



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**BOUNDARY WORK TACTICS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH WORK-
FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG FEMALE TEACHERS**

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**Bachelor of Science (Honours)
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**BOUNDARY WORK TACTICS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH WORK-
FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG FEMALE TEACHERS**

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
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Final Year Project Report

Masters

PhD

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Gred

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this study was to investigate the relationship between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict among female teachers. A questionnaire was administered to female teachers at a semi-government secondary school in Miri, Sarawak. Therefore, a number of 82 questionnaires were successfully completed using a Google Form. To test the hypotheses, Spearman correlation was used, and the results indicate that boundary work tactics, which include behavioral tactics, temporal tactics, physical tactics, and communicative tactics, have a significant relationship with work-family conflict. Multiple regression, on the other hand, was used to test the strength of the correlation between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict, and the findings demonstrate a very strong correlation between both variables with $R = 0.983$, $p = 0.000$. The study's findings may provide valuable information and a knowledge base for both practitioners and future researchers in order to improve current work-life balance legislation.

Keywords: Boundary work tactics, Work-Family Conflict, Female Teachers

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

In the 21st century, becoming a teacher is a challenging career that requires both mental and physical endurance. This statement is strongly agreed by NHS Scotland (2003) that describes the teaching profession as the most stressful occupation. Factors such as poor working conditions, student misbehavior, a lack of teaching resources, overloading with non-teaching responsibilities, and students' poor attitudes toward their work are believed to have become a major sources of stress among teachers.

After the outbreak of pandemic COVID-19, teachers all over the world have been required to work from home and conduct their classes through online. Courtesy of the advances in technology nowadays, the classes are able to proceed even though they are in the midst of a pandemic. Due to this situation, teachers may need to explore existing learning platforms to conduct their classes, either using video conferencing or preparing a pre-record video that is suitable for their students. Therefore, many important aspects are taken into account, including coverage, places and the effectiveness of delivering the lessons.

Teachers, like students, may encounter difficulties when conducting virtual classes, particularly boomers. According to Puspitasari et al., (2020), boomer teachers face a variety of challenges, including a lack of ICT skills, internet connectivity, time management, and student accessibility. These problems are difficult to resolve as they come from uncontrollable situations. Hence, due to these circumstances, teachers might come up with other alternatives, such as using a simple application, for example, WhatsApp or Telegram, to post the learning materials.

On the other hand, the new working method (working from home) has a significant impact on the lives of the employees, including teachers. As reported by Thorstensson (2020), working from home may influence employee productivity, especially among female workers. This situation is the same faced by female teachers, especially those who are already married and have children. As studied by Wallnas and Jendle, female teachers experience a greater stressful teaching profession than male teachers (Wallnas & Jendle, 2017). Addison and Yankyera (2015) strongly concur, stating that the stressor (female teachers) is overburdened with daily responsibilities, school workload, and individual obligations. Therefore, it is crucial for female teachers to implement boundaries between work and family to prevent work-family conflict.

Boundaries in work-life balance are known as boundary work tactics that consist of several tactics, such as behavioural tactics, temporal tactics, physical tactics and communicative tactics. The concept of boundary work tactics describes how people construct, deconstruct, and maintain the boundaries between home and work (Nippert-Eng, 1996). As a result, these tactics have different ways or methods of dealing with work-family conflicts that may affect one or both domains.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict among female teachers at SMK St. Columba, based in Miri.

1.2 Problem of Statement

The changing diversity of the family structure has become a concern among today's practitioners. The escalating number of women participating in the workforce has triggered an abrupt change in how individuals balance their time between work and family domains. Female teachers, on the other hand, are not exempted from encountering work-family conflict in their daily lives (Cinamon & Rich, 2003). Therefore, this conflict is believed to be solvable by implementing boundary work tactics (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2009).

Although there was a study conducted to determine the relationship between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict among female employees (Bandar et al., 2016), the findings, on the other hand, only apply to female employees from the private sector and are not applicable to other occupations. This is due to the fact that different occupations have varying job scopes and working environments. Thus, this prompted the researcher to conduct the study in the teaching profession, as according to Punia & Kamboj (2013), "teachers encounter challenges in balancing their professional and personal lives due to the lack of boundaries between work and life domains."

