

CORRELATES OF ROLE BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN THE WORK FROM HOME CONTEXT: A DYADIC APPROACH

GAVRIL RAD, LAURENȚIU P. MARICUȚOIU*

Department of Psychology, West University of Timișoara, Romania

Abstract

In today's world, effectively managing the boundaries between work and personal life poses a significant challenge. Therefore, the primary aim of this study is to explore the interplay between family identification, work identification, and couple conflict resolution styles (dominant, avoidant, submissive, integrative, and compromise), and how these factors shape role boundary management strategies. Responses were collected from 110 couples (220 participants) where both partners were engaged in home-based work. Both partners completed three self-reported measures: behavioral strategies in telework, conflict in couple relationships and role identity. We found that wives' role boundary strategies are not associated with most variables included in the study. However, the husbands' role boundary strategies were significantly associated with how both partners identify with work and family. Furthermore, the husbands' role boundary strategies were associated with the wives' conflict management styles. Taken together, these results suggested that the husbands' role boundary strategies can be seen as adaptive behaviors that account for the wives' approach to conflict.

Cuvinte-cheie: strategii de administrare a granițelor de rol, identitate de rol, stiluri de rezolvare a conflictelor.

Keywords: boundary management strategy, role identity, conflict resolution styles.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, working from home involves the management of boundaries between work and personal life. The term role boundaries describe the demarcations individuals establish between their various social roles, such as employee, spouse, and family member (Ashforth *et al.*, 2000). These role boundaries are present during workhours in any work context (e.g., when an employee discusses over the phone with family members to plan for family activities), but their importance is particularly enhanced when employees work from home. When working from home, employees must separate between work roles and job-related roles (Gardner *et al.*, 2021), can experience physical and psychosocial problems (Buomprisco *et*

Department of Psychology, West University of Timișoara, Romania
bvd. V. Pârvan, nr 4, 300223, E-mail: laurentiu9 .maricutoiu@e-uvvt.ro

al., 2021), but teleworking can also enhance one's evaluation of family quality time (Tufă & Neguț, 2023).

Previous research suggested that a strong identification with work often leads to conflicts between work and family roles, generating high stress and low satisfaction in couples (Carlson *et al.*, 2000; Van Der Lippe & Lippenyi, 2020). Conversely, strong family identification has been shown to mitigate these conflicts by prioritizing family needs and employing effective conflict resolution strategies (Frone *et al.*, 1992). As conflict management strategies are also part of the variables that describe individual differences, different approaches to conflictual situations are also relevant for studying how employees handle multiple roles. Therefore, we posit that role identity and conflict resolution within couples play pivotal roles in how individuals that work from home manage boundaries between their professional and family roles.

This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the variables associated with the management of role boundaries in the context of home-based work. Adopting a dyadic approach is crucial for fully comprehending the dynamics between partners and the impact of telework strategies on work-life balance. Therefore, the primary aim of this study is to explore the interplay between family identification, work identification, and couple conflict resolution styles (dominant, avoidant, submissive, integrative, and compromise), and how these factors shape role boundary management strategies.

1.1. ROLE BOUNDARIES AND BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

In today's work-from-home environment, effectively managing role boundaries and the strategies associated with them have emerged as crucial areas of study in academic literature. These concepts are pivotal for understanding how individuals balance the demands of their professional and personal lives within a remote setting. Role boundary management entails how employees establish and maintain boundaries between their work and personal lives. Recent research has identified diverse strategies and tactics employed for this purpose. Building upon existing research (Rad *et al.*, 2024), we focused on seven distinct strategies for managing role boundaries: intentional role mixing (i.e., voluntary attempts to satisfy requirements from both roles during workhours), unintentional role mixing (i.e., performing work-related activities in the same physical space in which other family members are conducting their daily routines), establishing physical boundaries (i.e., working from spaces that are physically separated from other parts of the house), use of communication boundaries (i.e., setting rules with other members of the family regarding work-family interferences), use of behavioral boundaries (i.e., behaving at home similarly to behaving at work), use of temporal boundaries (i.e., changing the workhours to accommodate family-related demands), and taking personal time at home (i.e., engaging in activities that are neither work or family related, such as hobbies or watching movies).

