Exploring work life balance amongst female flight attendants at selected airlines in the Western Cape

By

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: 13 December 2017

Raeesa Moosa

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Abstract

Work life balance has become an increasing concern for most employees, organisations and industries, not only in South Africa but in many countries around the world. Work life balance has some implications for quality of life. Quality of life is becoming increasingly popular as many individuals are pursuing careers that make work life balance possible. However, due to an increase in the demand of work responsibilities as well as domestic duties, many struggle to find the balance which results in negative consequences for both organisations and individual workers. With a changing world and workforce, women are rapidly entering the workforce and challenging the status quo. Nonetheless, women's employment allows greater ability to negotiate for fairness in the marital relationship and to question the role of a woman in today's society.

However, despite this, society seems to have created a norm whereby many women and men still feel that it is a woman's responsibility to maintain the household and to take care of children. This may be specifically challenging for female flight attendants that typically work long hours and are away from home very often. Despite these challenges, this domain is still dominated by women. Global Staff (2017) reported on the latest flight attendant statistics stating that females make up 75.9% of the workforce. Along with an unpredictable working schedule, many flight attendants experience work life imbalance. There are possibilities that female flight attendants are potentially at a greater risk of facing familial conflict pressures than their male counterparts.

Many factors contribute to female flight attendants not experiencing sufficient work life balance including irregular and long working hours, travelling, spending a lot of time away from home and the inflexibility of time schedules. Considering the negative consequences of experiencing high level of work life imbalance – it is important to investigate the possible sources that give rise to these perceptions. In this study, the

researcher explored the lived experiences of female flights attendants in the Western Cape.

Although work life balance has been researched on amongst various contexts and disciplines, there still remains a gap in the aviation industry. This research study aims to promote research on the work life balance of female flight attendants. A qualitative approach was used and 6 female flight attendants participated in this study. Content analyses was used to analyse the data .The content analyses suggest that female flight attendants experience various work challenges related to the display of emotional labour, domestic duties, working hours and health risks and employ a wide range of coping strategies to deal with the work and life stressors. These themes, along with the sub-themes are presented and discussed in chapter 4 and 5. The results of the current study have direct implications on the working practices of women flight attendants.
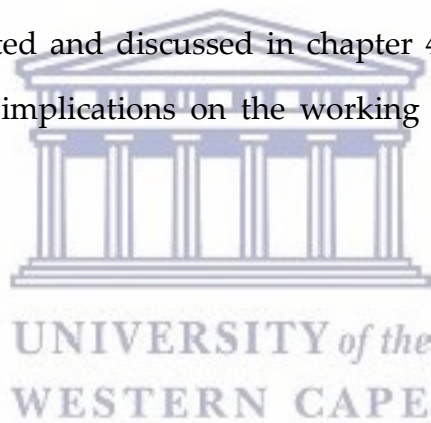
Keywords

Work life balance, Female flight attendants, Shift work, Western Cape.

Dedication

The completion of this thesis is dedicated to my beautiful mother.

"My mother was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her"

George Washington

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Firstly and most importantly to My Beautiful Mother, I don't even know where to begin. The completion of my master's degree is only because of you. I remember how you fought to get me into the master's programme and always being my number one supporter. You were always so proud of me. I hope today I am making you proud! I wish you were here to witness this day. If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't have been here today. I love and miss you so much!

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To the flight attendants who participated in my study, thank you for giving me some of your time to participate in my study. This study would have not been possible without you.
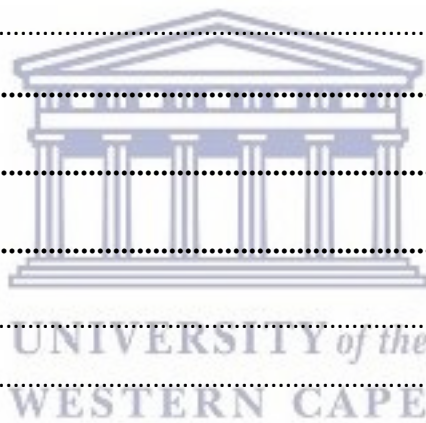
Lastly, to my friends and family, there are too many names to mention but thank you for all the support, love and encouragement that you have given throughout these past two years. It is much appreciated!
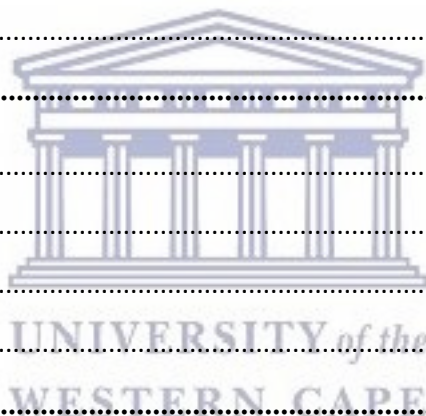
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Chapter 1

Introduction and overview of the study

1.1   Introduction

Since the late 1920s, a woman's role in society has undergone a major social and demographic shift. Women are now moving rapidly into the work force and professional women even tend to have fewer children as they are focusing on their careers. The increased employment rates of women have challenged long held cultural norms about gender and division of household tasks (Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003).

Along with work responsibilities and household tasks, work life balance has always been a challenge for working women. Women in South Africa, who were categorised as a previously disadvantaged group, are now given equal opportunities in the workplace. According to the gender statistics of South Africa 2017, 44% women are employed at various organisations within the country. Despite the changes, many people are still of the view that a woman's primary responsibilities need to be within their homes and with their families. According to Delina and Raya (2013 p. 274), "women have to manage the primary care of children and the extended family and are thus, under greater pressure to continue on a career path." Additionally, Godenzi (2012) states that wives provided the stability of home life and were flexible and adapted to the "special needs" of the husbands and children. These needs specifically refer to domestic duties.

Previously, many women were not allowed to work and if they did, they needed to choose a career which was seen as more suitable for a female such as a teacher (Delina & Raya, 2013). Their primary responsibility was looking after children, cooking and cleaning, or taking care of other household responsibilities while their husbands remained the breadwinners. Delina and Raya (2013) argue that women of the early

centuries were mostly confined to their kitchens and those few women who were employed worked in factories, farms or shops where there was minimum opportunity for growth and career advancement. Within South Africa, due to political and economic challenges, many women these days are required to find employment as the cost of living has increased and financial stability has become a key problem in numerous households. The dual nature of the career and personal life of the working woman poses various challenges as there is an ever increasing demand for time and attention at home and at the workplace.

Creating a healthy work and home environment is an essential step to achieving work life balance. Not being able to balance the various domains in one's life may lead to a number of negative consequences such as work-family conflict, health risks, poor work performance, stress and depression. Therefore, finding a solution to balancing one's work and personal life can positively contribute to an individual's overall well-being, it can allow for greater productivity at work and it may lead to stronger relationships.

Flight attendants working times are somewhat more irregular than normal office hours, and some airlines may have long stopovers, layovers, working on weekends as well as public holidays which require more time away from home. Thus, achieving work life balance, particularly for female flight attendants may be a challenge. Chung and Chung (2009) claim that flight attendants, due to erratic work schedules are particularly at risk of being unable to take on family obligations and to play their full role within their family.

However, pursuing a career as a flight attendant has many advantages as well. Since there are many perks associated with the position as a flight attendant, many females from a young age dream of pursuing a career as a flight attendant. According to Chung and Chung (2009, p. 212), "the job is attractive with its high pay, numerous days off, opportunities for travel, and typically good employee benefit programs."

However, on the other hand, Chen and Chen (2012) mention the drawbacks inherent in the flight attendant job, which include job stress, health related issues and most importantly, juggling between work and personal life. According to Haise and Rucker (2003), the unique nature of the work environment and the nature of a flight attendant's job (e.g., irregular shift schedules and rapid time adjustment demands due to frequent time zone crossings) not only affects the flight attendant's physical health but also induces harm to mental health and affects family and social adaptation. Many flight attendants go through social disconnection due to the nature of the job which by nature does not conform to typical working hours and conditions. Instead employers will need to look at it from a different angle, which is the "human element" in order to contribute to a healthier working environment. From the employees' perspective they can utilise certain coping mechanisms to reduce the lack of balance that are sometime endemic to the position.

1.2 Purpose

Studies on flight attendants are relatively sparse presumably due to difficulties in collecting data from this group of professionals. The main objective of the present study is to explore work life balance amongst female flight attendants. Moreover, this study aims to discover specific challenges that female flight attendants face when trying to balance their personal and work life. Work life balance is the key issue in most dual career families, however the issue may be more pronounced in the life of flight attendants due to the unique working conditions that they face on a daily basis. The question is how do female flight attendants combine their multiple roles (e.g. home making and mothering responsibilities) with their career demands and what strategies do they utilised to regain some degree of work life balance?

1.2 Research objective

Much of this research has been concerned with work related factors that might adversely affect the flight attendants' health. However, it is essential for researchers to explore women's experiences with regards to female flight attendants and work life balance and also to uncover challenges to those struggling to maintain a work life balance. The main aim of this study is to explore women's experiences when balancing their work and personal life.

1.3 Research Question

What are the lived experiences of female flight attendants when balancing their home and work life?

1.3.1 Sub- questions:

- To uncover challenges they might experience when struggling to maintain a work life balance.
- To investigate what strategies female flight attendants use in trying to balance their home and work life.
- To explore the support structures that flight attendants might have at home and how these support structures assist them in maintaining a balance life.
- To explore the support structures organisations provide to flight attendants in dealing with work life balance.

1.4 Significance of study

While numerous studies have been conducted on work life balance, this topic still remains an issue. Moreover, with a specific focus on women in the workplace, various emphasis and initiatives have been placed in organisations to assist women in achieving equal rights as males. Specifically, in South Africa, women were seen as previously disadvantaged which included the educational, social, economic and political domain. In addition, work life balance remains a primary concern for most women as they are constantly attempting to balance their personal and work life. The

essence of this study is to discover the challenges females' flight attendants face when trying to balance their personal and work life and to also uncover what strategies they use to deal with challenges that arise.

1.5 Clarification of relevant terms:

Work life balance: The division of one's time and focus between working and family or leisure activities.

Shift work: According to Stojadinovic (2016) shift work occurs whenever a 24-hour coverage is necessary or when a 24-hour day is needed to optimise work output and productivity. This may include rotational shifts and not the normal office hours.

Flight attendants: Flight attendants, also known as cabin crew members, are employed at an airline to ensure the safety of passengers and also to provide an in-flight service by attending to the needs of passengers.
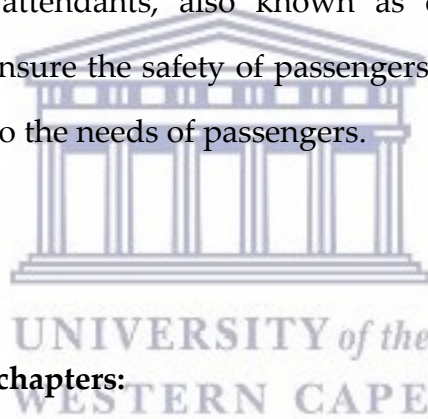
1.6 Thesis Overview
The thesis consists of five chapters:

Chapter one provides a brief overview of the study and specifically aims at providing the objective and purpose of the research topic.

Chapter two provides an overview of the literature. In this chapter several of definitions of work life balance are covered, the impact of shift work, health risks that are associated with being a flight attendant and also a discussion on dual career couples and work-family conflict.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology and research design, sample, sampling techniques and ethical considerations that were used and applied to collect the data.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study and the presentation of the biographical information of the flight attendants.

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the study, the limitations of the study and strengths of the study as well as recommendations for both organisation and flight attendant.

1.7 Conclusion

The present chapter provided the introduction and background of the study with regards to nature of the research problem under investigation. The argument pertaining to the need for a study of this nature has been out forward culminating in the postulation of the research question and research objectives. The significance of the study as well as the chapter outline of the thesis has also been provided.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Work life balance is an essential issue both locally and internationally. In the past 20 years there has been a rapid change in the world, economically, politically and socially (Godenzi, 2012). It is documented in literature that women, not only in South Africa but all around the world are working towards gender transformation where they are challenging the old norms that have been set out for them (Appiah, Poku & Acheampong, 2014; Wepfer, Brauchli, Jenny, Hämmig, & Bauer, 2015). What they have been trying to achieve and are still working towards is gender equality. Along with that, many women have entered into the workplace and are even occupying senior and leadership positions. According to Wepfer, Brauchli, Jenny, Hämmig and Bauer, (2015), the employment rate for women has risen from 66.4% in 1991 to 74.1% in 2013. However, household responsibilities, childcare and other domestic related duties are still seen as a female's main responsibility. There is a constant issue with regards to balancing both domains and to some extent certain legislation in various countries, including South Africa, have been put in place to address this issue. According to Appiah, Poku and Acheampong (2014) a number of laws have been enacted at both international and national levels over the years to respond to crisis and the conflict between work and life.

When looking at flight attendants, the situation becomes more complex. In this type of industry, shift work is inevitable therefore the struggle to balance personal and work life also becomes an intricate issue. The following section will consider the most important themes emerging from literature in relation to work life balance of female flight attendants.

2.2 Defining work life balance

Personal time, family care and social life forms a very important part of people's lives. However, when this clashes with an individual's work life it may become a challenge. The term "work life balance" has been replaced with a term which used to be known as "work family balance" (Hudson, 2005). Work life balance goes beyond balancing an individual's family time and work time. It may also include an individual's personal life such as spending time with friends, spending time on oneself such as taking the time to go to the gym or participating in a particular hobby or extra mural activity. Therefore, the change of terminology places an emphasis on striking a balance between work life and personal life. The reason for this is that many individuals who spend time away from work do not have to include the aspect of family, but the new term incorporates all the other personal domains of an individual's life. Hudson (2005) describes work life balance as the self-perceived, satisfactory integration of personal time, family care, and work with a minimum of role conflict. Also, Clark (2000, p. 43) defines work-life balance as "a satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict." Additionally, Bari and Robert (2016) claim that work life balance refers to the extent to which an individual reports on how well they perceive they are juggling multiple roles in concert with role partners.

Abele and Volmer (2005), in agreement with the afore-mentioned authors, also define work life balance as the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role. Deery (2008) defines the concept of work life balance as a complex task as it can be viewed from the meaning of "work", "life" and "balance." Time is a very important aspect when it comes to work life balance as this concept revolves around time management. With regards to work life it is vital to have a balance in which equal time is given to both work, social and family roles. When individuals struggle to juggle both personal and work time, it can often result in negative consequences. Such consequences can be experienced as

conflict at home or in the work place, high levels of stress, lower levels of productivity at work and also individuals may suffer from burnout and fatigue. Therefore, Abele and Volmer (2005) state that the interplay between the personal and professional life deserves increased attention and this plays an important role on an individual's mental health and physical well-being.

Work life balance may be different for every person as not everyone faces the same circumstances. For instance, not everyone has children or is married. However, it is still essential to balance out work and personal time. Personal time not only includes putting time aside for family, but also a daily effort to put time aside for one's social life e.g. friends, spirituality and self-care. Gurney (2010) states that work life balance is a concept that supports the efforts of employees to split their time and energy between work and other important aspects of their lives. Moreover, it is important for organisations to promote work life balance as it leads to an increase in employee morale, higher levels of productivity which has a direct impact on the employee's performance, a decrease in absenteeism and presentism and a healthy working environment which benefits the employee and also the organisation. Multiple studies have documented causal connections between poor work life balance and increased stress, reduced psychological well-being, deteriorating familial relationships, and ongoing gendered labour market inequality (James, 2013). Therefore, in these studies emphasis is placed on organisations to provide various initiatives and strategies to help employees in trying to achieve work life balance. Such initiatives may include flexi-time, wellness programs and the option of working from home.

However, on the other hand, employers are finding the implementation of various work life balance initiatives costly and believe that these initiatives are luxuries of a booming economy that cannot be sustained as many countries seek to recover from recession. For this reason some authors have abandonment the concept of work life balance and rather refer to work life integration (Leighton & Gregory, 2011).

There are many aspects that can have an effect on an individual's work life balance. In particular, support structures and organisations support are important determinants of an employee's ability to achieve work life balance. Therefore, it is important to note that achieving work life balance is not only dependent on the organisation or a group of certain individuals but rather it is dependent on a particular individual and the circumstances they are facing at that particular point in their life. However, organisations also need to take note that an employee's home or personal life is equally important as their career and in some cases it might be more important. Therefore, organisations should try to implement strategies and try to adjust their policies so that employees are accommodated.

Research has reported that not maintaining a work life balance can be associated with numerous indicators of poor health and impaired wellbeing including higher levels of stress, burnout, emotional exhaustion, the likelihood of depression and other health related risks (Frone, 2003). To avoid the abovementioned, it is important for an individual to be equally involved in this in all domains in one's life (James, 2013).

In addition, airlines are under such enormous commercial pressure to reduce costs wherever possible, which leads to cramped conditions and poor air quality which have important health implications for employees (Sharam, 2007). Furthermore, employees working hours are not only dependent on the organisation but also dependent on external factors such as the weather conditions of flight schedules. Therefore, even though employees might plan their day based on the schedules they receive, this might be affected by many external factors. Hence, this makes it even more challenging when trying to achieve work life balance. Lastly, Sharam (2007) claims that women are particularly at risk of being unable to take on family obligations when employed in the airline industry.

2.3 Historical Context of work life balance

Since the industrial revolution, there has been a radical change in the role of women, specifically in relation to work. Previously, women were seen as homemakers who emphasised the need to fulfil household duties which included childcare. On the other hand, men were seen as the breadwinners who needed to go out to work, earn a living and provide for their families financially. The Second World War marks a very important era in the transformation of gender role, specifically with regards to women. Women started to participate in the labour market. However; it was mainly women of the middle and lower classes. It was during this era when women started experiencing an imbalance in both home and work life due to entering the working world and responsibilities within the home domain and also child care were reliant on them (Forster, 2001). Many countries started to question the topic of gender inequality and many women started to question and stand up to the gender norms that were set out for them.

Countries have implemented initiatives and legislation to address this issue, specifically focusing on education and employment. South Africa is not an exception and various laws have been passed to increase the participation of females in the economic spheres of the South African society. The next section will examine the legislative environment in South Africa, specifically as it relates to the promotion of females in the work environment.

2.4 South African legislation

In South Africa, post-apartheid has been a direct emphasis for the need for economic, social and political change. A special emphasis has been put in place for women and children. Approximately three decades ago, South Africa implemented certain laws which prevented women from various rights such as not allowing them in certain areas or not allowing them to work in particular industries and sectors. The bill of rights was the first form of recognition that addresses gender equality and was specifically aimed at addressing the issue of women in terms of equal rights along

with males. This piece of legislation is the second chapter of the South African constitution which was adopted on the 8th of May, 1996.

