a whole. Therefore, the lack of the support of the greater family and the community can be a huge crisis for the asylum seeker families in terms of their parenthood. In communal cultures, mother's role as the primary care-giver of infants is often enhanced, which is why the asylum seeker mothers may be especially vulnerable when there is no support from their home community. In countries where the access to health care is difficult due to high expenses or simply because of the lack of the services, the women of the extended family usually take care of the new mother. They are also the primary source of information when it comes to the child's care. Due to this, many immigrant mothers may feel lonely and isolated in the new country, which is why the risk of postnatal depression is high among immigrant mothers (O' mahony et al. 2010 cited in Alitolppa- Niitamo et. al. 2013, 87). In Finland, the state has an important role in providing support and information for the mothers. The asylum seeker mothers and children are also entitled to these services. However, it should not be taken for granted that the asylum seeker mothers easily accept the interference of professionals regarding their family life, as there might be lack of trust towards authorities due to traumatic experiences, or simply because of cultural beliefs and customs.

When observing the lives of families in the reception center and in the private accommodation, it seems that the role of the mothers as the primary care taker of the children prevails after the infancy. It is common that in families with two parents, the father is more likely to seek for employment or education than the mother during the asylum process. This means that the mother will spend the days with the children, if there are children in the family who have not reached the school age. When it comes to single parents, it is more likely to have a mother who is seeking asylum without a spouse, than a father. Thus, the asylum seeker mothers can be perceived as having generally more responsibility on the upbringing of the children, and therefore the well-being of the mothers is especially important, also keeping in mind that the mothers may be suffering from traumas that cause mental health issues. (Niinikangas, S-M. 2019)

According to the family worker of the reception centre Satu-Maaria Niinikangas (2019), many of the mothers, especially the ones who live in the private accommodation, seem very lonely due to the lack of the support network. Many of them are not taking part in the surrounding society, even when they only have school aged children. Additionally,

many of them suffer from depression or anxiety. This raises many questions concerning the well-being of the mothers.

In the Finnish society, participation is viewed as a process that creates good and adds to people's well-being, by increasing self-efficacy and also, the awareness of making choices (Thomas 2007, 199). Therefore, participation is viewed as an essential part of well-being in this thesis. However, it is necessary to take into consideration, what well-being means for the asylum seeker mothers, and is participation a prerequisite for better quality of life in their perspective. In the next chapter the theoretical framework for the thesis is presented. The focus will be on exploring the notion of well-being and its connection with participation.

3 Theoretical framework

Well-being and quality of life are both multidimensional notions, which are not easy to define or measure. Philosophers have been contemplating on the essence of a good life for centuries, and several theories have been constructed based on these contemplations. However, in this thesis well-being is viewed through the capabilities approach or the human development approach as it was called when first created by Amartya Sen. The theory was then further developed by Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum 2011, 17). The reason why this theory is chosen as the basis for the thesis research is that it links together aspects of social justice, participation and human well-being, focusing on the opportunities that are available for people on each society. The theory views capabilities as the freedom to choose and act between different opportunities. In this chapter, the notion of capabilities will be further explored, focusing on how the capabilities are linked to the lives of asylum seekers and especially, to the lives of the mothers seeking asylum.

3.1 Capabilities approach

Capabilities are not just individual abilities, but also opportunities that are established by the social, economical and political environment (Nussbaum 2011, 20). Nussbaum highlights the importance of promoting the development of *internal* capabilities; education, resources to mental and physical well-being, and support for important relationships (family and love). Internal capabilities are not innate, they are rather skills, traits

