Work-family interface during COVID-19: a sociolinguistic study of working mums' identity and mental health

Mariana Lazzaro-Salazar[1]* and Sebastián Barros[2]

Abstract

Background The dramatic reconfigurations of work-family roles and social boundaries resulting from the social restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic led working mums to look for online sites as spaces of emotional support and regulation where they could vent their emotions, share their concerns and griefs, and seek advice. They also became interactional spaces where mums' relevant identities were reassessed and enacted as they aimed to balance work-family roles and improve their wellbeing. The paper explores how working mums discursively negotiated their multiple identities in an online support forum during times of global struggle, how these identity constructions reflect the domains of Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and how working mums perceived these identities are related to their mental health.

Methods 127 posts of Chilean working mums published in a public online support forum for working mums collected during the first half of 2020 were analysed in three phases. The first one involved a thematic analysis to identify themes and subthemes related to working mums' identity construction in the data. The second phase involved conducting a narrative analysis of working mums' microstorias in order to identify a master narrative crafted by these working mums, and contesting and conforming ideologies of motherhood, among others. Finally, the third phase involved a fine-grained discourse analysis of the most representative extracts illustrating working mums' identity negotiation.

Results The sociolinguistic analysis showed that working mums' discourses displayed three themes of self-reflection, namely, diminishing self-care, reassessing their self, and enhancing self through self-care. Identity-related sub-themes for each main theme are discussed and discursively analysed. Two main points are emphasised: (1) the identity that was most salient in working mums' discourse was their personal identity (rather than work-family roles and identities), and (2) microstorias allowed working mums to challenge the hegemonic power of dominant discourses around their identities and their work-family roles.

Conclusions The study shows that a sociolinguistic approach to the exploration of working mums' identity negotiation is useful to highlight the ways in which mums contest binary assumptions of work-family roles and the need to reconsider working mums' life domains so that they reflect working mums' actual identity needs and lived experiences. Future lines of research are outlined.

*Correspondence:
Mariana Lazzaro-Salazar
mlazzaro@ucm.cl

Full list of author information is available at the end of the article

Introduction

Achieving work-family balance has widely been recognized as one of the greatest challenges of modern day society. This is particularly true for women, as they need to cope with greater societal pressures to take on household chores and the caring of children, which, therefore, makes them more likely to undergo a number of family-related career interruptions [1–4]. Very often, these two life domains are in tension and, thus, work-family conflict (WFC) has been defined as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" [5]. The relationship between the two domains is bidirectional, that is, work may interfere with family roles (WIF) and family may interfere with work roles (FIW) [6].

Finding the balance (or failing to do so) between work and family roles has a direct impact on the mental health of workers. As an example, several contextual factors (such as the amount of working hours), and the resources people use to manage different social roles and associated expectations at work and with their family may mediate WFC by helping to buffer or increase occupational stress [7], depression [8], anxiety [9] and burnout [2], among others. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of mental health outcomes related to the work-family relationship has increased as confinement and social distance blurred the boundaries of work-family interactional spaces and roles [10]. This phenomenon has prompted not only scholars in the field of organizational psychology to thoroughly investigate mental health effects of WFC [11–12], but also governments to pass laws and initiatives that would lessen the gender gap in WFC and decrease mental health issues, while improving job commitment, among other outcomes. Consider, for example, the Chilean Exempt Resolution N°734, which authorizes remote work, and Law 21561, which reduces the working hours to 40 a week. However, in spite of such numerous efforts, both locally and globally, to contain the situation and help improve the WF relationship in times of crisis, women remain the population with higher rates of emotional distress as a result of: (a) acquiring more work-related responsibilities, (b) contributing to the emotional regulation of other household members, and (c) managing family activities and the strains of household chores while juggling work tasks (see the case of Chile in [13–15].

This situation led many women to look for online social sites as spaces of emotional support and regulation where they could vent their emotions, share and discuss their concerns and griefs, and seek advice [10, 16–17]. What is more, the use of online forums became even more prominent during the Covid-19 pandemic as social restrictions prevented face-to-face interactions [17]. Blogs and online forums on different social media outputs then became spaces of emotional care [18] as well as discursive spaces [19] where working mums could manage multiple identities simultaneously to balance both work and family demands and improve their well-being [20]. Negotiating identities in times of such disruption and uncertainty [21] can prove difficult, however, as the juxtaposition of roles may cause identities to become blurred, entangled, and/or contested, which could potentially prevent working mums from managing them successfully and, thus, put their own well-being at risk [22]. In this light, this paper explores how working mums discursively negotiated their multiple identities in an online support forum during a time of global struggle, how these identity constructions reflect the domains of WFC and how working mums perceived these identities are related to their mental health.

