

Women with Families and Experiences of Business Travel

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<p>The thesis studies how female business travellers with children experience business travel. The objective is to find out new ways and tools to make business trips easier for these travellers, make them have a better work-life balance and have a less stressful experience not only during their trips, but also after.</p> <p>The method used was semi structured interviews. The interview consisted of questions related to combining business travelling and family. The interviews took place in Spring 2015 and four respondents, aged 34-52, participated in the interviews. The respondents had 2-3 children. Three of the respondents had been travelling for business for around 10 years, one around 20 years.</p> <p>The theoretical framework focuses on issues relevant to the topic. Firstly, the role of Finnish women is presented. Secondly. Business travel, its challenges and women's aspect on working and business travelling is discussed. Well-being factors, as well as stress and work-life balance are also presented.</p> <p>The methodology chapter presents the method used, semi-structured interview, as well as discusses the validity and reliability of the interviews and presents the research implementation process.</p> <p>The interview results indicate that women with families find combining business travelling and family rather challenging. A trustworthy support network is very essential, and it would be desirable to get support from the workplace as well, e.g. free days after the business trip, or child care services provided by the employee.</p>	
Keywords business travel, business travelling women, wellbeing, work-life balance, women's role	

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1 Introduction

The number of female business travellers is rising. "Women business travellers already control 60 per cent of the wealth in the United States and influence 85 per cent of all purchasing decisions while being high-tech, mobile, connected and social. And 47 per cent of women who travel do so for business" (Global Traveler 2014)

The thesis studies how female business travellers with children experience business travel. The objective is to find out new ways and tools to make business trips easier for these travellers and make them have a better work-life balance and have a less stressful experience not only during their trips, but also after.

According to a survey made by SMT in 2011, most Finnish business travellers are content with their travelling, the most bothersome things being lack of sleep and exercise, as well as extra work. 12% of them reported that the amount of business travel days affected negatively in their well-being. (Matkaviikko 2011). The problem is, female business travellers are still a relatively new phenomenon. There are difficulties in meeting the needs of female business travellers, let alone those who have children. The issue is relatively unknown and thus there is not much literature available on the subject. The aim is to find out what kind of experiences women business travellers have by conducting interviews, and conclude how business trips could be made more comfortable, whether the solutions are changes in company policies or other ways to achieve the balance.

The qualitative method of this thesis is semi-structured interviews. This is the best method to use when wanting to know about the experiences of these women, as well as their feelings and thoughts on the existing matters, and what they would like to see in the future. Semi-structured interviews allow the respondents to tell their own views with their own words, rather than having to choose between ready-made examples. The interviews were conducted during the spring 2015, and the results are presented in chapter 6.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter, Introduction, will give the reader an insight of what the thesis is about. The objective of the thesis is presented as well as the research problem. The structure of the thesis is gone through. Chapter 2 starts the literature review. The chapter is about the history of Finnish women and how their role has changed over time, and how we have ended up as one of the best countries for women to work. Chapter 3 explains what business travel is, and what issues it is facing today. There is also a section about women at work and as business travellers. This subchapter presents the issues women are facing at work life. Chapter 4 digs deeper into wellbeing

issues at work and on business trips. Also issues such as stress, work-life balance, as well as the effect of company travel policy on business travellers' health are presented. Chapter 5 presents the methodology used in the thesis, as well as the implementation and reliability issues. Chapter 6 presents the results of the semi-structured interviews theme by theme, and chapter 7 draws the conclusions based on these results.

2 The changing role of Finnish women

For centuries the role of Finnish women has been invisible. Since women did not have much power, their voices were not heard, and thus there was not much written on the subject. Women were only in their own houses making food and producing offspring. During the wars Finnish women were taking care of the duties of their husbands', in addition to their own chores. Centuries of blaming women and making them feel worthless left a mark to the attitudes and self-esteem of these women (Utrio 2006, 8).

In mid-19th century, women made the first steps towards equality. Young women were educated to become better mothers, and unmarried women of higher social class were more and more willing to take care of their own economy. The ideas of individualism and happiness that came from Western Europe made it possible for the Finns to start thinking about democracy. Socialists started to strive for female rights, which was not taken lightly. First World War and independency in 1917 woke the Finnish up and they were forced to develop and have an opinion, which changed the position of women drastically (Utrio 2006, 11-12). In 19th century, the industrialisation made it possible for women to start working. Fabrics industries were using women and children as their workforce, which gave women the possibility to earn their own money and be more independent from their spouses. Women were usually working in positions that included serving or taking care of people (Tawast & Luukka 2010). After women were able to educate themselves to various professions, several women started to have their own career which made other people doubt their motives, and a lot of women were facing discrimination. (Utrio 2006, 305). In addition, in 1945, employers were advised to give women lower salary. Even though this practice was changed, it was hard to get rid of it completely. Even today, women are paid approximately 17% less than men for the same job (Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö 2014).

In the earlier times, women were expected to choose between work and having a family, but in the late 1970s nearly half of Finnish women were in the workforce, and the percentage continued to rise until the end of the century (Tawast & Luukka 2010).

Today, despite being able to work and have a family, there are still women who choose to stay home taking care of children instead of working. According to an article in Helsingin Sanomat in May 2015, around 4% of women in Finland are stay-at-home moms, when in the 1960's the number was 25%. The article states that Finnish women stay at home approximately 18 months per child and then continue to work as before. The reasons to stay home are in the circumstances; usually the husband makes enough money for both and

therefore staying at home makes sense for many. Some parents on the other hand choose to stay in order to take care of the children's wellbeing better (Helsingin Sanomat 2015).

In the 21st century women were completely independent from men and possessed even higher degrees than them. There is still a long way to go to complete equality, but Finland still ranks high with the equality of women (Utrio 2006, 308). In very short time, the life of Finnish women has changed to better and healthier. The chances of women leading their own lives and educating themselves have increased enormously. Women can choose the amount of children they want to have, they can vote and take care of their own economy even when married, and educate themselves to whatever they want (Utrio 2006, 12).

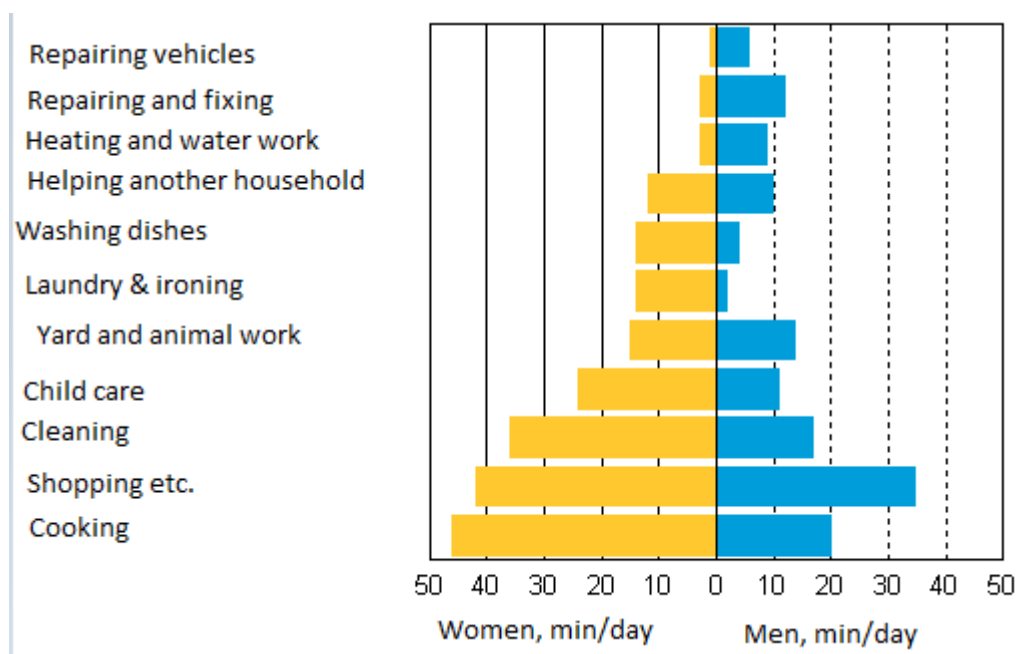


Figure 1. The time used for daily chores for women and men in 2009-2010 (Statistics Finland 2011).