Previous study by Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton (2006) suggested that future researchers should conduct boundary work tactics topics by linking them to other variables that may have a significant impact on the tactics. Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct a study to investigate the relationship between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict. Conversely, Golden (2021) found a link between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict in his study. This result strengthens the purpose of the researcher in conducting the study by involving both variables (boundary work tactics and work-family conflict).

Many studies on boundary work tactics topics have been conducted in western countries (Langley et al., 2019; Gudeta & Engen, 2018; Lirio, 2017; Wepfer et al., 2017; Knapp et al., 2013). However, there are a few studies that have been conducted in eastern countries, specifically Malaysia. Since different locations have different norms for boundary work tactics (Poster & Prasad, 2005), previous researchers (Allen, Cho, and Meier (2014); Kossek et al. (2012) proposed for future researchers to conduct boundary work tactics in different locations. As a result, the researcher decided to perform a boundary work tactics study in the local context using a new connecting variable in order to top up the current body of knowledge in the scope.

Hence, this study aims to investigate boundary work tactics and its relationship with work-family conflict among female teachers in SMK St. Columba, Miri.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General objective

To investigate the relationship between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict among female teachers.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- i) To identify the relationship between behavioural tactics and work-family conflict.
- ii) To identify the relationship between temporal tactics and work-family conflict.
- iii) To identify the relationship between physical tactics and work-family conflict.
- iv) To identify the relationship between communicative tactics and work-family conflict.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

Ha1 = There is a significant relationship between behavioural tactics and work-family conflict among female teachers.

Ha2 = There is a significant relationship between temporal tactics and work-family conflict among female teachers.

Ha3 = There is a significant relationship between physical tactics and work-family conflict among female teachers.

Ha4 = There is a significant relationship between communicative tactics and work-family conflict among female teachers.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