Within the South African work environment, government has put in place various legislations which address unfair discrimination and emphasise the fair treatment of all employees. These legislations include the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 2002. The main objective of this law applies to all employers and employees and it assists in regulating leave, working hours, employment contracts, deductions, pay slips, and termination. Furthermore, the Labour Relations Act (LRA) 66 of 1995 is another form of legislation which aims at promoting economic development, social justice, labour peace and democracy in the workplace. These policies are also a form of protection against employees to ensure that they are not abused or exploited by their employers. In addition, the Gender Equality Act 39 of 1996 and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 are two pieces of legislations that were formed to address the gender inequalities within South Africa and to protect women against unfair discrimination in the workplace, while at the same time attempting to promote the integration of women and people of colour into the workplace. However, it is evident that women still occupy lower paid and lower skilled jobs in the economy (Bosch, 2011). Along with various forms of legislations, which seek to promote gender equality in the workplace, it is expected of organisations to devise their own policies to promote the inclusion of women in the workplace. However, many organisations go beyond just implicating the basic conditions of the laws and actively try to promote the inclusion of women in the workplace.

2.5 Flight attendants

The primary responsibility of a flight attendant's job is passenger safety and secondly passenger service. Flight attendants receive extensive training in safety procedures so that they are able to deal with airborne emergencies. Chen and Chen (2012) state that flight attendants have more responsibilities than most front-line employees in the

service industry, as they are first trained to maintain cabin safety, and second to provide customer services on board.

This occupation has received many various names and has been through name changes more than any regular career (e.g. cabin crew, flight attendants, air hosts and hostesses). However, not any of these names truly encapsulates what flight attendants typically do in their day to day job routine.

The perception of the flight attendant role is that their main responsibility is cabin service to passengers which includes helping passengers fasten their seatbelts, serving them tea, coffee, flight meals etc. While this is partially true, flight attendants are sent through extensive safety training which ensures passenger safety, should there be an emergency (Chung & Chung, 2009). The training ranges from firefighting preventions, water evacuations, passenger safety during evacuations, health related issues such as heart attacks, anxiety attacks, unexpected child birth and even death on board the flight (SAA Cabin Crew Training, 2017). The training received by these flight attendants is extensive and need to be refreshed every year. Therefore, each flight attendant is required to pass all practical exams and also pass the main exam with a minimum of 80% (SAA Cabin Crew Training, 2017). Only once flight attendants have received their flying license, they will be taught on the "lesser" duties such as service during the flight. Furthermore, Chen and Chen (2012) claim that cabin crew positions are highly attractive in Taiwan, as they offer both an opportunity to travel worldwide and a chance to elevate one's socioeconomic status. Previously, airlines put in place various requirements in order to become a flight attendant. Flight attendants were not allowed to be married, they needed to be in a certain age bracket and there were also height and weight constraints. Even with these strict and somewhat unrealistic job requirements, the position of flight attendant is still a very attractive career for females. In the same study conducted on flight attendants, an airline advertised 150 positions for flight attendants and received over 6000 applications (Chen & Chen, 2012).

Being a flight attendant requires a range of attributes in comparison to an office job. According to Sangster and Smith (2016) flight attendants are required to be physically fit, well-groomed, neat, prim and proper, friendly at all times and to be well aware of their surroundings from before the flight until the end of each flight. Compared with a typical office based job – flight attendants seem to face many more challenges. Firstly, most people sit at their desks or in their offices and are not required to be physically fit. In contrast, flight attendants are required to be exceptionally fit. In case of an emergency, flight attendants are required to perform duties in a specific time frame, for example if there is a water evacuation, passengers are needed to be out of the plane in about 30 seconds (SAA Cabin Crew Training, 2017). Flight attendants are also in constant contact with their clients – sometimes for extended periods of time. According to Haise and Rucker (2003), the high level of contact the flight attendants have with airline customers makes it vital to their companies that they present a positive image. This can be a source of emotional labour since flight attendants always have to be courteous and friendly to passengers.

Despite the job being attractive, with numerous of benefits, Liang and Hsieh (2007) claim that the turnover rate in the airline industry is still high, due to the intensity of the job and the constant struggle to find the balance between home and work life.

A conceptual framework regarding work life balance was proposed by Voydanoff (2005); Greenhaus and Powell (2006) as well as Kelley and Moen (2007). They identified three major sources of conflict that arise from work life balance, namely time based conflict (b) strain based conflict and (c) behaviour based conflict. This model proposed that when there is conflict regarding time, strain or behavioural in one domain (e.g. work), it can impact the other domain, which may lead to conflict.

According to (Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001), time based conflict refers to when ones has limited resources in terms of time and energy to cope with the demands that is expected from him or her in both domains or roles (e.g. when an individual misses

an important family event due to their work commitment). Strain based conflict refers to the physical and psychological strain which can be experienced in either of the domains and affects the other domain. Physical strain relates to anything that can potentially harm the individual's body (e.g. lower back pain due to the heaviness of the trolleys on a flight). Lastly, behaviour based conflict may originate when certain behaviours expected in one role may conflict with the behaviour in another role or domain (e.g. treating passengers the same way one treat family members) (Greenhaus &Powell, 2006),.

Therefore all three concepts can be related to a flight attendant's perception of work life balance. However, time based conflict appears to be the concept that has emerged as the single biggest stressor faced by female flight attendants. Due to their inconsistent work schedules, time based conflict seems to impact this group of employees the most as they are constantly experiencing challenges regarding time. However, it is expected that flight attendants may also experience psychological and physical strain due to the unique demands placed on them in their work.
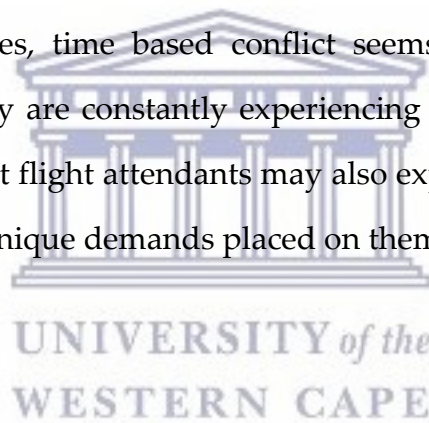
2.6 Shift work

Shift work is known as work that takes place outside normal working hours. This can involve employees starting work at odd times of the day and even on weekends. According to Van Dongen (2006) shift work refers to a job schedule in which working hours are other than standard hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or a schedule other than the standard working week, Monday to Friday. Shift work has become common these days as organisations are working in international setting across various time zones. What this actually means is that organisations need to offer their services to their clients at a time which is applicable and most convenient to them. Therefore, various work schedules were implemented in order to reach out to clients globally. This in turn meant that employees needed to move away from the typical traditional office

hours which as known as the 8a.m to 5p.m working time. For instance, if you are an employee working in South Africa, and your clients are from another country, chances are you will likely work odd hours to attend to the client's needs. Employees enjoy flexibility, but it also has its disadvantages such as unstable sleeping patterns, relationship conflict and it can greatly impact one's health (Caruso, 2015). Furthermore, another negative impact on shift workers' quality of life is linked to increasing anxiety and irritability, reducing of professional and general satisfaction, and lowers ability to manage domestic responsibilities (Skoufi, Lialios, Papakosta, Constantinidis, Galanis, & Nena 2017).

2.6.1 Shift work and the impact on health

No matter the type of career an individual may enter into, at some point or the other each individual is bound to experience a health related problem that may have an impact on their productivity at work. Some of these stem from the high demands of the job which may lead to health risks such as burnout. However, there are particular jobs that are unique and that may have acute health related risks to the individual. For example many doctors suffer with fatigue and burnout due to the long working hours and builders, on the other hand, might experience back pain due to the nature of their job. Furthermore, health related issues can also arise when an individual often experiences stress.

There are many factors that contribute to stress and specifically workplace stress such as work family conflict, and issues that may arise at work or in one's personal life. In a study conducted by Appiah et al. (2014) it is reported that work life conflict is associated with stress, depression, and a variety of stress-related poor health and mental health effects. Appiah et al. (2014, p. 421) further claim that "such ill health increases work absenteeism, turnover, and low morale." Furthermore, Gurney (2010) states that most studies found associations between work life imbalance and poor health, specifically physical health.

Zhao, Bogossian and Turner (n.d) explains that medical residents are prone to blood and body fluid exposure after being on duty for twelve hours, with medical residents reporting a 94% average yearly rate of exposure. Further studies were done to analyse the effect that working shifts has on occupational accidents. Zhao et al. (n.d) suggest that occupational accidents such as drug administration errors, errors in patient identification, and needle prick injuries occurred more often during the night shift. Similarly, Tucker, Bartom and Folkard (1996) explain that the greatest disadvantage of working shift work is the fatigue that individuals suffer; this then leads to negative consequences on an individual's health and well-being, as well as having effects on their performance and safety.

Some studies have shown that working shifts, especially strenuous hours, were significantly related to musculoskeletal disorders specifically in the neck, shoulder and back areas. Further studies were then taken on a sample of 348 nurses, and this proved that nurses who worked rotating days and evening shifts suffered more from musculoskeletal pain and gastrointestinal problems than those who worked normal hours (Zhao et al., n.d). Similarly, Lowden, Moreno, Holmback, Lennernas and Tucker (2010) explain that shift workers report more gastrointestinal problems as a result of the changes in digestion when working night shift. Gastric problems may also arise because of the constant snacking and the increase in coffee consumption and energy drinks to help stay awake, which could make the shift worker more prone to gastric problems and other types of illnesses.

Van Amelsvoort, Jansen and Kant (2006) further notes that smoking among shift workers is much higher compared to day time workers and for this reason shift workers are more at risk of cardiovascular diseases. A study of 239 shift workers and 157 day time workers was done and results revealed that an increase in cigarette consumption occurred more amongst the shift workers compared to day time workers.

Monsendane, Monsendane and Raal (2008) explain that approximately 15% of healthy individuals are unable to adapt to the effects of shift work; explaining that working night shifts are usually associated with health risks. It puts the worker at risks of illness such as peptic ulcers, breast cancer, hypertension and coronary heart disease.

In 1984, one of the first large scale reviews found that cardiovascular disease was closely linked to shift work (Caruso, 2015). Since then, more studies were completed on this specific topic and most found support for the strong association between shift work and cardiovascular disease does exist. A review of seventeen studies on shift work and cardiovascular disease was done, it proved that shift workers had a 40% increased risk of cardiovascular disease compared to the day workers. Another study showed that if workers worked for longer than six years on shift work daily; the individual has a higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease (Monsendane. et al., 2008).

In contrast, Virkkunen, Harma, Kauppinen and Tenkanen (2006) state that no excess risk of cardiovascular disease was directly associated with shift work. They found that the cardiovascular diseases were linked to the abnormally high intake of high fat food, smoking and excessive energy supplements. Virkkunen et al. (2006) explain further that the work environment exposures such as extensive physical work load, low control and noise were found to be some of the risk factors to cardiovascular disease, as opposed to shift work itself. Furthermore, there is no clear indication of the exact mechanisms of shift work that causes cardiovascular disease, but the main factors are highlighted, such as disturbed circadian rhythm, smoking, poor eating habits and stress that are all common among those individuals who work shifts (Virkkunen et al., 2006).

Monsendane et al. (2008) state most shift-workers eat meals late at night, which in turn have an adverse impact on their cholesterol levels. Also, eating meals at night resulted in individuals gaining more weight, with obesity being a potential consequence. It has

been proven that due to the irregular appetites such as over-eating at night and the intake of high-fat snacks of shift workers, individuals were prone to weight gain occurring and evidently leading to obesity. Similarly, Puttonen et al. (2010) explain that shift work has an influence on an individual's weight gain, with increased obesity among those who have irregular sleep patterns also proven to be true.

Eating during the night would cause a disturbance to intestinal motility and affecting digestion in the process. Also, the availability of nutritional food at night shift is scarce, which could also have a negative effect on night shift workers' well-being. Eating at night may also have a negative effect on an individual's neural functioning (Van Dongen, 2006).

One of the first effects shift work has on individuals is the disruption of consistent sleeping patterns. Pati, Chandrawanshi and Reinberg (2001, as cited in Bengani, Bengani, So'on & Pokasui, 2013) state working at night interrupts an individual's sleeping pattern, which leads to a disruption to the normal circadian rhythms of the body. Circadian rhythms can be defined as the psychological activities that occur roughly every twenty-four hours within the human body. It acts as a biological clock within the brain that internally keeps account of the time of day. It is human nature to want to be awake during the day and sleep during the night. Shift-workers therefore experience problems with their circadian rhythms and their sleeping patterns, as they are now forced to go against this rhythm by sleeping during the day and working at night. This argument is supported by Tucker et al. (1996) who claim that shift work forces an individual to do activities that are contradictory to what their body has been "programmed' to do, i.e. sleep during the day and remain awake during the evening. Similarly, Garbarino, Nobili, Beelke, Balestra, Cordelli and Ferrillo (2002) state that shift work interrupts the sleep-wake cycle and other biological rhythms, particularly people involved in working the night shift, which results in a considerably lower quality of life and health.

According to Van Dongen (2006) another neurobiological process that is affected by shift work is the homeostatic process. It is responsible for finding equilibrium between the time spent awake and the time spent sleeping. During the day, while awake, a special build-up of homeostatic pressure occurs that induces sleep during the evening. As one sleeps, this pressure is relieved. This process is closely synchronised with the circadian rhythm. In the evening, when the circadian rhythm slows down yet a person is forced to stay awake for work, the homeostatic pressure continues to build until such time an individual actually falls asleep. This is what causes an individual to lose their wakefulness, feel sleepy, and then ultimately fall asleep. As a result of shift work, the homeostatic process and circadian rhythm are not synchronised correctly, leading to increased sleepiness and a decrease in cognitive abilities.

According to Akerstedt (1990) circadian rhythms are considered relatively steady, and can be influenced by environmental factors such as light, food and sleep. The circadian cycle is considered consistent and therefore takes a relatively long period of time to adjust to the lifestyle of an individual. Often, this is not enough time for shift workers as they routinely move to different work shifts. Van Dongen (2006) states that the circadian rhythm is able to progressively adjust to changed sleeping patterns and become synchronised with the homeostatic process. This only applies to those who work permanent night shifts, as it allows the body enough time to realign its processes. Those who work rotational shifts are continuously changing their sleeping patterns, thus not allowing enough time for the processes to align themselves, resulting in the individual feeling sleepy and tired. In another study, (Sharam, 2007) suggests that shift working mothers of young children experience poorer mental health and stress; they are also more prone to burn-out and report higher marital dissatisfaction.

Sharam (2007) and Van Dongen (2006) mention advantages of working shifts. Such benefits include flexible working hours which give an individual the freedom to attend to various personal responsibilities when it is less busy. Therefore, shift

workers have plenty of time to run errands during typical working hours and they do not need to wait for the weekends. Also, the working hours are less in shift works. It is because they consist of enough relaxation time and breaks.

Chen and Chen (2012) states that flight attendants work the most irregular and inconsistent times in comparison to other shift workers. Shift work makes it difficult to try and balance one's work and personal life. In this particular field, working shifts is inevitable and for this reason it is important to look for strategies to help managing the work life balance.

In addition, Akerstedt (2003) noted that flight attendants suffered from abnormally high complaints of sleep disorders and fatigue due to the irregular patterns of sleep. They also face "relatively high rates of cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal problems, and reproductive dysfunctions" (Akerstedt, 2003, p. 212). Moreover, Chung and Chung (2009, p. 217) state "flight attendants have demonstrated abnormally high degrees of fatigue." Therefore, health remains an important part of a flight attendants ability to do his or her job effectively.

2.7 Dual career couples and work life balance

Due to economic, political and social change there has been an increase in financial difficulties experienced by many households in South Africa. As a result, it has become a norm for both husband and wife or partners living together to pursue dual income careers. Neault and Pickerell (2005, p. 306) defined dual-career couples, as "two people in a committed relationship each with a career." Furthermore, Abele and Volmer (2005) describe dual career couples as partnerships where both individuals pursue a professional career, without necessarily working full time.

In today's global economy, dual career couple has become a necessity. Both husband and wife or partners that are living together, are now entering into the working world as many households are unable to survive with only one income. However, along with this, dual career couples find it challenging to balance their personal life and work life.

Abele and Volmer (2005) state that there is an issue of whose career comes first. Most dual-career couples perceive that each of their careers are of equal importance as importance as each other, however, some differences were noted in heterosexual couples. In the aforementioned case the male's career where typically prioritised over the female's.

Lang (2000) reported a similar finding, despite a sense of equality; women were twice as likely as men to limit their work commitments. Lang (2000) further suggests that some dual-career relationships are more complicated than others, particularly when relocation is a job expectation or when working late or on weekends interfere with family responsibilities. In such cases, couples may need to negotiate whose career comes first. However, on the other handed Sprung, House and Capello (2014) reported that there has been in an increase in food preparation amongst males in various cultures. Therefore, the modernisation of certain cultures are slowly emerging.

Work related travel has also become a concern in most dual income families especially when one of the partners needs to travel considerably more than the other. An employee might feel stuck between the demands of a job and also responsibilities at home. According to Whitehead and Kotze (2003) this is an issue that increases the complexity of dual-career relationships. Another issue that might arise is known as overload dilemmas. According to Abele and Volmer (2005, p. 176), overload dilemmas refer to the issue that "full-time working couples have less time and fewer resources for housework." Study participants reported that they delegate some responsibilities to other people in order to deal with overload dilemmas. In this case, they may ask family members for assistance so that they are able to cope with their work and personal responsibilities.

Dual career couples have become an intriguing topic in the past few years as many women are eager to pursue their career to an extreme extent. Nowadays, there are

various women that make headlines as they reach top positions in their particular organisations, putting in the extra time and effort to pursue their professional dreams. However, the question remains, what happens to the neglected duties that need to be fulfilled in the household?

According to James (2013), there has been an increasing percentage of women's contribution to the household as indicated by the percentage of women in dual-earner marriages who out-earn their husbands has gone from 19.2% in 1990 to 23.3% in 2000 to 28.1% in 2011. The median percentage of family income contributed by wives has slowly risen from 26.6% in 1970 to 37.6% in 2010.

However, with the increase in women worker, the strain on most relationships also increases. In a random sample that was conducted by Delina and Raya (2013) therapists reported back stating that one third of their cases are concerning the topics of dual career families and marriages and issues as well as concerns that arise in such households.