Fonner and Stache (2012) underscored the challenges teleworkers face in managing micro-role transitions within the home environment, highlighting the intricate nature of role boundary management in telework scenarios. Strategies for managing role boundaries vary and are tailored to the specific contexts of home-based work. Seinsche *et al.* (2024) examined boundary management tactics and energy resource management strategies among public service employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing the adaptable nature of these strategies to different circumstances. Similarly, Basile and Beauregard (2020) underscored the significance of physical demarcation in delineating boundaries between work and personal life, stressing the role of physical space in preventing inadvertent role mixing. More recently, Härtel *et al.* (2023) demonstrated that telework strategies significantly impact job performance, influenced by preferences for boundary management and telework experience. Therefore, understanding the predictors of these boundary management preferences is important for having positive work experiences and family work experiences.

A critical gap identified in the literature pertains to the intricate interactions among family identification, work identification, and conflict resolution styles within couples managing role boundaries while working from home. This gap emphasizes the necessity for comprehensive investigations that explore how these variables influence both individual and interpersonal strategies for managing diverse social and professional roles. Today, few studies are integrating family and work identification with couple conflict resolution styles in the context of managing role boundaries in remote work settings. Moreover, existing research rarely examines these dynamics within the dyadic framework of home-based work.

1.2. IDENTIFICATION WITH WORK AND FAMILY

Role identity encompasses two key dimensions: identification with family and identification with work. Family identification reflects an individual's attachment and commitment to their family role (Rothbard, 2001; Kossek *et al.*, 2012), while work identification pertains to one's involvement and dedication to their professional role (Kossek *et al.*, 2012). Identification with work and family are critical factors influencing how individuals integrate their multiple roles within a work-from-home context. For example, employees that identify strongly with their family role are more likely to use prefer role mixing strategies, while one's identification with own work role will be associated with the preference for various forms of boundaries (Rad *et al.*, 2024). In a similar vein, Allen *et al.* (2021) emphasized the importance of temporal boundaries in achieving a balance between work and life roles, while Mellner *et al.* (2021) investigated various levels of congruence between preferred and enacted work-nonwork boundaries, highlighting the role of perceived control in reducing work-life conflict.

Based on previous evidence discussed above, we expected that the identification with one's work or with one's family will be associated with how the

employee deals with multiple roles when working from home. Consequently, we advanced our following hypotheses:

H1. High levels of identification with the family role will be associated with the preference for role blending strategies.

H2. High levels of identification with the work role will be associated with the preference for using role boundaries (e.g., physical or communication boundaries).

1.3. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

As employees that work from home are managing work and family roles simultaneously, the conflict between these roles is highly probable. In this vein, Zhang *et al.* (2020) examined work-life conflict perspectives in telework contexts, illustrating how telework can either exacerbate or mitigate role conflicts. Therefore, one's option for a particular role management strategy could be understood by examining personal variables such as conflict resolution styles. Based on the early work by Rahim (1983), Shi (2003) investigated the role of conflict resolution behaviors in romantic relations and reported evidence regarding their relationships with marital satisfaction. These conflict resolution styles include i) being dominant and imposing own perspective on the subject matter, ii) being avoidant regarding the source of the conflict, iii) being submissive and giving way from your own perspective, iv) attempting to integrate the partners' views in order to diminish the conflict, and v) trying to find a midpoint and to compromise.

As boundary management strategies are also a form of balancing conflictual roles, their relationships with conflict resolutions styles should be straightforward, as the conflict resolution styles should be antecedents of individuals' decisions regarding their adoption of role boundary management strategies in the context of remote work. For instance, a dominant conflict resolution style may escalate tensions, whereas a compromising style could lead to more harmonious resolutions (Gottman, 1994). When family members use dominant styles to solving conflicts, this could also involve the use inflexible of inflexible role boundaries (i.e., the family roles are strongly separated from the work roles). Also, the use of a compromising style could be associated with one's tendency to blend family and work roles (either intentional or unintentional). In this vein, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H4. The use of compromise-bases strategies in managing interpersonal conflicts will be positively associated with the use of role blending strategies.

H5. The use of dominant strategies in managing interpersonal conflicts will be positively correlated with strategies that set role boundaries (e.g., physical, communication etc.).

