

Chapter 3

SANDWICH GENERATION WOMEN IN SEARCH FOR MEANINGFUL WORK AND LIFE

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses female managers' and entrepreneurs' views on lifelong learning. The main empirical data were drawn from interviews with 67 women participating in training and coaching programmes in South Savo, Finland, in 2017–2021. Many of the women belonged to the working sandwich generation (WSG). The particular focus was on how lifelong learning relates to these women's careers, wellbeing at work, work–life balance and search for meaningful lives. A model integrating women's earning, learning and meaning aspects of work and life was developed. The findings of the study show that considering women's fragmented work careers, lifelong learning is often crucial for them. For an individual, opportunities for lifelong learning and meaningful work assure personal development, wellbeing at work and a sustainable career. For employing organisations, offering opportunities for learning and meaningful work for their employees constitutes a competitive advantage.

1. INTRODUCTION

The change in Western countries towards service and knowledge economies has changed the demands of work. Organisations must renew themselves

continuously to keep up with the competition. Skilful management of human capital has become increasingly important for organisations (World Bank, 2019). It is obvious that there is a critical need for employee training and lifelong learning. Meanwhile, the growth of service industries has offered new career opportunities for women and increased women's working hours (Ngai & Petrongolo, 2017; World Bank, 2019).

Moreover, in the fast-changing world, people are increasingly searching for balance and meaning in their lives. Work and employment are no longer seen merely as a way to earn money, but people want their work to be interesting and meaningful, full of opportunities to learn new things and grow and consistent with their values. This applies especially to the younger generation, but this phenomenon can be seen in every age group today (CIPD, 2017).

This chapter discusses female managers' and entrepreneurs' views on lifelong learning. We build on theories of human capital (HC), lifelong learning and women's work-life balance. The particular focus of the study is on how lifelong learning relates to these women's careers, wellbeing at work and search for meaningful lives. Many of the women we interviewed belonged to the working sandwich generation (WSG). The research questions are as follows. (1) How do female managers and entrepreneurs, especially those belonging to the WSG, use lifelong learning in advancing their careers? (2) What is the role of lifelong learning in ensuring their wellbeing, work-life balance and meaningful lives?

The chapter is organised as follows. First, the literature is reviewed on the following themes: changes in the working life, theories and concepts related to HC and lifelong learning and the careers and work-life balance of women. Next, the methods and data collection are presented. Thereafter, the empirical findings of the study are discussed. Finally, a discussion and concluding remarks are presented.

2. THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK

Western countries have experienced a significant change in the structure of their economies in the recent decades, including weakening manufacturing sectors, growing service sectors and increasing usage of outsourcing (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). These changes have been reflected in the structures and demands of working life. HC and its constant improvement are extremely important.

In order to remain competitive, societies and businesses need an ever more highly educated and skilled workforce whose competences are regularly

updated (Aspin & Chapman, 2001). Skills readjustments for the changing requirements of working life must happen increasingly somewhere else than in compulsory education, and for that reason, lifelong learning is needed (World Bank, 2019). Further, people themselves need to take more responsibility for their career development. They must also ensure that they have the ability to learn and adapt, gain general competences that are valid across organisations and build strong social networks (Garavan, Morley, Gunnigle, & Collins, 2001; Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015; Terjesen, 2005). Nowadays, careers consist of repeated developmental cycles, and employees may change their jobs and organisations frequently or even have multiple careers, meaning that the careers become ‘boundaryless’ (Mirvis & Hall, 1994).

For organisations, this situation also means that if their employees feel that they are not constantly learning new things and growing in their work, they may feel stagnant and begin to search for new job opportunities (Rodriguez, 2008). Employers have to compete against each other to get the best employees. The best way is to pay attention to the motivational factors of work, in addition to money, by offering learning and developing opportunities at work, challenging and diverse tasks, social relations, good leadership, work–life balance, flexible timetables and working hours favouring employees (Kultalahti, 2015).

3. CONCEPTS AND CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF HC

Investments in people, for example, in their knowledge creation, education, training or health, increase their productivity. These investments can be called HC. The concept was taken into wider use after noticing in the 1950s that a major part of economic growth could not be explained by the increase in physical factors, such as machinery, number of workers or financial capital. The reason behind this growing residual was considered to be the increase of efficiency of labour; in other words, the increase of HC due to, for example, knowledge creation through education and training (Goldin, 2016).