The job as a flight attendant makes it complicated when both husband and wife or partners are working. Men particularly put their careers first, however if the wife/partner is a flight attendant and has a stopover for a week, she will first need to make arrangements with regards to household tasks and especially if there are any children, one needs to find out whether her partner assists her in this or will there be extra assistance that she will need. This may place added pressure on the relationship and the support that flight attendants may need to cope with the physical and emotional demands of their jobs.

2.8 Work-family conflict

Dual career couples can be a topic of study on its own, and there are many challenges that may stem from it. One of them in particular is known as work-family conflict. Mikkelsen and Burke (2004) posit that work-family conflict is unavoidable in modern Western life. Work-family conflict has worsened through the recessionary period

through increased work-related sickness, stress, and unpaid overtime and this usually results in employees experiencing problems within a specific domain (Ahmad, 2008).

Mikkelsen and Burke (2004) further discuss that work-family conflict typically occurs when there is an involvement in one domain, for example work or personal life, and this interferes with involvement in the other domain. Additionally, work-family conflict occurs when the participation in a work activity interferes with participation in a family activity (Frone, 2003). Work-family conflict is commonly experienced when struggling to balance a work and family time. Therefore, work-family conflict can arise when individuals struggle to maintain and satisfy the demands placed on them by both the work and family domains.

When an individual experiences a clash between an event at work and an event in one's personal life, conflict may arise. A typical example of this might be when a parent has a meeting scheduled after hours and this time might clash with their child's sport event, or even parent meeting. In this instance, the parent will need to choose between the two or will have to make an alternative arrangement for either one of the events. In some cases this might work out well, however, if this becomes a regular issue, cases of conflict might arise in either the home or work domain.

Gurney (2010) has reported that some studies have found women experience higher levels of work-to-family conflict than men, but there is no gender difference in family-to work conflict. Also, Whitehead and Kotze (2003) state that although men increasingly express interest in a more balanced commitment to their work role, it is women who experience the highest levels of conflict between work and family, since women are still expected to perform the bulk of family and household tasks and responsibilities. The issue of work family conflict has posed as a great risk to an individual's well-being and health. Ahmad (2008) claims that conflictive demands arising from the clash of family and work domains have turned out to be some of the five emerging psycho-social risks in today's occupational world.

The issue of work-family conflict has caused numerous problems within many individuals household. These types of issues are the root of several stressors and this can cause extra stress, conflict and can make the environment very unpleasant. In another study, it was reported that there is a negative relationship between work-family conflict and various indicators of stress and occupational health and burnout (Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011.) Additionally, through the altering of an individual's family role, families that experience work to conflict may have a negative effect on one's social and domestic life.

Hansen (1991) explains that the most likely stressors that are placed on individuals balance between work and family roles is the overload and conflict which occurs when working shifts. They usually face the problem of having too much to do within a short period of time, depending on the shift schedule. Strazdins, Clements, Korda, Broom and D'Souza (2006) point out that parents who work shifts are more likely to report having relationship problems with their children, resulting in a negative influence on their social and emotional needs. The children's well-being may be affected by the type of relationships that they have with their parents, and working shifts may have an impact on these relationships. La Valle (2002) as cited in Strazdins et al. (2006) described how difficult it is to plan family holidays and outings when the parents' shift schedules are never on par. It is very important to spend time together, as it is needed to build intimacy and to restore the relationships when conflict arises both for the spouses and the parent and child relationship. Further studies prove workers having to work shifts are more prone to the risk of depression. This has an effect on their children's well-being, as depressed parents may be more withdrawn and less happy, causing the children to have behavioural problems, lacking physical health and sometimes affecting their academic performance (Bengani et al. 2013; Chung & Chung, 2009).

In relation to flight attendants and shift workers, work-family conflict will most likely have a negative impact on the family responsibility of shift workers, and inevitably

affect the balance of family and work life. Those individuals working during the day will be able to spend more time with their children as opposed to shift workers. One study proved that those working a shift between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. were only able to spend 30 minutes or less with their children for the day, affecting their parental involvement in that child's life. When looking at the factor of parental knowledge, it was found that fathers lacked knowledge about their children's experiences and daily activities when they worked shift work in comparison to those that worked during the day (Davis, Croute & McHule, 2006).

Similarly, Bengani et al. (2013) state that shift workers experience much more family issues and have a significantly lowered social support system. This often caused instability in the lives of those working shifts, and brought about problems such as divorces, as one member of the family spent most of the time with the family than the other partner did. It also made it very difficult to spend quality time together as a whole family. According to Ahasan, Khaleque and Mohiuddin (1999, as cited in Bengani et al., 2013) in developing countries where unemployment rates were high and securing jobs were vital, workers were often subjected to harsh working environment and shift schedules. There was a clear disregard for the well-being of the employees, and as a result, they experienced many personal, family and health issues. The studied indicated that of those affected by shift work, 75% reported problems with their family lives, 65% with the social lives, and 72% with marital issues. Also, 71% of people felt they had no time to spend with their friends and family, while 83% reported health issues.

2.9 Gender

In society, women that have a career are generally frowned upon. Many people assume that women who are career orientated will experience negative consequences on their domestic duties and rearing of children. This assumption stems from the traditional idea that women belong in the home as their priorities lie within their home for their husband and children. Questions surrounding this topic still occurs today

especially in many collective cultures such as the Eastern and African cultures whereby women are still controlled by the rules of that particular culture (Costes, Rowley, Britt, and Woods, 2008). Males would preferably take on careers or would want to pursue careers which would include a good salary and would provide financial stability for the household. Reasons for this are that males, in many households, are the primary breadwinners. Females on the other hand look for careers in which they can balance their work life as well as family life, as they have other responsibilities at home. Furthermore, Naidoo (2000) state that culture may have an impact on the type of career that women may choose. In another study, Chowven (1999, as cited in Salami, 2002) states that most women are employed in low-paying, customarily female dominated careers such as nursing, teaching, social work, sales, care taking, and administrative support positions. Salami states that "nursing is an example of a female-dominated occupation while engineering is an example of a male-dominated occupation" (2002, p. 818). Secondly, Clutter (2010) provides statistical information whereby nursing care facilities constitute 87% of females and only 13% male. Furthermore, in the child care services females occupy 95%. Additionally, there are some underlying reasons why women may choose certain career fields. Saebi (2002) argues that if a woman were to study mechanical engineering, for example, she would be considered out of place. Coldwell and Caughan (2013) also state that disciplines like medicine, law, engineering and mathematics which appears to be male dominated. Therefore, McMahon and Patton (1997) claim that that women people may only perceive a narrow gender-based range of future options, particularly in relation to education and career opportunities.

Chung and Chung (2009) says that due to the overwhelming majority of flight attendants in Taiwan are females, the same as in other Asian countries, the role pressures of women employees in Asia must also be taken into consideration. Traditional Asian culture considers family to be more important than the individual; therefore females would need to see to family and home responsibilities first followed

by their jobs. In other words, certain cultural values also "encourage females to fully engage in household activities" (Clark, 2000, p. 43).

2.10 Workplace Stress

Stress is defined as an event or situation that is perceived as threatening, demanding or challenging (Hardie, Kashima, & Pridemore, 2005). Also, Herman (2017) suggests that stress arises when individuals perceive that they cannot adequately cope with the demands being made on them or with threats to their well-being. With organisations constantly competing in the market, employers therefore rely on their employees to do more at work and take on extra responsibility. With the aim of increasing client satisfaction and maximising profits, employers often look to employees to put in the extra hours as well as extra effort at work.

Stress is an important factor when it comes to any job and it is experienced by many employees. Stress can be defined as "quality of experience, produced through a person-environment transaction, which through either over arousal or under arousal, results in psychological or physiological distress" (Aldwin, 2007, p. 24). When an individual experiences some sort of difficulty, they may experience stress.

There are a range of factors that may lead to work stress. This can be financial issues encountered by an individual that requires him or her to work overtime in order to earn more or some individuals are also required to take on two jobs to address their financial needs. In a study done by Skakon, Nielsen, Borg, and Guzman (2010), work-related stress has been identified as one of the largest problems in the European Union. According to Fu (2013) flight attendants are subjected to high levels of mental and physical stress due to take-off and landing of flights, jet lag, constant maintenance of friendly service to passengers and harmful effects of flight radiation.

As discussed in previous studies, stress can have numerous negative repercussions such as health risks, absenteeism at work and emotional exhaustion. According to Appiah et al. (2014), pressures both form home and work can lead to stress.

Additionally, flight attendants seem to experience a higher level of stress as the job requirements are quite demanding than most. During flights, one flight attendant has to serve 20 to 50 passengers on average, including dealing with demanding or aggressive passengers, long working hours in a confined space with relatively low humidity, and physical as well as mental exhaustion. These are just a few causes of stress experienced by flight attendants (Chen & Chen, 2012). When looking at flight attendants, it is imperative that they look after their health and maintain a well-balanced life, due to the requirements of the job. The effects of stress can result in absenteeism and presentism. Absenteeism refers to when employees deliberately stay away from work due the stress they are experiencing at work. Absenteeism alone can have many negative consequences. It slows down processes in the organisation. The employees need to deliver on their deadlines but if they are constantly absent, these responsibilities are passed on to other employees which then have added tasks to complete or the organisation will need to hire a temporary employee to help achieve deadlines. Either way this is costly and threatening to the sustainability of any organisation (Koppenhaver, 2006).

Presentism refers to when an employee is present at work, however they are referred to as "absent" as they are at work but they are either not working or they on a "go slow." Similar to absenteeism, this is both detrimental to the organisation and the wellbeing of the individual. Presentism according to Delina and Raya (2013) is the phenomenon of employees coming to work yet not functioning up to their capabilities on the job.

Although there has been much research conducted on workplace stress, there still remains a gap in research that addresses the stressors of female flight attendants, particularly in South Africa. Not only do they suffer from increased health risks as opposed to normal office careers, they also go through psychological distress which has an impact on their stress levels.

Broers (2005) stated that balancing a successful career with personal or family, life can be challenging and impact on a person's satisfaction in their work and personal life roles. With regards to work life balance and stress, individuals who are unable to manage their personal life and work life are likely to encounter stress. Furthermore, research reports that female flight attendants may encounter a higher stress level. This is because of the duties that need to be fulfilled in her household, demands and time that is needed to be given to her children and also maintaining a satisfactory level of work standards that is required at her work place.

2.10.1 Burnout

When an individual is overly stressed and overworked, it often leads to burnout. Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) described burnout as a reaction to chronic occupational stress, characterised by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Moreover, burnout is also defined by Freudenberg (1974, p. 159) as "the extinction of motivation or incentive, especially where one's devotion to a cause or relationship fails to produce the desired results." Schaufeli, Maria and Peeters (2000) state that because of the highly emotionally, mentally, and physically demanding nature of cabin crew's duties, emotional exhaustion and cynicism are deemed to be good indicators of burnout. Moreover, Chung and Chung (2009) describes that flight attendants' experience of burnout has been associated with a variety of negative outcomes, both personal and organisational, such as depression, irritability, greater conflict at work, stress-related health problems, and reduced organisational commitment. Lastly, due to the shift-work schedule, they are frequently unable to maintain daily family and social lives for long periods of time. Struggling to maintain a work life balance can result in work-family conflict. The consequent work–family conflicts cause "increased work-related stress, and in turn lead to burnout for flight attendants" (Chung & Chung, 2009, p. 42). This has been shown to affect psychological and physical health in numerous ways, with higher levels related to increased emotional exhaustion and job burnout (Chung & Chung, 2009).

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, the existing literature on the topic of work life balance with a particular focus on shift work and women has been discussed. The literature discussed presented various challenges that employees face when working trying to balance their home and work life and also the impact that shift work has on an employee's health. Furthermore, this chapter looked into the topic of gender and how this has affected the difficulty in trying to achieve work life balance. The following chapter that will be discussed focuses on the research methodology that was used to gather data for the purpose of this research question.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the present study was to explore female flight attendants' work life balance through understanding what is it that they do daily, what challenges that might clash with their home and work life and to gain more insight on how they deal with these challenges. This chapter discusses the research methodology that was used to address the research questions outlined in chapter 1. Furthermore, the researcher used a qualitative research design as the intention was to gain insight into the experiences of female flight attendants.

3.2 Research Design

Green (2004) defines a research design as a design that includes the methodology and procedure that is used to guide the research process. The key consideration when designing a research project is establishing which method is appropriate for the aim of the study (Gurney, 2010).

Qualitative research is aimed at a deeper meaning of understanding a particular topic. Researchers who were interested in studying human behaviour developed an approach which was known as a qualitative approach. According to Willig (2001) qualitative research is a type of social science research that uses non-numerical methods to analyse the data in order to gain an in-depth understanding of individual's experiences, perceptions and actions. Willig (2001) points out that qualitative research is focused on the social processes and consists of a greater in depth of the data rather than a measurement of an item. It is concerned with the how people experience things

from their personal perspective in order to comprehend why they understand things in a certain way and also how people make sense of the world (Willig, 2001).

3.3 Research Paradigm

A paradigm is "a basic set of beliefs that guides action" (Guba, 1990 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22). The paradigm is determined by the nature of the research problem and the way in which the problem is explored and therefore the research paradigm plays an important role in the research design. There are three types of paradigms which is positivism, post-positivism and Interpretivism. Positivism is used to obtain knowledge through the measurement of a particular phenomenon. This paradigm searches for the truth and facts on reality. Positivism is usually more appropriate for quantitative studies where hypotheses are tested (Perry, 2009). Post-positivism on the other hand is quite similar to positivism and these two paradigms share a few similarities. However, post-positivism was developed after positivism and is one of the first shifts away from the positivism paradigm. This paradigm suggests that a study must be examined by using a variety of ways in order to enhance the findings and results of the research topic. Also, this paradigm incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods of measurement (Perry, 2009). In this research study, the paradigm of Interpretivism was used and is discussed below.

3.4 Interpretivism

The aim of this study is to explore the challenges that female flight attendant's face when trying to balance their work and personal life. The aim of a research design is to select the appropriate approach to answering the research question. In this study, the researcher used an interpretive approach which aims to explain the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind the action as well as to understand social realities (Green, 2004). Therefore, a qualitative approach was more applicable for the research topic.

Interpretivism naturally lends itself to qualitative methods. It is, in its simplest form, an ideal means of exploring individuals' interpretations of their experiences when faced with certain situations or conditions (Gurney, 2010). In this study the researcher interpreted specific information with regards to experiences and challenges that female flight attendants are faced with when balancing their work and personal life.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques

With the aim of addressing a research study, the researcher can make use of three different techniques to collect data. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods are three ways in which data can be gathered. Qualitative research aims to gain a deeper understanding of a particular topic. This method has various ways in which data can be collected such as interviews, focus groups and observations. In contrast, quantitative study aims to quantify a particular study. Quantitative methods are more numerical focused and it involves statistical analysis. The approach is very structured as opposed to qualitative methods and participants usually follow the same process when participating in the study. Quantitative studies include a much larger sample than a qualitative study which makes the findings more generalisable to the population. Various methods of collecting quantitative data include surveys and questionnaires (Bergman, 2011). Lastly, a mixed method approach is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. This method provides a greater understanding of the topic being studied and it is known to be more valid, reliable and generalisable as opposed to using one method (Bergman, 2011). The figure below depicts the various techniques that are used in a qualitative and quantitative study.

Figure 3.1

TYPES OF RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES
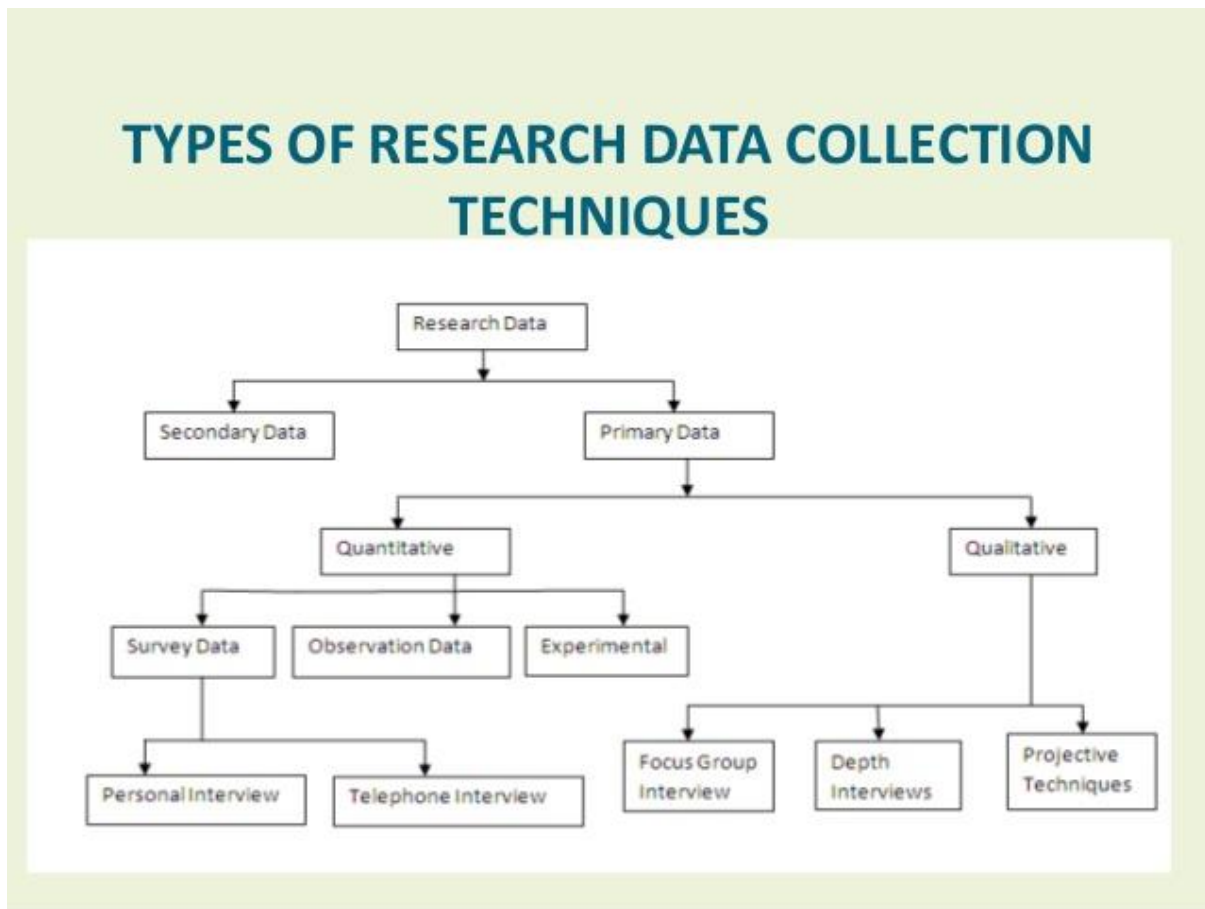
Source: Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2008). *Educational research - Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches.* Los Angeles: Sage.