Figure 1 illustrates the amount of time used for daily chores between women (in yellow) and men (in blue). It shows that women use the most amount of time for doing chores, especially for cooking shopping and running errands cleaning and taking care of children. Men use most time for shopping and running errands, cooking and cleaning, but the amount of time used is still less than it is for women.

Despite the equality between men and women, Finnish females still find themselves doing more daily chores in the household compared to their spouse. Even though men continue to do more and more at home, women still do nearly twice as much, as we can also see from Figure 1.

As normal working hours rise, the amount of chores decreases for both men and women. (Miettinen 2008). However, despite men continue to do more housework, this equality between doing chores is mostly due to the fact that women have decreased the amount of chores they do daily (Tilastokeskus 2011). Nowadays women also travel for business, which makes it more difficult for women to combine work and family. In the next chapters we will talk more about what business travel is and how it affects wellbeing.

3 Business travel

In this chapter I will introduce the subject of business travel, its development since ancient times and the challenges business travel is facing today. I will also introduce the female perspective into work and business travel; how the role of women has changed during the times, the discrimination and stereotyping they are still facing and the different needs they have in regards of business travel.

3.1 Business travel, development and challenges

Business travel is defined as traveling to a place where your purpose of travel is somewhat linked with your work or professional interests. This may include trips where an employee is traveling somewhere to carry out actual work, or trips that help them do their work more effectively (Davidson & Cope 1994, 3). Swarbrooke and Horner (2001, 5-6) explain that a business traveller can be travelling for meetings, exhibitions, employee training courses, product launches or incentives.

Davidson and Cope (2001, 4) elaborate that business travel is grouped into two groups: individual business travel and business tourism. Individual business travel is a necessary part of one's work consisting of going wherever the need for meeting is. The country or the agenda is not decided by the traveller itself. These trips are usually carried out individually, hence the name. Business tourism on the other hand consists of the above mentioned factors such as events and exhibitions. People know when these events are happening and they are usually not crucial part of the employment. It is also common to travel to these events together with colleagues.

The need for business travel dates back to ancient times. Business tourism, such as traveling for incentives and events, is a relatively new phenomenon. Thousands of years BCE people were practicing agriculture. After the living conditions changed to better and there were more goods than needed, they began to trade with someone who had something different. This evolved into selling goods on markets and sometimes travelling thousands of kilometres to trade products. Trading developed during the great empires of Egypt and Rome and during the medieval times. During the Middle Ages the Silk Route made it possible to transport goods from Asia to Europe and vice versa (Swarbrooke & Horner 2001, 14-15). All this, and the industrialization and the development of transportation, political and social society and technology have made business travel as we know it today (Verhelä 2000, 9). Organizations building factories and office buildings abroad have strengthened the need to travel for business. It is also worth mentioning that as the level of Finnish

education and the mentality of people has changed, Finnish people have more confidence to go abroad and they trust in their skills a lot more than before. Globalization and joining the EU has had a significant meaning to business travel as well (Verhelä 2000, 10).

The business travel industry is facing many challenges today. Even though some problems only occur in certain areas of tourism, they still affect the whole picture (Swarbrooke & Horner 2001, 223-224). For instance, there are new technological tools coming all the time that challenge the need for business travel. These tools are both an opportunity to save money, but also a threat (Swarbrooke & Horner 2001, 228).

One accurate problem is occurring as the number of female business travellers is rising, and we do not yet know exactly how to meet their needs. The service providers too often assume that the business traveler is a man, and therefore the services are set for the needs of male travelers. There is a need to make sure the needs of female business travelers are also met, and that the two genders are treated equally (Swarbrooke & Horner 2001, 228). More about female business travellers in chapter 3.2.

Another rising issue is having a balance between work and leisure time, which, when in imbalance, can cause a great deal of stress. As we know already, business travellers experience more stress than those who do not travel regularly. The long hours, being away from home and delays affect to the mental wellbeing of the employee. The employers should keep in mind that a stressed traveler is not as effective. More free time and well planned itineraries, as well as making it possible for them to contact their families during the trip, would make the trips easier for them (Swarbrooke & Horner 2001, 230). The well-being and work-life balance issues are presented in chapter 4.

The line between leisure and business travel is clear for most. While leisure travellers choose, plan and pay their trip themselves, business travellers do not do any of those. Business travellers also usually travel to industrialized destinations and big cities, whereas leisure travellers' choice of destination is more varied and can be anything. (Verhelä 2000, 14). However, it is not uncommon nowadays that business travellers take their friend, partner or children with them to their trip and/or extend their stay with one or two days to have time to do some sightseeing or shopping. Therefore, they are adding some leisure travel element to their business stay. (Davidson & Cope, 1994, 6-7).

It is also worth remembering, that business tourists may visit sights or museums in the evening after their meeting or conference, making them a leisure tourist at the end of the day. It is also common for conferences to include leisure activities to the guests. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2001, 10).

3.2 Women at work and as business travellers

Gone are the times when women could only take care of children at home. Today, women can be found in every profession and getting high degrees at universities. However, women still have difficulties in maintaining work-life balance and they feel more insecure about keeping their workplace. In addition, women still get paid less than men from the same job (Reeves 2010, 11)

While men and women can pursue the same professions, there are still jobs where there is a clear line between what is men's and what women's work. Women are more likely to go for work in the service sector, while men are seen to go for more technical jobs. These jobs are not seen as important and therefore are paid less (Reeves 2010, 16-18).

It is also widely discussed that men and women have naturally different skills and capabilities and therefore are more suitable for different occupations. This might prevent women from pursuing higher roles or to be in leading positions because the attributes that women possess are not seen to suit these positions. In many cases, men are chosen to be in management positions more frequently than women. However, women can be seen in high management positions more in the area that holds the most female workers, such as healthcare (Reeves 2010, 18-19).

In March 2015 The Economist named Finland as the best country for women to be working at. They surveyed different components of work in 28 countries and measured which country offers the best and most equal working conditions for women. What seems to be good in Finland is the level of higher education degrees possessed by women, the amount of women in the workforce and the amount of women going for commercial degrees. Finland also got appraisal for the long maternity leave offered (The Economist 2015). What is concerning, however, is the fact that the amount of women in leading positions has stayed the same for the past 10 years. It also seems concerning that women are having difficulties in rising into these leader positions inside a company. According to women themselves, the biggest reason for this is having a family (Helsingin Sanomat 2015).

For some women, travelling alone can be a frightening experience and there is a bigger possibility to experience physical or mental abuse during the trips. In some cultures, women might not be taken as seriously as males to do business with, which might also

cause problems. Checking the business culture in advance before traveling is essential (Dickson 2007, 153).

The growing number of female business travellers as well as their need for more security has spawned a lot of services provided solely for female business travellers, such as “women only floors” on some hotels or special offers only for women (Road Warriorette 2009). Even though men are thought to be business travellers, Swarbrooke & Horner (2001, 113) point out that it is usual for women to be the majority in working in the business tourism industry.