Theoretical underpinnings of social identity construction

This study draws on the main principles of social identity theory viewed through a sociolinguistic lens [23] as a valuable, yet underemployed, approach to investigate working mums' multiple identities in online support forums as they juggle work-family roles during the Covid-19 pandemic. Women's identity in relation to their work-family roles has been the focus of considerable attention in organizational studies over the years [24, 25]; in fact, studies drawing on social identity theory played a central part in the investigation of the role of gender in moderating the relationship between WFC and health since the early 1990s [26, 27]. However, research in the field has almost exclusively identified two kinds of identities (worker-mum) and circumscribed them to one of the two domains (work or family) [24, 28–31], overlooking or even often curtailing the emergence of other social identities. In addition to this limitation, women's identity when coping with WFC has, more often than not, been explored through questionnaires and surveys [24, 32–34] or exclusively through content classifications when interview data was used [30, 35]. Such traditional ways of approaching the study of WFC issues, though valuable, have often been questioned for their overreliance on cross-sectional designs and self-report survey data that offers a limited view of the phenomenon as the knowledge emerging from those approaches often lacks concerns of cultural specificity and the wealth of narratives of lived experiences [36].

This makes a sociolinguistic exploration of women's firsthand accounts of their WFC identity struggles, as a way to shed light on how women's identities and identity orientations are saliently constructed through discourse and the linguistic resources used to construct these identities (such as is proposed in this study), a rare focus of study. Exploring women's identities in a sociolinguistic manner allows us to transcend the mere analysis of the content (i.e. the 'what' was said) to focus more specifically on the way things are said (i.e. the 'how' it was said). Thus, a sociolinguistic approach entails a comprehensive consideration of both contextual information and a detailed examination of various linguistic and discourse features (e.g., pronoun usage, lexical choices) to elucidate the negotiation of meaning among interactants. This approach highlights the significance of context and discursive choices as crucial factors in interpreting and understanding social interaction [37]. This perspective facilitates a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics involved in understanding of work and family roles, and the construction of women's identity when coping with them.

Social identity refers to the ways that people's self-concepts are based on their membership in a number of social groups, such as work teams, professions and families [38–39]. Sociolinguists have applied socio-constructionist principles to social identity theories [23] to investigate the discursive and linguistic resources used by social actors to constantly construct and negotiate their identities within the social milieu [40–41], which is also in line with the purposes of this study and, thus, makes a social constructionist stance suitable. Identities are then viewed as subjectively produced and negotiated in close relation with relevant others. As such, a social constructionist ontology rejects the notion of subject and object as separate entities. Instead, the construction of self and other is inter-subjective and relational and, consequently, self and other coexist as relational dualities rather than as separate entities. Thus, identities and the contexts in which they are embedded are in continuous (re)construction and in reciprocal interaction with one another. From this perspective, a social constructionist epistemology then allows us to explore the intersections between working mums' roles, their socio-cultural environments (or contexts) and their agentic construction of self as they interact with other forum posters.

Moreover, identities shape people's sense of lived experiences and are contingent upon a specific time and space, enabled and/or constrained by cultural norms, beliefs, attitudes and values [42]. Social contexts then produce a 'local ontology' or 'moral space' of what is considered acceptable practice by locally embedded social actors [43]. Hence, a situated sense of the interactional space informs forum posters what identities are preferred and/or should be like, enabling or constraining their emergence within its boundaries. More so, online forums serve as interactional spaces to contest and reframe grand narratives and taken-for-granted social understandings [44]. Thus, this paper views forums as more than mere interactional sites, but rather as social spaces where landscapes of meaning [45] are created to contest and re-create identities as a way of managing working mums' mental health. Very importantly, in these online forums posters often build and negotiate their identities through narratives of relevant stories that serve to illustrate a point, construct shared meanings or build an argument. Given the performative power of narratives in social life [46], forum posters often use them to maintain a sense of personal unity and purpose, make sense of their social worlds during confinement, and build identities and group memberships [47] to agentically construct meaningful and preferred selves [40]. For this reason, the extracts analysed in this paper are excerpts taken from the master narrative[1] [48–49] of social identities crafted by forum participants throughout their posts as representative of their struggles, resistance and resilience across different life domains.

In this light, because our data analysis is based on small accounts [50] posted by working mums in a support forum, we draw on the notion of 'microstoria'[2] [51] as a way to approach overlooked, unconventional, forgotten and/or invisibilised stories, contexts and individuals, those who are more susceptible to being stereotyped and stigmatized due to the norms and expectations of their roles within society. The concept of microstoria then allowed us to identify and analyse small accounts through which working women in this study constructed different aspects of their self. In this regard, scholars have argued that working mums need to manage multiple identities simultaneously to overcome both work and family demands [20] and that negotiating these multiple identities successfully is vital for their mental health and overall well-being [22]. Such a task has proven to be even more difficult in times of great disruption and uncertainty, such as the Covid-19 pandemic [21]. Thus, from our own ontological point of view, by which we seek to make the voices of women who struggle to reconcile their various roles in society heard, we chose microstorias as a suitable concept to explore the constituents of their own master narrative of social identities [54] and how forum posters use microstorias to challenge the hegemonic power

---

[1] In this study, we view master narratives as "collective stories that govern the existence of a collective subject, or group, in such a way that they shape the "personal" identities and narratives" [48].