3.5.1 Qualitative approach

Bui (2009) claims that qualitative research is quite the opposite of quantitative research. This type of study collects non-numerical data, which is in a narrative form, hypothesis are not used and usually does not require a large sample size. Furthermore, Given (2008) describes a qualitative research design as a research method that is focused on understanding the meaning that people have, which comprises of how people understand the world as well as how they experience it. The researcher was able to develop a deeper and fuller understanding of the phenomenon under study. Unlike quantitative approaches there are open ended questions, which allowed the

flight attendants to add for information and express their feelings. The greatest advantage of the qualitative method is that it can save both time and money. There is no obligation to obtain a number of research resources or any special equipment to complete the research.

Qualitative research consists of various research methods such as observation, interviews and focus groups. Gurney (2010) explains qualitative research is known to address the "how" and "why" of a particular study, and draws on individuals' experiences rather than making assumptions. Additionally, in qualitative research the main aim is to uncover the experiences of the participants relevant to the research topic. In this case, the researcher investigated the experiences and challenges faced by female flight attendants when trying to balance their work and personal life. Furthermore, the researcher gained an in-depth understanding to the research problem. In a qualitative study, the researcher can make use of various techniques. Such techniques include interview, observations and focus groups. However, in this study, the researcher used face to face interviews as a means of collecting data. Moreover, the research question is considered best answered through using a qualitative method because of the exploratory nature of the study. It aims to describe the experiences and the challenges of work life balance amongst female flight attendants rather than making assumptions and providing known variables and the associations between these variables in an explanatory design.

Not only is qualitative concerned with the understanding of things but it can also challenge the researcher's assumptions. Brannen (1992) states that when a researcher is doing a particular study, the researcher already forms particular assumptions in his or her mind. However, when conducting the research, it may be found that the findings are quite contradicting to what was assumed. The findings are therefore unpredictable until to research study has been fully completed.

Willig (2001) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) discuss various advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research:

3.5.2 Advantages of qualitative Research

A qualitative research design allows the researcher to explore topics in more depth and detail than quantitative research. Qualitative research is often less expensive than quantitative research, because a research does not need to recruit as many participants or make use of particular instruments. Lastly, qualitative research offers flexibility as far as locations and timing are concerned because the researcher does not need to interview a large number of people at the same time.

3.5.3 Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

With regards to qualitative research, it is typically more difficult to determine the reliability and validity of the results. The quality of the research is dependent on the researcher and how consistent and fair he or she is throughout the research process. Also, qualitative studies are not generalisable and the sample size is usually much smaller than a quantitative study. Lastly, qualitative research has a variety of methods to collect data; however, these methods are usually more time consuming than quantitative methods.

3.6 Data analysis

There are many various techniques that are used to analyse qualitative data. Merriam (2009) defines analysis as a way of making sense of the data. Additionally, LeCompte and Shensul (1999) describe data analysis as the process a researcher uses to reduce data into a story or categories and makes sense of them. The method of analysis should be chosen on the appropriateness of the topic and research questions. Furthermore, the method of data analysis should fit the researcher's design and research paradigm. Data analysis can be analysed manually but with technological advancement, a number of software's have been developed to facilitate to process of data analysis. The Atlas-TI is one of the software's developed specifically for

qualitative data. This program was used for this study. The researcher made use of both the Atlas-TI, as well as the manual method of analysing the interviews. However, whichever method of data analysis is employed, the same process needs to be applied. Discourse analysis, narrative analysis and content analysis are just a few techniques used to analyse qualitative data. Content analysis was used to analyse the data in this research study.

3.6.1 Content analysis

Content analysis is defined as analyses of 'words or phrases within a wide range of texts, including books chapters, essays, interviews and speeches as well as informal conversations and headlines (Babbie & Mouton, 2008, p. 491). Green (2004) defines content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid interpretations from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis has been defined as "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort" (Patton, 2002, p. 453) that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings. With regards to the research topic, content analysis was mainly used to analyse the data.

The aim of content analysis is to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. In this case, the aim is to identify themes from the data received in order to discover the work-life balance challenges that the flight attendants are faced with. According to Green (2004), qualitative content analysis encompasses a process designed to reduce raw data into categories or themes based on valid inferences and interpretations. In this study, the researcher made use of content analysis whereby various themes and sub themes emerged. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) suggests that content analysis allows the researcher to test theoretical issues to enrich the understanding of the data and it makes it possible to filter words into less content related categories.

Table 3.1

Content analysis process

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Orientation to the data	On the way- working with the data	Final composition of the analysed data text (verbal and visual)
• Reading or studying data sets to form overview and to comprehend the context (of the data)	• Coding segments of the meaning • Categorising related codes into groups • Seeking relations between groups to form thematic patterns	• Writing the final themes of the set of data • Presenting patterns of related themes

Source: Henning, E.H., Van Rensburg, W., & Smith, B. (2010*). Finding your way in qualitative research.* Van Schaik Publishers: Pretoria.

3.7 Research participants

In this study the focus was on the lived work-life balance experiences of female flight attendants in the Western Cape. Thus flight attendants were recruited to participate in the study based on two main criteria, firstly being female and secondly residing in the Western Cape. This included flight attendants working for low cost and premium airline carriers and who work on domestic and international flights.
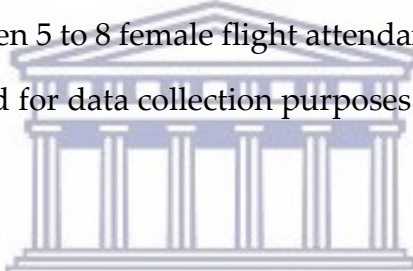
3.8 Population

The population refers to the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate (Sekaran, 2002). In the current study the population consists of female flight attendants in the aviation industry in the Western Cape.

3.8.1 Sample

A sample is defined as the subset of the population. It comprises some members chosen from the population. In other words, some, but not all, components of the population would form part of the sample (Sekaran, 2002). Babbie and Mouton (2008) refer to a sample as that small group of people researchers choose to collect data from, since they are almost never able to select the entire group. For this study, the initial aim was to interview between 5 to 8 female flight attendants. In then end only 6 flight attendants were interviewed for data collection purposes.

Description of Sample:

Gender:	Female (6)	Male (0)	
Age :	24-35 (3)	36-46 (2)	55+ (1)
Religion:	Christianity (3)	Islam (2)	Hinduism (1)
Marital Status:	Married (4)	Single (2)	
Number of children:	0 (3)	2 (2)	2+ (1)

The above table indicates a summary of the biographical information with the chosen sample. The total sample size was 6 female flight attendants. The flight attendants ages ranged from 24 to 55 years. The respondents suggested that they most practise Christianity and Islam as primary religion. Most flight attendants indicated that they are married (4 out 6) and lastly half of the sample indicated that they do not have children, whereby the half indicated they have children.

Figure 3.2

Sampling techniques
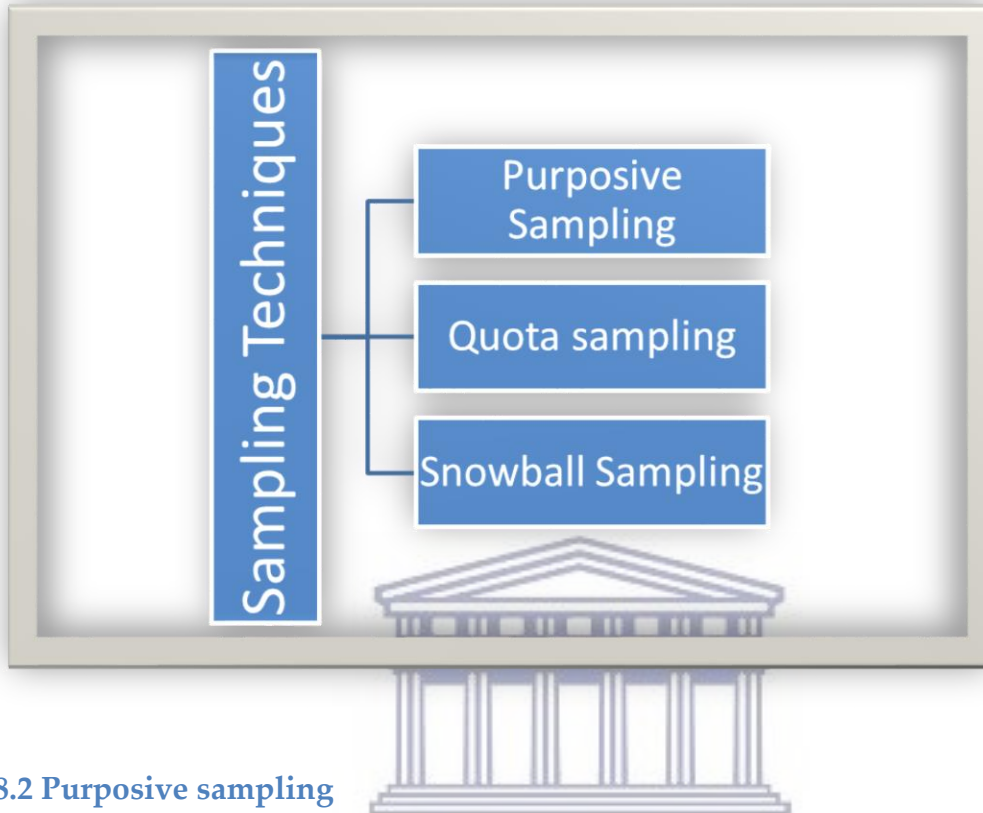
3.8.2 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is one of the most common sampling strategies (see Figure 3.2). This sampling technique groups participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question (for example, HIV-positive women in the Western Cape). According to Patton (2002) purposive sampling involves locating individuals with specific characteristics as specified by the researcher (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling by selecting female flight attendants in the Western Cape to participate in the study.

3.8.3 Snowball sampling

According to Thompson (1997) snowball sampling is used most regularly when a researcher aims to conduct qualitative research which is done predominantly through interviews.

Snow ball sampling is also known as chain referral sampling, which is considered a type of purposive sampling (Van Meter, 1990). This technique allows participants with whom contact has already been made or those participants who have already participated in the study, to refer the researcher to other people who could potentially participate in or contribute to the study. Snowball sampling is often used to find and recruit more participants. This technique is usually used when the sample is hard to find or when the researcher needs more participants to participate in the study. Therefore, in this study, the flight attendants referred the researcher to potential participants who were then recruited to participate in the study by the researcher.

3.9 Data collection methods

3.9.1 Interviews

An interview is a technique used in qualitative research whereby the researcher asks the participants specific questions that are related to the topic. DeMarrais (2004) defines an interview as a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study. This technique is conducted face to face and the information that is recorded is transcribed verbatim. The researcher chose to do these interviews as a means of collecting data as it would be improbable to observe the experiences and challenges that female flight attendants face when balancing their personal and work life.

In addition, the qualitative approach comprises of various data collection methods. Structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, observations, focus groups, draw and tell technique and also a combination of the methods mentioned. In this particular study the researcher used one particular method to collect data. A semi structured interview process was used to gain in depth information regarding the lived experiences of female flight attendants in the Western Cape (Patton, 2002).

3.9.2 Procedure

The initial step of this research paper was to obtain ethical clearance from the University of the Western Cape to conduct the study. The goal of the ethical clearance process is to prevent any unethical research practises or harm to any of the participants. As part of the ethical clearance process, an interview guide and information sheet was included with the consent forms that were given to the participants. This allowed participants to review the questions and decide if they wanted to participate in the study. Once the participants provided informed consent to participate in the study, the interview followed. The interviews were recorded and thereafter transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

3.10 Trustworthiness of Research

In quantitative research, validity and reliability is used to ensure that the study is more objective, however in qualitative research, trustworthiness is utilised to ensure the quality and objectivity of the study. Trustworthiness encompasses various strategies that can be used to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. It involves methods such as peer review, triangulation, member check and leaving an audit trail. Guba (1981) and Lincoln and Guba (1982) suggest four criteria points to ensure trustworthiness. These four points include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each one of these criteria will be explained in more detail in the subsequent section.

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility is the most important element out of the four criteria. Credibility is a function of the quality of field work. Stated differently, credibility refers to ensuring enough time is spent on the method of data collection in order to get a complete picture of what one is researching on. For instance, in this study, the researcher used interviews as a method of collecting data. The interviews were structured in such a way that the research could get a comprehensive and well balanced perspective on the lived experiences of flight attendants. Moreover, credibility can also be enhanced

through using different interview techniques. In this study, the researcher achieved this by rephrasing a question in two or three different ways in order to ensure that the participant is consistent in their answers. This provides more credibility to the findings of the study

Another strategy that can be used to ensure credibility is triangulation. This refers to different ways of collecting data. Guba (1981) describes the process of strengthening the findings obtained from a qualitative inquiry by cross-checking information. This can be done through using observations, interviews and textual information such as emails. In this study only one method was used to collect data, therefore the researcher did not use the triangulation strategy.

3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the applicability of the findings to other people, different contexts and over different time periods (Guba, 1981). Various strategies can be used to ensure transferability. Researchers can make use of selecting a nominated sample. This can be done by choosing a knowledgeable panel to choose your sample. This would ensure a sample that is diverse and contribute positively to the research topic. The findings are only generalizable to female flight attendants in the Western Cape Province. Given the nature of the flight attendant job it was difficult to obtain a bigger size.

3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency of the findings. It looks at whether the instrument is consistent in the research study. However in a qualitative study, the instrument refers to the researcher. When obtaining information from the participants and also analysing the data, the researcher needs to be consistent throughout the entire process. There are various strategies that can be used to ensure consistency. This can be done through stepwise replication which is when two researchers analyse the data and compare their findings. Another strategy is known as code-recode procedure

whereby the researcher analyses the data on two different occasions and compares the findings. Lastly, another strategy that can be used is known as peer examination. This refers to the auditing of the researchers work which is commonly done by another researcher or colleague to ensure consistency. In this study, the use of peer examination was utilised (Shenton, 2004). In the current study dependability was ensured by using two knowledgeable subject matter experts to code the themes in the data. The codes and themes where then compared between the two subject matter experts.

3.10.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the neutrality of the researcher. A strategy that can be used to ensure the study is confirmable is the use of triangulation. This is when more than one method was used to collect data and the methods were compared against each other to ensure the data is confirmable. However, in this study a strategy of confirmable audit was used. This was done by a peer, who is familiar with the topic, checking all the interview notes, recordings and other details gathered to see if it is logical and coherent (Shenton, 2004).

3.11 Ethical considerations

According to Fouka and Mantzorou (2011) upon doing research there are research ethical considerations to be noted when collecting data. Research ethics involves protecting the dignity of the subjects which provide information for publication. Fouka and Mantzorou (2011) further state there are a number of aspects to consider when doing research. These aspects include: Informed consent, respect for anonymity and confidentiality and respect for privacy. The next section will briefly discuss how informed consent was provided by the participants in the current study.

3.11.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is a major ethical issue to consider upon collecting primary data (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011).This is when an individual would knowingly, voluntarily

and intelligently provide consent to the information that they will present to the researcher. Before being able to proceed with the interview, the flight attendants would have to agree to/ sign the terms conditions of the interview. This would serve as a consent form to the researcher. The researcher also obtained permission from the flight attendants for the interview to be recorded. Although participants provided informed consent to use their responses in the study, they could withdraw from the study at any time without having to provide any reason for their withdrawal.

3.11.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

According to Fouka and Mantzorou (2011) anonymity is when the identity of a subject, participating in the research, is not revealed. This means that the data, the subject provides cannot be linked to the subject. However, if for any circumstance anonymity is not guaranteed, the onus is on the researcher to ensure that the confidentiality of the subject is maintained (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011). Confidentiality is the management of private information of the subject. For the purpose of this research anonymity was adhered to as the respondents were not asked to reveal their name. The participants were labelled as "Flight Attendant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6". In other words, pseudonyms were used for each of the participants.

3.12 Conclusion

In the above chapter the research design was discussed. In this chapter, the researcher highlighted why a qualitative design was more appropriate for this topic. Furthermore, various advantages and disadvantages of a qualitative study were discussed as well as ethical considerations that were taken into account when conducting the study. In addition, Guba and Lincoln highlight the importance of obtaining validity and reliability in a qualitative study. They emphasise the use of four attributes, namely: Credibility, transferability, dependability and conformity which is proven to increase the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. These were also discussed as well as the data analysis via content analysis,

Chapter 4

Presentation of Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

In the following chapter the main findings from the data analyses are presented. The data was collected by means of in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews were analysed both manually and also using the Atlas-TI software for qualitative data analysis. During the data analysis, various themes emerged; these are presented in this chapter. The four major themes that emerged were identified as: Challenges, Coping Strategies, Support Structure and Culture. Furthermore, various sub themes also emerged during the analysis. Evidence from the interviews is presented in this chapter.
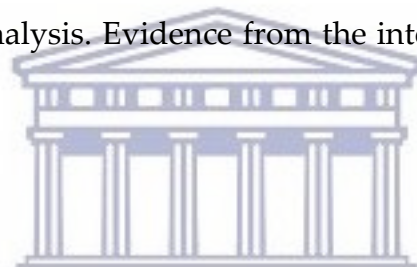
4.2 Presentation of biographical data of female flight attendants

Figure 4.1

Religion practiced by flight attendants
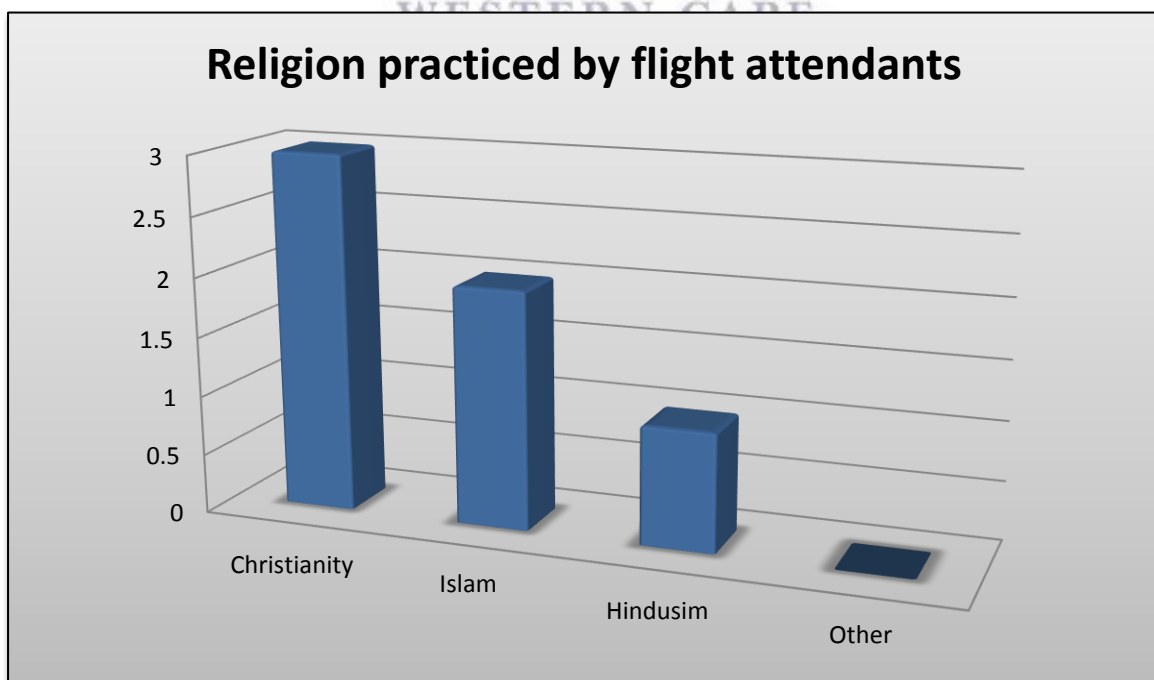
Figure 4.1 indicates that 3 out of 6 flight attendants were of the Christianity religious group, 2 out of the 6 flight attendants were of the Islamic religious group and 1 out of 6 was of the Hinduism religious group.