2. THE PRESENT STUDY

In the present study, we aimed at exploring the antecedents of the boundary management strategies used by employees when working from home. Based on previous evidence (Rad *et al.*, 2024), we expected that employees' identification with their family role or with their work role are associated with the behavioral strategies used when working from home. Because managing role boundaries is aimed at reducing potential conflicts, we also included the individual differences regarding conflict management approaches.

Last but not the least, conflicts arising from the intersection of professional and family roles are frequently studied within dyads, highlighting their potential to create high levels of stress and dysfunction in couple relationships (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Martineau and Trottier (2024) explored how work design shapes the enactment of work-life boundaries and work-life conflict, indicating that contextual factors play a pivotal role in these dynamics. In the case of telework, we believe that it is important to account for the partners' variables (i.e., role identification, preferences for conflict resolution strategies) as potential predictors for one's preferences for particular role boundary strategies. Therefore, we collected our data using a dyadic approach, to explore how the partners' variables are relevant for prediction of own role management strategies.

3. METHOD

3.1. SAMPLE

The sample included 110 couples (N = 220 participants) where both partners were engaged in home-based work, constituting the final dataset used for analysis.

The distribution of participants by gender was equal. Women participants ranged in age from 20 to 66 years, with an average age of 33.9 years, while men ranged from 21 to 66 years, with an average age of 36.5 years. In terms of educational attainment among women, 28.2% completed high school, 34.5% held undergraduate degrees, 23.6% had master's degrees, and 13.6% held doctoral degrees. Among men, 29.1% completed high school, 36.4% held undergraduate degrees, 26.4% had master's degrees, and 8.2% held doctoral degrees.

Regarding the amount of time spent working from home in the past month, 64.5% of women and 70% of men reported working three-quarters of their total work time. Participants held various types of employment contracts, including full-time, part-time, and freelance arrangements. Specifically, 86.4% of men and 73.6% of women were employed full-time, 2.7% of men and 10% of women had part-time contracts, and freelancers accounted for 10.9% of men and 16.4% of women.

Participants represented diverse fields within both the private and public sectors, including education, IT, accounting, real estate, insurance, engineering,

psychology, industry, management, business, development and research, media, sales, telecommunications, and NGOs.

3.2. MEASURES

Self-reported measures were completed by both partners. Behavioral strategies in telework were evaluated using the BATS-21 questionnaire (Rad et al., 2024), comprising 21 items categorized into 7 strategies. These strategies include intentional role mixing (e.g., “When I work from home, I tend to juggle work and family responsibilities simultaneously”), unintentional role mixing (e.g., “I work in bed or on the sofa in the living room while other family members relax nearby”), communication (e.g., “I inform family members when interruptions are acceptable during work time”), behavioral (e.g., “Even when working from home, I prepare for work as if I were going to the office”), temporal (e.g., “My work-from-home schedule is structured similarly to my office schedule”), personal time (e.g., “When I work from home, I allocate time for activities that are important to me alone”), and physical space delimitation (e.g., “At home, I work in a dedicated space where I can isolate myself from others, such as a separate room”). Participants rated these items on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = never; 4 = always). Results of a confirmatory factor analysis suggested that the BATS-21 scale had adequate psychometric properties (CFI = .932, RMSEA = .052, SRMR = .47), and the internal consistency of the scales ranged between α Cronbach = .721 and α Cronbach = .834.

Conflict in couple relationships was assessed using the Conflict Resolution Behavior Scale in Couple Relationships (Shi, 2003), consisting of 35 items distributed across 5 subscales. These subscales reflect different conflict management styles: Integrative (e.g., “I collaborate with my partner to reach a mutually acceptable decision”), dominant (e.g., “I am typically firm in supporting my viewpoint during disagreements”), submissive (e.g., “I try to meet my partner's expectations”), avoidant (e.g., “I try to avoid arguments with my partner”), and willing to compromise (e.g., “I use the principle of 'give and take' to reach compromises”). Participants rated these items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The scales had adequate internal consistency, with α Cronbach values between .711 and .845.

Role identity was measured through two subscales developed by Kosseck *et al.* (2012): Family Identity and Work Identity, each consisting of 2 items. These items gauged the extent to which individuals identified with their roles in the family and at work, respectively (e.g., “People see me as highly focused on my work” or “I invest a significant part of myself in my family”). Participants rated these items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The scales had good internal consistency, with α Cronbach values between .822 and .876

4. RESULTS

We conducted two types of analyses. First, we conducted pairwise comparisons between the two partners, to investigate any differences between men and women regarding their preferences for boundary management strategies. Next, we investigated the correlations between study variables.