and abilities that have been trained in interaction with the socio-political and familial environment (Nussbaum, 2011, 21). For a person to exercise their capabilities at the fullest, the society needs to first nourish the internal capabilities and then allow space for the internal capabilities to flourish through combined capabilities. Combined capabilities refer to the opportunities that a person has for their choice and action in their social, political and economic situation or environment. Nussbaum argues that in order for a person to actualise their capabilities to the fullest, the society needs to provide the opportunities for the development and actualisation of both internal and combined capabilities. A society might successfully educate the internal capabilities of a person but fail to provide the arenas in which to take those capabilities into use. For instance, people may be well educated and able to express their ideas and thoughts concerning their situation, but the political environment might hinder freedom of speech. An immigrant may have all the internal capabilities for expressing their needs, but the legislation does not allow them to take part in the political decision-making, because they are not allowed to vote. Of course, this also goes vice versus; the society might provide substantial freedoms in terms of combined capabilities, but does not provide avenues for the development of people's internal capabilities by the lack of access to education and good quality health care. When talking about capabilities, it is important to mention functioning. Functioning can be defined as the active actualisation of capabilities. For instance, enjoying good health or reading a book are functionings. Although capabilities bear the intrinsic value of freedom and being able to select, without functioning, capabilities would be somewhat pointless. A society where people have capabilities but are hesitant or unable to function, would not be a very successful society (Nussbaum, 2011, 25).

Nussbaum (2011, 33-34) identifies 10 central capabilities that are essential in terms of leading a life that is worthy of human dignity. These are: 1. Life 2. Bodily health 3. Bodily integrity 4. Senses, imagination and thought 5. Emotions 6. Practical reason 7. Affiliation 8. Other species 9. Play 10. Control over one's environment. All of the capabilities are worthy of closer exploration in terms of participation and the well-being in the lives of the asylum seeker mothers, as all of the capabilities are interconnected. However, as the perspective on this thesis is enhancing participation as an important component on well-being, the focus on this thesis is on further exploring the capabilities of "affiliation", "play" and "control over one's environment" (capabilities number 7, 9 and 10).

3.2 Affiliation, play and control over one's environment

Affiliation. The notion of affiliation as a capability is divided into two parts. First of all, it stands for living in relation towards and with other people. It is about giving and receiving empathy and taking part in social interactions of many forms. Secondly, affiliation stands for being treated as worthy of human dignity, and equally in relation to other humans. Being free of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, caste, religion, gender, sexual orientation or national origin. One can assume that an asylum seeker, who is also a mother and has at least one of her children in Finland with her, has meaningful human relationships in their lives. However, it is worth discovering, who else is there in the mother's life that she can connect with, for instance, does she have a spouse, family members, relatives or friends. Mapping out the mother's support network is an essential part of the work conducted by the family worker, and therefore it is important to take the matter into closer observation in the thesis research. When it comes to the second domain of affiliation, which is the area of being treated as worthy of human dignity and the right of not being discriminated against, one can say that all asylum seekers are likely to face discrimination both in individual and structural level. As described before, the Finnish legislation places asylum seekers into unequal positions compared to the Finnish citizens. The financial allowance that they receive, for instance, is smaller than the minimum of a person who holds a Finnish residence permit. However, it is the constitutional right of the asylum seekers to be free discrimination based on their ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation etc. One can assume that the mothers are able to practice their religion freely in Finland and therefore, the mothers who want to practice a religion, are able to do so. However, there are also people who do not want to continue practising the same religion as they were practising in their country of origin, but can not leave the religion due to the pressure of the community. Thus, it is not only the legislation that might hinder people from actualising their capabilities. As the capability of affiliation bears the idea of having meaningful relationships towards other people, it is also worthy of exploring if the mothers have connections with other people of the same cultural background, and if so, does it have a positive impact on their well-being. As mentioned earlier in chapter two, maintaining cultural traditions, together with the support of the cultural community has in fact been proven to prevent the depression of immigrant mothers (O' mahony et al. 2010 cited in Alitolppa- Niitamo et. al. 2013, 87). Therefore, it can be assumed that the mothers value the presence of other people from the cultural background.