According to Dickson (2007, 152) “The average woman business traveller, according to statistics from a variety of industry sources, is over 40, married with no children, has a management job, and, with an income of about 68,000USD, is often the primary or sole wage earner. She spends 175 billion USD on 14 million trips a year.”

The women’s role as workers and business travellers is more difficult than men, especially if there are children in the family. Some women might find it relaxing to spend a few days without the hassle of small children, but at the same time there are feelings of guilt leaving them home and worries whether travelling will affect the family negatively (Dickson 2007, 30-31).

4 Wellbeing and business travel

In this chapter is presented what wellbeing at work is and what aspects it consists of, and also the wellbeing factors on business trips are explained. The importance of work-life balance is explained, as well as its challenges and benefits for both the individual and the organisation. Stress at work and during business trips is also explained; what are the causes and how to manage it.

4.1 Wellbeing at work and on business trips

The Centre for Occupational Safety (Työturvallisuuskeskus) defines workplace wellbeing as “safe, healthy, productive work that professional workers and work communities do in well led organisation, and where workers and work communities find their work meaningful and rewarding and they think their work supports their life control.”

People are the most important asset of the company. By taking care of employees' health benefits not only the employees themselves, but also the company by having more motivated and efficient workers. While health is much more than just “not being sick”, most employers only focus on treating already existing problems, when they should be focus more on preventing issues. It is also important to bear in mind that health is a combination of physical, mental and social wellbeing. Employers are responsible in promoting employees' health and should see it as an investment. After all, happy and healthy workers are more likely to be working harder and longer. Absences, due to physical, mental and emotional causes are costing any company a lot of money. Furthermore, this spawns loss of productivity and has other negative impacts to other workers and clients. (Macdonald 2005, 1-3).

There are many aspects which make employees feel well at work, job satisfaction being one of them. This can be increased by getting positive feedback and constructive criticism from one's employer. Important is also to feel part of the work community and feel like the organisation's goals and values are close to the employees' hearts. Job involvement and work engagement are also essential parts of wellbeing at work. If one is feeling involved and very devoted to his work and really makes a difference, it affects his self-esteem and gives fulfilling experiences. Social wellbeing at work is also essential, since the people you work with have a huge impact on one's mood during the day and therefore affects work performance (Chen & Cooper 2014, 14-22). What is also important is to let employees develop as professionals offering them to improve their skills or gain more knowledge related to their work. Such opportunities also show the employees that they are valued and cared about, thus increasing motivation. When providing these trainings, it is also im-

portant to let the employees use these skills obtained, and give them more challenges (Day & al. 2014, 14).

Workplace safety is also one essential part of well-being. An estimate is that over two million people die at work every year, and many suffer injuries. Employers are not only responsible for their employees' wellbeing, but also making sure they do not get hurt and feel safe. Planning well and using safe tools and designs, as well as protecting outwear is essential in preventing health hazards. The attitudes of the managers and leaders are also essential for workers to feel safe. If the managers seem to care about their employees' safety and well-being, the employees feel safer. Employees, who also feel safe and cared of, seem to be less absent and more satisfied with their work (Day & al. 2014, 84-85). Chen & Cooper (2014, 238) go into more detail with the effect of bad management to the employees' health: "Empirical research suggests that abusive leaders negatively impact diverse aspects of employee physical wellbeing, including their overall general health, their sleep, and their risk and safety behaviors".

According to the survey on wellbeing factors associated with business travel (Burkholder, Joines, Cunningham-Hill & Xu 2010) suggest that excessive drinking is a problem during business trips, whether it is due to boredom, stress or social pressure. Lack of proper sleep was also found to be a factor during business trips, resulting in poor work performance, as well as affecting the mental health of the traveller. Jet lags are a problem during longer trips, which might be one cause. Both of these issues, especially combined, affect negatively in business travellers' health and wellbeing, and might cause more severe psychological and mental issues, especially during frequent travellers. What should be necessary is to let workers recover from their business trips, especially if it has included travelling to a different time zone.

What could be done to ensure business travellers wellbeing, is for them to be well aware of their own health. Keeping track of vaccinations and medication is important. Keeping a medical bag with the most common supplies such as plasters, painkillers, diarrhoea medication etc. is recommended. Avoiding unsafe sex, having a medical insurance and requesting medical assistance when needed is also good to do when necessary. (Travel Medicine 2015).

In addition to taking care of one's health during business trips, it is also worth remembering the physical aspect as well. Kidnappings and terrorism threats are not impossible. Planning well ahead and researching the country and its situation before travel is essen-

tial. Companies should acknowledge this risk and make a risk management plan in case something happens (Travel Medicine 2015).

4.2 Company travel policy's effects on wellbeing

A company travel policy is widely used for controlling business travel related costs. The policies usually contain specific guidelines for business trips and travel arrangements; preferred airlines, car hire companies and hotels to use, and how high ranking they can be. Many bigger companies have written travel policies, but it is also common for smaller companies to use informal and spoken rules (Davidson 1994, 40-41).

In the purchasing process, the decisions are made in two levels: company-wide and day-to-day. Company-wide, the decisions are made by those who decide what is written on the company travel policy. These people can be for example procurement managers or managing coordinators. Many bigger companies also may hire a travel manager to take care of their travel related decisions; in this case the role would be theirs. In day-to-day level, the choices are made by those who actually book the flights and hotels, usually secretaries or PA's. In some companies, the employees make these decisions themselves. There are however differences in the decisions these day-to-day level decision makers do. The employees themselves opt for comfort and good conditions, while the decisions made by secretaries are usually strictly according to the company policy and therefore might not be as comfortable, because the key would be to save costs. The best option would be to ensure low costs, but still make sure the employee could handle the trip (Davidson 1994, 40).

In February 2015, BBT wrote an article about how "companies without a health and wellbeing policy risk losing employees on long-term sickness due to stress caused when travelling". The article states that the stress caused by business travellers takes a toll on the travellers' health and "illnesses such as high cholesterol levels, IBS, muscle pains and deregulated sugar levels can lead to type 2 diabetes" The article suggests that instead of just upgrading travel class, "companies should promote a culture of health in the workplace – subsidised gym membership, canteen on-site, encouraging employees to turn their phone off on holiday and weight loss initiatives". (BBT 2015).

Another article states that larger companies with frequent business travel take care of their employees' health much better than smaller sized companies, where travelling is less frequent (BBT 2008). In order for the travel policy to be the best for the travellers, compa-

nies should include a frequent traveller into the travel policy discussions. (Lehman & Niles 2001).

4.3 Work-life balance

In today's world we have more roles and responsibilities than ever before; we go to work and we might also have a family and hobbies and other projects we are interested in. We are expected to do more things than previous generations and we use the technology to support our daily life. It is hard for all these different roles to be in balance and it might significantly affect our performance and increase stress. (Allan & al. 2006, 7).

If work and family life are not in balance, we are talking about "work-family conflict". When having a conflict between these two areas, there are several negative effects, job dissatisfaction being one of them. One is not feeling satisfied with their job which results in being absent and having interruptions in the work schedule. Being present but having thoughts on something else might also occur, which means not being as productive. Dissatisfactions in the family are also common, leading to difficulties in one's marriage or relationship with children (Day, Kelloway & Hurrell 2014, 102-103).

For women, work-life balance seems to be more important than for men, since they feel more committed to family. It is also more common for women to be single mothers, which gives them more pressure to take care of everything themselves. Especially when young children are born, women feel they cannot leave them alone for long periods of time. When organisations nowadays require more work and longer hours, it can be very difficult for women to have that kind of balance in their life which would allow them to properly take care of their children, especially if there is no spouse or grandparents present (Reeves 2010, 193-194).