Regarding the gender differences between the two partners, we found significant differences on 2 BATS scales. Results presented in Table 1 suggested that, as compared with their husbands, wives reported more frequent use of intentional role blending ($t(109) = 2.441, p = .016$) and communication boundaries ($t(109) = 2.378, p = .019$).

Table no.1
Pairwise comparisons between men and women regarding the telework strategies

	Wives		Husbands		t(df)
	m	SD	m	SD	
Intentional role blending	1.939	.899	1.660	1.036	2.441*(109)
Unintentional role blending	1.242	1.036	1.312	1.177	-.624 (109)
Use of physical boundaries	2.342	1.117	2.139	1.231	1.485 (109)
Use of communication boundaries	2.230	1.157	1.915	1.139	2.378* (109)
Use of temporal boundaries	1.770	.862	1.846	1.007	0.672 (109)
Use of behavioral boundaries	2.218	1.077	1.954	1.267	1.951 (109)
Taking time for one's self	1.897	.816	1.952	.968	-.535 (109)

An overview of the correlations presented in Table 2 suggested that wives' preferences for their role management strategies are not associated with their conflict management styles or with how they identified with family or work. In this vein, we only found a weak positive correlation between the wife's frequent use of behavioural boundaries and her preference for an avoidant approach to conflicts ($r(108) = .258, p = .007$). The situation is similar regarding the associations between wives' preferences for their role management strategies and her partner's variables. Unlike wife's preferences, the husband's preferences showed more numerous associations with own variables, and with his partner's variables.

On the one hand, husband's identification with the family was significantly associated with his use of unintentional role blending ($r(108) = .272, p = .004$, thus supporting Hypothesis 1), and with the frequent use of temporal ($r(108) = .229, p = .016$) and behavioral boundaries ($r(108) = .230, p = .016$). His identification with work was associated with frequent use of physical boundaries ($r(108) = .229, p = .004$), communication boundaries ($r(108) = .304, p = .001$) and behavioral boundaries ($r(108) = .313, p = .001$), thus supporting Hypothesis 2. Regarding his conflict resolution strategies, these preferences were generally not associated with his role management strategies while teleworking, except for a weak positive association between using a dominant position in conflict and the frequency of unintentional role blending ($r(108) = .204, p = .033$). However, we found numerous

significant relationships between his use of role management behaviors and her conflict management approaches. In short, every type of role management behavior used by the husband was significantly associated with one or more of his wife's role management behaviors. In general, husbands' frequent role blending was associated with wives' compromise-oriented conflict style ($r(108) = .197, p = .041$ for unintentional role blending, and $r(108) = .238, p = .013$ for intentional role blending). On the other hand, husbands' use of various forms of role boundaries was associated with their wives' integrative conflict style ($r(108) = .207, p = .032$ for use of physical boundaries; $r(108) = .237, p = .013$ for use of