Play as a capability stands for being able to take part on recreational activities, laugh, and to have a good time. Therefore, it is worth exploring, how the mothers perceive the definition of leisure time, and how it links to the feeling of well-being. Asylum seeker mothers with small children, meaning children who have not reached school age yet, are likely to spend most of their time their children. This is due to the fact that compulsory education in Finland starts at age 6 when children go to pre- school. Attending day care is not compulsory in Finland, and therefore there is no legislation ensuring that asylum seeker children under the age of six would be entitled to attend state provided day care. The general assumption regarding asylum seeker mothers' leisure time is that they have very little of it, if leisure time is defined as time that a person is spending alone or with friends, doing something that they enjoy without obligations. However, it is also possible that the mothers think that they have a lot of leisure time, especially if they are living in a reception centre where the food service is outsourced and if they are not working. Also, they might think that time spent with their children and participating in enjoyable activities as a family is leisure time for them.

Control over one's environment is a capability that connects with both political and material dimensions. In the political aspect it means that people have the right to have impact on the political decision-making that concerns them. It entails having the freedom of speech and formation. Asylum seekers do not have the right to take part in the political decision- making by voting, since this right is only entitled to Finnish citizens. However, there are some ways that the asylum seekers can get their voices heard. One channel is that they can participate in the activities and activism organised by the Finnish civil society. They enjoy the right of freedom speech in Finland, and also the right to organize and participate in demonstrations. One good example of this was the "Right to live" demonstration camp in Helsinki in 2017, which aimed to criticize the deportation policies of the Finnish authorities. The demonstration was facilitated by asylum seekers. Thus, there are channels through which the asylum seeker mothers can get their opinions and thoughts communicated. However, one needs to first be aware of having the freedom of speech and also, opportunities to access the arenas where influence- making takes place.

The second dimension of the capability of *control over one's environment* entails the material aspect. It is about having the right to be employed on equal basis with others, and working in human conditions. Being able to have reciprocal relationships with other workers. The capability also entails having the equal right of holding property, and the

freedom from unjustified search and confiscation. According to the Finnish legislation, asylum seekers are only allowed to work three months after their arrival to the country, if they have a valid travel document. If not, then they will have to wait six months before they are allowed to work (Act on Foreign Affairs, 2020). However, when they are employed, they do have the right for the same employee rights as others. It can be assumed that many of the mothers are not employed, due to several reasons. However, it is worth exploring, how important do the mothers find employment in terms of their well-being, or if they find it important at all.

One can make assumptions on how people, and in this case asylum seeker mothers experience their well-being. However, in order to get a more holistic idea of the matter, it is important to ask the mothers' own opinion. Therefore, the thoughts of the mothers concerning the above mentioned capabilities and their actualization are discovered through interviews (appendix number 1). Questions 1 and 2 focus on exploring the capability of affiliation, question 3 explores the capability of play, where as questions 4 and 5 focus on exploring the capacity of having control over one's environment. The following chapters focus on the presentation of the study. First, the methodology of the study is presented, followed by a chapter on the analysis of the results. The analysis is then followed by the discussion on the study findings.

4 Methodology

The focus group of the thesis research is asylum seeker mothers, who are clients of the Helsinki receptions centre's family worker. The research question is, how do the mothers perceive their well-being in terms of the actualization of the capabilities as described in Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach. The research focuses on three capabilities: Affiliation, play, and control over one's environment. The thoughts of the mothers in terms of how the family work has influenced, and how it could influence their well-being is also explored. The research is conducted by qualitative methods, through semi-structured focus interviews. Thus, all mothers are asked the same, open questions. The questions for the interview are planned together with the family worker. The answers for the interview are written down on the interview sheets. No recordings are done to safeguard the anonymity of the mothers.

4.1 Ethical consideration

According to the ethical principals of human research, all researchers in Finland have to commit to respect the research participant's right for self-determination, and safeguard the participant's human integrity. This entails that the research participant has to be aware that the participation is voluntary, and that they have the right to discontinue their participation at all stages of the research without stating a reason. The participant should not feel pressured to participate. All participants should be asked for consent. It is also the right of the participant to get all available information concerning the research and also, how their personal data is being processed. (Finnish national board on research integrity, 2019, 7-8).