Age of Flight Attendants

A bar chart titled "Age of Flight Attendants" with the y-axis ranging from 0 to 2 in increments of 0.5. The x-axis categories are: 24-29 (value 2), 30-35 (value ~0.8), 36-40 (value ~0.8), 41-46 (value ~0.7), 47-55 (value 0), 55 + (value ~0.5).
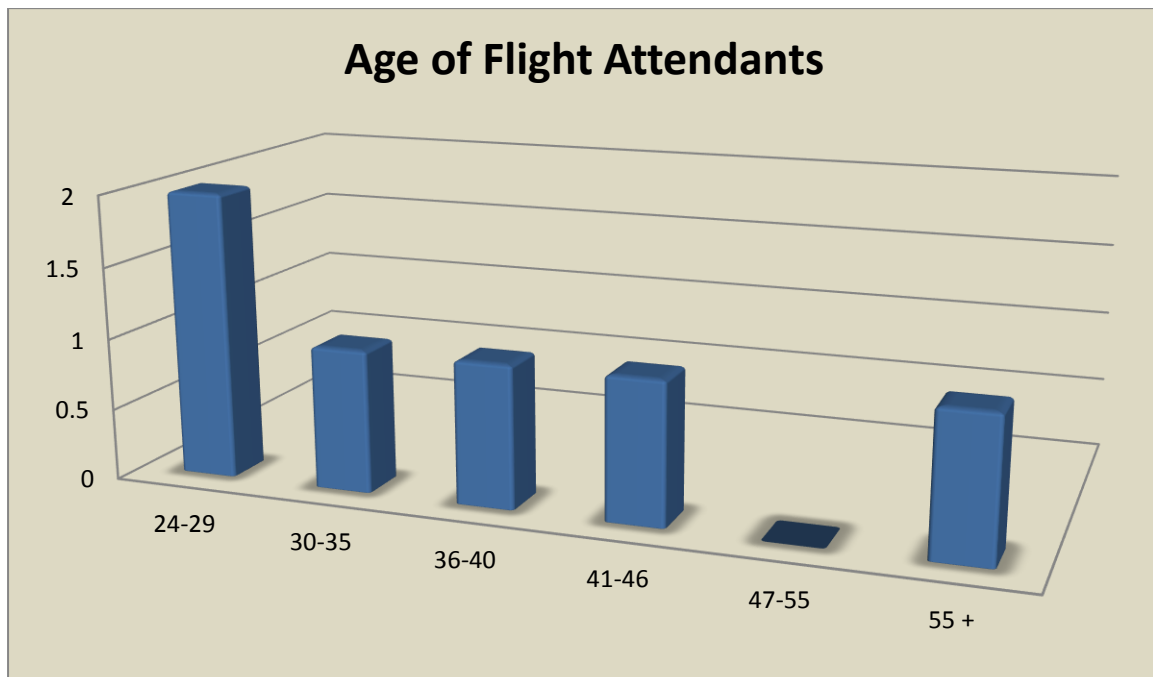
Figure 4.2 indicates the different ages of the flight attendants. Most of the flight attendants interviewed were relatively young falling in the age group of 24-41. The rest of the participants were spread out evenly across the age categories. None of the participants fell in the age category ranging between 47 and 55 years of age. Only one participant indicated that she was older than 55 years.

Figure 4.3
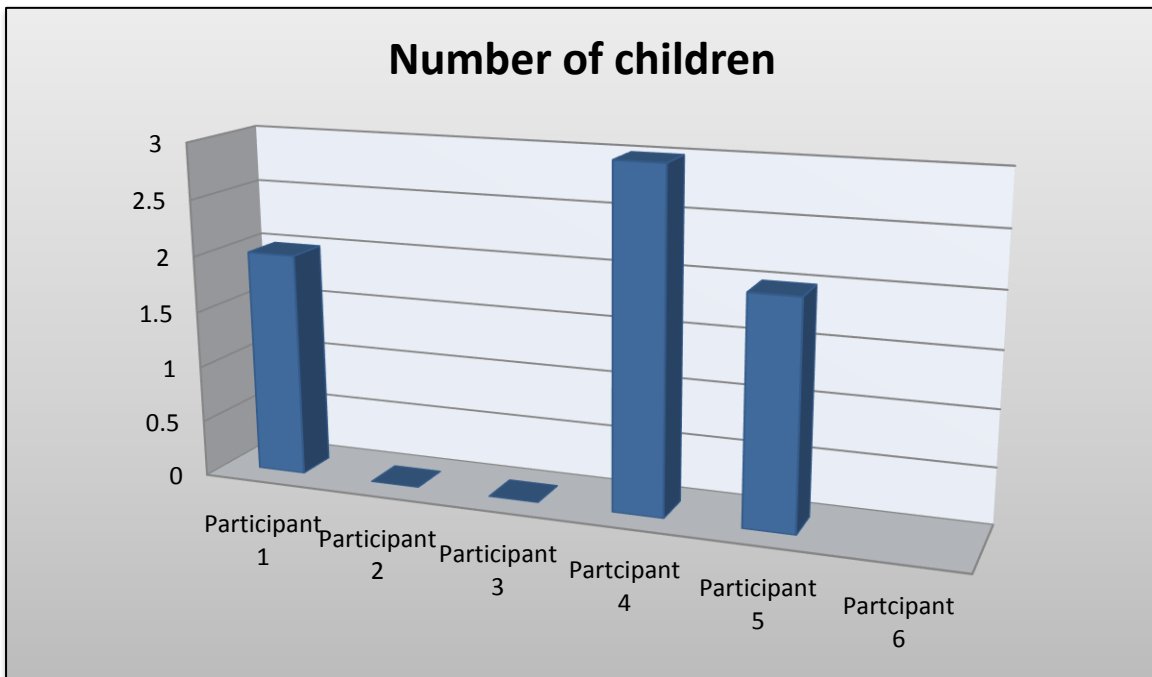
Figure 4.3 points out the number of children each flight attendant had. Only 50% of the flight attendants from this study stated that they have children. Three of the respondents indicated that they had no children.

Figure 4.4
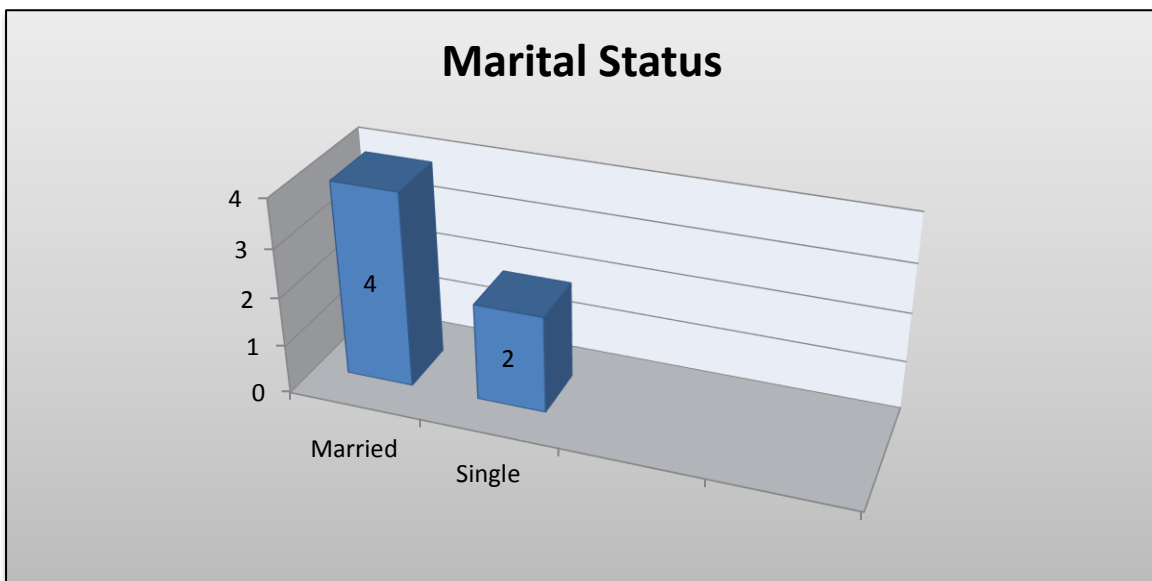
Figure 4.4 indicates the marital status of the female flight attendants that participated in this study. The figure represents that 33% of the flight attendants were single and the remainder 67% were married. This indicates that 4 out of the 6 participants claimed to be married.

4.2 Summation of sample

The sample consisted of 6 flight attendants of which all of them were female. With regards to age, all of the flight attendants were between the ages of 24 and 55. Majority (60%) of the flight attendants fell in the age category of 24-41. The flight attendants came from a diverse group of religious and cultural backgrounds which provided different views to the study. In terms of marital status, 67% of the flight attendants indicated that they are married. To conclude, the biographical data of the flight attendants assisted in making a contribution to the themes identified in the study.

4.3 Research Findings

The researcher utilised a qualitative research design as it was more applicable to address the research question outlined in chapter 1. Various themes and sub themes emerged from the qualitative process. The following figure presents the themes and sub themes that emerged during the analysis. Evidence from the interviews are used as a confirmation of these themes.

The figure below is a presentation of the research findings that was found during the analysis of the data. The researcher made use of Atlas-TI to analyse the data. Also, the researcher manually analysed the data. The themes and sub-themes that emerged were a combination of both methods.

Figure 4.5

Themes derived from the transcripts

- Emotional Labour
- Domestic Duties
- Working Hours
- Health

Challenges

- Functional Coping Strategies
- Dysfunctional Coping Strategies

Coping Strategies

- Organistional Support
- Social Support

Support Structure

- Western vs non western

Culture
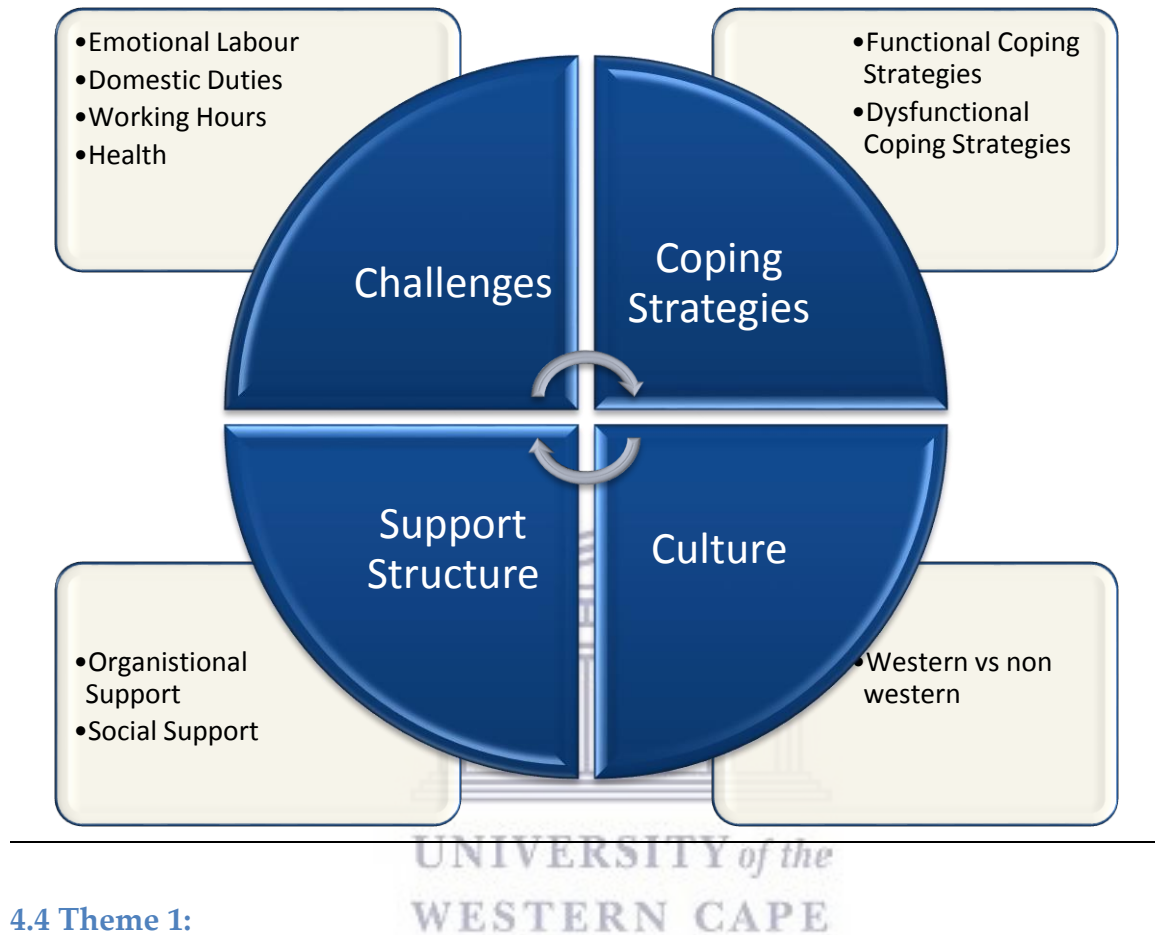
4.4 Theme 1:

Challenges:

4.4.1 Emotional Labour

With most frontline employees such as flight attendants, tellers and waitresses, it is important for them to show a friendly face at all times. By not doing so, they will come across as unfriendly, arrogant towards their customers or clients. Even though an individual might be going through issues in their personal life, they have to try their hardest not to let it show at work. By suppressing their feelings, this can often lead to emotional exhaustion.

Emotional labour can be described as effectively managing your emotions while suppressing other emotions as an unconscious requirement of the job (Choi & Kim, 2015). The majority of the flight attendants felt that emotional labour was an integral part of the life of a flight attendant.

"Once you put on your uniform you put on your professional side and then you go to work and you smile and you just have to pretend that everything is hunky dory"

FA 1

"Then you get a person that's travelling for days or from far and they so exhausted and tired, so you come on board and just do your job and they just snap at you, and then you just have to tell yourself ag this person must've had a bad day"

FA 2

"Like for example you may be going through a divorce but you still have to act like the happiest person when you are at work".

FA 2

"Uhm yes it can be at times but then again it can also be good because when you are feeling down there are people or passengers that can make your day or make you smile and it's not the same people you see every day so you never know".

FA 4

"And whatever we going through we have to smile and pretend to be a care free person. And believe me it is really hard…I mean I come from a family where there is always an issue and while you trying to work and be normal you still have that at the back of your mind and sometimes it seems as if absent minded or not fulfilling my duties as I'm supposed to."

FA 4

"I still needed to greet them with a smile as they left and also walk down the aisle as if nothing happened and everyone was looking me weird. It really is emotionally draining…to smile when you really don't want to".

<div align="right">FA5</div>

"Like you get those days where you just feel like being quiet and it is hard because you have to be 100% all the time. You can't go and hide in your office if you know what I mean".

<div align="right">FA5</div>

4.4.2 Domestic Duties

Domestic duties refer to the need to fulfil home or family duties which includes but not limited to cooking cleaning and seeing to the well-being of the spouse and children. In many homes, many women feel that domestic and child care duties are their primary responsibility. Therefore, some flight attendants felt that they needed to attend to these responsibilities instead of getting assistance from their spouse or partner. Flight attendant 5 needed to perform these duties prior to work or after. However, flight attendant 1, 2 and 4 had various strategies that they used to help them manage this. Evidence from this study suggested that flight attendants that belonged to a collective religious and cultural group felt that domestic duties played a more important role in their homes therefore; these flight attendants displayed feelings of guilt and may have higher stress levels than the rest of the participants.

"And if I get home late, I will first take an hour nap and then I will cook so my family will just have to wait for the meal and if they moan then that's their problem".

<div align="right">FA 1</div>

"Ok so what I did was I uhm was cook meals before the time and freeze it and then they could help themselves or they would buy takeaways if I wasn't here and uhm I had to make sure my house is tidy".

"Well I'm very fortunate that my husband loves cooking, he is a chef and he is flying as well so I'm an exceptional case, but most crew cook ahead, like they cook and they freeze it, so they plan ahead".

"I just go with it. Like today I started work at 5 and finished at 5 so come home and don't really need to do anything".

"Like my mom helps me a lot. She always has breakfast ready for me when I have early morning flights or my clothes ironed".

"You still have that at the back of your mind and sometimes it seems as if absent minded or not fulfilling my duties as I'm supposed to".

"At times yes, like when they buy takeaways when I supposed to be home cooking or helping my husband with the kids if it comes to bathing or home work.

"I also try and get a domestic worker a few days in a week to make the work less".

4.4.3 Health

Health forms a very significant part of any individual's life. Organisations have placed an emphasis on employee assistance programmes (EAP) to address the wellness of employees so that at the end of the day these employees can be more productive. However, when it comes to careers in aviation and specifically flight attendants there are various health issues that affect the employee in comparison to an office job.

All flight attendants in this study felt that their health was affected due to the requirements and nature of the job. All the flight attendants that participated in this research were impacted physically and psychologically.

"There were a lot of crew who had miscarriages in the first trimester. That is why if you are pregnant and you are flying, it is a risk and that is why the airline lets you work on the ground as soon as you inform them. One miscarriage in London I remember and then one in Miami. Your first three months is best to be on the ground".