Table no.2.
Correlation matrix between study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Age (W)	1																
2. Telework (W)	-.052	1															
3. Age (H)	.943**	.005	1														
4. Telework (H)	-.015	.202*	-.027	1													
5. Relationship length	.567**	-.009	.570**	-.007	1												
6. IntRBlend (W)	-.045	.006	-.091	-.084	-.134	1											
7. UnintRBlend (W)	-.154	.207*	-.16	.227*	-.08	.282**	1										
8. PhysicalBound (W)	.157	.073	.184	-.061	.045	.007	-.369**	1									
9. ComunicBound (W)	.007	-.062	.038	-.12	-.102	.129	-.198*	.586**	1								
1. TemplBound (W)	.038	.087	.025	-.007	-.005	.386**	.352**	-.063	-.066	1							
11. BehavBound (W)	.068	.116	.155	-.081	-.001	.08	-.161	.492**	.572**	-.157	1						
12. PersTime (W)	-.205*	.092	-.200*	-.087	-.230*	.215*	.166	.147	.092	.302**	.066	1					
13. IntRBlend (H)	-.023	.053	-.026	.085	-.135	.246**	.102	.035	.034	.09	-.078	-.052	1				
14. UnintRBlend (H)	-.198*	-.085	-.191*	.117	-.086	.085	.447**	-.087	-.023	.119	-.065	.186	.354**	1			
15. PhysicalBound (H)	.218*	.062	.172	.179	-.04	-.1	-.095	.257**	.283**	-.222*	.149	-.283**	.143	-.207*	1		
16. ComunicBound (H)	.041	.011	.002	-.009	-.059	-.142	-.139	.195*	.268**	-.299**	.097	-.186	-.021	-.18	.722**	1	
17. TempBound (H)	.005	-.069	.006	.123	-.081	.152	.245**	-.097	.02	.207*	-.082	.066	.756**	.506**	.092	-.061	1
18. BehavBound (H)	.055	.058	.052	-.013	-.038	-.138	-.157	.145	.1	-.270**	.278**	-.199*	.139	-.029	.563**	.624**	.112
19. PersTime (H)	-.086	.082	-.058	.191*	-.312**	-.014	.239*	.144	.249**	.068	.051	.292**	.460**	.425**	.207*	.037	.503**
20. Avoidant (W)	.041	-.033	.088	-.17	.018	-.105	-.127	.108	.147	-.167	.258**	-.064	.022	.078	.224*	.288**	-.034
21. Integrative (W)	-.242*	-.033	-.223*	-.059	-.244*	-.099	-.015	.115	.023	-.168	.11	-.046	.134	.085	.207*	.237*	.117
22. Submissive (W)	-.143	-.108	-.124	-.156	-.071	.002	.016	-.005	-.055	-.125	.085	.032	.168	.15	.092	.154	.107
23. Compromised (W)	.001	.026	.031	-.158	-.024	-.042	.138	.057	.058	-.093	.118	-.029	.197*	.238*	.142	.082	.162
24. Dominant (W)	.131	-.011	.173	-.067	.005	.017	.142	.009	-.017	.029	.068	.079	.202*	.174	.101	.002	.198*
25. IdentFam (W)	.129	-.142	.136	-.156	.081	.004	-.08	.048	.031	-.038	.126	-.131	.247**	.161	.086	.058	.266**
26. IdentWork (W)	.125	-.106	.144	-.108	-.031	.063	-.091	.028	.123	-.16	.086	-.107	.087	-.009	.149	.192*	.009
27. Avoidant (H)	.036	-.124	-.007	.05	-.164	-.023	-.12	-.009	-.088	-.008	-.053	.022	.159	.079	.043	.114	.112
28. Integrative (H)	-.126	-.09	-.012	-.085	.01	-.117	.012	-.057	-.081	-.099	-.017	-.088	.037	.099	.032	.104	.07
29. Submissive (H)	-.075	-.085	.007	-.034	-.057	-.083	-.008	-.065	-.162	-.132	-.051	.064	.099	.157	-.001	.035	.088
30. Compromised (H)	-.006	-.001	-.005	.055	-.075	-.034	.041	.028	-.044	-.045	.089	.025	.09	.16	.051	.086	.108
31. Dominant (H)	.144	-.159	.006	.177	-.061	.034	.066	-.043	-.097	.042	-.039	.082	.16	.204*	-.123	-.13	.079
32. IdentFam (H)	.107	-.033	.054	.117	-.112	.052	-.118	-.064	-.053	-.077	.06	-.234*	.272**	.124	.076	.011	.229*
33. IdentWork (H)	-.112	-.049	-.166	-.111	.032	.044	-.026	.091	.097	-.114	.095	-.057	.02	-.015	.229*	.304**	.068