[2] In this article, 'microstoria' is defined as those life stories that go beyond the boundaries of personal narratives and, at the same time, challenge the universality of grand narratives to portray narratives of the minorities [52–53].

of dominant discourses around working mums' identities [55]. In this way, the findings contest often taken-for-granted identities of working mums and how they manage WF domains through identity construction by proposing a third domain in the negotiation of WF roles. To this end, we borrow Bhabha's [56] notion of Third Space to propose a domain where working mums' personal identity (different from the identity as a mum and as a worker) exists.

Data and methods

We analysed 127 posts of Chilean working mums from different backgrounds and occupational fields, which represents the total amount of posts made during the first half (March to July) of 2020. Fourteen of these were the initiating comment (or trigger), eighty-three were first replies to these initiating comments, and thirty of the posts were second replies (that is, replies to a first reply). This involved the participation of approximately forty-five forum members. At this point, it is worth mentioning that most first replies are direct responses to the initiating comment (rather than reactions to other first replies) and that second replies are mostly very succinct reactions to first replies (such as 'I agree', 'absolutely', or just emoticons).

All these posts were made during the Covid-19 quarantines before vaccines were available to the public in Chile in December 2020. Hence, all these mums were compelled to work strictly from home. As in our previous research [57, 58], these texts were posted in Spanish and were translated into English by the first author (herself a bilingual speaker of Spanish and English), resulting in a dataset of around 7,500 words. The online website was a support forum for working mums in one of the most widely used social media outputs, and was administered, monitored and facilitated by one moderator, herself a psychologist. The forum was publicly and freely available to anyone to view, had over five thousand members at the time and required no registration to either post or view the texts. Posters could either reply to posts made by the moderator (trigger/initiating comments) or the responses to these by other posters, with no word limit restrictions. A disclaimer displayed this information on its webpage for all visitors/posters to see. Following these considerations and those provided in the guidelines by the Association of Internet Researchers [59], informed consents were not required from posters as the data was sourced from the public domain. Moreover, for confidentiality purposes, all posts have been anonymized and the name of the website will not be disclosed under any circumstances. Ethics approval for this study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at Universidad Católica del Maule, approval number 46/2021.

As a first analytical step, thematic analysis [60] was carried out following the theme-oriented approach to discourse analysis suggested by Roberts and Sarangi [61], which allowed us to capture broader themes and subthemes related to working mums' identity construction in the data. Thus, we read every post several times to become familiarized with them and then relevant posts were first coded using open-coding techniques or line-by-line examination to identify units of text (or vignettes) of potential interest. This process resulted in the identification of 54 posts (which represents the total number of posts that were explicitly related to working mums' efforts to balance work and family tasks) and 14 initial categories. All 54 posts were then compared with each other to group them according to their similarity. This led to the emergence of 3 thematic clusters (namely, diminishing self-care, reassessing self, and enhancing self through self-care), with their own sub-themes (see Table 1 in the following section). The coding of the data in all the steps here described involved independent categorization by each of the authors, followed by a collaborative revision of the categories between the authors. Following this, a continuing and iterative process of data analysis and literature review (on working mums, identity construction in WFC, and narrative analysis) informed several adjustments to our initial categorization to provide theoretical support and further refinement of our grouping. All of these steps were carefully discussed between the authors to reach agreement about the methodological choices, emerging intuitions and insights [62], the relation between theory and data, and the overall rigor of the process [63, 64].

As a follow-up step, we used narrative analysis [40, 60] to explore how working mums positioned themselves in terms of roles and role obligations (e.g., managing work-family tasks) through the stories' characters (e.g., kids as the primary source of tension and themselves as the heroes), plots (i.e., juggling work and family duties), settings (i.e., working from home), and morals (i.e., need for self-caring). In this regard, some of the examples analysed here are extended stories of past events that display Labov and Waletsky's [65] either most or all six parts of the narrative structure, and some are stories which are not told in their entirety (e.g. small stories) [66, 67] and mini-tellings [68].