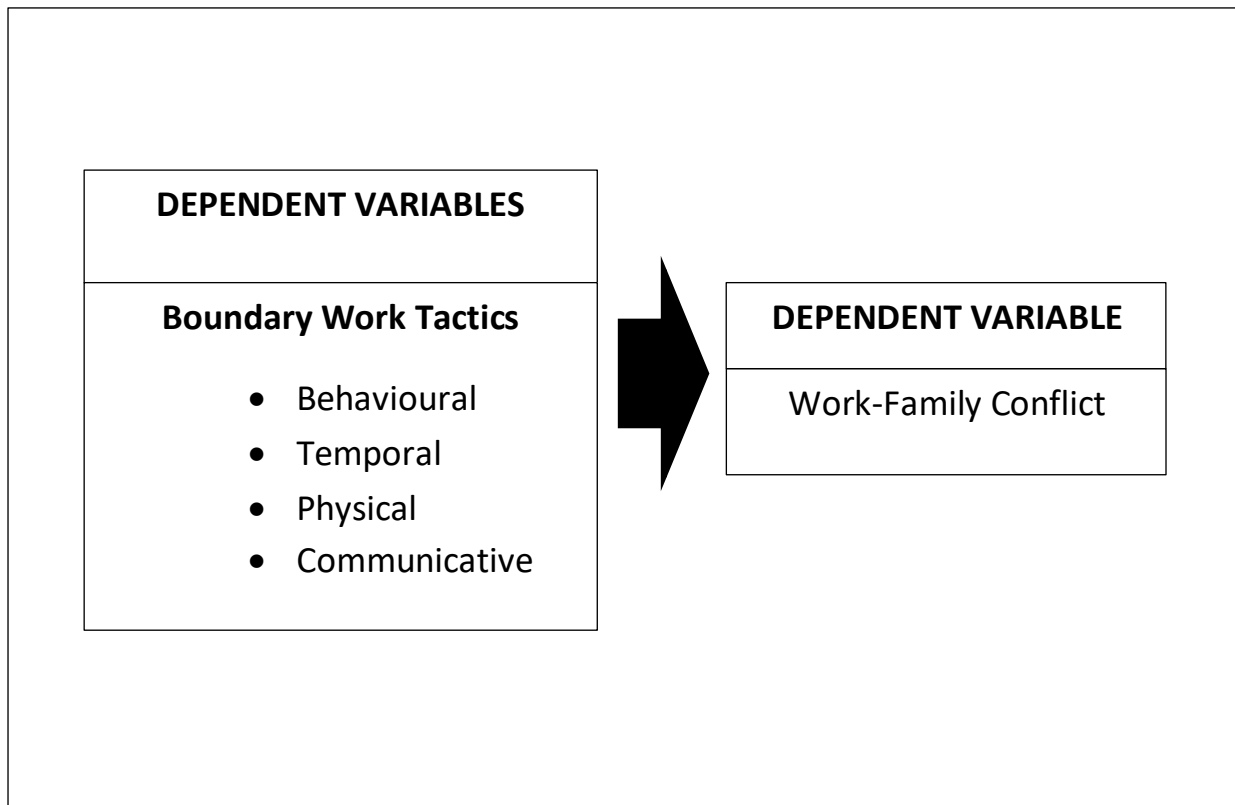


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

1.6 Significant of Study

This study will improve the current body of knowledge on the importance of creating boundaries between work and non-work domains to prevent work-family conflict among female teachers. The proper boundaries between work and non-work domains will help the female teachers to attain a decent work-life balance. Additionally, this study may contribute to useful insights for future researchers, readers, practitioners and other related parties. Apart from that, this study's outcomes will also help extend the current literature on boundary work tactics such as behavioural, temporal, physical and communicative. On the other side, this study was carried out to fill in the gap as stated in the problem statement.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

This study consists of several limitations that may affect the outcomes' accuracy. Firstly, this research sample was among female teachers in SMK St. Columba, Miri. Only female teachers from these secondary schools are required to provide the data.

Hence, the research findings only represent the sample size, not the whole population. Apart from that, since the study needs to carry out in a short period, the researcher has to ignore other aspects related to work-family conflict among the female teachers.

1.8 Definition of Term

Terms	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition
Boundary Work Tactics	Boundary work tactics referred to various "work-family decisions" made by individuals to recalibrate the work-home boundary negotiation (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006)	In this study, boundary work tactics refer to as strategies that use by the female teachers to cope up with their imbalance work-life.
Work-Family Conflict	Role conflict that emerges from the incompatibility of certain aspects of the job requirements arises from work and family environment (Greenhaus et al., 1989).	In this study, work-family conflict refers to as the outputs of imbalance work-life among the female teachers.

Table 1 Conceptual and Operational Definition of Terms

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher has discussed the background of the study, the problem of the statement, research objectives, research hypotheses, conceptual framework, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study and the definition of terms. The following chapter will discuss the literature relevant to this study.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the literature on the relationship between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict among female teachers. The chapter will clarify the discussion of the study's variables, the theory that will justify the study, and previous research findings to support the study.

2.2 Variables related to the study

2.2.1 Boundary Work Tactics

The development of technology in communication has changed the traditional working norms whereby employees nowadays can discuss their work through instant messaging platforms, namely as WhatsApp, Telegram, Wechat, Facebook Messenger and Skype. These platforms provide various functions that are useful, such as message delivery, document delivery, video call, voice note, location sharing and contact sharing. These platforms are free and available as users can install them on their smartphones via the Play store or the Apple store. On the other hand, employees might also use video conferencing platforms such as ZOOM, WeBex, Google Meet, and Microsoft Team to communicate or hold meetings with their colleagues. These conferencing platforms are also widely used by many people, especially those who are working from home.