While it is commonly known how long days and short holidays workers in the US have, people in the Nordic countries have it quite well. Women choose to stay in the workforce longer times and are encouraged to do so due to paid leaves and more flexible working hours at times of maternity and other commitments. What seems to be the case is that the more support you get during these life commitments, the more women are in the workforce. For example in Spain the amount is low and those who are, are working full time. When this is the case, maintaining a good work-life balance is easier. (Reeves 2010, 199-200).

While the benefits of work-life balance for individuals are clear, it is also worth keeping in mind that the organisations benefit as well. The employees are more satisfied and won't have as much stress which results in more productivity (Reeves 2010). Also according to various studies, employees who were having a conflict between work and life were reported to have increasing possibility of having depression, anxiety or other mental disorders and more likely to being addicted to intoxicating substances compared to people not experiencing these typed of conflicts. Work-life imbalance has also been linked with higher blood pressure and a higher risk of getting a cardiovascular disease. It is also common for workers to have unhealthy diets and lack of exercise which results in bad common health and can spawn problems later on. (Day & al. 2014, 104).

A survey made by BTN (2012) group suggests that it is hard for business travellers have a balance between personal time and work. The respondents thought the biggest sacrifice they had to make when travelling was time with their friends and family, sleep and interruptions in the work routine being the following. 69% of travel managers addressed this issue as important to have in their travel policy, and to deal with this issue they limited the amount of one day business trips and allowed frequent travellers to access higher rated services in order to make their stay more comfortable. Another thing to do was to allow employees to have virtual meetings and not having to travel, however, not many travellers were aware of these options.

What could be done to improve this balance, is to identify your roles and list your priorities. It is important to share responsibilities between your spouse, grandparents or possible older children. One person should not be in charge of everything. If both parents are working long hours it is good to have someone for the children, whether it is a relative, friend or an au pair. It is also good to keep clear boundaries, and learn to say no. No one should take care of everything themselves, and asking help is more than acceptable (The Lex Line 2010). Also keeping in touch with spouses or family is important both for the traveller and the family at home. Sometimes the organisation covers the cost of calling home, but also daily e-mails or video messages might be helpful. Children should be maintaining their normal routine when a parent is away rather than making changes to their routines. It is not uncommon to take children with you to business trips, but this might interfere with the child's school and it is also rather costly if the organisation is not willing to pay (Travel Medicine 2015).

4.4 Stress at work and on business trips

Stress stems from the past when people needed to be alert in case of encountering a wild animal or another situation where we would need to either “fight or flight”. (Clark 2002, 2) Work related stress has been defined as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them” (Clark 2002, 5).

Stress comes from various sources. Major changes in life, unexpected events, and difficult events in life cause stress. Some people might also have a low self-esteem or have other personal issues that make them experience more stress. At work, poor working conditions and long hours cause stress, as well as poor relationships with colleagues. Also, if one feels like he is not getting anywhere in the job or has for example problems at work cause stress at workplace. It is important to address these issues and take care of the causes of stress, rather than easing the symptoms. (Agrawal 2001, 73-78).

It is estimated that a third of sickness absences are due to work related stress or other mental issues. As mentioned in the chapter above, absences are a costly factor and therefore stress needs to be taken seriously in order to have healthy and effective employees. Not only does stress affect monetarily, it leads to less productivity. Stressed people often affect other peoples’ moods as well, which may lead to more negative atmosphere in the workplace. It is also worth keeping in mind that prolonged stress can lead to other illnesses which can turn more costly for the employer than simply treating the stress (Macdonald 2005, 18-19).

Stress is also a widely experienced feeling during business trips. There are many factors causing stress during business trips, the most common being delayed flights, lost or delayed baggage, poor internet connection, bad flying conditions when flying long haul, low hotel categories and trips that are announced in short notice (CWT 2013). According to a study made by Carlson Wagonlit Travel about the Travel Stress Index (2013), stress was experienced during 6.9 hours per trip on average. These 6.9 hours was referring to time lost during a trip due to delays or time otherwise unavailable for them to rest or work. The most stressful and time consuming activities were flying economy class on medium or long haul and getting to the airport or station.



Figure 2. How stressful business travel was experienced by roles (CWT & HEC Paris 2014b)

Figures 2 and 3 present the results of a survey where 7,400 global managers were asked how and when they are stressed during a business trip. The figure 2 shows the stress levels by job and Figure 3 by gender and the white line in the middle represents the average amount of stress during different times of a business trip. The figure 2 suggests that the most stress experienced directors, vice presidents, seniors executives and managers during the departure, vice presidents also experiencing a lot of stress post-trip. Support Staff is seen to experience least stress during the whole trip, pre-trip being the most stressful time for them. Associate staff seems to experience more stress during the early times of the trip.



Figure 3. How stressful business travel was experienced by genders (CWT & HEC Paris 2014b)

Figure 3 suggests that females experience more stress during the whole trip, the peaks being pre-trip and at destination. Men experience less stress than average, the peak times being trip preparations, departure, flight and post-trip.

Another survey made by CWT and HEC Paris on “Global Business Travel Builds Sales and Stress” (2014a) suggests that the three most stressful elements of business travel are lost time, anything causing inability to work, unforeseen events like losing baggage, and events that break existing routines such as unhealthy meals during trips. An interesting factor, that Figure 3 illustrates, was that women experience more stress than men during these trips, the most stressful event being lost or delayed baggage. The location of one’s origin also seems to affect the stress experiences. Travellers from Asia Pacific were experiencing more stress than travellers from Europe, Middle East or Africa. The study also suggests that the less you travel for work, the less stress you experience. When the employee is required to take more than five trips during a time span of one year, their stress levels were noticed to rise. As we can see from Figure 2, the role you have at work also has a significant impact on the stress levels experienced. Travel stress cannot be eliminated completely, but it certainly can be managed. Ways to decrease travel related stress include e.g. letting the traveller take a spouse with them, setting realistic work expectations, and upgrading destination hotels and flights.

When on business trips, there are several ways of coping with stressful situations. First of all, employers should carefully select those people who travel. Some are more suitable for

changing situations and coping with stress. The amount of travel should be realistic and more flexible scheduling has been found helpful. Making sure trip cancellations and other changes are kept to minimum, and if this cannot be the case, travellers should be able to refuse to travel. Counselling and being otherwise available for travellers when they are on trips is good in order to help business travellers to cope with their stress and other issues (Travel Medicine 2015).

5 Methodology

In this chapter the methodology of the thesis is presented. First there is a section on qualitative research, and how it differs from quantitative research method. The method used in the thesis, semi-structured interview is presented and what needs to be taken in consideration when conducting one. Lastly, there is a section on the research implementation; how the interview was planned, conducted and analysed.

5.1 Research method

In this research, I chose to use qualitative method, since it was the best method to use when wanting to know about experiences and feelings, rather than making statistics. Rosaline Barbour explains the following about qualitative research (2008, 11): "Qualitative methods cannot answer questions such as 'How many?', 'What are the causes?' , 'What is the strength of the relationship between variables?' It can, however, provide an understanding of how official figures are created through social process." Suoranta & Eskola (2005, 13) add that simply put, we could call qualitative methods "non-numeral" and quantitative methods "numeral". Qualitative method is not about the outcome, rather than about understanding the process, which helps us to understand actions (Barbour 2008, 31).