The participants are asked for written consent. The consent form entails the information regarding their rights as research participants, as well as information about the research and its purpose. It is also mentioned that the interviews are anonymous, and there will be no information gathered on the participant's country of origin, ethnical group or native language. The participants also receive a separate privacy notice stating how their personal data is being handled during the research. However, participant's name and signature are needed for the consent form and therefore privacy notice is needed. If the participant does not speak fluent Finnish or English, translators are used to make sure that the participant has a full understanding of what it entails to participate in the interview. The consent form and privacy notice are presented in appendix number 3.

4.2 Data collection

Four mothers are interviewed, using semi-structured focus interviews. The interview consists of certain themes, which were followed by open-ended questions. The questions are same for all the participants. Semi-structured interviews as a method is chosen, because it is suitable when the aim is to get information on specific topics, as in the case of the study, the certain aspects of well-being (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniikka, 2006). However, semi-structured interview as a method allows some space for the interviewee to speak freely on the chosen theme, compared to structured interviews. The interviews are held in the meeting rooms of the reception centre, at the end of the family worker's meeting. In two of the interviews translators are used, the

other two interviews are conducted in English. The answers are written down on the question sheets by the interviewer, and therefore only the central points of the interviews are written down.

4.3 Data analysis

The answers are transcribed on a word document, then organised according to the themes. Thus, the data from the interviews is analysed by thematic analysis. This method is chosen because the interview is organised in themes, which makes it relatively convenient for the analysis.

5 Results

The chapter entails the results of the interviews. The presentation of the results is organised according to the capabilities of affiliation, play and control over one's environment, in the same order as the questions are presented in the interview sheet. Analysis of the results is also included.

5.1 Affiliation

The first question concerned affiliation and its meaning for the mothers in terms of their well-being. Only one of the mothers tells that she had been able to create meaningful, reciprocal friendships while her stay in Finland. Then again, one of the mothers mentioned that for her the most important people are her children and her mother. One mother said that she is not very sociable, and therefore she does not find having friends as important aspect in terms of her well-being. In conclusion, the mothers mentioned that they have only few friends, if any here in Finland. However, three out of four mothers said that the relationships with their children are the most meaningful ones in their lives.

Three out of four mothers expressed that they do not feel the need of practising their culture in Finland, because they associate their culture with negative life events of the past. One of the mothers even said that *"my culture has destroyed me"*. Then again, the one mother who expressed that her culture is a positive asset in her life mentioned that it brings her peace to practice her own culture, and she finds it also important that her children learn about their home culture. In conclusion, all four mothers said that

they feel free to choose if they want to practice their culture in Finland or not, without discrimination. One of the mothers, who represented a sexual minority, mentioned that for the first time she feels free to be her self and is treated equally despite her sexual orientation.

The results indicate that all of the mothers feel like they do have meaningful relationships in their lives, because of their children. According to Nussbaum, the capability of affiliation is about giving and receiving empathy and taking part in social interactions of many forms. Therefore, if only one of the mothers mentioned that she has meaningful relationships outside of the family circle, one can make the assumption that the capability of affiliation is not fully actualized in the lives of the asylum seeker mothers when it comes to the enjoyment of reciprocal relationships and taking part in social interactions of many forms.

When it comes to the second domain of affiliation, which entails living equally in relation to other humans without discrimination, all of the mothers expressed that they feel free to practise their culture in Finland in the way they choose to. They also feel free to choose not to practice it. One of the interviewees enhanced the feeling of freedom, in terms of expressing her sexual orientation. As mentioned in chapter 3, asylum seekers are likely to face discrimination and racism both in individual and structural level due to their ethnical backgrounds. Also, the Finnish legislation places asylum seekers into unequal positions compared to the Finnish citizens or holders of the resident permit. However, none of the mothers mentioned that they feel discriminated against. Despite this, the mothers perceive that they are free to practice their culture as they please. This shows that the aspect of affiliation is actualized in terms the second domain of affiliation.