Very importantly, we sought to make sense of these microstorias collectively rather than individually, as it allowed us to reach for a better thematic and narrative saturation [69]. For this purpose, we followed the feed of the conversation holistically, seeking to grasp an overarching arc of identities and stories within these online interactions. Therefore, the fact that most working mums told a somewhat similar story allowed us to identify a master narrative crafted by these working mums. Finally,

Table 1 Themes, sub-themes and examples

Theme	Sub-themes and examples
Dimin-ishing self-care	*S.1* - Work interfering with self* *Example 1*: A few days ago (it was Monday and it feels like a thousand years ago hahaha) I collapsed due to a sudden increase in my workload. Emails, messages, calls. Pure duty duty and more duty. I can't find space for myself. *S.2 - Conflicting roles within family domain* *Example 2*: I have been losing my space during the day […] I believe that the confinement has been affecting the children's behaviour, no matter how much one tries to plan routines for them, that they do their homework, that they go online for their classes, they are ir-ritable. My daughter is 5 years old, she is full of energy, which she used to control with activities. Nowadays, nothing motivates her and I have been stressing myself over that. Feeling overwhelmed […] I feel that my time is being used and monopolized by my daughter and leaving me less time for my husband and my other son, less time to be myself you know? *S.3 - Family roles interfering with self* *Example 3*: I'm more exhausted than when he was born…!!! But it's a more emotional exhaustion, I think that this pandemic has affected me real bad. *Example 4*: I try to give myself time in the afternoons at the beginning of the pandemic it was easier. It's like the children liked to be with-out doing normal activities. But for a while now [daughter's name] is irritable, very quarrelsome with her brother, she is more active, at the beginning my husband stayed with them for a couple of hours playing and I could read and talk with my friends in my room. Today, [daughter's name] starts fighting and my husband says to me, you can look after her, so I have been losing my space during the day.
Reassessing their self	*S.4 - Managing control expectations* *Example 5*: I am very controlling. Like everything depended on me. When I got sick I think that the hardest thing for me to realize was that I didn't have control over things, that I couldn't control this. I was afraid that my children would see me suffer or disturb their life, which I had always tried to make as happy as possible. One day I allowed myself to cry and say why me. […] What I will do is try not to believe again that the octopus can do everything. I am happy without so many rules and with many dreams. *Example 6*: It turns out I have my email inbox full of invitations to parenting, motherhood, self-care, empowerment, etc. webinars. Infoxi-cation they call it. And although in the past I did all those seminars, today I just can't do it … I just can't cope and I decided to let go; I cannot cope with it and I decided to disconnect to connect with my kids, because I understand that they need me, and I need that. *S.5 - Self-forgiveness* *Example 7*: For me, being positive doesn't mean not having low moments, feeling tired and overwhelmed. Giving ourselves these per-missions to feel chaotic, discomfort, the urge to "throw in the towel" is part of our cycle, of our emotions and of life. *Example 8*: I don't know, but it's so hard for us to give ourselves a minute and sometimes we feel guilty, but hey, look for the moment when you're calm and your baby is asleep, so do everything or do nothing, do whatever you want in that valuable moment… *S.6 - Self-awareness and empowerment* *Example 9*: I have always believed that within us there is a compass that is never wrong! Only at times we are so busy and engrossed by external noise that we ignore it! Now, when connecting with that 'internal compass', you will always be at peace, happy, even if there are difficulties. *Example 10*: When a mum is in good health, physically and emotionally, her children will be well. It was an opportunity to make visible what mums experience, how vulnerable we are in the face of this system, so we realize how we are as a society. *Example 11*: From experience, I think it is a mistake just to use the naptime to do your things. In the past, I only took time for myself when my daughter was sleeping or was with her father on the weekend. The problem is that (1) at some point they stop napping, (2) they don't learn to see you taking time for yourself. My daughter is 7 now, and until the quarantine, she assumed that my life was that of a sacrificial mum: either for her or for work (I have always worked from home). I did not know how to respect my own time, which I needed so much with the confinement (reading, doing Pilates, yoga, knitting, etc.), but over time I have had to fight for those spaces and teach her that they are important parts of my life and for my integral health.
Enhanc-ing self through self-care	*S.7 - New routines* *Example 12*: I think that keeping routines and schedules has freed us from chaos. What I'm doing is getting up a little earlier and there I don't make space for anything but myself, since my priority was to open my eyes to everything but me. *Example 13*: Knowing that my "Day off" is coming helps me a lot to keep going, and once it arrives, I will fully enjoy a few hours alone, walking slowly without watching my son, and then, a giant nap, without interruptions! Just to be myself for a while!!! *S.8 – The sense making and learning process* *Example 14*: I know that I have to continue learning, that today we have more opportunities, but I also know that I must trust myself more and everything I know. I know that there are potentialities dormant or stored comfortably in a corner that I must mobilize. […] I also believe we are unstoppable that the only limits are the self-imposed ones and I believe that when you are a mum the challenge is to balance giving to others by dedicating everything they deserve for being your loved ones and giving yourself the permission and time to develop that unstoppable momentum to grow. *Example 15*: I think taking the time is a mix of finding what really thrills you, what allows you to be yourself, and then creating a habit around it so that it's like washing your hands.