Working from home is a new normal for employees after the pandemic COVID-19 attack in 2019. Many employers, profit organizations and businesses all over the world are implementing the 'work from home' method as an alternative to work. This alternative is used as a measure to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. While implementing this

method, technology plays a vital role in facilitating employees to systematically complete their tasks (Kapur, 2019). The use of technology does make employees' lives much easier. However, if there is no boundary between work and home when using technology, it can result in interference in one of the domains (Adkins & Premaux, 2014). As argued by Nippert-Eng (1996), individuals must engage in boundary work, which is described as efforts to construct, dismantle, or preserve the work-home border in response to inconsistencies between work and home domains. A past study by Park & Jex (2001) indicates that communication/information technologies (CIT) such as email and mobile phones may lead to work-family interference. This statement is fully supported by the findings from Ghislieri et al. (2017) study, whereby the researchers specify the usage of technology in work has a positive relationship with work-family conflict. When this happens, it can cause an imbalance of work- life and dissatisfaction (Hughes & Bonzionelos, 2007).

In attempt to settle the conflict, the individual may need to establish a boundary between the work and home domains. Therefore, there are several examples of boundary work tactics that the individual can use, such as behavioural, temporal, physical and communicative (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2009). These boundaries have different tactics to amend each individual who encounters conflict in work and home (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2006; Nippert-Eng, 1996). For instance, when the individual chooses to implement temporal tactics in their life, they are more likely to take a break from their work by going on a trip or getaways to recharge their energy (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2006). As for behavioural tactics, individuals who pose in this will use others to create the boundary between their work and home domains. Therefore, every individual has different preferences or methods to create a boundary between work and home domains (Carlson, Ferguson & Kachmar, 2016).

2.2.1.1 Behavioural Tactics

Kreiner and Hollensbe (2006) explain behavioral tactics as communicating expectations, confronting violators, using technology, and using others to establish a distinction between work and home domains. It is also often referred to as a social practice that can be used to alleviate work-life conflicts. In this study, for example, it can be described as female teachers' ability to work by using the knowledge and accessibility of other individuals who can aid with work-home boundaries.

2.2.1.2 Temporal Tactics

Temporal tactics, according to Kreiner and Hollensbe (2006), are methods that deal with time and how persons manipulate it. According to Aroujo, Tureta, and Aroujo (2015), temporal tactics are strategies for maximizing the efficiency of time spent and improving time-related conflicts that occur when job demands intersect with other demands, causing an imbalance in the work-home relationship. These tactics are classified into two different categories: controlling work time and finding respite. In this study, temporal tactics are described as female teachers' ability to perform by managing work-home time, seeking respite, and synchronizing tasks in order to prioritize the primary responsibility.

2.2.1.3 Physical Tactics

Nippert-Eng (1996) defines "work" and "home" as two physical domains with varying strengths in one of her boundary core components. According to the researcher, weak physical boundaries are easily crossed, while strong physical boundaries require a huge amount of effort to cross. A wall, a commuting distance, a window, a door, or lines are all examples of the boundaries. Therefore, physical tactics in this study can be described as the ability of female teachers to perform by manipulating physical boundaries, leveraging physical distance between domains, and managing physical objects in order to cope with the challenges of work and family roles.

2.2.1.4 Communicative Tactics

Aroujo et al. (2015) described communicative tactics as just a means of communicating with others about their personal circumstances and the borders within work and home. In this study, communicative tactics were described as female teachers' capacity to work through setting expectations, negotiating new expectations, and confronting offenders in their daily lives.

2.2.2 Work-Family Conflict

According to Greenhaus & Beutell (1985), work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict between work and family domain that is mutually incompatible due to different role demands.

Work-family conflict might occur when the work domain interferes with the family domain or vice versa (Zhang, Griffeth & Fried, 2012; Netemeyer et al., 1996). An earlier study by Duxburry & Higgins (1992) discloses work-family conflict among employees exists if they hold more than one role. To put it more simply, a conflict between work and family will take place if employees are expected to meet the demands of both domains at the same time.

A study by Akkas, Hossain & Rhaman (2015) revealed that female employees engage more in job stress as they need to manage both work and home domains. Rees (2003) strengthened this statement through his findings whereby he discovered female employees experience tremendous stress compared to male employees. If this persists, it can lower individual job satisfaction and quality of life (Benjamin, 2015).