Diverse definitions of the HC concept are built around the characteristics of people employed in organisations, some of them taking into account, besides intelligence, the ideas, skills, creativity, etc., of people, and also their wellbeing and learning potential (CIPD, 2017). The importance of learning and innovation has been emphasised in the definition of HC as: ‘the human factor in the organisation; the combined intelligence, skills and expertise ... capable of learning, changing, innovating and providing the creative thrust ...’ (Bontis, Dragonetti, Jacobsen, & Roos, 1999). The health and

wellbeing aspect has been emphasised, for example, by the World Bank ([Lim et al., 2018](#)).

Several other theories may be discussed in the context of HC. The resource-based view (RBV) was originally introduced by [Penrose \(1959\)](#), becoming one of the main theories of strategic management ([Newbert, 2007](#)). RBV describes how a company may gain sustainable competitive advantage using the resources it possesses. These resources have to be valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable ([Ambrosini & Bowman, 2009](#)). Based on RBV, organisational resources can be divided into three groups: physical and organisational capital resources and HC resources ([CIPD, 2017](#)).

RBV has been criticised for having a too-static view and failing to explain how resources can be developed and companies can adapt to dynamic and turbulent environments ([CIPD, 2017](#); [Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001](#)). Therefore, [Teece, Pisano, and Shuen \(1997\)](#) introduced the concept of dynamic capabilities (DC), referring to companies' ability to transform internal and external competences to respond to fast-changing environments. DCs are processes that attract, integrate, reconfigure and release resources to match or create market change ([Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000](#); [Wright et al., 2001](#)). They include four key processes: learning, reconfiguration, leveraging and creative integration ([Ambrosini & Bowman, 2009](#)).

Opponents of the HC perspective have also pointed out that seeing people as mere means and resources used in the economy is reminiscent of slavery ([Cockburn-Wooten, 2012](#); [Goldin, 2016](#)). Contradictions can arise if employers treat their employees merely as resources, while employees seek work which provides a sense of meaning in their lives. For an individual, the meaning aspect of work may be of the utmost importance. The formula for meaningful work includes that a person knows themselves and understands what is expected, and how to realise the objectives of work ([Steger & Dik, 2010](#)). It has also been stated that besides the characteristics of the work itself and the person's sense of self, a sense of balance is also needed ([Cartwright & Holmes, 2006](#)). For many people, learning and development opportunities in work are important aspects of meaningful work ([CIPD, 2017](#)).

4. CONCEPTS AND CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF LIFELONG LEARNING

There are several ways to frame lifelong learning. In any case, the concept includes that all people, whatever their age, need to learn, change and improve in order to keep up with the demands of changing working life. The personal-level

definition of lifelong learning by Jarvis (2007, p. 123) emphasised a ‘process of transforming experience into knowledge and skills, etc. and resulting in a changed person, one who has grown and developed as a result of the learning’. The European Commission (2001) similarly defined the concept broadly as ‘all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective’. This kind of wide definition is not bound to viewpoints of merely adult learning or economy, and includes all learning activities, ranging from formal and non-formal to informal and incidental.

Summarising these perspectives we can conclude that lifelong learning has at least three complementary objectives: *at the level of individuals*, personal fulfilment, active citizenship, employability and adaptability; *at the level of the economy*, innovation, economic progress and growth; and *at the level of society*, higher gross domestic product, social inclusion and wellbeing (Aspin & Chapman, 2001; European Commission, 2001).

Lifelong learning – as any learning – includes four types of learning: learning to know things (knowledge), learning to do things (skills), learning to become oneself (personal development) and learning to collaborate (Jarvis, 2007, p. 111). Furthermore, research has distinguished single-loop learning, meaning adapting to existing situations, and double-loop learning, challenging the status quo and enabling change (Kang, 2007). Research has shown that innovating small firms have adopted higher-order, that is, double-loop learning, and therefore are better at information management, compared to their counterparts (Chaston, Badger, & Sadler-Smith, 2001).