Note: *S.1 stands for 'Sub-theme 1' and so on

we further probed the results with a more fine-grained discourse analysis [40, 57] of the most representative extracts, that is, examples that display either most or all parts of the Labovian narrative structure, and that clearly illustrate participants' common views and construction of working mums' identity negotiation, how these identity constructions reflect the domains of WFC and how forum participants perceive these identities are related to their mental health.

Analysis

Similarly to what has been reported in studies of this nature [15, 25, 70], the thematic exploration of the data revealed the following recurrent topics: *unclear work-family boundaries* (e.g., work interfering with family and/or family interfering with work, work and family overlap, blurring of physical and emotional spaces); *role accumulation* (e.g., growing demands, increased burden, multi-tasking); and/or *change of family dynamics and work hours* (e.g., alteration of household chores and routines, longer work shifts). All in all, facing family and working concerns with the Covid-19 pandemic as a gloomy backdrop became a heavy burden for many working mums, which, as they report in the forum, led to burnout, anxiety, distress and fear, all of these often in relation to the uncertainty about the future, not being good enough or being unable to perform well in the different roles.

Following this initial thematic data exploration, we selected all those extracts where some aspect of these working mums' identities were discursively salient. The thematic analysis was further refined and it showed that working mums' discourses displayed three stages of self-reflection, namely, diminishing self-care, reassessing their self, and enhancing self through self-care (Table 1). These then became the main identity-related themes, for which each of the extracts was then classified into sub-themes. Representative examples for each sub-theme have been selected for micro-discursive analysis.

Diminishing self-care

This theme centres on those narratives in which working mums reflect on the impact that work and/or family roles have had on their self-care and, consequently, mental health. As these working mums put it, they "collapsed" (example 1), felt "stressed", "overwhelmed" (example 2), and "emotionally exhausted" (example 3) by their never-ending demands and pressures. Contrary to what is often reported in the literature (where family roles are shown to interfere with work roles and vice versa), we found that working mums' accounts of struggles of work and family roles were often related to how the demands and pressures of those roles interfered with their time and/or space for themselves (S.1, S.2 and S.3) and, more importantly, to *be* themselves (S.3). In other words, work and

family roles are felt to interfere with mums' own identity needs. Moreover, they also reported within-domain role interference (example 2) as a source of stress when the demands of their role as mums (or as the mum of one of their children) interfered with the demands of their role as a wife or as the mum of their other children. This may be an indication that there may be conflicting roles within the same domain and that they may affect working mums' overall family role satisfaction, while, at the same time, these competing roles within the family domain may surface as identity tensions.

From a discursive perspective, posters' stories of hard work (for both work and family domains) and the way this has affected their mental health could be interpreted as an act of complaint or even whining [71]. In this regard, DeGroot and Vik [71] explain that women are expected to save face and maintain a positive self-image when performing motherhood publicly; the authors further show how mums' reflections on the burdens of motherhood are perceived as complaining behaviour. Mums' identity construction around these matters then is (to different degrees) influenced by societal expectations of working mums in relation to whether it is appropriate to show exhaustion, for instance, and to share microstorias of WIF and FIW, most of which may often cause feelings of guilt and frustration [25]. Thus, because such acts can potentially damage the positive face of the narrator [41], working mums need to discursively manage their self-image in positive ways to avoid stigmatization [71], which is achieved by employing a number of rhetoric devices and other discursive resources that help them position self and other in preferred ways.

To this end, the display of humour (see ironic comment 'it was Monday and it feels like a thousand years ago,' followed by laughter in example 1) may be interpreted as a form of mitigation [72] of the story that follows. The choice of pronouns (consider '*the* children' rather than '*my* children', and 'one' rather than 'I' in example 2) also helps posters work through their emotions in the forum as they distance themselves from their very own stories, impersonalizing them and, thus, making them more easily relatable to other posters. In this light, lists ('emails, messages, call') and the repetition of words ('Pure duty duty and more duty') (both in example 1) are also rhetorical devices used as patterns of argumentation [73] to influence or persuade the interlocutor to support the view that, because of her workload, the poster has not been able to find space for herself. These discursive resources, together with the choice of tense (present perfect continuous) in 'I have been losing my space' (examples 2 and 4) to indicate this situation is continuously progressing, seem to emphasise their level of exhaustion, to intensify the burden of the space restriction and to persuade readers to empathise with them.

Persuading readers to empathise with posters' views, feelings and situations plays a key role in how these working mums construct their narratives and, thus, their identities. In this light, drawing on compelling arguments that are easily relatable to other working mums is useful to get readers to side with the narrator. For instance, one of the recursive arguments in the forum relates to their feeling that whatever time working mums have for themselves is 'on loan' and depends on the willingness of the husband to take over and look after the kids for a while so mums can find 'space' for themselves (example 4). Drawing on shared experiences is also a powerful resource when posters seek readers' empathy, and so in example 3 the poster illustrates how exhausted she is by comparing that feeling to the way women often feel when they give birth.