I chose to use semi-structured interview in this research. In semi structured interview, the questions are the same for every interviewee, and the interviewees are encouraged to answer the questions using their own wording (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001, 47). "The 'semi-structured' aspect is crucial as it refers to the capacity of interviews to elicit data on perspectives of salience to respondents rather than the researcher dictating the direction of the encounter, as would be the case with more structured approaches" (Barbour 2008, 119). Galletta (2013, 24) also adds that "It is sufficiently structured to address specific topics related to the phenomenon of study, while leaving space for participants to offer new meanings to the study focus". There are also structured interview, where there are ready made questions and answer options, and unstructured interview, where there are no pre-set questions and the interview is led by the interviewee, not the interviewer (Ruusuvuori & Tiitula 2005, 11). When making a semi-structured interview, there is a somewhat clear process that needs to be done; firstly, we know that the interviewees have gone through a certain experience we wish to know more about. Secondly we need to research theory about the subject, and through analysing the theory we make a draft of the questions we want to ask. The interview consists of the personal experiences of the interviewees (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001, 47).

When conducting a semi-structured interview, one needs to identify the topic of the interview, and decides who would be the most suitable candidates for the interview, and how many interviewees one should have. The number of interviewees can vary a lot, and should be as much as one needs to get the answer to their question. Interviewer can interview a group or people individually (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001, 58). An interviewer can choose to record the interview, or take notes (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001, 75). Recording the interview allows the interviewer to focus on the interview, and get back to the interview later and maybe notice something that wasn't noticed before, e.g. hesitations (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula 2005, 14-15).

After the interviews are conducted, the interviewer usually writes the interviews down to a paper exactly from word to word. Then, you look at the similarities and differences and draw some conclusions based on them (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001, 138).

When conducting an interview, it is also crucial to take ethical points into consideration. In the beginning of the interview the interviewer should state the topic and purpose of the research, whether the responses will be anonymous, and if the interview consists of personal topics, it is important to note that the respondents are allowed to state if they do not want a certain response they gave to be in the report (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula 2005, 17).

5.2 Validity and reliability

Hirsijärvi & Hurme (2001, 185) argue that the reliability in an interview depends on the quality, e.g. whether the answers are transcribed (written down on paper) the same way every time. "Reliability means that when researching one person you get the same result in two different research times". However since people are bound to change over time, we might not get the same results every time. This doesn't necessarily mean the research itself is not reliable, but the circumstances have changed. (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001, 186). There is a need to check whether the researcher and the respondent have the same idea about the research concepts. The strengthening of the research data means seeing same patterns and results in the researcher's own research and in other researches done about the same subject. Reliability also means that there are no contradictions in the data analysis. (Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 212,213). When doing qualitative data, it is important to know exactly what the respondent meant by what he/she said and ask for them to elaborate if things are not clear (Shank 2006, 110).

When discussing the validity of the research, we need to think whether the research reflects the research problem and objective. We need to be sure we make it clear for the

respondents what we are after (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001, 187). Validity also means that the researcher presents the results of qualitative research as they are, not changing anything or including own opinions. (Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 213). Shank (2006, 111) suggests that “validity deals with the notion that what you say you have observed is, in fact, what really happened. In the final analysis, validity is always the truth. “

I feel like the research is valid and reliable. The respondents were well aware of the subject and what kind of answers I was after, and I acted the same way with each of the respondents. I transcribed the interviews word by word and read them again to check that I surely understood the issue right and tried not to take text out of its context when writing about the results.

I managed to gather 4 respondents, which in my opinion was enough to get certain patterns out of them. However, the research would have been better if I had managed to get people from very different fields and workplaces.

5.3 Research implementation

I started working on the interview at the same time when I was writing the theory of the thesis. After looking at the theory, I wrote down questions I would like to ask and that seemed relevant considering the topic, and started building the interview base. I was planning to get around five interviewees. After testing and reading more about the subject I was happy with the research. I tested the interview by interviewing my friends who made up the answers to see how long the interview would take, and to get familiar with the interview questions.

Three of my interviewees I got through my thesis advisor and after contacting them via e-mail they both agreed to be interviewed, and we set up a time for the interview. One interviewee I got through my degree programme coordinator, whom I also contacted by e-mail and agreed to interview her in Helsinki. I recorded all the interviews, after which I wrote them down. I also asked from friends who are working whether they would know anyone in this position, but they did not know anyone who would travel so much.

The interviews went well. I made the interview bases first in English and then translated them into Finnish. Three of my interviewees I interviewed in Finnish, since that was the nationality of them and I assumed they would express themselves the best with their na-

tive language. One interviewee I interviewed in English, since she had a Russian background and even though had been living in Finland for over 10 years thought to express herself the best in English. I was aiming for the interviews to last approximately half an hour, but the time varied between each participant. The longest interviews were about 20 minutes or more, and one interview only lasted for less than 15 minutes. I started to notice patterns and similarities in the interviews already after the third one. The interview times and durations are presented in Figure 4.

Two of my interviews I conducted in Helsinki in the interviewees' work places, and two at Porvoo Campus. In all times we found a quiet room where the recorder would work the best. All four interviewees were very happy to share their experiences. The recordings went good, except the two first times when the recording settings were set to low quality, so the quality of the sound was not that good. However, I managed to change the settings after which it was much better to listen to the interviews afterwards. I did not take any notes during the interviews, because I wanted fully focus on the conversation. All of the women I interviewed were very curious about the interview and wanted to know about the results afterwards.

Respondent	Interview date	Interview duration
Respondent 1	4 th of May 2015	About 12 min.
Respondent 2	11 th of May 2015	About 23 min.
Respondent 3	27 th of April 2015	About 21 min.
Respondent 4	18 th of May 2015	About 20 min.

Figure 4. Interview dates and durations.

Figure 4 illustrates the dates the interviews were conducted, as well as the durations of each interview.

5.4 Data analysis

Eskola & Suoranta (2000, 137) say that the meaning qualitative data analysis is to clarify the data and therefore bring new information about the subject researched. They also state that by analysing the researcher makes the data smaller but without missing the point. Dey (1993, 30) adds that "It is a process of resolving data into its constituent components, to reveal its characteristic elements and structure. Without analysis, we would have to rely entirely on impressions and intuitions about the data as a whole."

There are many ways to analyse qualitative data. Usually the researcher has to think of the way he will analyse the data already when gathering it. There are three common ways to analyse data. First suggestion is that after gathering and transcribing the data it is analysed immediately. Second way is similar to the first one, but suggests that the data is coded after transcription. Third way suggests combining the transcription and coding process (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2001, 136).

There are other ways to analyse qualitative data. The researcher should first decide, what is important in the data gathered. After that, one needs to go through the data and mark all the things that are interesting, and leaving everything else out. Then, the marked things would need to separate from the original data, and making themes out of the subjects. Lastly, the researcher should write a summary out of those findings (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 92).

In my research, I started thinking of the analysis already when doing the interviews, when I started noticing similarities and certain patterns in the respondents' answers. After each interview, I transcribed the text into paper word by word. When I had all the four answers in paper, I printed them and went them through with a pen and marked important parts and phrases. I grouped the answers into themes, and started writing about the results grouping people who had similar answers and tried to make everyone's opinion heard.

6 Interview Results

In this chapter the results of the interviews are presented. First the demographics of the respondents are presented, and after that the results are gone through theme by theme. First, there is a chapter on the hardship of combining family life and business travel, then there is a section on the support the respondents receive from the workplace, and what kind of support they would like to receive. The feelings about business travelling of the travellers themselves and their families are gone through. After that, there is a section on the advice the respondents gave to other business travelling mothers based on their own experience. Lastly, the respondents tell what kind of situations they find the most stressful, and share a little on their views of choosing between family and career.