5.2 Play

Two of the mothers mentioned that free time for them means time that they are spending away from the reception centre, like going to the library, to the children's club or to the park with their children, which they are doing actively. Then again, the other two mothers said that they do not have free time at the moment. One of them mentioned that for her free time means that she could sleep well. The other one said that she likes to do sports in her free time, and it is very important for her mental and physical well-

being. However, as a single parent she has not been able to do any sports in a long time. In conclusion, all of the mothers agreed that leisure time is important in terms of well-being. However, the mothers had different definitions for what leisure time consists of; for others children are part of it, and for others not.

The results indicate that leisure time is important for the asylum seeker mothers in terms of their well-being. However, as all of the interviewees were single parents, they did not really get to spend time without their children. Also, none of them was participating in education or working, so the contrast between every-day life and leisure time might not be as distinguishable as for someone who is, for instance, working. Even though all of the mothers spend most of their time with their children, two of them mentioned that they have leisure time (with their children), whereas the other two said that they do not have leisure time at all. Therefore, the results indicate that for two of the mothers, the capability of play is actualised, and for other two not. This also proves that the actualisation of the capabilities might not be the same for two people in similar life situation; it is more about how the person perceives their situation.

5.3 Control over one's environment

One mother mentioned that her religion is a way for her to make societal impact; she can forward the hope and comfort for others that she receives from going to church. One of the mothers said that she would like to find ways to raise awareness concerning sexual minorities, but was not aware of the ways that she could do it. Two of the mothers mentioned that the lack of social networks hinders them from making impact on the societal aspects that concern them. What stood out from their answers was that three of the mothers mentioned that it is important for their well-being to be able influence their own thoughts and behaviour, and found it as means of having control over themselves and their environment. The aspect of influencing local decision-making did not stand out from their answers.

All mothers stated that participation in working life is important in terms of well-being. The positive impact work in terms of mental well-being was frequently mentioned, and brought out more than financial benefits of working. Another aspect that stood out was that working is important in terms of connectedness to others and participating in the society. However, none of the mothers was working because their children were so

small and also, because children of asylum seekers are not automatically entitled for day- care places.

The results indicate that the political aspect of the capability of control over' ones environment is not actualising in the lives of the mothers. Most of the mothers were not aware of the arenas where they could make societal impact on decision- making. Also, only one of the mothers expressed interest in making such impact, because she wanted to raise awareness about the rights of sexual minorities. Even though the capability of control over one's environment might not be actualising in the political aspect as Nussbaum defines it, most of the mothers felt like they have control over themselves, in terms of their behaviour and appearance.

When it comes to the material aspect of the capability of control over one's environment, which entails participation on working life, the results show that the capability is not actualised; none of the mothers is working. However, the fact that the mothers are not working is not alone the reason why the capability is assessed as not actualised. What makes the difference is that they do not have the freedom to choose if they participate in the working life or not, because they are all single parents, and the children of asylum seekers are not entitled for state provided day care.

5.4 Family work and well-being

All of the mothers feel like they have received help from the family worker. Three out of four mothers said that they have started to use the services for families in the surrounding area, such as children's clubs and play parks. Two of the mothers assessed that the family workers help has had significant positive impact on both on their and their children's well- being. One of the interviewees stated that due to the regular meetings with the family worker, she has been more motivated to leave her room and socialise outside the reception centre. Additionally, her child has become more sociable. Other interviewee said that the guidance on parenting skills that she has received from to family worker has been very beneficial; she has learned to use verbal communication instead of physical punishments, and she has also been able to change the daily routines so that the child now eats and sleeps better. One of the mothers also mentioned that she wants to share to others what she has learned from the family worker.

The results indicate that the family worker has been able to influence the actualisation of the capability of affiliation, because most of the mothers had started to participate more in activities where they could possibly meet other people. The family worker has also helped the mothers to find places where they can enjoy their free time, such as parks and libraries and play grounds, which indicates that worker also has a possibility to influence the actualisation of the capability of play. However, as already mentioned, some of the mothers do not count the time spent with their children as free time, and therefore the worker might not be able to influence that aspect no matter how many recreational activities she presents them.