FA 1

"You eat in the middle of the night".

FA 1

"You don't sleep".

FA 1

"Open up the storage and see what you can nibble on like chocolates and chips which isn't the healthiest option".

FA 1

"We also suffer from sinusitis which is because of the aircon".

FA 1

"I have arthritis on my back now and many of the crew have back ops due to it so when you reach a certain age it becomes hard".

FA 1

"Our body takes a strain and with us not having a normal routine with hours, our sleeping patterns are completely out of sync, so quite a few people in our industry have a problem with getting that adequate sleep".

FA 2

"That's what our medical doctors explained to us. So if you work 8 hours on the ground and you work 8 hours in the air, the 8 hours in the air will make you feel

like you've been working 16 hours and that's where the fatigue and everything comes in".

<div align="right">FA 2</div>

"I can only fall asleep every night at 11.30 or 12pm and say I fly at 5 in the morning and work until 5 in the afternoon I will still sleep at 12am and then I'll have to wake up at three again for my flight the next morning…so sometimes I can have the same shift for 5 days and only go with 3 hours of sleep every night. And then I have days like my off days…because I have days because of all the different times that you sleep and also not getting enough sleep, I can sleep for both of my two off days. You just want to be in bed doing nothing".

<div align="right">FA 3</div>

"we work in the air our body parts uhm I don't know how to explain…well its, there is more strain on our organs because we work in the air so we have to drink 3 times as much water when we are flying".

<div align="right">FA 4</div>

"And also the amount of takeaways we live on and because for example if my flight lands past 8 at night we just buy takeaways there is no time or energy going home to still cook a meal".

<div align="right">FA 5</div>

"we have to take care of ourselves more because of the nature of the job and I mean we don't work in an normal environment so we have need to be extra careful and healthy. For example drink more water, go to the gym…its easier said than done because our body does hurt whether we're feeling drained or hurting body parts then we don't really have it in us to still go have a work out".

<div align="right">FA 5</div>

"I try and cook in the morning before I leave which is like 3am but sometimes I'm so tired from all the flights I just tell my husband to buy something".

<div align="right">FA 6</div>

4.4.4 Working Hours

Working hours play a key role in the nature of the job. It has a direct bearing on the standard of living. A requirement of being a flight attendant is to work irregular hours. Some studies report how organisations are moving towards flexible working hours however on the other hand, other studies reported on the negative effects of working irregular hours (Caruso, 2015). The flight attendants responses varied whereby advantages and disadvantages were highlighted. A study suggested that flexibility with regards to working schedules provide workers with the freedom to adapt their working hours and schedule to meet personal and family needs (Van Dongen, 2006).

In contrast Van Dongen (2006) shows that some forms of non-standard working hours, such as night work and shiftwork, can result in health problems for workers. In this study, flight attendants were asked to comment on the working hours and the impact it has. Evidence from the interviews is depicted below.

"When you do these long flights, so you could get up to three hours of sleep and while the others are sleeping, the other half of the crew is on duty".

FA 1

"In our industry there is never a set time because like you say it's a liquid airline, everything changes from delays to early arrivals to delayed flights. When you get up in the morning you just hope that everything goes to plan".

FA 1

"Can only fall asleep every night at 11.30 or 12pm and say I fly at 5 in the morning and work until 5 in the afternoon I will still sleep at 12am and then IL have to wake up at three again for my flight the next morning…so sometimes I can have the same shift for 5 days and only go with 3 hours of sleep every night. And then I have days like my off days…because I have days because of all the different times that you sleep and also not getting enough sleep, I can sleep for both of my two off days. You just want to be in bed doing nothing".

FA 3

"Definitely because of the working hours I always feel tired and burnt out. I feel like I have a lack of sleep all the time even when you have two days off".

<div align="right">FA 4</div>

"Like when I want to go for family picnics and I'm maybe working later in the afternoon I must leave early and sometimes it's actually no use because by the time I have get dressed and go there and stuff…I can't take my uniform with because I am a female obviously so I can't just dress anywhere and plus the uniform must be ironed and neat and stuff so I have to look my best at all times so sometimes it's just not worth the effort.

<div align="right">FA 4</div>

"Oh yes and also each flight route is different so I can get nice days where I start at 4am and end at 10am or I can have really crappy days where I start at 4 or 5pm and finish at 6pm or also start for example at 11am and end at 10pm…so I really don't have a set time".

<div align="right">FA 5</div>

"So we are doing the same thing every day. I tried studying part time to keep me going but exam dates and tests etc. always clash with my working times and it's a process to swap with anyone".

<div align="right">FA 5</div>

"I think it's a constantly stressful environment because you never know what is going to happen that day or if there is going to be a delay etc."

<div align="right">FA 6</div>

Theme 2

4.5 Coping Strategies

The term coping strategies refers to various ways in which an individual deals with problems, conflict and stress. Flight attendants that were interviewed had various coping strategies. Flight attendant 1, 2, 4 and 5, 6 used similar strategies such as getting

assistance from family members, making time for themselves and seeking counselling. Flight attendant 3 however, believes that she does not use any coping strategies. She feels that the reason might be due to her not having any responsibility such as a spouse or children and she lives alone. Therefore, she feels that she has enough time to see to everything and is able to maintain a good work life balance.

4.5.1 Functional Coping Strategies

Functional coping strategies refer to coping mechanisms that are used by the flight attendants which assist them in a beneficial way. Each flight attendant mentioned several strategies. This was analysed and the various strategies that were utilised amongst all flight attendants are listed below:

- Family and social support
- Making time for myself
- Organisational support
- Colleagues' support
- Not taking things personally
- Counselling
- Employee assistance programmes
- Prayer
- Reappraisal of stressful stimuli

"Yes well I try to make time for myself; I go for a massage or I'll spoil myself, just me time. Even if I meet up with friends for lunch or invite someone over for lunch. But I make time for myself. I've got to have a... you know a balance".

FA 1

"Ok so what I did was I uhm was cook meals before the time and freeze".

FA 1

"So I try to make it work. Like I try to swap or bid for leave. If I am lucky I can be on standby on Christmas morning and then lunch time I can be at home, that's if I'm lucky and everybody pitched up for work".

FA 1

"When I'm off or on leave I use those days to catch up on my sleep. I have to do that because I tried pride in my work and I like looking fresh and having energy".

FA 2

"You have that quality off days; they make up for the odd days they weren't at home".

FA 2

"Like my mom helps me a lot. She always has breakfast ready for me when I have early morning flights or my clothes ironed…it makes a difference. Also my siblings, like I always ask them to do something for me in exchange of money ha-ha or buy them something. But without them I don't think my life would be this as easy".

FA 4

"Sometimes I see a counsellor. I feel it helps as she helps me deal with a lot but also sometimes you just want to offload and this helps to. I also try and give myself some me time, like go shopping and for a facial".

FA 5

"My husband and I also try and get a domestic worker a few days in a week to make the work less".

FA 6

4.5.2 Dysfunctional Coping Strategies

Dysfunctional coping strategies are also coping mechanisms used by flight attendants that are detrimental to their health and well-being. Flight attendants make use of dysfunctional strategies when they are under a lot of pressure and stress as a form of relief due not being able to cope. Flight attendant 1, 5 and 6 mentioned during the interviews that some employees use negative coping mechanisms when they are

under pressure. During the analysis, the researcher found various uses of dysfunctional coping strategies. These include:

- Alcohol
- Medication
- Bad eating habits
- Smoking

"You don't sleep. You eat in the middle of the night. But you eat out of boredom.

<div align="right">FA 1</div>

"But uhm during the flight you open up the storage and see what you can nibble on like chocolates and chips which isn't the healthiest option but we don't really have much of a choice when we on the flight. While everyone is sleeping we will eat".

<div align="right">FA 1</div>

"if you suffer from stress and a lot of crew actually suffer from depression as well, uhm some of them eventually go to alcohol uhm some of them take tablets like sleeping tablets and take things that will like suppress them you know instead of helping them".

<div align="right">FA 1</div>

"Yes actually because we are exposed to so much sweets and chips and coffee and those things on the flight we tend to eat unhealthy and also to stay awake we consume much more energy. There are nights when we are so tired that we don't still have the energy to go home and cook so our takeaway intake is quite high…oh yes and then we also have layovers so that means we at the airport for maybe three hours to wait for a next flight and what can we do to kill time? Of course the crew is going to have a nice meal at one of the restaurants at the airport and stuff so it is hard to keep healthy".

<div align="right">FA 5</div>

"I actually started smoking because I can promise you this that maybe about 90% of the crew is smokers so eventually you pick up these habits and follow it and then also I found it to be a stress reliever. Uhm with regards to other things, definitely unhealthy eating habits. I mean have you looked at the menu on our magazines? There isn't anything healthy and of course we are going to snack on these things unless we choose to bring our own but they do provide crew meals and stuff".

<div align="right">FA 6</div>

Theme 3

4.6 Support structures:

A support structure refers to any assistance that is received by the flight attendants in various forms. This may be emotional support or assisting with a specific duty. A flight attendant's support structure seems to play a vital in their lives. It is highlighted with all the participants that the support they get plays an important role when facing work life balance challenges. They discussed various forms of support which has been categorised into social support which refers to support from family or friends and also organisational support which can be EAP programmes or the organisation's policy with regards to assisting employees to help maintain the balance between their personal and work life. Previous research reported that the presence of friends or family members has been shown to reduce these rates among people during difficult periods (Gregory & Milner, 2009).

4.6.1 Awareness of organisational support

Organisational support can be displayed in various forms for instance, wellness initiatives such as heart line which is one of the popular employee assistance programmes used by many companies. Flight attendant 1 and 2 listed ways in which they received support from their organisation such as extra training and development

and employee assistance programs. On the other hand, flight attendants 3, 4 and 6 perceived that the support they received from their organisation was not sufficient.

"That is why if you are pregnant and you are flying, it is a risk and that is why the airline lets you work on the ground as soon as you inform them".

FA 1

"I think that is why you must become a flight attendant, you can travel the world and your family can also go along with you".

FA 1

"They got this heartbeat where you can actually get counselling for like 6 sessions per year".

FA 1

"We get three days family responsibility leave".

FA 1

"You get a schedule a month ahead so you can kind of see what I'm doing more or less this day".

FA 2

"They have a structure where they see to those types of incidents. Like counselling they allow you to speak about it, like how you feel and you can request to see someone should you not wants to do it with the panel that they have…they have a very good structure. With regards to a helpline, they have heartbeat which is a structure for you and your family so it's something that hasn't been around for few but is has been around for the past few years.

FA 2

"Well we can ask for that…we get a roster so a month in advance we can like ask for that day off and when it comes to studying and stuff we work shifts, so ya I have enough time to study".

FA 3

"Organisation did not provide anything not even medical assistance. When you go through a decompression, you not supposed to fly for the next 48 hours, that's the rule and there's a decompression chamber, we supposed to be sent there. Nothing was done. I never even got an email to say "is u ok" or whatever. I was just told that I need to work the next day and that was it".

<div align="right">FA 3</div>

"What I would do generally uhm…you respect everyone's culture, like you got your Hindu colleagues or Christian colleagues, Muslims etc. so if you Muslim and you want Eid off you will have to speak to the people in charge of rosters and see if they can make a plan or swap with someone".

<div align="right">FA 4</div>

"uhm we have this lifeline thing, I'm not too sure what it is I haven't really used it but you could call these people at any time should you feel you need expert help but other than that no I can't uhm really think of anything else".

<div align="right">FA 5</div>

"We always eating junk and the crew meals are not as healthy and I also I think we need more support from them because it's always our family that needs to help us even emotionally I don't think the support is enough".

<div align="right">FA 6</div>

4.6.2 Social Support

Social support is seen as one of the coping mechanisms used by the flight attendants to help them deal with challenges that may arise from trying to balance their home and work life. The social circle refers to family and friends and even work colleagues. With regards to flight attendants 1, 2, 4 and 5 their husbands play an important role and they try and take on some responsibilities or at least share them with their partners in order to make things easier for them. On the contrary, flight attendant 3 felt that she was not in need of any social support.

"They could help themselves or they would buy takeaways if I wasn't there".

"My husband. You need a good support group".

"My sister lives with us now so she is there to cook".

"In my case not because I don't have any children and it probably makes it a bit easier, but for those that have children, they have a family support that stays with them in the house that can afford them to be away for a few days".

"Like my mom helps me a lot. She always has breakfast ready for me when I have early morning flights or my clothes ironed…it makes a difference.

"Also my siblings, like I always ask them to do something for me in exchange of money ha-ha or buy them something. But without them I don't think my life would be this as easy".

"yes like we become friends and we get close so when we having a crap day and still need to go to work we can always count on each other to give us support or even just lend an ear so that we can vent".

"The people you work with also become your friends so at times they can be supporting and you can just offload when you need to and these are people you are not living with you so sometimes yes they are a help".

"Well my husband I guess. If he wasn't there I would not be able to manage like with the kids and stuff".

Theme 4

4.7 Culture

Amongst the participants, it was found that flight attendants 4 and 5 faced very similar issues. These flight attendants belonged to the same religious group. Flight attendants from this particular group had more responsibilities and saw their home and family as more important than their work life. In contrast, flight attendants 1, 2 and 6 belonged to the same cultural group as well; however, the roles and responsibilities of these flight attendants were not the same as flight attendant 4 and 5. Culture often shapes our values and expectations as they relate to many parts of our lives, including jobs (Fernandez 2007).

In addition (Fernandez, 2007) argues that a woman living in a patriarchal family face more constraints for work than one living in a liberal family. Therefore an individual's culture or religion can play a vital role when trying the balance their home and work life as the expectations of each culture or religion differ from each other.

"Generally if you look at the airline industry you will notice not many Indian women but specifically Muslim. There are some but when they married they tend to change jobs because in our society like the Muslim an Indian society the men don't do much. You will rarely find a male doing the washing or cooking so my culture is still set in that way and that is where my challenges also come from".

FA 5

"I supposed to be home cooking or helping my husband with the kids if it comes to bathing or homework".

FA 5

"My in-laws were not happy about it because you know how it is…it's not his duty and why do I want to take a job like this"

FA 6

"If I'm working a later shift IL of course cook in the morning and if I'm done early

I'll be at home to cook".

FA 6

The main findings that were presented in this chapter included four broad themes with each incorporating sub themes. The main themes that were identified during the analysis are depicted in Table 4.1. Evidence from the interviews is presented from a flight attendant to provide evidence for the theme.

Table 4.1

Main themes

Theme	Sub-theme	Evidence
Challenges	Emotional labour	*"You know this really changed my mood. I woke up happy and this incident made me so upset and to top it all, it was my first flight so I still had another 3 flights to do before the end of my working day…and also what makes it hard is that I have to stick it out".*
	Domestic Duties	*"I cook meals before the time and freeze it".*
	Working Hours	*"Most of the time I'm tired though, like when I have two or three early mornings where you sign on like at four or five o clock and you could land from 11 o clock up to 4 o clock in the afternoon. So it's a long day".*

Coping Strategies		*"I also try and get a domestic worker a few days in a week to make the work less".*
Support	Social Support	*"When the kids were smaller my mother also helped looking after the kids so that was ok, not everyone is that fortunate".*
	Awareness of organisational support	*"That is why if you are pregnant and you are flying, it is a risk and that is why the airline lets you work on the ground as soon as you inform them".*
Culture	Western Culture	*"my husband is actually a chef so he does the cooking"*
	Non-Western Culture	*"well in our culture husbands are not really "allowed" to into the kitchen so I have to see to things before…especially cooking"*

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4.8 Conclusion

In the present chapter the results (comprising the themes and subthemes) from data that was collected during the interviews have been presented. Along with this, each theme and sub theme were briefly explained and evidence from the data was provided. The findings that were presented provided an insight to the challenges that were faced by the flight attendants. Furthermore, the evidence suggested ways in which the flight attendants dealt with these challenges. Although there was a similar pattern amongst the flight attendants, there were also some differences such as the requirements of belonging to a particular cultural group and how that impacted on their work life balance. In the next chapter (chapter 5), a discussion of the various

themes and sub themes is provided. These findings will be compared to previous studies and what other researchers have reported on.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the work life balance amongst female flight attendants at various airlines within the Western Cape. The research approach was qualitative in nature. The researcher conducted face to face interviews with 6 female flight attendants that were employed at various airlines. The interviews were approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The information that was gathered was then transcribed verbatim, and content analysis was used to analyse the data and extract themes from the interviews. Various themes and sub themes emerged as illustrated in chapter 4.
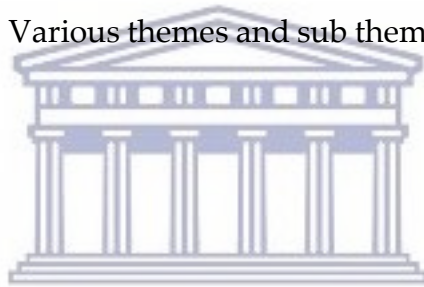
Theme 1

5.2 Challenges

Work life balance is a concept that supports the efforts of employees to split their time and energy between work and the other important aspects of their lives. This may include family time, participating in a particular activity or even time for oneself. However, when they spend much of their time on work related activities and feel as if they are neglecting the other important parts of their lives, conflict, stress, challenges and unhappiness can result. With the aim of trying to achieve work life balance, all the flight attendants highlighted a few challenges that they are faced with. The content analyses suggested that the themes can be divided into a number of more nuanced sub-themes.

5.2.1 Emotional Labour

Emotional labour is the process of managing your emotions effectively in order to fulfil the emotional requirements of a job. Moreover, Brotheridge and Lee (2003) define emotional labour as the ability to control an individual's behaviour in order to display suitable emotions which may be for various reasons such as an individual's job. Employees are expected to not let their emotions get in the way when they are interacting with their clients or customers. What makes this particularly challenging is suppressing your emotions especially when experiencing heightened emotional arousal. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as emotional labour.

All 6 flight attendants experienced some form of emotional labour. They felt that it was draining to act normal when they felt angry, anxious or distressed. Although there were similarities there were also differences. Flight attendant 1 and 2 felt that once you are at work, you need to act as an ambassador for the company and act professionally. They felt that issues from your personal life cannot affect your work. Also, they felt they have received sufficient training on how to deal with potentially stressful situations. However, flight attendant 5 on the other hand felt that it was difficult to effectively do your duties when customers are aggressive or rude to you. She felt that these types of incidents can affect her duties whilst at work which lowers her work productivity and performance towards passengers. Emotional labour often leads to emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of energy depletion and describes mental and physical unresponsive attitudes toward the receivers of one's services under a certain amount of emotional labour (Choi & Kim, 2015). A flight attendant from the study describes how emotionally draining the job can be:

> *"I still needed to greet them with a smile as they left and also walk down the aisle as if nothing happened and everyone was looking me weird. It really is emotionally draining…to smile when you really don't want to".*

"Well sometimes I think so. I actually don't have the energy to smile and be friendly and talkative with the passengers because of how I feel. Like you get those days where you just feel like being quiet and it is hard because you have to be 100% all the time. You can't go and hide in your office if you know what I mean."