6.1 Demographics

In this chapter is presented the basic demographics of the women participating in the interviews. As Figure 5 below illustrates, the women interviewed were 34-52 years old, three of them had two children and one had three. Two of the interviewees had older children, from 13 to 22, and two had younger, from two and a half to 12 years old. Three of the respondents travel five or more times a year, respondent 4 travels now less than five due to a younger child in the family. The respondents are away around five days per trip, except respondent 4, who is away less than five days per trip. Three of the respondents have been travelling for business around 10 years, except for Respondent 3 who has been travelling twice the amount. From the interviews we could also see that most of the business trips were made to Europe. Two of the respondents were working as expert positions, two were senior lecturers.

Respondent	Age	Number of children	Ages of children	Number of trips a year	Length of business trips (days)	Number of years travelled
Respondent 1	42	3	13, 12, 22	6-7	3-10	9
Respondent 2	44	2	6, 12	4-5	5-7	9
Respondent 3	52	2	19, 22	8	3-5	21
Respondent 4	34	2	2½, 8	2-4	2-3	10

Figure 5. The demographics of the interviewees.

6.2 Combining business travel and family

The respondents had varied answers on what combining business travel and family life is like, most of them found it challenging. All of the four respondents brought up the importance of having a “support network” taking care of the children while the mother is travelling. This network consists of husbands and other relatives. Respondents 2 and 3 are both married and their husband is the number one person taking care of the children at home. Respondent 2 also takes advantage of other relatives, neighbours and friends due to the fact that her husband’s work doesn’t always allow him to be there. She finds combining the family life and business travelling very hard in her case, and even though she uses the whole support network available, she does not feel like it is enough even though it is working somewhat.

Respondent 2: “It’s really tiring in our case, my husband is also in that kind of position where he doesn’t willingly take the whole responsibility, and our support network is quite bad. My husband is German so his side of the family is completely excluded. I’m leaving again the day after tomorrow and it takes so much fixing and arranging and actually on the other hand I would gladly go more often, quite often I have to say to my boss that it just can’t happen right now.”

Respondent 2 mentions she would like to travel more often for business but she cannot due to family reasons. She also mentions how she would like to get more support and acceptance from her relatives and family, that they would say it is okay for her to travel. She mentions that she has feelings of guilt leaving everything to her husband. Respondent 3 also mentions having to arrange things with her husband’s work situation. She says her situation has been going quite smoothly.

Respondents 1 and 4 are divorced. Respondent 1 says the people taking care of her children during her trips are the children’s grandparents, who live close. Respondent 4 says that even though she is divorced, the father of the children takes care of them during the trips. Respondent 4 is not originally Finnish, so she doesn’t have any relatives in the country, and the father is the only one capable of taking care of the children. However, this is not always possible due to the nature of his work, which causes her to be unable to go to business trips sometimes.

Respondent 4: “Well, the thing is that I’m also divorced so I live alone with my sons, so you can imagine this is a real hassle, and that’s the reason why I don’t travel that

much anymore because my ex-husband doesn't have an opportunity to take the kids often"

Respondents 1 and 3 say their situation is good, respondents 4 and 2 say they are having a hard time combining business trips and family life.

6.3 Support from workplace

The respondents get varied support from their workplaces, but none of the workplaces offer any special benefits for travelling mothers. Respondents 1 and 4 mention that they have a certain flexibility when it comes to business trips.

Respondent 1: "Mainly we can choose the travelling times very flexibly ourselves, you can either prolong or shorten the arrival or departure days according to your own schedule. About that, I have nothing to criticize."

Respondent 4 also mentions being able to come home earlier when needed. Respondent 2 mentions that her superiors understand her situation and if she is not able to go for a trip due to family reasons. However, she is not happy about her travelling schedules, because most of the time she has very early or late flights. Respondent 3 cannot think of any kind of support available, but mentions that she wants to do her trips as fast and efficiently as possible, which causes her to come home with the earliest possible flight. She says also her employer benefits of her doing her trips as efficiently as possible. She says she has not needed any special arrangements for business travelling mothers.

When asked about the support the respondents would want to receive now and in the future, Respondent 2, related to her not being happy with the flight schedules, suggests that the business travellers' opinions about the flight schedules would be heard more often. She also suggests that employers would offer child care services for travelling mothers. She mentions that her trips are so busy and full of work that she would also like to stay a day after the business part in the destination. Respondent 3 doesn't feel like she would need any special support, but mentions the importance to be able to wind down after the business trip and not go to work straight after.

Respondent 3: "For example I was just last week in London so I got up 5:30 in the morning, I'm leaving home 6:15, then I travelled there and attended the meeting, came back with the first flight possible that was in Helsinki at 23:00, I was at home at midnight and the next morning I had to be at work at 9:00. If I think I'd have little children in this situation, I have to say that this is a very inhumane pace to work, the

business trip has kind of taken my whole free-time and the evening and I get nothing else but a half of the daily allowance.”

Respondent 3 also adds that employers should give the access to lounges or free meals for people travelling a lot, which would make the travelling more comfortable.

Respondent 1 is happy about the flexibility she has with her travelling, and also adds that women should be able to choose the time period in their life when they are able to travel for business. Respondent 4 on the other hand doesn't think that beyond the flexibility there should be any special support from the workplace, and that the employer cannot do anything about it. She also mentions that no one should have special benefits whether it is a single mother or a woman with no children, due to the equality principle. It is more about the personal choices inside the family. She also adds that her workplace pays for her phone calls from trips to home, which she is happy about.

6.4 Family's attitudes towards travelling

The respondents experienced going away differently; some thought it was easy and a welcomed break, some thought it was more difficult. When having small children at home, leaving was difficult for both sides.

All of the respondents mention that their children are already used to their mother being away from time to time. When the children were smaller, Respondent 2 admits that it was a lot harder then.

Respondent 2: “When the children were smaller it was really hard. They were somehow attached to me of course and I was trying to sneak out in the mornings so I just wouldn't wake them up because the saying goodbyes was always so dramatic and sometimes when they woke up they stayed there crying and I had to be like ‘Okay, I'm leaving now’ and closed the door and then I heard them crying inside. It's the same as in kindergarten sometimes when you leave them and sometimes there are mornings when things just aren't working, of course it's not nice for them and it's not nice for me either. Especially if there is an acute crisis when they're screaming that I cannot go.”

Respondent 2 also says it is probably good for the children too to be able to learn to take care of themselves. Respondent 3 remembers that when she only had one child it was a bigger deal to leave for trips, but after the second child it was somehow easier. She says that when the kids were smaller there were some contradicting feelings but because her

husband was home and the children did not mind staying home with him, everything went quite well.

Respondent 1 admits it had never been hard for her to leave for business trips, and she feels like it was a very welcome change to normal family routines.

Respondent1: "If I'm completely honest, when the children were smaller it was perhaps nice to get a break and a change in the routines... maybe I'm a bad mother, I've never left with tears in my eyes for a business trip."

Respondent 1 says now that she and her children are so used to it and nothing has ever happened before she can leave for trips with no worry. Respondent 4 also thinks it feels good to leave children home for a change. She also adds that when she had only her first child there were more feelings of guilt when she left.

Respondent 4: "Sometimes, when I'm especially when I'm in a situation I'm 24 hours with them so when I go for a short two day three day trip I do feel a bit of like... not as a holiday but something you know that you can change and can forget at some point that you have all those responsibilities. Well, you can imagine when you come back from work and you have to pick up one from school and another from daycare and do all the stuff, and then in the business trip the routine is so much different. Once the work is done you're on your own and you can go for a walk or enjoy beer in a bar or something."

Some of the respondents also mentioned how their children raise questions about why their mothers' have to go away, but after explaining them that it is part of work and not a holiday, they understand.