In the following chapter, the study findings are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and the challenges that asylum seeker mothers face in the Finnish society. Causalities are briefly explored. The chapter also entails further suggestions on how the family work can be developed, given the results of the study.

6 Discussion

Nussbaum embraces the idea that the actualisation of all 10 capabilities is what is required for a person to lead a life worthy of human dignity. In this study, only three of the capabilities were explored, focusing on the capabilities that connect most with participation. The results of the study indicate that the capabilities of affiliation, play and control over one's environment are not fully actualised in the lives of the interviewees. Therefore, in the light of Nussbaum's theory, the well-being of the mothers is not at its highest potential, when looking at participation as a component of well-being. However, the findings do not rule out that the mothers would not regard themselves happy, because happiness is a subjective experience. Therefore, De-Shalit and Wolff (2007, 40) point out that despite the comprehensive nature of Nussbaum's theory, it raises a question concerning authority: Does a philosopher have the right to define categories for human well-being? However, as well-being is not easy to measure due to its abstract and subjective nature, Nussbaum's theory offers a good standing point for well-being assessment.

What stands out from the answers of the mothers is that they feel free to choose if they want to practice their culture or not. Surprisingly, three out of four mothers did not find their culture as a positive factor, quite the opposite. This contradicts the fact that ac-

According to previous studies, maintaining cultural traditions, together with the support of the cultural community has in fact been proven to prevent the depression of immigrant mothers, as described in chapter 2. However, the thesis research only had four interviewees, out of which three came from the same cultural background, which might have created a bias on the results.

The use of translators in two of the interviews can also have created some bias on the results. It was noticeable that the interviews with translators were more formal, and the answers of the mothers were shorter. One of the mothers clearly had difficulties understanding some of the questions, which might have been related to the translator's ability to attend to the questions. Then again, the mothers who were interviewed without a translator, gave more multifaceted answers. However, considering the focus group of the study, the use of translators in some of the interviews is necessary. Interviewing only English speaking mothers would have created even a stronger bias, because it can be assumed that an English speaking person has some advantage in terms of participating in the Finnish society, compared to a person who does not speak English or one of the official languages of Finland.

Finally, it is worth discussing that most of the mothers perceived the control over one's environment more as a personal capability that connects with control over one's mind and behaviour, rather than as a need or ability to make societal or political impact. It may be that making societal influence is not important for the mothers. However, it is also possible that the mothers might suffer from learned helplessness. Learned helplessness is a phenomenon, where a person is prone to focusing on the lack of opportunities to make an impact on their surroundings, or changes in their lives (Bosankic et. al, 2019). According to studies, the phenomenon of learned helplessness among refugees and asylum seekers can be caused by multiple exposures for subordinate conditions. The people have often fled from authoritarian regimes, and ended up in refugee camps, which are hosted by peacekeepers or relief agencies that have adopted military approaches to keep the camps in order. On top of this, asylum seekers are placed at reception centres upon their arrival in Finland. Although the work in the centre is based on the principals of social work, the centres are institutions where the same rules have to apply for all, and individual freedom is often limited. Consequently, some people become institutionalised, which causes apathy and the loss of self-confidence (Bosankic et. al, 2019). Therefore, the capabilities of the mothers adjust so that they

correspond to the limitations of freedom that asylum seekers face in terms of the legislation, and on the other hand, the rules of the institution.

6.1 Suggestions for family work

The mothers perceived that they have become more active in terms of participating in activities since they had started to meet with the family worker. Thus, the family work has been promoting their participation in the surrounding society. The results also indicate that leisure time is an important component for the well-being in the mothers' opinion. Although some of the mothers expressed that seeing the family worker has had a positive impact on their leisure time, more attention could be paid on the actualisation of the leisure time for all of the mothers. For instance, the family worker could discuss with the mothers about the importance of leisure time and also, what leisure time means for them. A plan for actualisation of leisure time could also be drawn together with the family worker and the client.

All of the mothers mentioned the importance of being able to influence themselves both mentally and physically. Therefore, the clients of the family worker should also get support in terms of self-development.