Despite the fact that lifelong learning is highly important in organisations, the demands of constant lifelong learning and especially courses offered by employers are not necessarily attractive to every employee. Jarvis (2007, p. 133) noted that employers cannot expect their employees to attend courses at their own expense and at times which endanger their work–life balance. It has been said that adults-as-learners want to be self-directed in their learning, are motivated to learn when they see needs learning would satisfy, have experience as the main resource in their learning and that their individual differences increase with age (Trotter, 2006).

5. CAREERS AND WORK–LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN

In constantly changing modern working life, people do not stay for decades working for the same employer in the same job, and they may even change their profession now and then. It has been claimed that today on average,

employees change job every 4.5 years (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007). Therefore, the traditional linear career models do not reflect the complex career developments of the contemporary workforce, and they are particularly unsuitable in relation to the careers of working women (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008). More importantly, organisational practices are no longer in line with the changing needs and attitudes of employees. This may lead to workers, but especially women, changing jobs, starting their own businesses or leaving the workforce entirely (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007, 2008). Related to women, there is also a new concept coined for this phenomenon, 'opt-out', referring to the migration of professional women from the workplace (Zimmerman & Clark, 2016).

There is a challenge around women's work-life balance with its roots in societal qualifications of 'a good mother' versus 'a good father', which are still different (James, 2013). These expectations reflect enduring attitudes that the main responsibility for taking care of home and children lies with women, limiting women's opportunities to work outside home and advance in their careers (Jewell, 2011; Rajahonka & Villman, 2019). According to European Union (EU) statistics, part-time work is much more common among women: 30% of women compared with 8% of men in 2019 worked in this way (European Commission, 2020). Furthermore, if women have more children, their employment percentage goes down; the opposite happens for men (European Union, 2020).

In the EU, only one-third of managers are women and women's salaries are lower compared to men's (on average 15%, but for managers 23%) (European Union, 2020). Furthermore, top-level positions are still extremely male dominated. The share of female chief executive officers in listed companies in EU member countries is on average 6.3% (FinnCham, 2018). The share of women executives has been increasing, particularly in the younger generation, but still it can be stated that the 'statistics are the result of a combination of some women plateauing in middle management, and other women leaving their employers' (Walsh, Fleming, & Enz, 2016).

Several issues have been mentioned as reasons why women do not advance in their careers. Stead and Elliott (2013) mentioned 'floating stereotypes', that is, that leadership is still perceived as 'men's knowledge'. In addition, it has been argued that the interrupted nature of women's careers due to family commitments, etc., depresses women's HC, leading to fewer promotions and lower pay (Terjesen, 2005). Moreover, women have lower work-related social capital, because their networks fulfil more social than utilitarian purposes (Schuller, 2017; Terjesen, 2005).

For women, becoming an entrepreneur may be a way of balancing family responsibilities and work, but also a way of escaping the 'glass ceiling'

(Rajahonka & Villman, 2019; Terjesen, 2005; Walsh et al., 2016). Female entrepreneurs represent about 30% of entrepreneurs in Europe. In particular, women own the clear majority (78%) of one-person businesses (European Commission, 2014; Pappas, Papagerasimou, Drigas, Raftopoulos, & Nikolaidis, 2017). Research has shown that women are motivated to start their own businesses because they want to increase their independence and flexibility, have new challenges and develop their skills and experiences, whereas for men, economic factors are often the most important motivation to start a business (Akehursta, Simarro, & Mas-Tur, 2012).

Several metaphors were presented in research describing women's challenges in their careers or work–life balance. Carli and Eagly (2016) described women's careers as a labyrinth, because although there has been slow improvement in women's admission to leadership positions, they still have challenges throughout their careers, fighting against gender stereotypes and discrimination in wages and promotions, a lack of networks and greater responsibility for childcare.