Furthermore, Choi and Kim (2015) explain that emotional labour involves concepts which are known as deep acting and surface acting. Deep acting can be described as an attempt to change actual feelings to match a required display. Surface acting on the other hand refers to attempting to change affective displays without altering underlying feelings. According to the research conducted all flight attendants seem to have displayed either deep or surface acting which is due to the requirements of the job. According to Choi and Kim (2015) both deep and surface acting can be harmful for an individual's mental health which can often lead to stress and anxiety and it may also hamper one's social functioning. This is evident as the findings lead to various health risks which are discussed in this chapter.

Although research indicates that deep acting may have both advantages and disadvantages, surface acting has consistently been shown to be detrimental to employees, inducing psychological strain (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003).

Additionally, flight attendant 4 feels that although it can be challenging at times when you are going through personal issues, she also feels that passengers can have a positive effect on your emotions. She adds that when she is having a bad day, a passenger might give her a compliment and make her day.

5.2.2 Domestic Duties

As discussed in chapter two, many women are still required to perform domestic duties. These tasks include cooking, cleaning, looking after their children and any other household duties. According to the societal norms set out for them, women

generally feel responsible for these tasks. Although there has been much advancement with regards to work place equality with women, evidence shows that many women still feel responsible for this domain. Therefore, if they are unable to attend to these duties, they are mostly likely to take initiative to make provision for it. In a study conducted by Kirai and Kobia (2012) some women experienced feelings of guilt or selfishness if they put their career interests first. McGowan, Redeker, Cooper and Greenan (2012) state that mothers spend nearly as twice as long as fathers doing unpaid domestic work.

It is evident that most of the flight attendants felt that they need to find a way of attending to these duties prior to work or after. When there is an overload of duties it may clash with an individual's work especially when their work schedule is irregular. With regular working hours, it is easier to create structure around work and personal life. The time women spend on these necessary but unrecognised chores taxes their energy, undermine their workplace authority, and reduce the time they could be spending on more socially and professionally recognized and valued work (McGowan et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, according to the interviews, flight attendants 2 and 4 had fewer responsibilities when it came to domestic duties. In some cases they had various forms of assistance, for instance a family member supported them with regards to a particular duty. However, on the other hand, flight attendants 1, 3, 5 and 6 needed to perform their various domestic duties prior or after work. For example flight attendant 5 needed to cook early in the morning or cook before the time and freeze the food. From the interview, a flight attendant describes how she attends to some of her domestic duties:

"I try and cook in the morning before I leave which is like 3am but sometimes I'm so tired from all the flights I just tell my husband to buy something".

This may stem from various reasons, predominantly due to 2 of the flight attendants cultural norms that they need to conform to. Flight attendants 5 and 6 felt that provision needed to be made with regards to cooking and cleaning as this was seen as "their responsibility". According to these 2 flight attendants, husbands were not allowed to cook or clean; therefore this required the flight attendants to find an alternative solution such as freezing food or getting in a domestic worker to assist with the household cleaning. This is evident that there is a difference in cultural roles. The expectations that are set out for women differentiate between the cultural groups they belong to which in turn has an influence on the role they play within their home.

Flight attendants 5 and 6 felt that it is easier to achieve work life balance when there is structure and consistency and also when their duties are aligned to the routine and schedule of their families. This makes it less complex and they are able to deal with it more meritoriously. Furthermore, flight attendant 5 felt that if she had the financial means she would stay at home to look after her children and to attend to the household duties and she feels it is her main responsibility. This statement is in line with a study conducted by (McGowan et al., 2012) where it is argued that some women choose not to return to corporate life preferring instead to establish their own business, in the expectation that it will offer a better balance between work and family. Furthermore, Shelton (2006) claim those women will often choose to scale down their hours of paid employment to make time for household work when starting a family.

5.2.3 Health

From the evidence that was presented in chapter 4, there are many health risks that are associated and experienced by flight attendants. Despite the technological advancement that has been taking place in the world of work which assists in making the work easier and operational by all despite gender or the need for a particular physical requirement, the role of a flight attendant has become quite the opposite and more risks are associated with one's health. The work now includes longer flight hours, with less turnaround times, larger airplanes that require more physical

strength, and this may lead to added health risks (Chung & Chung, 2009). This has an impact on both physical and mental health. Flight attendants may experience physical pain such as lower back pain and arthritis or it can affect an employee's mental health which can lead to depression, anxiety and fatigue. Moreover, constant exposures to the cabin environment have been associated with cardiac disease, including air pollution, noise, and sleep disruption (Chung & Chung, 2009). In this study, all 6 flight attendants highlighted various health challenges that they each face. Some are long term health effects such as arthritis and some are short term which develops into long term sequels.

In a study conducted by McNeely, Gale, Tager, Kincl, Bradley, Coull, and Hecker (2014) on flight attendants and health, it was reported that longer tenure increased the risk of heart disease in females by 32% for every five year increase in tenure, although males had no increased risk. Interestingly, females also had an increased risk of high blood pressure with longer tenure with a 13% increase for every five years on the job while males showed no increased risk (Mcneely et al., 2014). Furthermore, in the same study it was stated that cardiac disease prevalence was 3.5% times greater in female flight attendants than the general working population (Mcneely et al., 2014).

All 6 flight attendants discussed very similar health risks such as lower back pain due to the physical requirements of the job which include carrying and lifting heavy weight items but also assisting and lifting disabled passengers, standing for long periods of time and being in a confined working space for about 8 to 12 hours.

Also, miscarriages were a fear amongst the flight attendants as they felt that they are more at a risk to have a miscarriage during their first trimester in comparison to the general female population due to the environment they work in. Flight attendants 1 and 3 claim that as soon as you inform the organisation that you are pregnant, you are placed on ground duty until the employee reaches the three month period. This is to protect the flight attendants against the risk of having a miscarriage. Flight attendant

1 further explains that she experienced a miscarriage on an international flight. According to a study that was conducted on flight attendants and health implications, results indicated that flight attendants who flew more than 15 hours during normal sleep hours in the first trimester were at increased risk for miscarriage (Mcneely et al., 2014). Additionally, researchers found that early miscarriage was about twice as likely for a pregnant flight attendant with high physical job demands compared to those without high physical job demands (Libr, 2007).

Furthermore, all 6 flight attendants referred to having unhealthy habits such as not drinking enough water, over eating and eating unhealthy. These habits often lead to overweight or other diseases such as diabetes or high cholesterol. Caballero (2007) describes that overeating can result in an individual feeling energetic for a short period, but crash shortly after, leaving him or her feeling lethargic and fatigued. Furthermore, overeating, particularly when you consume high fat and high calorie foods can increase your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, kidney function, enlarged heart, gall bladder disease and obesity (Caballero 2007).

Also, due to the cabin pressure and radiation in the aircraft, the environment that these employees work in, is described as more detrimental than a normal office environment. All 6 flight attendants were asked about working long hours in flight. The flight attendants described it as an "unnatural environment" in which they need to take extra precautions to remain healthy. They described that working 1 hour in the air is like working 3 hours in the office, hence there is more strain on the individual's body. Evidence from the interview is explained below:

"I don't know if you ever saw a half empty bottle when you descent, the whole bottle goes in and that is what actually happens to your organs and that is what happens every time you are flying. It ages you quicker and messes up your chances of getting

pregnant. Flying is also very draining; you become very dehydrated and also very exhausted due to what's happening to your body".

Moreover, various studies have been conducted on the risks of cancer amongst flight attendants. Another health concern that was found amongst female flight attendants is the risk of cancer. Appiah et al. (2014) found that exposure to known or suspected carcinogens and mutagens such as ionizing radiation, ozone, jet engine emissions, electromagnetic fields, and cigarette smoke could increase chances of contracting cancer and therefore health concerns have been increasing among flight crew.

In addition, it is reported that the radiation in the aircraft causes damage to tissues and DNA have been linked to cancer and reproductive problems (Tokumaru, Haruki, Bacal, Katagiri, Yamamoto & Sakurai, 2006). These radiation levels are higher than those found at ground level. Tokumaru et al. (2006) further discussed that several papers were published regarding cancer incidence among female flight attendants. Even though many of them indicated increased risk for melanoma and breast cancer, those results were still based on relatively small populations.

Furthermore, the flight attendants suggested ways in which they can manage this such as drinking much more water than the average amount, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and attending to issues that arise such as burnout and fatigue. Flight attendants 1 and 2 claim that their organisations provide employees with training on this.

Figure 5.1

The health related risks associated with the flight attendant job
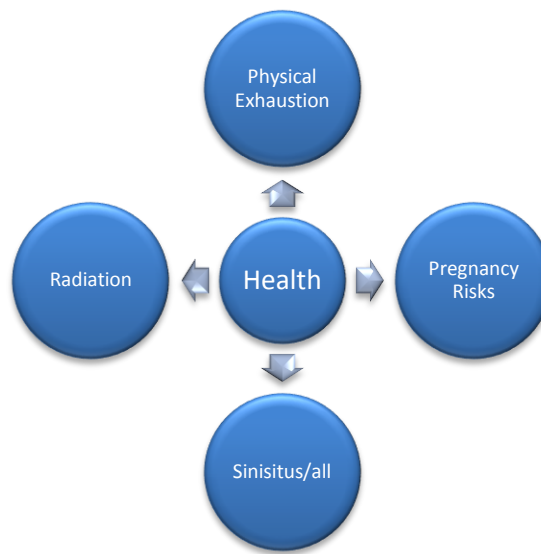
The main health related risks that were associated with the job of being a flight attendant are graphically depicted in graph 5.1 above. Based on the health risks associated with the job, flight attendants 3, 4 and 5 felt that it is unfavourable to make this a long term career. Not only due to personal commitments that may interfere with one's life but also because of the health risks associated with being a flight attendant, especially when one is doing it for a long time. Although flight attendant 1 felt that this can be long term career, she describes all the health risks suffered by her and other flight attendants due to the length of time spent being a flight attendant. Libr (2007) states that the airline industry has changed and employees are experiencing pay cuts, benefit cuts, increased workloads and, longer working hours. Therefore, flight attendants these days are less likely to stay for a period longer than 5 years.

5.2.4 Working Hours

Shift work and the irregular working hours have a major impact on work life balance. Many organisations are moving towards flexible working hours and many organisations that operate internationally such as call centres, include shift work where employees work various shifts (Skoufi et al., 2017). However, this is slightly

different from careers in aviation, particularly pilots and flight attendants as their work times are not only irregular but also unpredictable. Flights may include stop overs, layover and also delays. These employees can be away from their homes and families for about 5 days. However, these irregular working hours have its advantages and disadvantages. According to some flight attendants, there are days where this works in their favour and according to other flight attendants it clashes with other responsibilities on a daily basis.

According to flight attendant 1, who has been employed at the airline for 25 years, states that in the beginning it was hard to adjust however as time go by, one gets used to it and so does the family. She believes you just work with the time that you have for example having a Christmas meal with her family on Christmas Eve as she was required to work on Christmas day. On the other hand, flight attendant 3 felt that because she only does domestic flights, she has more free time on her hand and she lives alone in which case she has no added responsibilities therefore the working hours do not affect her much.

Flight attendant 5 appreciates the flexibility and believes that these times can work in her favour for example going to home affairs or traffic department during the week as it is less busy than a weekend. Research shows that flexible work arrangements may reduce stress because employees working flexibly are more satisfied with their jobs (Caruso, 2015).

However, when analysing the findings of this study, it is somewhat evident that domestic and international flight does play a role in influencing the lives of the flight attendants. Due to stop overs, the flight attendants who fly internationally are usually away for longer periods of time and this may even last for a period of 5 days. However, domestic flights do not include stop overs which allows the employee to be home every day unless there is an emergency or delay with the flight. Flight attendants 3 states that "*I think uhm as I say I'm domestic so I have time on my hands*".

Furthermore, all 6 flight attendants discussed how the working hours affected their sleeping patterns which put a strain on their body. A flight attendant describes this: *"sometimes I can have the same shift for 5 days and only go with 3 hours of sleep every night"*. Martens, Nijhuis, Van Boxtel and Knottnerus (1999) state that patients working rotating shifts, compressed weeks and had irregular sleeping patterns showed significantly more health complaints and more sleeping problems. Additionally, Shen, Botly, Chung, Gibb, Sabanadzovic and Shapiro (2006) completed a study to test whether or not working shifts had an effect on individuals fatigue and energy. The study was completed on 489 workers from a major Ontario employer; they then completed a series of subjective, self-report questionnaires, including the Fatigue Severity scale and the Epworth Sleepiness scale. The results obtained from this study showed a low correlation between workers fatigue and sleepiness scores and these individuals working shifts. Tucker, Barton and Folkard (1996) disagree by stating that working 12-hour shifts has a negative impact on individual's energy levels as they begin to experience fatigue.

Theme 2

5.3 Coping Strategies

Coping skills are those daily strategies and activities that we use as people to help deal with, work through, or process our emotions. A study suggests that "coping can thus be seen as a response that follows a stressful experience" (Herbst, 2007, p. 12). When employees struggle to balance all the domains in their life's they revert to coping strategies to deal with the conflicting demands. According to Capelo and Pocinho (2016), a coping strategy that is often employed by employees is organisational support and support from family. In the current study all six the flight attendants used different coping strategies. Some flight attendants set time aside for relaxation activities; others leaned on a family member to help them cope whilst others made use of life coaches and professional psychologists to help them deal with work strain.

These coping strategies were categorized into two sub themes, namely: Functional Coping Strategies and Dysfunctional Coping Strategies.

5.3.1 Functional Coping Strategies

Functional coping strategies refer to the coping mechanisms that are used by individuals in order to reduce stress. Capelo and Pocinho (2016) define functional coping strategies as ways that individuals deal with stressors in a positive way. This can often lead to better psychological and physical well-being.

Flight attendant 1 put time aside for herself for example going for a massage or having lunch with friends. She also leaned on her family to help with the domestic duties. For example, her sister used to cook for her husband and children whilst her mother would take care of her children whenever the need arose. Flight attendant 2 stated that her husband is also a flight attendant and they do not have children – so they do not need extra help with domestic duties.

Flight attendant 5 states that she needed to employ a domestic worker to help with working, cooking and cleaning. Furthermore, she goes for counselling regularly to deal with the stress at work. Flight attendant 6 experiences similarities to flight attendant 5, whereby she needs to employ a domestic worker to assist with some of the household duties. Evidence from the interview states the following *"my husband and I also try and get a domestic worker a few days in a week to make the work less"*.

From the above discussion it is evident that functional coping strategies do play an important role in the lives of a flight attendant that they turn to. Without these coping strategies, it makes it more challenging to try and balance their personal and work life. However, it is evident that having family does add extra responsibilities as flight attendants 2, 3 and 4 feel that their lives are manageable due to the fact that they do not have children or a spouse. A study suggests that coping strategies help to maintain job satisfaction and contribute to a sense of physical well-being (Peltzer & Ramlagan, 2009). In support of this statement, Ntuli (2007) suggested that positive coping

strategies such as seeing a therapist can lead to better physical and psychological well-being and it can lower the risks of depression. Furthermore, with regards to an individual's health it is reported that functional coping strategies leads to better cardiovascular health and reduced risk of death from cardiovascular diseases (Herbst, 2007).

Rotondo and Kincaid (2008) suggested functional coping strategies can be grouped into problem focused strategies and emotion coping strategies. Problem focused strategies are described as a strategy which serve to change the circumstances in which the challenge or threat arise (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Problem focused strategies focus on direct and proactive behaviours aimed at removing stressors or reducing their impact. Emotion focused strategies on the other hand focus on minimising the negative psychological and emotional effects of stressor. An example of an emotional coping strategy could be cognitive reappraisal of a potential threatening stressor. However, despite evidence claiming that coping strategies can serve as potentially powerful stress reduction tools problem focused strategies have been associated with higher levels of stress among certain groups, notably, the unemployed (Chang & Taylor, 2014). However, since most flight attendants would be unable to greatly alter the sources of their stress (e.g. irregular working hours and sleep patterns), they are probably forced to employ emotional coping strategies.

5.3.2 Dysfunctional Coping Strategies

In contrast to functional coping strategies, participants also mentioned other forms of coping strategies which were categorised into dysfunctional coping strategies. Dysfunctional coping strategies are also ways of coping mechanisms used by the participants however these may be detrimental to their health. Stress is a well-known factor that leads to the use of dysfunctional coping strategies. Employees often make use of substances when they feel they are unable to cope. Self-medication and alcohol are typical examples of substances that employees use. These forms of coping strategies often lead to more risk factors in one's health and personal life. Peltzer and

Ramlagan (2009) highlight that dysfunctional coping strategies are often linked with health risks, such as increased smoking and alcohol consumption, weight gain and depression. Flight attendant 1 describes how the uses of dysfunctional coping strategies are linked to flight attendants:

"Sometimes you work 5 to 6 days in a row with one day off and sometimes people can't cope so they resort to alcohol or to drugs and medication."

In a study done by Horton, Diaz, Mcilveen, Weiner, and Mullaney (2011) claims that employees tend to use prescription medication to manage the stress and related symptoms, such as emotional problems, insomnia, and nervousness. Others have turned to alcohol or drugs to deal with the effects of intense daily stress or some continue to suffer substance abuse relapses related to the stress. Furthermore, in the same study, it suggests that women were more likely to abuse over the counter medication in order to deal with everyday stressors.

Substance abuse has become a very common use amongst individuals who are unable to deal with life's challenges. In a study conducted on the effects of substance abuse, it suggests that drugs destroy the basic structure of a whole society, by affecting a sophisticated human society in all aspects including destabilizing families (Horton et al., 2011). Peltzer and Ramlagan (2009) further suggest that drugs create illusion and artificially make you feel euphoric, excited or pleasurable. Individuals tend to use drugs when they are unable to cope with stressors. In addition, Peltzer and Ramlagan (2009) describe that long term use of drugs can cause a deep impact on the way your brain works, and lead to increased anxiety and stress. Additionally, drugs would affect your ability to concentrate and focus at work (Matzopoulos, Truen, Bowman, & Corrigall, 2014). In a study conducted by Fabricuis, Langa and Wilson (2008), results indicated that flight attendants were more likely to experience alcohol dependency and due to this, they experienced high levels of anxiety, major depressive disorder and dysthymia. Therefore, the use of drugs as a means of coping is detrimental to

one's health, career and it affects family, colleagues, and friends who are associated with that individual.

