



The Relationship between Boundary Work Tactics and Work-Family Conflict among Working Women

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the relationship between boundary work tactics (behavioral, temporal, physical and communicative) and work-family conflict among working women. A survey methodology was used in this study. This research involves the utilisation of questionnaire which was administered among one-hundred and three (103) working women currently working in a selected organisation. This study was conducted in a selected private organisation in Kuching, Sarawak. The relationship between boundary work tactics and work-family conflicts was analyzed using the Pearson's correlation analysis test. The results of this study revealed that there is a significant relationship between behavioral tactics, temporal tactics, and communicative tactics with work-family conflict. Hence, from this study, the organisation can implement more strategic tactics to reduce work-family conflicts when the working women are challenged to balance responsibilities between their work and family.

Keywords: Boundary work tactics; work-family conflict

INTRODUCTION

A growing development in organizations has been employers' concern in whether their employees are experiencing a high quality of work life (QWL) or not. Ca-

reers that involve high-tech management, as well as 24-7 monitoring, for instance in the department of Information Technology, have driven the curiosity of scholars from different studies to investigate methods that can generate improved state of work life (Gayathiri & Ramakrishnan, 2013). Work-family conflicts occur when the working women fail to balance responsibilities towards their work and family. Work-family conflict has been defined as *“a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually in-compatible so that par-*

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ticipation in one role at home is made more difficult by participation in another role at work'' (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Cousins and Tang (2004) stated that the number of women participating in the labor market is increasing and it is difficult for women to accommodate work and family as their eagerness for educational attainments, careers and financial independence also increases. Consequently, there will be conflicts when people are not able to balance and manage their work and family commitments.

Previous research found that there is a significant relationship between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict. Study reveals three strategies mobile workers used to attenuate work-life boundaries, such as, managing physical boundaries, managing temporal boundaries and managing psychological boundaries (Cousins & Robey, 2015). For example, a female Chief Operating Officer of an IT company took along her mobile devices on the elliptical exercise machine in her home office and she was able to attend a business conference and reply messages while exercising.

Wilson, Polzer-Debruyne, Chen and Fernandes (2007) stated that the incorporation of social coping plan and family involvement significantly reduced work-family conflict. However, the pressure of time can become a fixed problem when shift workers try to organize family timetables with personal commitments and community services, such as, school, housework, shop hours, transport and office hours (Wilson et al., 2007). Be-

sides, Loudon and Bohle (1997) mentioned that time compulsion could have a negative authority on children's education, marital role, parental role, and relationships.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) stated that there is an obligation at work and in the family which does not match and may lead to lower role performance and work-family conflict. Therefore, as careers increasingly pose more requests on the individual's work roles, work-to-family experiences and conflicts are more possible to influence job out-comes (Voydanoff, 2002).

This study focuses on determining the relationship between boundary work tactics (behavioural tactics, temporal tactics, physical tactics and communicative tactics) and work-family conflict among working women.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The size of women population around the world entering the workforce is increasing throughout the year. According to The Malaysian Insider (2015), the Labour Force Survey revealed that the ascension in labor force participation increased to 67.5% in 2015 in Malaysia because of the participation of women in the job market. This data was obtained from the Department of Statistics. The United States Labour Force Trends stated that the number of women in the labor force in the U.S.A. has increased from 43% to nearly 60% since 1970 (Lee & Mather, 2008). Therefore, women are definitely different from the past where

they are now engaging actively with the nature of a business which was once conquered by men.

In Malaysia, the government will continue to implement the policies that determine the involvement of women in professional working world, such as, in managerial and decision-making at the rate of 30% in private and public sectors (Eleventh Malaysia Plan 2016-2020, 2015). However, a short of managerial and professional abilities tend to curb women's development to higher professional positions (UNICEF Malaysia, 2005). In Japan, almost 1 million women had joined the labor force in previous years because the prime minister of Japan encouraged more women participation in the labour force as it is the benchmark of Japanese growth (Lewis, 2015). Furthermore, Japan's prime minister has been actively trying to increase a higher participation rate, whereby by 2020 Japan has to increase women leadership positions to 30% (Blair, 2014).

Hence, when women are actively participating in the labor force, they will face serious challenges in balancing the potentially conflicting demands of their profession, children and elder care (Marcinkus, Whelan-Berry & Gordon, 2007). However, Patel, Govender, Paruk and Ramgoon (2006) in their study reported that married women had higher conflicting demands than unmarried women. Therefore, Dhanabhakym and Malarvizhi (2014) in their study revealed that working women faced stress in managing their personal and work life.