Finally, as a long-term improvement, the family worker could facilitate discussion in the decision-making arenas about the right for state provided day care places for children of asylum seekers. As mentioned on chapter 3, Nussbaum argues that in order for a person to actualise their capabilities to the fullest, the society needs to provide the opportunities for the development and actualisation of both internal and combined capabilities. Therefore, the asylum seeker mothers can not fully practice their capabilities, before the legislation of the society allows them to freely choose if they want to place their children to day-care in order to seek for education or work.

7 CONCLUSION

Asylum seeker families face a number of challenges during upon their arrival and stay in Finland. Mental health issues are common among the families, and long waiting periods, uncertainty of the future and cultural differences between Finland and the home

country do not make the matters easier for the families. However, as studies suggest, seeking for asylum together as a family may serve as a protective factor, especially for the children. Therefore, the well-being of the families should be promoted at the reception centres.

The study focused on assessing the well-being of the mothers who are clients of the family worker in Helsinki reception centre. In conclusion, all of the interviewees acknowledged the importance of affiliation, play and control over one's environment as important components of well-being. However, these capabilities were not fully actualised in the lives of the mothers. Therefore, the promotion of the actualisation of the clients' capabilities should be taken into consideration both on the personal and societal level, when developing the concept of family work.

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INTERVIEW SHEET

HAASTATTELURUNKO

1. Millaisia merkityksellisiä ihmissuhteita sinulla on tällä hetkellä elämässäsi? Mikä on heidän merkityksensä hyvinvointisi kannalta? *What kind of meaningful relationships do you have in your life at the moment? What kind of impact do these relationships have on your well-being?*
2. Koetko voivasi toteuttaa omaa kulttuuriasi Suomessa? Miten tämä vaikuttaa hyvinvointiisi? *Do you feel free to practice your own culture in Finland? Is it important for your well-being to practice it?*
3. Mistä vapaa- aikasi koostuu? Koetko vapaa- ajan tärkeäksi hyvinvointisi kannalta? *What does your leisure time consist of? How does it impact your well-being?*
4. Mihin asioihin koet voivasi vaikuttaa ympäröivässä yhteiskunnassasi? Haluaisitko saada mielipiteesi paremmin kuuluviin ja jos haluat, niin missä asiassa? *What kind of matters are you able to influence in the surrounding society? Would you like to get your opinions heard better, and if so, what are the matters?*
5. Mitä ajattelet työnteosta? Onko se sinun mielestäsi tärkeää hyvinvoinnin kannalta? *What do you think about working? Is working important in terms of well-being?*
6. Mitä odotuksia sinulla on perhetyöltä, millaista tukea koet tarvitsevasi hyvinvointisi kannalta? *What kind of expectations you have for the family work, and what kind of support you need in terms of your well-being?*

INFORMATION SHEET/ INFORMAATIO KIRJE

Hei,

Olen Larissa Puruskainen ja opiskelen Metropolia Ammattikorkeakoulussa sosionomiksi. Teen opinnäytetyötä liittyen turvapaikanhakija äitien odotuksiin Helsingin vastaanottokeskuksessa tehtävästä perhetyöstä. Tarkoituksena on äitejä haastattelemalla saada selville äitien ajatuksia, toiveita ja ideoita liittyen perhetyöhön, sekä kuulla heidän ajatuksia hyvinvoinnista.

Haastatteluun osallistuminen on täysin vapaaehtoista, eikä se aiheuta osallistujille kustannuksia. Osallistujista ei myöskään talleteta, tai julkaista mitään tunnistetietoja, kutenhenkilötietoja, kansallisuutta tai ädinkieltä. Haastattelut tehdään suullisesti, ja haastattelija kirjaa materiaalin haastattelun aikana. Haastattelulomakkeet hävitetään tietosuojattuun paperinkeräykseen heti aineiston analysoinnin jälkeen.