Sullivan and Mainiero (2007, 2008) illustrated women's careers with a kaleidoscope model, where changing patterns of life are formed whenever the tube is rotated and pieces of glass in the kaleidoscope move and make a new decoration, arranging women's relationships and roles in new ways. Three mirrors in the rotating kaleidoscope reflect different aspects of women's lives: *authenticity*, being true to oneself; *balance*, making decisions so that all parts of life are taken coherently into account; *challenge*, demonstrating autonomy, control and responsibility, and at the same time learning and growing. The importance of these aspects varies depending on circumstances and as women age. Sullivan and Mainiero (2008) observed that young women are often keen on searching for challenges, middle-aged women with or without family responsibilities for balance and mature women for authenticity. In each time and situation, women fine-tune their sights through the kaleidoscope bearing in mind all aspects to find the best fit matching their needs considering work, relationships and prospects. In particular, women often work out their career actions in light of their impact on other people around them, hence practising relationalism (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008). The people impacted may be spouses and children, but also ageing parents, friends, people met at hobbies or volunteering work, etc.

Sullivan and Mainiero reminded that one of the keystones expressed through authenticity in their model is that women – as all people – search for meaning in their work and lives. As a result, women frequently want to work in organisations whose missions are in harmony with their own values (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008). Largely in the same way as Sullivan and

Mainiero, O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) also discovered that younger women living in the so-called 'idealistic achievement phase' see no limits and have trust in their possibilities to 'do it and have it all'. Middle-aged women, in the 'pragmatic endurance phase', have multiple responsibilities and 'muddle in the middle' and mature women (aged 46–65) see their careers as opportunities to learn and to make a difference to others. O'Neil and Bilimoria called this third career stage the 'reinventive contribution phase' and claimed that for mature women, success means recognition, respect and integration of life. Therefore, particularly these women want to contribute meaningfully through their work. However, it is important for all working women to get support in achieving a better work–life balance (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005).

Because there are often breaks and changes in women's careers, women need to adapt and learn flexibility in relation to their lives and careers. It has also been claimed that particularly human and social capital and adaptability contribute to women's employability (Zimmerman & Clark, 2016). Considering women's fragmented work careers, lifelong learning, that is, updating knowledge and skills by attending courses or learning by doing while working, is often crucial.

It is also worth mentioning that women aged 45 and over increasingly find themselves in situations where they must combine their career with care for their loved ones from two generations. They are called the WSG. In Western countries, core families are typically quite small. This leads to situations where there are not too many siblings sharing care responsibilities for elderly parents. In ageing societies with diminishing public funding for the care sector, people live longer in their own homes. WSG women have to balance their work and care responsibilities. For example, they may feel permanent hurry and stress, or they may not be able to work or pursue for their career interests (Kärki, Marjanen, & Hernandez, 2019). This situation of double care tasks also impacts the health of the WSG (See Chapter 7 in this book 'Sandwich Generation in the Workplace – International Comparative Research' by Dorota Kwiatkowska-Ciotucha and Urszula Zaluska).

Next, we present the research design and discuss the findings of the empirical study.

6. RESEARCH DESIGN

Here, we discuss theories, concepts and models of lifelong learning and human resources based on the current literature. For the background, we conducted a literature review of theories related to lifelong learning, HC and women's work–life balance.

The empirical data were drawn from interviews with women who participated in training and coaching programmes in South Savo, Finland, in 2017–2021. The data were collected mainly through face-to-face interviews. The first phase involved around 40 individual interviews with female managers and entrepreneurs, conducted at the beginning of the DigiJoko training programmes (2017–2019). Seventeen of the same women attended two focus group discussions at the end of the programmes. Based on these interviews, an initial version of the model integrating women's earning, learning and meaning aspects of work and life was developed. Furthermore, in the second phase, when conducting interviews with women attending the Time4Help Finland project (2019–2021) at the beginning of the training, work–life balance was discussed and additional focus group interviews were conducted with one of the groups (five women) and with the Time4Help Finland project steering group (five women) in 2020 and 2021 to gain a deeper understanding about how working women tackle their work–life balance and care responsibilities. Based on these interviews, to better consider the dynamics of women's care responsibilities, the model was slightly modified. The data analysis process was multi-staged. The data were first coded, and then the codes were theorised to link the collected data with theories.

Qualitative methods were used because we want to increase understanding of how women relate to lifelong learning, and how lifelong learning relates to their careers, wellbeing at work, work–life balance and search for meaningful lives. Qualitative research methods are particularly appropriate in the early concept development phases of research, when there is a need to increase understanding of real-life events and a need to generate clarifications for phenomena or create and test theories (Eisenhardt, 1989; Voss, Tsikriktsis, & Frohlich, 2002).