While some working mums' narratives show the way they have struggled to fulfil mum-worker roles and/or how mum-worker roles have interfered with each other between family-work domains, what these examples (as a reflection of what was observed for most posts) have in common is the fact that posters' *self* is made salient. This self is discursively isolated (i.e. constructed separately) from the self as mum and the self as worker, yet seems to heavily interact with the latter two, leading to distinctive identity tensions among narrators. Thus, these narratives attest to the fact that the stressors associated with family-work domains exponentially increased amidst the Covid-19 emergency, demanding working mums to be better mums and hard workers, at the expense of *being themselves* (example 2). As a result, these women's personal[3] identity was increasingly compromised, threatened by the burden of not being able to find time and space to be themselves.

Interestingly, these comments are often made at both the beginning and the closing of the narrative (within the same post), which performs an evaluative role that allows posters to display their own feelings *vis à vis* the story and to index the centrality of these feelings in narrators' lives. Evaluative comments such as these have been found to be used in the expressive elaboration of microstorias to help build interest in the story [75]. Constructing their narratives with this affective orientation [76] certainly allows working mums not only to share their views and stories and to let their feelings take centre stage, but also to find the appropriate interactional space [19] where this self is relevantly constructed and maybe even enacted.

Reassessing their self

As the months went by and working mums continued to post in the forum, the mum-worker-personal self

tensions seemed to have reached a turning point, in which these working mums started looking for coping strategies that would allow them to '*be themselves*' while also being a mum and a worker. To achieve this, they often began by reassessing their life situation and their self needs and wants when they discussed ways in which they: a) managed self and other control expectations of working mums, b) navigated the path of self-forgiveness for not being able to cope with the burden of increased work and family tasks and identity tensions, and c) developed a sense of self-awareness that allowed them to reflect on themselves, their needs and projections.

Interestingly, in these reflections, the identities that surfaced more strongly and clearly for this theme in our dataset is posters' personal identity and their identity as mums. During the pandemic, both these identities (or aspects of working mums' identities) were often revised and negotiated in online forums [17], which resulted, as shown below, in identity shifts that would allow them to cope with the demands of their social environments. Working mums in the forum, thus, reflected on their need to move away from their urge to be in total control and task-oriented (both at home and at work), in favour of a change of mind-set that would allow them to focus on their physical and emotional wellbeing and to put their personal identity in the centre. This push for an identity shift was often embedded in discourses of time and space (e.g., be here now), learning processes (e.g., taking baby steps, being flexible, letting go, focusing on processes) and self-fulfilment (e.g., placing emotions over outcomes).

Possibly because of the retrospective and problematic nature of identity shifts, motherhood ideologies played a more central role in posters' narratives of identity negotiation and shift than in the case of the first theme. One of these ideologies is that mums are supposed to be in complete control of not only house chores and work tasks, as mentioned above, but, most importantly, also their own health (example 5) and the way they manage their own well-being (example 6). Narratives around this ideology are rather self-centred and, thus, narrated in first person singular (using the personal pronoun 'I' and possessive pronoun 'my'), which allows posters to claim epistemic authority [40] of their own microstorias in order to gain the right to discuss their own vulnerability, that is, the moment they realized that not everything was under their control (example 5) and that they could not cope with the stress of trying to control everything around them (example 6). Building their own agency in their narratives, as has been discussed in the previous theme, seems to allow posters to find a safe interactional space where their personal identity is made relevant, where they can be themselves (that is, enact their personal

---

[3] Drawing on feminist theory on the self, the term 'personal identity' is here used as discussed in Anderson, Willett and Meyers [74] as a way to distinguish the kind of identity these women construct that is different from their 'relational identities' (that is, as workers and as mums).

identity) and share their feelings with other mums in the forum.

These narratives also draw on gendered metaphors such as the idea that mums are an 'octopus' (example 6) to provide a vivid portrayal of the amount of work (whether family or job related) mums had to do during the pandemic, and construct positive in-group affiliations (that is, a sense of 'us'). On a negative note, this metaphor has been defined as a gender stereotypical rhetoric figure that helps to widen the gender gap in daily discourse, and it had a dominant role in the public scrutiny of mums' role(s) during the pandemic of Covid-19 [77, 78]. However, in spite of this negative power of the octopus-mum metaphor, in the context of the narratives analysed here, it seems to be used as a powerful figure of speech that allows posters to build a sense of shared life experiences (as most mums could easily relate to the metaphor's underlying gendered normativity) and to show some insights into their personal feelings. Hence, as mums' narratives show the processes through which they began to acknowledge their limitations and vulnerability as human beings as a way to resist superwoman dominant ideologies (examples 5 and 6), they opened up to also reflect on how they needed to conceal their personal self and feelings out of fear that their children would see them suffer (example 5).