Respondent 1 also adds that she took her children with her to the business trip. She says there should be someone else taking care of the children and it does interfere with her work during the trip. However she says that it showed her children what going on business trips is about, which was a good thing. Respondent 2 also took her first child with her when he was younger, which caused a lot of lack of sleep and interference with her work. She remembers that trip as very stressful.

6.5 Advice to other business travelling women

The respondents had several advice they would like to give to other travelling mothers.

Respondent 1's advice is that women should find the one and same person who always takes care of children while the mother is travelling. She says it is important to find the routine for the children so that she knows everything is okay at home and she can fully focus on working and doesn't have to worry.

Respondent 2 also mentions how important it is to find the support network. She says that it is important to check the husband's work situation that it allows the other parents travelling and that he is willing to take the lead when the other person is away, otherwise it can be hard on not only for the family but for the relationship as well. However, she warns not to always say no to trips because it might interfere with one's career development, and says that family and kids is not a reason always to decline. She suggests finding the ways that work for your family to combine business travelling and family. She says that no one can control the ordinary days and that we should accept that everything cannot be perfect and perfectly clean every day.

Respondent 2: "One thing I've noticed is that you cannot control daily life. Not at work nor at home, one needs to understand to loosen up the demands, you cannot expect that there is a gourmet dinner at home every day or that everything is super clean and all shirts are ironed, and you have to accept that. And that's a tip for other women who travel a lot and have a career that cleaning doesn't make you happy. It just doesn't help."

Respondent 3 mentions the importance to make it clear for the husband that business trip is not a holiday where the mother is able to rest. She also advises women to think of their own wellbeing and how much support they are getting from home.

Respondent 3: "When the children are small it can be that the spouse is thinking that 'okay you're able to go to the hotel to rest' and probably it is like that if you have small children who sleep bad, then you can have the luxury in the business trip to sleep good. But as I said that it eats your free time and weekly schedule so probably the mom doesn't come back rested and blooming."

Respondent 4 would tell travelling mothers not to stress during the business trip, and also to make sure there is someone reliable taking care of the children at home. She advises mothers to take their own time when they can and use the opportunity to go to museums or explore other places and just enjoy the time there.

6.6 Stress factors and work-life balance

Business travelling was experienced rather stressful among these business travelling women. There were several opinions on what was the most stressful part about their business trips.

Respondents 4 and 2 mention that when they go on a business trip, they still have all their regular work to do and when they come back, the work is still waiting and it takes extra time to take care of it, and that is very stressful. She also says that having small children at home adds the stress level and interferes with work on business trips. Her child also has a chronic disease and worrying about her stresses her more.

Respondent 2: "Awaiting undone work and when you come back you know it means a couple of over long days before you get it all done and house work. Even though my husband does a lot in a way he doesn't... you cannot expect one person to do everything the same way as if there were two parents home."

Respondent 4 also adds it was very stressful for her to go on business trips at the time of her divorce, which also interfered with her work a lot. She mentions that the only stressful factors during business trips are when either of her children gets sick right before or during her trip.

Respondent 3 mentions not having enough time to get ready for business meetings. Flight schedule changes and many connecting flights also cause a lot of stress. Since she has been travelling for business for so long, she is already used to preparing and everything, so it goes easier and stress free for her. Her home conditions have been good so she has never had to particularly stress for the sake of her children. Respondent 1 says packing is stressful for her, and also having to plan everything in advance for the kids. She says she sometimes has a lot of business trips in a short period of time, which she feels is very stressful.

Respondents 2 and 3 say their work and life are not in balance. Respondent 2 says her work takes too much time and evening work and checking e-mail takes a lot from the free-time. She says if she works well, her family is not happy and in the other case her colleagues are not, so she has yet to find the perfect balance when everyone is somewhat happy. Respondent 3 says travelling for work takes very much from free-time and messes up the weekly schedule completely. She says she would have the chance to stay in the destination after the meeting but she is so much on the working mode she doesn't even find the idea of staying appealing and would rather spend her free-time with her family.

Respondent 1 says her work and life are pretty well in balance. She says being able to prolong the business trip and stay in the destination is a very good choice and helps with the work-life balance immensely.

Respondent 4 says her divorce was mostly because she was working so much, so she knows now to pay more attention to her family and stop working when the working time is over and not continue it at home. She says it is important to know the limits and not take work home.

Respondent 4: "I have noticed my colleagues sometimes they discuss that okay they have to work in the evening and so forth and now I know when I've done that so many years and it ended up in divorce that well this is not what you should do. For the work you have to have a clear 'okay, I'm done for today', nobody will die because of that. If you don't get the project then you don't get the project, you'll get it next year. You have to have some limits."

6.7 "Women should choose between family and successful career"

When asked about whether women should choose between family and successful career, the respondents had a lot of opinions.

Respondents 1,2 and 3 thought it is possible to have both, family and successful career. Respondent 1 says it is possible in Finland but also means being able to arrange life accordingly. She says family and grandparents are helping.

Respondent 3: "I think that it doesn't have to be either-or, you can have both. Of course if you have small children you probably should think many times how much challenges you can take so the work doesn't take too much. But I don't think that you should sacrifice yourself for the family and not take those challenges. But I think what is very important is that whatever you choose, you and your spouse agree what the choice is.

Respondent 2 feels very negatively about the statement, and says the new government might have thoughts where women should just stay home. She says the adjustments and choices should be made inside the family, as long as accepts the fact that nothing can be perfect.

Respondent 4 says that realistically that is the case, that women have to choose. She says she is speaking from her personal experience and since her marriage ended partly

due to her working too much, she has realized that working too much doesn't work and from now on she chooses her family over her children and values the time with them more than work. She also says that for people who have grandparents and husband the case might be completely different but for her, when she doesn't have any relatives in the country it is not the case.

Respondent 4: "To be honest of course it's possible to have kids and be a successful business woman but whether... I mean having kids and being a good mom doesn't necessarily mean the same. And I think majority of those women who will say that yes it is possible, they either have a husband who is really committed to the family or their grandparents or somebody else to support. I don't know, for example this week, tomorrow my oldest son has dentist and then the younger son has that and that so it's kind of.. who else will do that? If you have somebody who does other things than yes it's probably possible, but my personal experience is that no it doesn't work. You can have a well-paid job but is that a career I don't know. Maybe I'm a bit pessimistic.

7 Conclusions

As mentioned in chapter 3.2 about women with children finding it relaxing to spend time without children during business trips and having feelings of guilt (Dickson 2007, 30-31), two of the respondents did mention positive feelings when leaving on a business trip because they had some time for themselves, especially when the children were small. This gave them some time for themselves and a welcome change in the routine. Three of the respondents also had had feelings of guilt when leaving their children at home.

The chapter 4.3 presented work-life balance issues. In the chapter was mentioned that in a survey made by BTN (2012), several business travellers felt like travelling compromised their time with friends and family, as well as interruptions in their sleep and work schedule. This was also seen from the respondents' answers, several saying they did not feel like their work and life were in balance and that business travelling messed up their weekly schedule, both at home and at work.

Chapter 4.4 mentioned stress-factors at work and during business trips. While in the chapter most stressful situations were "delayed flights, lost or delayed baggage, poor internet connection, bad flying conditions when flying long haul, low hotel categories and trips that are announced in short notice" (CWT 2013), the things mentioned in the interviews were flight delays, not being able to prepare for meetings, awaiting work at home, small children at home and packing.