In Greenhaus & Beutell's (1985) study, the researchers have managed to discover stressors that may lead to work-family conflict. The stressors are namely time-based, strain-

based and behaviour-based. Time-based is defined as the conflict that ascends due to individuals' difficulty devoting their time from one role to another (Ahmad, 2008). A situation that is best to explain this behaviour is when a person is late for a family gathering due to a great deal of work at the office. He or she may choose their work rather than spending their time with family. On the other hand, strain-based, this conflict occurs when one role affects another role's performance (Monstert, 2008). This conflict is mostly encountered by female employees that are married and have children. Female employees, for example, should first fulfill their responsibilities as mothers by dropping their children off at school before coming to work. Due to the responsibilities, sometimes these working mothers may come late to the office, which causes to their poor attendance. Next, behaviour-based. Behaviour-based is described as certain behaviours in one role make it difficult to accomplish demands from other different roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). A situation that can explain behavior-based is when an individual focuses excessively on work matters and neglects household affairs. This situation is more likely encountered by workaholic people that only prioritize their work than family.

2.3 Discussion of Theory

2.3.1 Spillover Theory

Spillover is a mechanism in which one role's responsibility affects the other role's responsibility. It participates in the stress transmission from one aspect of life to another and may occur in both directions. There are two types of spillover namely known as positive and negative spillover (Balmforth & Gardner, 2006; Hanson, et al., 2006; Hill, et al., 2001).

Hill, Ferris, and Martison (2003) provide a thorough explanation of the idea of positive and negative spillover between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict. According to the researchers, when work-family interactions are rigidly organized in time

and space, there is usually negative spillover in terms of behaviour, time and energy. The researchers also added job versatility, which allows individuals to combine and overlap work and family commitments in time and room, often contributes to positive spillover and is essential in achieving balance between work and family. Therefore, this hypothesis proposes two potential associations between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict: negative spillover and positive spillover. For instance, skilled working mothers are caught up in a tangle of juggling, meddling, and interferences from one life sphere to another, and the existence of these disputes impedes women's career advancement (Dizaho et al., 2016). Additionally, if employees are unable to balance the demands of both roles, the possibility of conflicts between both roles will grow (Jamadin et al., 2015).

2.4 Discussion of Past Similar Study

2.4.1 Boundary Work Tactics

Macro Perspectives

By focusing on individual-level strategies for resolving work and non-work domains, boundary management tactics have contributed to current work and non-work literature (Wepfer et al., 2018). Each of these levels consists of various approaches or methods for individuals to overcome the growing divide between work and non-work domains.

Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep (2009) conducted a previous study in which they investigated how individuals manage their boundaries to negotiate the demands of work and home domains. Boundary work tactics are classified into four types: behavioral tactics, temporal tactics, physical tactics, and communicative tactics. By referring to their preferences, these boundary work tactics are thought to be able to assist individuals in creating their ideal level and work-home style.

Individuals, for example, can choose to be a "segmentor" or "integrator" when dealing with work- family domains. These two groups of people have distinct preferences, with "segmentors" preferring to separate work and family spheres by erecting more or less impermeable barriers between work and family domains. Individuals who are "integrators" prefer to maintain highly permeable boundaries in order to blend with work and family aspects. Furthermore, the study's findings revealed that there are differences between boundary violations and the state of work- home conflict. The researchers were able to create a new model to demonstrate how boundary work tactics reduce the negative consequences of work-home challenges at the end of this study.

Basile and Beauregard (2016) conducted a similar study to identify the strategies used by successful teleworkers to create and maintain boundaries between work and home domains. The goal of this study is to investigate the relationship between employee segmentation and integration preferences. As a result, the researchers concluded that teleworkers used physical tactics, temporal tactics, behavioral tactics, and communicative tactics to reconstruct a boundary similar to the working environment. Therefore, the researchers conclude that the teleworkers' findings can be implemented by organizations and other teleworkers who struggle to establish boundaries between their work and home domains.

Micro Perspectives

In the local context, a study carried out by Ibrahim (2014) seeks to identify the approaches used by Malaysian employees in their work and non-work lives by demonstrating how structural factors are significant when workers are either enabled or constrained in their ability to manage the relationship between work and non-work. The researcher asserts in the study that employees' commitment to their responsibilities in work and non-work life is