Table no.2 (cont.)
Correlation matrix between study variables

	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33
18. BehavBound (H)	1															
19. PersTime (H)	.131	1														
20. Avoidant (W)	.248**	.106	1													
21. Integrative (W)	.236*	.225*	.409**	1												
22. Submissive (W)	.116	.159	.609**	.639**	1											
23. Compromised (W)	.064	.325**	.540**	.595**	.667**	1										
24. Dominant (W)	.04	.261**	.416**	.306**	.559**	.695**	1									
25. IdentFam (W)	.309**	.13	.359**	.357**	.325**	.329**	.279**	1								
26. IdentWork (W)	.107	.043	.250**	.358**	.207*	.235*	.165	.407**	1							
27. Avoidant (H)	.078	.1	.547**	.262**	.387**	.392**	.398**	.392**	.205*	1						
28. Integrative (H)	.016	.053	.351**	.619**	.496**	.476**	.280**	.420**	.250**	.512**	1					
29. Submissive (H)	-.028	.066	.447**	.507**	.590**	.504**	.387**	.358**	.16	.659**	.823**	1				
30. Compromised (H)	.017	.178	.401**	.472**	.432**	.669**	.483**	.295**	.173	.633**	.731**	.777**	1			
31. Dominant (H)	-.096	.158	.280**	.126	.371**	.522**	.662**	.288**	.049	.443**	.332**	.455**	.609**	1		
32. IdentFam (H)	.230*	.008	.330**	.251**	.266**	.251**	.181	.673**	.389**	.415**	.289**	.316**	.224*	.126	1	
33. IdentWork (H)	.313**	.154	.174	.395**	.189*	.137	.18	.387**	.442**	.203*	.189*	.164	.162	.049	.281**	1

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. Age (W) = age of wife; Telework (W) = wife's frequency of telework in the past month; Age (H) = age of husband; Telework (H) = husband's frequency of telework in the past month; IntRBlend (W) = wife's preference for intentional role blending; UnintRBlend (W) = wife's unintentional role blending; PhysicalBound (W) = wife's use of physical boundaries; ComunicBound (W) = wife's use of communication boundaries; TemplBound (W) = wife's use of temporal boundaries; BehavBound (W) = wife's use of behavioral boundaries; PersTime (W) = wife's preference for taking time for herself; UnintRBlend (H) = husband's unintentional role blending; PhysicalBound (H) = husband's use of physical boundaries; ComunicBound (H) = husband's use of communication boundaries; TemplBound (H) = husband's use of temporal boundaries; BehavBound (H) = husband's use of behavioral boundaries; PersTime (H) = husband's preference for taking time for himself; Avoidant (W) = wife's avoidant conflict strategy; Integrative (W) = wife's integrative conflict strategy; Submissive (W) = wife's submissive conflict strategy; Compromised (W) = wife's orientation towards compromise; Dominant (W) = wife's tendency to use a dominant approach; IdentFam (W) = wife's identification with family; IdentWork (W) = wife's identification with work; Avoidant (H) = husband's avoidant conflict strategy; Integrative (H) = husband's integrative conflict strategy; Submissive (H) = husband's submissive conflict strategy; Compromised (H) = husband's orientation towards compromise; Dominant (H) = husband's tendency to use a dominant approach; IdentFam (H) = husband's identification with family; IdentWork (H) = husband's identification with work.

communication boundaries; $r(108) = .236$, $p = .014$ for use of behavioral boundaries) and with their wives avoidant conflict style ($r(108) = .288$, $p = .003$ for use of communication boundaries; $r(108) = .248$, $p = .010$ for use of behavioral boundaries). Consequently, Hypotheses 4 and 5 were not confirmed on data from the same person (i.e., as an intra-personal association), but as an inter-personal association (i.e., wife's conflict styles were associated with husband's boundary management strategies).

4. DISCUSSION

In the present study we analyzed the variables associated with one's preference for establishing and for managing role boundaries when working from home. Building on existing theoretical perspectives regarding boundary management strategies (e.g., Ashforth *et al.*, 2000), we investigated whether one's identification with work or one's identification with family (Kossek *et al.*, 2012) are associated with these boundary management preferences. Because boundary management strategies are aimed at reducing the potential conflict between work and family roles (Zhang *et al.*, 2020), we also included one's conflict resolution styles in romantic relationships (Shi, 2003) as potential antecedents of one's preferences for managing role borders when working from home.

Our results partially supported our expectations regarding the relationships between role management strategies, identification with work and with life, and conflict management. We found significant correlations only in the case of husbands' role management strategies, not in the case of wives' role management strategies. This finding suggested that only the husband's role management strategies are related to one's identification with work or family, while the wife's preferences for role management strategies are independent of her self-identification with work or family roles. Furthermore, the husband's preferences for role management strategies are associated with the wife's conflict resolution styles in romantic relationships, not with own conflict resolution styles. Taken together, these findings suggested that the husband's preferences for role management strategies can be interpreted as regulatory mechanisms for dealing with his wife's identification with work and with his wife's reaction to conflict. Unlike the husbands included in our study, the wives' preferences for role management strategies are not associated with the variables included in our study, therefore other potential antecedents (e.g., wife's personality) should be explored.