Boundary Work Tactics

Boundary work tactics were introduced to describe the concept of "boundary work" which entails how people construct, deconstruct and maintain the boundaries between homes and work (Nippert-Eng, 1996). In this study, it can be defined as how working women cope with the challenges of their work and family by applying boundary work tactics in their daily life. Boundary work tactics subsequently can be broken down to four dimensions, namely, behavioural tactics, temporal tactics, physical tactics and communicative tactics.

Behavioral Tactics

Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep (2009) defined behavioural tactics as social practices that could be used to lighten work-home conflicts. In this study, it can be defined as the ability of women to work by utilizing the skills, and availability of other individuals who can help with work-home boundary (e.g. staff member screen calls).

Temporal Tactics

Aroujo, Tureta, and Aroujo (2015) defined temporal tactics as strategies to increase the effectiveness of time used and to improve time-related conflicts that occur when the demands of work interfere with other demands that can cause imbalance in work-home relationship. In this study, it can be defined as the ability of women to work by managing work-home time, finding respite and synchronizing tasks so they can prioritize the main responsibility.

Physical Tactics

According to Hewit (2003), physical boundaries can be manipulated both physically and symbolically. The boundaries can be a wall, a door, clothes and a gesture. In this study, it can be defined as the ability of women to work by manipulating physical boundaries, manipulating physical distance between domains and managing physical objects so that they can cope with the challenges between their work and family responsibilities.

Communicative Tactics

Aroujo et al. (2015) defined communicative tactics as a method of how people communicate with other people about their circumstances of the boundaries between their work and home. In this study, it can be defined as the ability of women to work by setting expectations, renegotiating expectations and confront violators in their daily life.

Work-Family Conflict

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-family conflict as clashing expectations where the role pressure from the work is an antipode to the family domain. In this study, work-family conflicts can be defined as conflicts that occur when the working women are unable to balance their responsibilities at workplace and family domain.

The Role theory

Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno and Tillemann (2011) in their study stated that the beginning of research on work-life balance can be distinguished back to

studies of women having more than one role at the same time. For example, a woman plays multiple roles such as a paid worker and at the same time as a wife or a mother (Barnett & Baruch, 1985). The concept of role theory with boundary work tactics towards work-family conflict is explained in more detailed by Smith (1993) as

“A conception of the family as a legally married couple sharing a household. The adult male is in paid employment; his earnings provide the economic basis of the family household. The adult female may also earn an income, but her primary responsibility is to the care of the husband, household, and children” (p. 52).

According to this theory, each role is related to a set of behavioral expectations and each individual already knows what role he/she plays so he/she can show a set of behaviours that are viewed as being suitable for the role (Thoits, 1991). However, people possibly simultaneously obtain several identities as a result of the anomalous roles that they play in the social world (Bagger, Reb & Li, 2014).

The Spillover Theory

Spillover is a process whereby responsibility in one role influences the other responsibility in another role. It also acts within-person and across domains transmission of tension from one region of life to another. Besides, spillover theory is divided into two types which are positive spillover and negative spillover. Based on the finding by previous researchers, boundary work tactics and

work-family conflict have a significant relationship. The concept of positive and negative spillover between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict is explained in detail by Hill, Ferris, & Martison (2003) as:

“if work-family interactions are rigidly structured in time and space, then spillover in terms of time, energy and behavior is generally negative. Research also supports the notion that works flexibility, which enables individuals to integrate and overlap work and family responsibilities in time and space, leads to positive spillover and is instrumental in achieving healthy work and family balance”(p. 222).

According to this theory, there are two possible relationships between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict which are negative spillover or positive spillover. For example, women confront with multiple role and have potentially conflicting with the demands of their occupation, career, children and parent (Marcinkus et al., 2007). Besides, interference between work and family cannot be avoided and it negatively influences both individuals and organizations (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000).

Relationship between Boundary Work Tactics and Work-Family Conflict

A study by Cousins and Robey (2015) found that there is a significant relationship between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict. As noted previously, Wilson et al. (2007) found that the incorporation of social coping plan with

family involvement significantly reduce work-family conflict.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The researcher is interested in studying the relationship between boundary work tactics and work-family conflicts among working women because the number of women in the workforce today is increasing throughout the year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Besides, women also play so many roles such as a daughter, sister, wife or mother. Sometimes they need to cook food, raise their child or elder and do housework at the same time. So, their tasks and challenges in life have increased and they need to multitask in order to balance between their career and family. However, the existence conflicts between the work and family could not be fulfilled both requirements.