Theme 3

5.4 Support structure

The need to have support and feel supported by others plays a significant role in many people's lives as it helps many individuals cope with challenges that arise in their daily lives. Support comes in different forms such as emotional support, financial support and instrumental support. Another form of support is known as instrumental support which provides support in a different way. This type of support specifically refers to helping one another with something for example helping clean the house (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983). In essence, the main reason why individuals seek for these various types of support is to lessen their burdens and help them cope with everyday challenges. Most flight attendants indicated that it is beneficial to have a good support structure.

Cohen and Hoberman (1983) suggest that a good social support structures helps reduce tension. With the data gathered and analysed, two types of support structures were identified which were categorised into two sub themes, namely: Social support and organisational support.
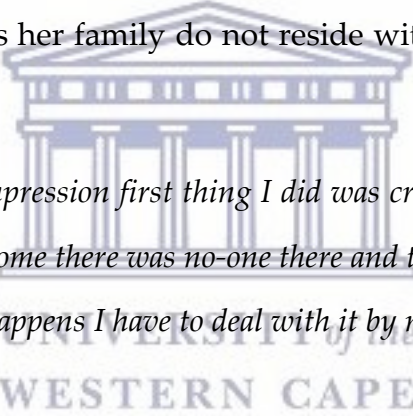
Figure 5.3

Support structure
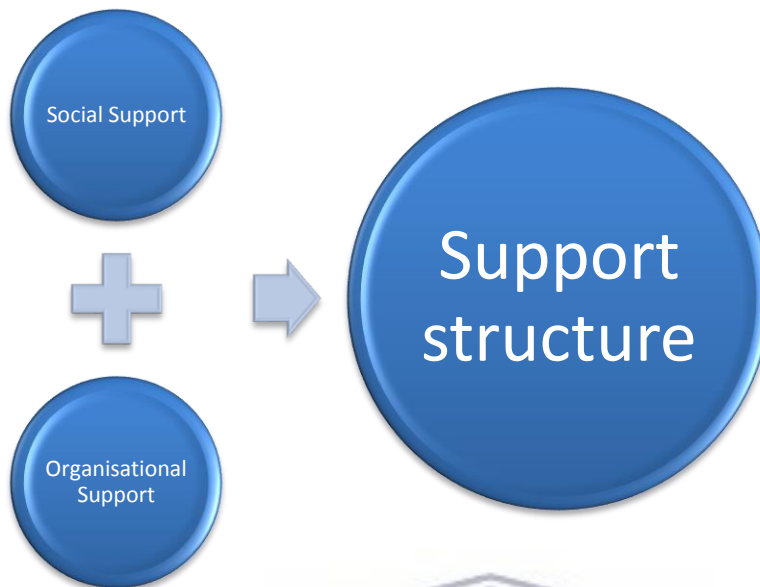
5.4.1 Social Support

Social support refers to people who help us in different ways. This can be friends, family, neighbours and also co-workers. According to Cohen and Hoberman (1983) a social support network refers to family, friends, neighbours that are available in times of need to give psychological, physical and financial help. To have a supportive social network is vital as we rely on these people for assistance at various times in our lives especially when we experience challenges and difficulties. Not having a social support network can result in people feeling isolated and this may lead to depression and alienation. Having a good social support structure provides employees with resilience to cope difficult circumstances. Rotondo and Kincaid (2008) reported that having a good social support network has a positive effect on the ability to cope better, better mental and physical health and resistance and recovery from diseases.

Flight attendant 1 indicated that her main support structure is her family. She further discussed ways in which they assist her. She has various family members to assist her with particular duties within her home and she has been receiving this type of support for as long as she is employed as a flight attendant. Similarly flight attendants 4, 5 and

6 have a similar support structure to flight attendant 1 in which they get various forms of assistance from family members. This support from family members helps them to juggle work and personal responsibilities.

However, flight attendants 2 and 3 differ in the type of support they receive in comparison to flight attendants 1, 4, 5, 6. The possible reason for this is that they may have fewer responsibilities within their home or personal life. For instance, both flight attendants 2 and 3 do not have children which mean there are less domestic responsibilities in their lives and more time for themselves. Additionally, flight attendant 3 felt that to some extent she does not need a support structure because she lives alone. However, she further explains that when she experiences something traumatic, she feels that she does need emotional support from her family. This is the part is challenging for her as her family do not reside within the Western Cape. She explains an incident:

> *"When we had the decompression first thing I did was cry and not because I was scared but when I came home there was no-one there and that was the hardest part and when stuff like this happens I have to deal with it by myself"*

In contrast, Cohen and Hoberman (1983) suggest that there are also risks that are associated with seeking for a social support. Individuals that usually do not have a social network feel that they might not want to burden anyone, therefore they restrain from asking for assistance. Another risk factor is that individuals may feel that they need to reveal particular information that may be embarrassing or confidential. However, most participants placed a strong emphasis on the need of a support structure, particularly with balancing work and personal responsibilities.

5.4.2 Awareness of Organisational Support

Just as social support plays an important role in an individual's life, the support an employee receives from an organisation plays an equally important role especially

when it comes to work life balance. The support from an organisation can come in various forms such as wellness programmes, a good organisational policy that speaks to the needs of the employees and added training that educates employees on how to deal with challenges. The support that employees receive from their employers varies in terms of the airline they are employed at. Various airlines have different strategies and initiatives in place to assist their employees. A large majority of both employers and professionals believe that a workplace wellness program can have a positive effect on organisational productivity (Cotton & Hart, 2003).

Flight attendant 1 indicated that the airline provides four holiday tickets for the employee's family during the year. These rebate tickets allow the employees family to go with them on holiday four times a year at no cost. Flight attendants can make use of these rebates when they choose to. However, flight attendant 1 feels that she rarely uses these rebates as it is more responsibility for them to look after her family and see to their needs while she is working. Additionally, flight attendants 1 and 2 emphasise other initiatives the organisation has put in place to assist them such as counselling services, training on stress and lifestyle management.

Flight attendants 3 and 4 on the other hand states that not much assistance is provided by their organisation. Both flight attendants feel that they are required to work many consecutive days without a break and when they experiencing trauma, specifically related to workplace incidents, there is minimal assistance. Flight attendant 3 describes a traumatic incident that occurred on board, and thereafter she was required to work the next day. Evidence from the interview is provided below:

> "My organisation did not provide anything not even medical assistance. When you go through a decompression, you not supposed to fly for the next 48 hours, that's the rule and there's a decompression chamber, we supposed to be sent there. Nothing was done. I never even got an email to say "are you ok" or whatever. I was just told that I need to work the next day and that was it."

It is evident that organisations do play a vital role in an employee's work life balance. Increased support from the organisations leads to increased productivity and lower turnover. In a study based on perceived organisational support, it is reported that 59% of employers and 56% of professionals believe their organisation does not do enough to support employee health and wellbeing (Amazue & Onyishi, 2015).

Figure 5.3
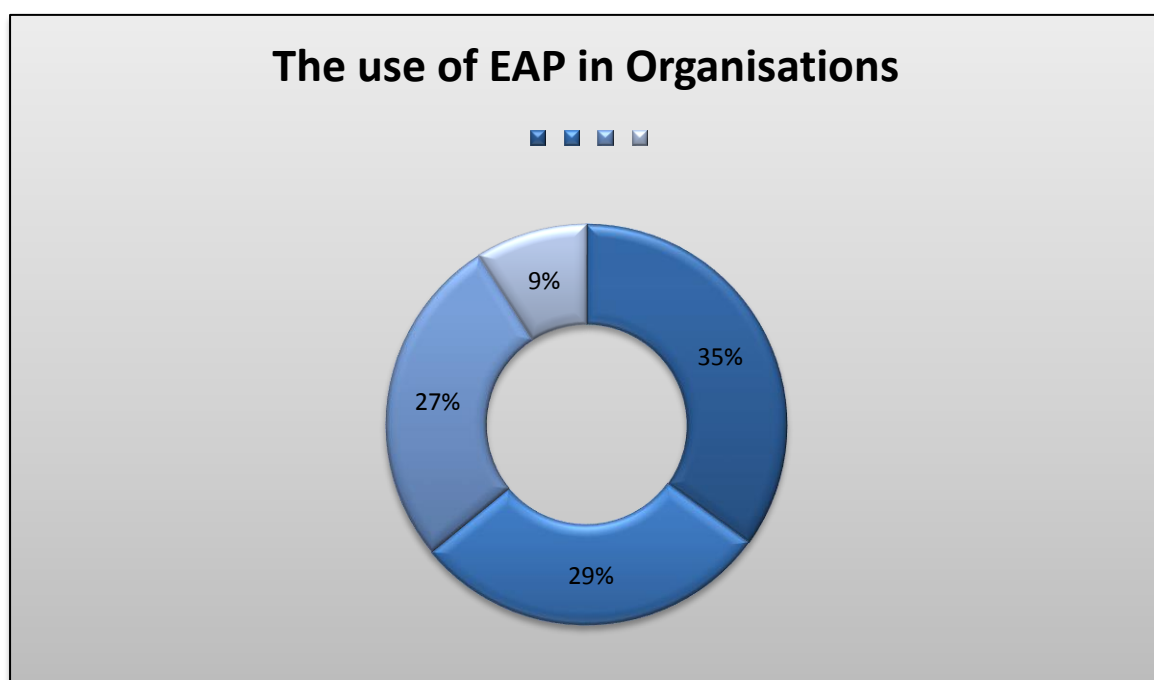
In the above figure, it indicates that 35% of wellness programs are offered in organisations but are partially implemented, ineffective and/or poorly utilised. Approximately 29% suggests that a wellness program is offered and is fully implemented, effective and/or highly utilised. About 27% suggests that no wellness program is offered and the organisation has no plans to implement one. Lastly, 9% suggests that no wellness program is offered but organisation has plans to (Amazue & Onyishi, 2015).

Theme 4

5.5) Culture

The role of women may differ in terms of the culture she is from. Some cultures are more traditional in the way it requires women to act. Culture can be defined as "an integrated pattern of human knowledge, beliefs, and behaviour" (Salami, 2002, p. 57). Some cultures have strict regulations regarding a woman's role in society. These cultures place some emphasis on collectivism whereby family is seen as an individual's priority especially when it comes to a woman's role. On the other hand the western culture places an emphasis on individualism. In these cultures women enjoy more liberties in terms of career choices and domestic responsibilities. According to Fernandez (2007), individualism is conceptualised as a preference for a free social network in which individuals look after themselves and their immediate families, however the main focus is on themselves, while collectivism is conceptualised as a tight social network in which individuals, in exchange for unquestioned loyalty, can expect that members of their family and group will look after them. Moreover, western cultures tend to be associated with an individualistic outlook, whereby non-western cultures are associated with collectivism outlook (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Evidence from the interview is provided below:

"I try and cook in the morning before I leave which is like 3am but sometimes I'm so tired from all the flights I just tell my husband to buy something. He doesn't cook; you know Indian men and the kitchen"

"Generally if you look at the airline industry you will notice not many Indian women but specifically Muslim. There are some but when they married they tend to change jobs because in our society like the Muslim an Indian society the men don't do much. You will rarely find a male doing the washing or cooking so my culture is still set in that way and that is where my challenges also come from".

In a study conducted on the socio-cultural beliefs on women's career progression amongst Indian women, it is reported that neither their husbands nor their male relatives have acceded to the changes ushered in by the era of gender equality promotions. Furthermore, in the same study evidence suggested that in some cultures such as African and Indian; husbands refuse to eat meals other than the ones prepared by their wives (Kirai & Kobia, 2012). Also, in the same study conducted by Kirai and Kobia it is reported that 56% of the respondents perceived social cultural beliefs as a barrier to women career progression. Moreover, Naidoo (2000) suggests that most of the Indian men are conditioned from childhood that the kitchen is a woman's domain and any involvement within that area would be discouraged.

Furthermore, in the same study, it was found that black women in South Africa faced significant challenges in breaking through the glass ceiling. In addition, Indian and Coloured women experienced similar barriers but had somewhat more room for advancement (Naidoo, 2000).

5.6 Limitations of study

In the study that was conducted, there are few limitations that will be outlined. A qualitative research design was used to undertake his particular study. According to various studies, it is evident that various methods of collecting data strengthen the reliability and validity of the study. However, in this case only interviews were used to collect the data. According to Newman and Benz (1998) there are various disadvantages pertaining to this design. Using a qualitative research design can be seen as subjective as the information provided by participants is dependent on their emotions, feelings and perceptions. Furthermore, content analysis was used to analyse the data. Along with its strengths, content analysis consists of certain shortcomings which may impact the study. Content analysis can be extremely time consuming if it done manually and it is also subjected to increase in error in comparison to other methods.

Furthermore, the sample size consisted of 6 female flight attendants who were sufficient for this study as similar themes emerged from their interview however, an increase in sample may have represented better findings and more themes could have emerged from the data.

This then leads to the point of the limitation of the different races and backgrounds of flight attendants. Only female flight attendants were used in this study which only allowed for a limited view of the topic. Lastly, the flight attendants that were interviewed resided only in the Western Cape; therefore the findings from the study cannot be generalised to female's flight attendants who reside outside of this province.

Lastly, only one method used to gather the data. Face to face interviews were used as a method of collecting data. Interviews can be somewhat subjective; therefore it makes it challenging to determine the validity and reliability of the study. The use of one method being used to collect data is known as mono method bias (Kammeyer-Mueller & Steel, 2010). Various research suggests that it is more advantageous to use more than one method when collecting data, as it enhances the research findings.

5.7 Strengths of study

A qualitative research design was used to explore the lived experiences of female flight attendants and work life balance. In-depth interviews were used to collect data and these interviews were done face to face. This allowed the researcher to probe for more information where necessary in order to address the initial research questions that were proposed in chapter. This method allowed the researcher to gain information from flight attendants that allowed them to share their experiences and feelings with regards to work life balance. This made the data more rich and meaningful. This method was most appropriate for this research topic as it provided more insight in comparison to a quantitative method. The information collected was transcribed verbatim and content analysis was used to analyse the data. A coding

scheme was adopted in which information that was received and were put into categories which is presented in chapter 4.

5.8 Recommendations

5.8.1 Recommendations for the organisation

It is recommended for organisations to adopt various strategies to assist their employees in their home or work life. This can be done by creating more structure around rosters whereby all employees get an equal amount of weekends off. This will make their work life more predictable. Furthermore, more time can be spent with better arrangements for auspicious holidays such as Christmas. Specifically on South Africa, there is such a diverse group of individuals; accommodating particular employees on particular days should be somewhat achievable.

Airlines should create more awareness around the health risks for flight attendants, particularly females with regards to pregnancy. The perception of pregnancy being frowned upon by employers should be changed.

More training on functional coping mechanisms should be given to employees. This can be done by providing training on stress and time management. This is a healthier way coping as opposed to dysfunctional coping strategies. In addition, it is recommended for organisations to provide a more nutritious meal for flight attendants. This will assist in making a more contribution towards their health.

5.8.2 Recommendations for female flight attendants

It is advised for employees to plan in advance how they will prioritise work and home demands. They can be able to do this by requesting to have their rosters earlier so that they can plan their time and create more structure for themselves and their dependents.

Employees can improve lines of communication with their employer. When they experience something traumatic they need to communicate this to their employer as

well as offer suggestions on how better their well-being. Employees can use additional forms of resources and assistance where necessary such as asking family members for assistance. For those flight attendance without a well-developed support structures – the support that they receive from the organisation become vitally important.

In order to feel energised, employees must maintain healthy lifestyle. This can be done by increasing their water intake, eating healthy, getting regular medical check-ups and improve their psychological well-being through making use of employee assistance programs.

5.9 Further research possibilities

The study can be extended in a number of ways to further contribute to the canon of knowledge with regard to the work life balance of female flight attendance. A quantitative research design can be adopted whereby a researcher can test the objectivity of the themes that were provided in this study. Also, a mixed method approached can also be used. A mixed method is proved to hold much more objectivity, reliability and validity than opposed to a single approach.

Another research possibility could be in the same area of work life balance, however, with a specific focus on male flight attendants. Even though the industry of flight attendants is dominated by females, there has been an increase in employment of male flight attendants. It is becoming more common and less unusual to see male flight attendants than previously. Another possibility is looking at males work life balance in all industries. The changing workforce and societal norms is changing and males are now performing certain duties that "a female would previously do" such as cooking. Along with this, divorce rates have increased and there are some men who have to tackle fatherhood as a single parent.

Enhancing internal validity of qualitative research can be done by utilising various strategies that were not used in this study. Such strategies that can be used in the

future are the use of triangulation. This is where the researcher makes use of more than one method in collecting and also analysing the data.

Lastly, various additional findings emerged during the analysis process in which can be used for further research. These include:

Limited career opportunities after 40

Flight attendants were asked during the interview whether being a flight attendant can be a long term career. Flight attendants 1 and 2 felt that with a good support system this can be a long term career. However, flight attendants 3, 4, and 6 feel that this is the type of career to have when an individual is young and has minimal responsibilities. Flight attendant 3 particularly feels that there is no growth within this field. Also, flight attendants 5 felt that it could become a long term career if you do not have children, as this is an added responsibility.

Having children vs not having children

Flight attendants 2, 3 and 4 indicated that not having children or living alone makes it easier to balance personal and work life due to fewer commitments. It is evident that flight attendants 1, 5 and 6 struggled more to balance their work life due to the added responsibilities of their children.

Domestic vs International

Three of the flight attendants were employed at an airline where they were required to fly internationally. It is evident that there is a difference between domestic and international flights which impacts the trying to balance work and personal life. This could be due to the longer flight times and stop overs.

In summary, the additional themes that emerged from the study were not given due consideration due the space restrictions. However, it should be emphasised in future research due to the practical and scholarly implications of these findings.

5.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the various themes and sub themes were discussed. It is evident that work life balance still remains an issue in today's society, predominantly amongst women. The aim of this study was to explore the most important factors that influence work life balance of female flight attendants and what coping mechanisms can be employed to deal with stress. Part of the evidence that was gathered was in line with chapter 2, which discusses various literatures around the topic of work life balance. Evidence from the data suggests that these flight attendants experience several challenges such as health risks, domestic duties, emotional labour and inconsistent working which impact both their work and personal life. However, from the data collection and analysis, it is evident that this type of career is manageable with the right social support structures, coping strategies and organisational support. Furthermore, limitations and strengths of this study were discussed as well as other research areas to be explored in terms of work life balance. Lastly, recommendations were provided in this chapter, specifically aimed at individuals in the aviation industry which might be beneficial for both organisation and employee.

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