The point of view of the research is that of an individual, especially a female manager or entrepreneur. Themes of the interviews and group discussions dealt with, among other issues, education, career, skills, lifelong learning, life situation, work–life balance and wellbeing.

The training and coaching programmes were arranged especially for women to develop their leadership skills suitable for the fast-changing world. The women attending the training and coaching programmes were working in several sectors, about half (33 women) as entrepreneurs, and the rest as managers (23) or experts (11) in companies and other organisations. The most common sectors were consulting (21 women), health and care (16) and other service sectors (18). Their ages ranged between 35 and 65 years, about one-sixth of them being under 45, two-thirds between 45 and 55 and one-sixth older. A total of 67 women attended the training and coaching programmes,

in the first phase (DigiJoko) 42, and in the second phase (Time4Help) 25 women. Almost all the women in both programmes had children, but we did not ask about their other caring responsibilities. For confidentiality reasons, the names and organisations of the women are not given.

7. FINDINGS

Next, based on the literature and empirical findings, a model is introduced, taking into account different aspects in women’s lives and careers. The model uses concepts presented in the literature, and shows how earning, learning and meaning aspects of work and entrepreneurship are entangled (Fig. 1).

The model was developed based on our empirical findings and the literature, the main inspiration being the kaleidoscope model presented by Sullivan and Mainiero (2007, 2008). The model is dynamic and its elements are in constant movement. Every aspect in the model affects the other aspects, so that debating and balancing the aspects is the main issue of interest for women. Situations change constantly, demanding repeated evaluations of how to find the best balance between the aspects.

The learning aspect of the model includes personal development, learning new things to advancing the career or just for fun. The meaning aspect includes



Source: Authors’ original work.

Fig. 1. A Model Integrating Women’s Earning, Learning and Meaning Aspects of Life, Work and Entrepreneurship.

personal values and motivations, hobbies and interests, care responsibilities, living environment and life situation, but also family, friends and other important social relationships. The earning aspect includes work and career, and the basis for the individual's economic welfare and livelihood. These aspects are linked, and the idea is to try to find the best balance between them in ever-changing life situations. If one of the aspects consumes a woman's energy and resources, this reflects in other aspects. For example, if care responsibilities are very challenging and eating up all the energy and resources, this implicates challenges and a narrowing perspectives in work and personal development. Life becomes a struggle from day to day, and no plans or dreams for a better future can be prepared or realised. On the other hand, if, for example, the family situation is empowering, there are positive reflections in the earning and learning aspects; or vice versa, if the situations concerning work or learning are excellent, this brings extra resources to the meaning aspect, for example, care responsibilities.

For many of the interviewed women, lifelong learning seems to be a driver for every aspect presented in the model. Learning generates new prospects for finding both earning and meaning in life. Learning strengthens self-esteem and increases wellbeing, but also opens new career options. Learning new things also increases women's HC, as it typically offers new and improved tools to succeed at work better, and in this way increases the meaningfulness of work. Work is meaningful if the employee feels that she has control over her work, if she can constantly learn something new, and if she has opportunities to apply the new knowledge and skills.

One of our interviewees stated that it is most important for her that her work is meaningful, and this has occasionally led to bad career choices, because she has changed jobs whenever she had the feeling that she did not have control over her work. Another woman pointed out that after she had understood that she only had one life and stopped trying to separate work and the rest of her life, things got easier. Based on the interviews, we can argue that besides family-related reasons, changes of interests or financial reasons can also sometimes make radical decisions necessary for a woman, such as turning her career around and learning a new profession.

Next, the aspects of the model and the reasoning and choices women make in their lives are illustrated with quotations from the interviews in more detail.

Debating between learning and earning:

I have studied constantly for 10 years while working all the time. I think that my studies have been a big reason why I am in this job right now.

Attending to training has given me self-confidence, strength and courage to think about, how to renew my business Learning is a big thing, but the benefits you usually only see later.

Debating between earning and meaning:

I started my own business. I liked my job, but I had a wish to work how I wanted.

It has been hard to find a balance between family and entrepreneurship, but if I had had a regular job, it would not have been possible to give so much time to the family. But then again, work has been very important for me – it has given me time for myself and a break from family and its worries.