Claiming epistemic authority over narratives constructed as shared experiences through the use of dominant gendered metaphors seems to have helped mums to build solidarity and empathy among them as well as to persuade others of the narrator's points of view [79], which, in turn, helps to consolidate a strong sense of 'us' in the narratives that begins to be more explicitly constructed in S.5 and S.6. It also serves to again project the forum as a safe space where working mums can share their burden and discuss their identity shifts in a supportive environment. In this light, posters reflect on how they managed to free themselves from previous constraints and allowed themselves to show their feelings and emotions to their families (example 5) while also discussing their feelings of not being able to cope (example 6) and their guilt (examples 7 and 8), some of which are taboo in public spheres because of the normative power of the social expectations towards mums' roles.

Moreover, posters also drew on other useful public discourses, such as the 'disconnect to (re-)connect' notion (example 6), when discussing their identity shifts and/or at the balancing of their different identities. The 'disconnect to (re-)connect' notion aligns with the poster's main argument (that is, the idea that she feels 'infoxicated' by the amount of self-care, etc. information she receives in her email), and it is very much rooted in current discourses of self-help, well-being and 'being present'. This notion evokes the idea that disconnecting helps

regain a sense of self during a period of 'detoxing' from media influence [80] and the idea that it is an opportunity to reconnect with a different social space in order to strengthen family bonds with their children as a form of self-family enrichment process ('I understand they need me, and I need that'). In addition to the use of first person pronouns discussed earlier, the narrator in example 6 continues to claim epistemic authority by using the word 'just' as a restrictive adverb that, first of all, shows the truth value of the proposition [81] ('I just can't do it') and, then, introduces a logical consequence ('I decided to let go') that is justified and supported by the proposition in the previous clause [82]. The idea is then repeated in an almost identical sentence ('I cannot cope with it and I decided to disconnect to connect with my kids') that emphasises the feeling of (possibly) frustration and/or resignation over the handling of the situation. This helps the narrator to support her decision of devoting herself to her children while also resisting societal expectations that are contrary to what these working mums actually want and can cope with.

As these working mums learn to manage their expectations of control around the family and their own health, their narratives show they go through a realization phase in which they feel they need to forgive themselves for not conforming to others' expectations of their roles as mums and as women. This seems to constitute a second phase of identity negotiation during the identity reassessment period. In their discourse of self-forgiveness (examples 7 and 8), posters' narratives become more collectively oriented as microstorias and reflections are voiced in first person plural ('we', 'our', 'ourselves') which is in stark contrast to the previous narrative orientations that were constructed from a more individual perspective. In this light, the use of the second person singular pronoun ('you' 'yourself') (example 8; see also example 11) is less frequent, though it is functionally powerful as it helps the narrator to bond with the other posters by addressing their audience explicitly and, thus, being more inclusive.

A third phase of identity negotiation involved a period of self-awareness, in which posters reflected upon their own strengths (example 9), vulnerability (example 10) and the struggles of competing roles (example 11) as a way of rejecting the idea of the self-sacrificial mum and empowering themselves ('within us there is a compass that is never wrong' in example 9; 'it is an opportunity to make visible what mums experience' in example 10). During this phase, working mums continue to use a number of discursive resources that allow them to build positive relations with the other members of the forum and to build preferred self orientations. Mums' reflections are then constructed in second person singular ('you') when providing advice to bond with the other posters (example 9), first person singular ('I') when expressing an opinion

and narrating a personal experience (example 11) to gain epistemic authority, and second person plural ('we') to draw on shared feelings and experiences to build in-group membership and solidarity (examples 9–11).

Figurative language (e.g. 'external noise' in example 9) is again used to appeal to the audience as a powerful discursive resource of working mums' empowering discourses. In this case, the 'internal compass' metaphor emerges (example 9) to give hope and empower posters regarding their decisions and choices. In everyday language, the metaphor is commonly used to refer to people's moral and ethical standards, that is, the personal identity that guides their behaviours [83]. This seems to connect well with Liamputtong's [84] idea that motherhood is a moral career, one that is tied to discourses of good/ideal motherhood and involves the ethic of care and responsibility for others, and is in line with the views reported for the previous themes (see examples 2, 4–5), which shows that this a well-engraved ideology in mums' collective self-conceptions. This ideal-motherhood ideology [85] is further reinforced in subsequent reflections and narratives, such as in example 11 where the poster draws on the idea of the self-sacrificial mum as a way to contest work-family identity assumptions and to fight for her own space in order to improve her wellbeing.

Though the phases here analysed (that is, managing control expectations, learning self-forgiveness and empowering themselves through self-awareness) may not be linear (nor have we endeavoured to establish this kind of relationship among the phases), they have been observed to discursively develop before posters enter a phase of forging positive identity shifts and enhancing self-care, which is discussed below.