An important finding of the present study regards the relations between the husband's preferences for boundary management strategies and how the two partners identify with their work or their family. We found that husband's unintentional role blending and husband's use of temporal boundaries are positively associated with stronger identification with the family of both partners. This finding confirmed that husband's prioritization of family roles, as assessed by the two BATS scales, is related to his family identity but also to his wife's family

identity. Regarding the prioritization of work roles, we also found that both partners' identification with work are associated with the husband's use of various forms of role boundaries (e.g., setting rules for interruptions, setting physical boundaries). Taken together, these findings suggested that husbands' preferences for role integration (i.e., mixing roles, or changing workhours to accommodate for family events) are related to the degree to which both partners acknowledge that being a family is part of their identity. Furthermore, husband's preference for role segmentation (i.e., use of physical or communication boundaries to delineate between work and family) is related to the degree to which both partners identify with their work. These findings are convergent with the conclusions formulated by Kossek *et al.* (2012) regarding the importance of one's identification with work and family for the integration or segregation of work and family roles. In addition, our findings highlight the importance of the partners' identification with work and family.

Another important finding of the present study regards the relations between one's management styles and the use of boundary management strategies. Although we anticipated that one's boundary management strategies are behavioral manifestations of own conflict management styles (Gottman, 1994), our results did not supported this hypothesis. However, the only significant relationships were between the wives' conflict management styles and their husbands' use of boundary management strategies. We found that husbands that use strategies that segregate between the work and family roles (e.g. use physical boundaries or set rules regarding the interruptions when working from home) also have wives that prefer and avoidant and integrative conflict management style. Furthermore, husbands that use role blending strategies have wives that prefer a compromise-based conflict management style. All these relationships suggested that husbands' integration or segregation of work and family roles can rather be understood as adaptative strategies to their wives' variables (i.e., conflict management styles and identification with work or with family), rather than as an expression of their own conflict management styles.

Finally, we also conducted gender comparisons to see whether men and women are different regarding their preferred boundary management strategy. We found that wives reported using intentional role blending and communication strategies more frequently than their husbands. As women are generally viewed as primary caregivers in the family, they may feel more pressure to accommodate work and family responsibilities when teleworking. This role-driven pressure could explain the gender differences regarding intentional role blending. Regarding the differences in the use of communication strategies, this finding could suggest that women are more conscious of the need to protect certain times or spaces from work or family demands. This might indicate that wives are more proactive in managing interruptions and maintaining some level of segmentation between work and family life, even if they also engage in more role blending.

There are some limitations that should be taken into consideration. Firstly, our study is limited by a sample that is specific to a particular cultural background (i.e., Romanian couples), potentially constraining the generalizability of our findings to other cultures. Moreover, reliance on self-reported data may introduce subjective biases. Future research should explore these dynamics across diverse cultural and professional contexts and employ more varied and objective data collection methodologies. Longitudinal studies could also investigate the enduring impacts of telework strategies on role management and work-life balance (Cobb *et al.*, 2022; Seinsche *et al.*, 2024). Additionally, examining how individual preferences for boundary management and varying telework experiences might moderate these relationships could offer deeper insights (Mellner *et al.*, 2021; Zhang *et al.*, 2020).

Last but not the least, there are some practical implications of our findings, both at individual and organizational level. At the individual level, we found that men's deliberate efforts to manage the boundaries between work and family roles is associated with stronger family identities for both partners. Therefore, men's decisions regarding boundary management strategies can be linked with improved family cohesion and improved work-life balance for the couple. Secondly, the cross-partner relationships between wife's conflict resolution style and men's boundary management strategies suggested that husbands can consider adapting their role management strategies to complement their partners' conflict resolution styles. At the organizational level, our findings suggested that organizations can support men in adopting flexible role management strategies by allowing them to adjust work hours, or by allowing them to work from home when this may help them integrate family roles more effectively.

Our work is also aligned with recent inquiries into boundary management tactics and energy resource management strategies among public service employees during the COVID-19 pandemic (Seinsche *et al.*, 2024). Practical implications underscore the necessity for employers to provide resources and support for home-based employees to effectively manage work-life boundaries (Santarpia *et al.*, 2021).

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