Wayne, Musisca, and Fleeson (2004) indicated that when one role interferes with the other role, it may result in poor role quality or performance in the role being interfered with. Kim and Ling (2001) stated that time pressure, work stressors, parental demand and spouse support have different levels of influence on work-family conflict.

Clearly, individuals play a crucial role in affecting work home outcomes, hence, this research is important to identify whether the application of four elements of boundary work tactics which are behavioural tactics, temporal tactics, physical tactics and communicative tactics can reduce work-family conflict.

OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The objectives of the study are as follows:

To identify the relationship between (behavioural tactics, temporal tactics, physical tactics, communicative tactics) and work-family conflict among working women.

The research hypotheses are as follows:

H_a1: There is a relationship between behavioural tactics and work-family conflict.

H_a2: There is a relationship between temporal tactics and work-family conflict.

H_a3: There is a relationship between physical tactics and work-family conflict.

H_a4: There is a relationship between communicative tactics and work-family conflict.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed the survey methodology to collect data on the dependent variable, that is, work-family conflict and on the independent variables (Figure 1) which are boundary work tactics (behavioural tactics, temporal tactics, physical tactics and communicative tactics).

Population and Sample

This study was conducted at a selected electric utility company in Kuching, Sarawak. The population of this study consisted

of one hundred and forty-five (145) working women. A simple random sampling was applied in this study. A formula devised by Krejcie & Morgan (1970) was used to determine the minimum required sample size for the survey to guide in the sampling process. Based on the calculation using this formula, the minimum required sample size for the survey should be one hundred and three (103) working women only.

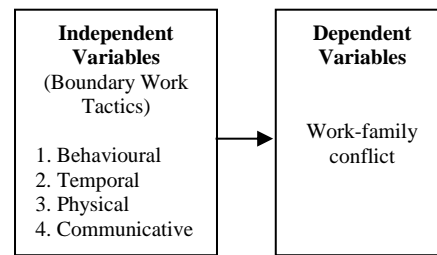


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Instrument

The boundary work tactic questionnaire was adapted from Arouje et al. (2015) which consisted of 12 items. In this study, the questionnaire employed the five-point Likert scale, as follows: 1=Never; 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally; 4=A moderate amount; 5=A great deal. Meanwhile, work family conflict questionnaire was adopted from Carlson, Kacmar & Williams (2000) and included three domains (time based, strain based and behavioural based). The questionnaire employed the six-point Likert type scale, as follows: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Moderately Disagree, 3=Disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Moderately Agree and 6=Strongly Agree. A pilot test was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument and the results are shown in Table 1.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics techniques. Data gathered for this study were processed and analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows Version 20.0. Pearson’s Correlation was used to test the relationship between independent variable (Boundary Work Tactics) and dependent variable (Work-Family Conflict).

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Instruments	Pilot Test	Actual Test
Behavioural Tactics	0.675	0.616
Temporal Tactics	0.614	0.714
Physical Tactics	0.686	0.622
Communicative Tactics	0.681	0.615
Work-Family Conflict	0.818	0.802

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data were collected from 39 single women and 64 married women respondents (with a total of 145 respondents), aged between 20 to 59 years old. A majority of them are Chinese (40.8 %) and most of them are Christian (46.6%). Then, 48 people have a Bachelor degree and have a permanent job (90.3%) and 44.7% of them have worked for five or less years. Lastly, 49.5% of the working women have at least 1 to 5 children while 50.5% of them have no children.

Relationship between Behavioural Tactics and Work-Family Conflict

Pearson’s Correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between be-

havioural tactics and work-family conflict among working women in a selected electric utility company, Sarawak. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Coefficient of boundary work tactics and work-family conflict

Variables	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Behavioral tactics	0.440	0.000
Temporal tactics	0.362	0.000
Physical tactics	-0.151	0.129
Communicative tactics	-0.202	0.041

H_a1: There is a relationship between behavioural tactics and work-family conflict

Table 2 above shows that there is a relationship between behavioural tactics and work-family conflict among working women in which the significant value is smaller than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$), $p = 0.000$ at the significant level of 0.01. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis is accepted. The value of $r = 0.440$ shows that there is a moderate relationship between behavioural tactics and work-family conflict among working women. In this study, the researcher states that behavioural tactics help to reduce work-family conflict among working women. As a result, the involvement of family/spouse will help to minimize stressful situations.