Toiveenani olisi, että pystyisit osallistumaan haastatteluun, jonka avulla Helsingin vastaanottokeskuksessa voidaan kehittää perhetyötä. Haastattelu kestää 10-15 minuuttia. Haastattelut on tarkoitus toteuttaa helmi- huhtikuun 2020 aikana perhetyöhön liittyvien tapaamisten yhteydessä. Osallistuminen on täysin vapaaehtoista, ja voit missä vaiheessa tahansa muuttaa mieltäsi ilman, että ilmoitat siihen syytä tai että se vaikuttaa millään tavalla oikeuksiisi saada palveluita Helsingin vastaanottokeskuksessa.

Kiitos jo etukäteen, jos päätät osallistua!

Helsingissä 24.02.2019

Larissa Puruskainen

SUOSTUMUSLOMAKE

Suostumuslomake opinnäytetyön haastattelua varten

Minua on pyydetty osallistumaan Larissa Puruskaisen tekemään opinnäytetyöhön haastattelun muodossa. Minulle on kerrottu opinnäytetyön sisällöstä, tarkoituksesta ja tavoitteista. Olen myös tietoinen, että voin esittää kysymyksiä, jos minua askarruttaa jokin haastatteluun osallistumisesta.

Suostun osallistumaan haastatteluun vapaaehtoisesti ja ymmärrän, että voin perua osallistumiseni milloin vain syytä ilmoittamatta. Annan lupani käyttää haastattelun tuloksia siten, että henkilöllisyyteni säilyy tunnistamattomana koko prosessin ajan. Ymmärrän, että kaikki tiedot käsitellään luottamuksellisesti, ja hävitetään tietosuojaa kunniottaen, kun tutkimus on ohi. Minulle on selitetty tutkimuksen sisältö ja sen keskeiset tavoitteet, sekä tämän suostumuslomakkeen sisältö tulkin välityksellä tai muutoin kielellä, jota ymmärrän erinomaisesti.

Paikka ja aika

Haastateltavan allekirjoitus ja nimenselvennys

Opinnäytetyön tekijän allekirjoitus ja nimenselvennys

TIETOSUOJASELOSTE**14.01.2020****1. Tutkimuksen nimi**

Asylum seeker mothers' expectations on family work

2. Rekisterin ylläpitäjä ja tutkimuksesta vastaavat taho

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3. Tutkimuksen tarkoitus ja kesto

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on kartoittaa turvapaikanhakijaäitien toiveita ja odotuksia Helsingin vastaanottokeskuksessa tapahtuvasta perhetyöstä. Tarkoituksena on myös kartoittaa haastateltavien äitien ajatuksia heidän osallisuudestaan Suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa, ja kuulla heidän näkemyksiään siitä, kuinka he kokevat voivansa vaikuttaa omaan arkeensa. Tutkimus toteutetaan kevään 2020 aikana siten, että se on valmis viimeistään 31.05.2020 mennessä.

Helsingin vastaanottokeskuksen kriisi- ja perhetyöntekijä rekrytoi haastattelun osallistujat.

4. Tutkittavien oikeudet

Haastateltavilla on oikeus perua osallistumisensa tutkimukseen missä tahansa tutkimuksen vaiheessa syytä ilmoittamatta. Tästä oikeudesta kerrotaan haastateltaville suostumuslomakkeessa, joka käydään läpi heidän kanssaan joko heidän äidinkielellään tulkin välityksellä, tai kielellä, jota he ymmärtävät erinomaisesti.

5. Henkilötietojen kerääminen

Henkilötietoja, eli haastateltavan etu- ja sukunimi, kerätään tutkimuksen suostumuslomaketta varten. Suostumuslomakkeet hävitetään tutkimuksen tultua valmiiksi, kuitenkin viimeistään 31.05.2020. Suostumuslomakkeet hävitetään Helsingin vastaanottokeskuksen yksityismajoitustoimipisteen tietosuojakeräyk-

seen. Suostumuslomakkeita säilytetään Helsingin vastaanottokeskuksen kriisi- ja perhetyöntekijän työhuoneessa, kunnes lomakkeet hävitetään yllämainittuun päivämäärään mennessä.