We moved to this town when my husband started his job here. My own job has to be flexible because I have a family.

Debating between learning and meaning:

Training, meeting other people and discussing with them has been an investment to myself and my wellbeing at work.

Wellbeing and balance aspects:

I remember having first customers coming to us when my third child was five days old Flexibility is the first thing that comes into my mind when I think about balancing my career and family life.

There were signs of burnout. Now I have tried to learn to say ‘no’ at work.

Everybody makes millions of life choices! Getting older makes you more conscious about them.

8. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of our study show that the fragmented careers of women make lifelong learning of the utmost importance. Lifelong learning is a driver for every aspect of life, assuring both personal development and wider career opportunities. Wider opportunities offer flexibility whenever situations

change. Flexibility is one of the success factors in how WSG women can deal with change. Changing situations demand constant evaluations of how to find the best balance between different aspects.

Many of the interviewees emphasised the critical role of studies and continuous learning in advancing their careers. Further, many explained that they had advanced in their careers by learning new things at work, getting involved in new projects and not being afraid of challenges. Moreover, lifelong learning makes life more interesting and creates a sense of meaning in life and work. Meaningful work includes components of self-knowledge and reaching for valuable life goals. Learning opportunities in work are important aspects when pursuing meaningfulness at work.

Having meaningful work with lifelong learning opportunities is also an important balancing factor for many of the interviewed women, improving their wellbeing. In other words, a very important aspect related to their work–life balance is that they have options to learn and develop while working. In addition, the findings of our study show that women are constantly balancing different aspects of their lives. Previous research and the empirical findings in this study suggest that reaching an appropriate work–life balance is a very important aspect in WSG women’s lives. It must still be remembered that for many women, work–life balance is not easy to reach, but learning to know oneself better offers methods towards a better work–life balance.

Our research shows that learning creates a virtuous circle in many mature women’s lives. Through learning they manage their jobs better, and consequently, the job does not consume energy, but on the contrary, releases energy into their private life. At the same time, an opportunity opens for them to learn something new, based on which they can build meaningful lives for themselves. But then again, if the family situation is challenging leading to the individual just struggling from day to day, this is reflected in their work, where the perspectives become narrower and the struggle for survival replaces development initiatives or plans for the future.

Our findings support the previous research, as we find that mature women want to contribute meaningfully through their work (see [O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005](#)) and search for authenticity, but at the same time, practise relationalism by thinking how their career choices affect other people around them (see [Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008](#)).

For employing organisations, offering meaningful work opportunities for their mature female employees and advancing their work–life balance establishes a significant competitive advantage that is worth pursuing. It has been shown that if employees perceive that their employer supports their career development, they have better job satisfaction ([Walsh et al., 2016](#)).

This means that organisations should offer their mature female employees opportunities to learn constantly and flexibly and build human and social capital while working. Further, organisations should offer women challenging, ‘entrepreneurial’ or business development roles and proper career advancement, as well as flexible working arrangements, which guarantee them a good work–life balance (Kultalahti, 2015; Terjesen, 2005).

In fact, cherishing the work–life balance of all employees is an extremely important issue in modern working life that every employer should address. This has become even more important with the increasing use of information and communication technologies at work. Consequently, for many workers work has become much more flexible. On the one hand, this is extremely positive, because an employee can decide when and where to work. On the other hand, there is a danger of work sneaking into leisure time if an employee is not able to draw the line between work and private life (Rajahonka & Villman, 2019). This aspect could be seen in the interviews of this study.

Our study also corroborates the observations presented in previous research that today’s working life does not entirely fulfil the needs and expectations of modern employees, something especially true for women (Grönlund & Öun, 2018; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007). Namely, many of the interviewed women in this study had chosen to become entrepreneurs, because they felt that meaningfulness of work and work–life balance were easier to reach that way in changing life situations.

The chapter contributes to the discussion on lifelong learning and the mechanisms of how it can help advance women’s meaningful and well-balanced careers and lives. The limitations of this study include that the empirical material was gathered from a rather small group of women in South Savo, Finland. The data are rather limited and therefore, the conclusions may not be widely generalisable. More research is needed on women’s careers and on the effects of lifelong learning and better work–life balance on organisational success.

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