H_a2: There is a relationship between temporal tactics and work-family conflict

The result shown in Table 2 also reveals that there is a relationship between temporal tactics and work-family conflict

among working women in which the significant value is smaller than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$), $p = 0.000$ at the significant level of 0.01. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis is accepted. In this study, temporal tactics are defined as: a) Controlling work time; manipulations of one's regular (e.g. banking time from home or work domain to be used later, blocking off segments of time, deciding when to do various aspects of work) and b) Finding respite -removing oneself from work-home demands for a significant amount of time (e.g. vacations, getaways, retreats) (Kreiner et al. 2009). The value of $r = 0.362$ shows that there is a low and significant relationship between temporal tactics (controlling work time and finding respite) and work-family conflict among working women. In this study, the result indicates that polychronic individuals will help to reduce work-family conflict. Polychronic individual always attend to things concurrently or several at a time. This is in line with a study by Bluedorn et al., (1992) and, Hall and Hall (1990) which found that, at the level of the individual, polychronicity focuses on the number of related and unrelated tasks, activities and stimuli an individual attends to, participates in, and is involved with literally at one time or within relatively brief spans of time. This finding is similar with a study by Diyanna, Nur Fatimah, Surena, Samsiah, Mazdan and Rosita, (2016), who stated that flexible working hours promote or facilitate work-life balance.

H_{a3}: There is a relationship between physical tactics and work-family conflict

As shown in Table 2 above, the result reveals that there is no relationship between physical tactics and work-family conflict among working women. There is no significant value and the alternate hypothesis is rejected. Since there is no significant value, it shows that there is no relationship between physical tactics and work-family conflict. This indicates that the physical boundaries, which were often built or used to create a separation of work and home did not affect work-family conflict among working women.

H_{a4}: There is a relationship between communicative tactics and work-family conflict

From Table 2, it is shown that there is a relationship between communicative tactics and work-family conflict among working women in which the significant value is smaller than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), $p = 0.041$ at the significant level of 0.05. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis is accepted. The value of $r = -0.202$ shows that there is a negative and negligible relationship between communicative tactics and work-family conflict among working women. This indicates that the communicative tactics also lead to work-family conflict among working women. In this study, communicative tactics is one of the tactics through effective listening and speaking need to put into account (Kreiner et al. 2009).

Table 3: Summary of Results for Hypotheses Testing

No.	Hypotheses	Result
H _a 1	There is a relationship between behavioural tactics and work-family conflict	Accepted
H _a 2	There is a relationship between temporal tactics and work-family conflict	Accepted
H _a 3	There is a relationship between physical tactics and work-family conflict	Rejected
H _a 4	There is a relationship between communicative tactics and work-family conflict	Accepted

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between boundary work tactics and work-family conflict among working women in a selected private organization. The results reveal there is a relationship between boundary work tactics (behavioural, temporal and communicative tactics) and work-family conflict among working women in a selected private organization. On the other hand, there is no relationship between physical tactic and work-family conflict.

Behavioural tactics should have considerable importance in a workplace. This

study indicates that it would be valuable for other individuals who either help or hinder an employee's attempts at work-home balance, such as spouses, children, co-workers, and supervisors. Without a proper supervision, it might lead to work-family conflict. Despite this, behavioural tactics also involve technological advances, and this study reveals that technology usage is also one of the contributors to reduce conflict (e.g. use of email or phone message) which might help working life much easier.

It is intriguing to note that temporal strategies are fundamentally connected with work-family strife. Worldly strategies included controlling one's timetable to expand time with family. The results show that more temporal work tactics (controlling work time and finding respite) will help to reduce work family conflict. In this study, employees prefer to choose monochronic time instead of polychronic time. They tend to handle things adherence to time schedule rather than concurrently (intermittently) during a time period.

The present results exhibit that communicative tactics have a significant relationship with work-family conflict. Communication tactic through effective speaking and listening skills with spouses, family members and co-workers will always help to resolve conflict.

The findings show that adapting physical boundary, manipulating physical space and managing physical artifact (e.g. calendar, timetable) do not affect work-family interface among working women.

This study highlights the importance of using behavioural tactics to minimize conflict. Hence, future studies should focus on other tactics for both directions of work-life balance such as work-family conflicts and family-work conflicts in different cultures and settings.

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