Travelling for business has its own challenges, and when you have children, especially small, at home, balancing work and family life can be hard. After interviewing four women who travel for business and have children at home, there are certain aspects that could make business travelling for mothers easier. You can see from the interviews that it really matters to have people around you taking care of the home life when the mother is travelling. If you don't have that "support network", it affects your ability to travel for business and might make your career development suffer. However, having children does not mean you cannot have a good and satisfying career. Women should discuss their situation at home and make sure everyone is on the same level and no one feels left out, whether it is the husband or the children.

The background of these respondents tells a lot about their answers. Respondent 3 has been travelling for business for 21 years and her children are already grown up. Therefore you could see that she found her situation mostly very easy, possibly due to the fact that

even though she remembers what it was like to travel when her children were smaller, she cannot remember exactly how hard or easy it was.

Respondent 4 on the other hand, has slightly different answers from the three other respondents. This could be due to the fact that she really doesn't have a support network to support her career and children, and she could see things differently due to the fact that she is born and raised outside Finland.

However, we should not only focus on improving the business travelling of women with families. While it is important due to the increased amount of work there is to do, we shouldn't forget that even women who are single have to have time to wind down after a business trip, and they too deserve to get a lounge access.

7.1 Suggestions for improvement

First improvement suggestion is letting business travelling mothers have a day or two off from work after their business trip. Several respondents brought up the issue of having to do extra work after their business trip. Having a day or two off would help them wind down after their trip, focus on house work and catching up with their real work. This would also reduce their stress levels, enhance work-life balance and make them more efficient at work when they do go back. If they have had a busy schedule at their business trip destination and they come home in the night and they have to wake up early to go to work, it can be very consuming in the long run. Also they should have a possibility to stay in the destination a day or two longer, especially if it is week end after the business trip, which would give them time to relax and have some time for themselves. As Respondent 2 suggests, this could be done at the employer's expense but there would be no need to get money for that day. For Respondent 2 especially this would be ideal, because her trips are so fully scheduled and she barely has any free time.

Another suggestion example is making the travelling more comfortable for business travelling women. Hearing out their own preferences about the flight times and for example giving them lounge access, upgrading their flight class (even sometimes) and giving them free meals would make the travelling much more comfortable and enhance their satisfaction and efficiency during business trips. Waking up for a really early flight and coming home really late affects negatively to business travellers' sleep schedule affecting them to be less efficient during trips. Many respondents mentioned that they have a certain flexibil-

ity when it comes to when they travel, which is really good, and should be available in every workplace.

Respondent 2 suggested child care services at the employer's expense. She said that there could be a certain monetary limit and within that limit travelling mothers could take advantage of these services. However, as I was discussing this issue with Respondent 1 and 4, they mentioned not being very willing to leave their children in the hands of a stranger. In any case, for some these child care services would be beneficial. Of course the optimal would be that the person is the same all the time and someone the women would feel comfortable with. It would also be worth considering getting an au-pair to families where extra help would be needed. Another thing arose was the awaiting housework after a business trip. This could be minimized by providing cleaning services. This would result in the women not having to use any extra time for cleaning when they come back, when their dishes and laundry would have already been done.

Respondent 1 suggested having the option to choose the time in their life when business travelling would be the most suitable. During a divorce or when the children are really small it might be harder and less appealing to go on a business trip, and these periods in life should be taken into account in the workplace and give women the choice to say when it would be the best for them to travel, and when it would be the best to do only one or two trips a year. This is also beneficial for the company in order to have efficient and fully motivated people travelling.

To summarise, the following things are important for women who travel for business:

- Being able to wind down after a business trip
- Getting lounge access, upgraded flight class or free meals
- Receiving child care or cleaning services
- Getting the flexibility to choose the timing of business trips

7.2 Reflection of the thesis process

I specialize in corporate travel and meeting management so as I started this thesis, I was quite well aware of the issues of business travel. However I had never really thought of the issues business travelling women, and especially women with families, were facing. Writing this thesis provided me with deeper understanding of business travel, especially well-being and stress related issues. It was also interesting getting to know more about the role of women in the workforce, especially in Finland.

I started working on this thesis on a quite busy schedule, since I wanted my thesis to be done before my internship. I think when it comes to time management, I have succeeded well. It also helps that I didn't have any other courses and I could fully devote my time to writing. Starting the theory was hard, but when you got the hang of it, it went well. The hardest part of my thesis was to find respondents for the interview, since I did not know anyone in the field.

I feel like the goals I had for this thesis were met; I managed to find answers to how to make business travelling more comfortable for female business travellers with children. If I could start all over again, I would probably start searching respondents for the interview earlier.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview in English

Background questions:

- Age
- Position in company
- Number and age of children
- Number of business trips a year
- Most common business trip destinations
- Length of business trip
- How long have you travelled for business during the years?

Business travelling:

- How have you experienced combining business travel and family? How challenging has it been?
- How do you stay in touch with your spouse/children during your business trips? How often do you contact them?
- What kind of support do you receive from spouse/friend/relatives while on business trips? How do you feel about the support? What kind of help would you want to receive?
- What kind of support do you receive from your workplace for combining business travel and family? How do you feel about the support? What kind of support would you have needed?
- How should employers support travelling mothers' wellbeing in the future?
- How does it feel like to leave children home during business trips?
- How does your family (children) feel about your travelling?
- What kind of advice would you give to women who have children and are about to start travelling for business regularly?

Other questions:

- What causes the most stress in your trips? How could this stress be decreased?
- Tell me about a time in your life when you have experienced particularly a lot of stress during a business trip. E.g. personal or work related time period.
- Do you feel like your work and life are in balance? What could be done to improve the balance?
- How do you feel about the statement "women should choose between family and successful career"

Other comments?

Appendix 2. Interview in Finnish

Taustakysymykset:

- Ikä
- Asema työpaikallasi
- Lasten lukumäärä ja ikä
- Työmatkojen määrä vuodessa
- Yleisimmät työmatkakohteet
- Työmatkan keskimääräinen pituus
- Kuinka kauan olet matkustanut työn puolesta vuosien aikana?

Liikematkailu:

- Kuinka olet kokenut liikematkailun ja perheen yhteensovittamisen? Kuinka haastavaa se on ollut?
- Kuinka pysyt yhteyksissä puolisoosi/lapsiisi työmatkan aikana? Kuinka usein olet heihin yhteydessä?
- Millaista tukea saat puolisoiltasi/ystäviltäsi/sukulaisiltasi työmatkojen aikana? Mitä mieltä olet saamastasi tuesta? Millaista tukea haluaisit saada?
- Millaista tukea saat työpaikaltasi liikematkailun ja perheen yhteensovittamiseen? Mitä mieltä olet saamastasi tuesta? Millaista tukea haluaisit saada?
- Miten työnantajien tulisi tukea matkustavien äitien hyvinvointia tulevaisuudessa?
- Miltä tuntuu jättää lapset kotiin työmatkan ajaksi?
- Mitä mieltä perheesi on matkustamisestasi?
- Millaisia neuvoja antaisit naisille joilla on lapsia ja jotka alkavat matkustaa työn puolesta säännöllisesti?

Muut kysymykset:

- Mikä aiheuttaa eniten stressiä työmatkoillasi? Miten voisit vähentää tätä stressiä?
- Kerro ajankohdasta elämässäsi jolloin olet kokenut erityisen paljon stressiä työmatkoilla. Ajankohta voi olla esim. henkilökohtainen tai työelämään liittyvä ajanjakso.
- Koetko työ- ja vapaa-aikasi olevan tasapainossa? Miten voisit parantaa tätä tasapainoa?
- Mitä mieltä olet väitteestä ”Naisten tulisi valita perheen ja menestyvän uran väliltä”

Muita kommentteja?