Enhancing self through self-care

As mentioned in examples 10 and 11 above, finding the appropriate space for their personal self to emerge favours working mums wellbeing. Thus, as they embraced prioritizing themselves over fulfilling other roles (examples 12 and 15) to fight feeling trapped ('keeping routines and schedules has freed us from chaos', example 12) and boost their wellbeing ('knowing that my "Day off" is coming helps me a lot to keep going' in example 13; see also example 15), two sub-themes emerged in their narratives: creating routines, and making sense and learning from the pandemic experience. In this theme, the personal identity reference is more explicitly voiced ('I don't make space for anything but myself', example 12; 'just to be myself for a while', example 13; 'allows you to be yourself', example 15) and building in-group affiliation ('us' in example 12; 'you' in examples 14–15) in maintained as a salient discursive resource. Space reappears as a recurrent topic in S.7 (e.g. having a 'day off' in example 13), as

working mums relate their personal identity needs also more explicitly to their mental health (example 13).

In this light, working mums seem to have found in the forum a safe interactional space where they not only discuss their feelings and concerns, but also collectively reflect upon their identity needs and enact their personal self. However, despite the importance of these achievements, at times the discursive construction of posters' identity shifts still align with dominant gendered discourses concerning motherhood responsibility through discourses of obligation (e.g. 'I allowed myself to cry' in example 5; 'giving ourselves the permission to feel chaotic' in example 7, also example 14), the impact of mums' health on their children (examples 10 and 11), guilt (example 8), and insecurity ('I need to trust myself more' in example 14), among others. The cultural pressure of motherhood ideologies still lingers in some of these reflections and microstorias of working mums, and, thus, the presence of dominant gendered discourses in mums' narratives may show that their identity shifts were still at an initial phase.

Discussion

As our sociolinguistic analysis of the three themes and their sub-themes reveals, there are recurrent threads of shared experiences and feelings, notions of self and motherhood ideologies throughout posters' narration of microstorias that show how working mums negotiated their identities in an online forum during the Covid-19 pandemic. Possibly because it is a mum's forum, posters were prompted to build their identity as mums more powerfully and extensively than, for instance, their identity as a worker or as a professional. Yet, women's identity as a mum is not the only identity that becomes salient in the dataset. In this light, a very important recurrent idea is that working mums are more than 'just mums and workers', and that the new social boundaries and reconfigurations of work-family roles somehow pushed them to conceal or relegate their personal self. Therefore, their identity negotiation during this period of the pandemic was largely related to finding the time and space (both literally and figuratively) to be able to recover their personal identity, which, in these mums' views, is an integral part of both their physical and mental health (see example 11).

This sense of lost identity [84] played a vital part in working mums' role and identity struggles during the pandemic as they adapted routines and pursued coping strategies in search of a social space where they could be neither a mum nor a worker, that is, where they could recreate a sense of self and just 'be' them. Drawing on a number of discursive resources (such as metaphors and the use of pronouns for in-group alignments), their microstorias then construct bits of a master narrative that involves discourses of empowerment, self-awareness and

forgiveness, as well as guilt and responsibility as roles and identities compete for recognition and space. These identity struggles reveal the need to re-think working mums' life domains, to include a domain where working mums can retain high degrees of agency and individuality.

In this regard, an increasing number of scholars in the field of organizational psychology have begun to consider other non-work domains as vital to WF enrichment and individuals' health [86], and, therefore, they have employed the term 'life' as an umbrella concept to refer to the domain that encompasses family and other non-work contexts of people's lives [35, 87]. However, organizational psychology literature has traditionally used the term as a synonym of the family domain and has commonly circumscribed women's identity conflicts to the two traditional domains (work and family). Thus, often when other dimensions of women's life are considered (such as sports and hobbies), they have been investigated as a way to buffer WF conflict or to promote WF-FW enrichment [88], rather than as a space or domain in its own right where other dimensions of the self (different from those related to work and family) inhabit and are re-created. As a consequence, we have purposefully not used the word 'life' in this paper to refer to this domain because equating family with the life domain would then invisibilize the need to recognise a separate space for these working mums personal identity to be conceptualized and enacted.

We then borrow Bhabha's [56] notion of Third Space to propose a domain (hence, Third Space domain) where working mums' personal identity (rather than their social self, involving mum/worker roles and identities) exists. Though Bhabha's [56] theory is much more complex than we let on in this article, some basic parallels can be made to explain our rationale for borrowing the concept. Bhabha [56] defined Third Space as a hybrid social space in which two or more cultural paradigms (for instance, normative ideologies of womanhood and individuals' own self-conceptions as women) interact to form new or hybrid ways of thinking or being. Thus, the Third Space is a space of resistance to the dominant order arising from mums' personal identity peripheral positioning. In line with our findings, the Third Space domain would then be a site of struggle, liberation and/or emancipation where working mums actively challenge binaries and dualisms [89], resist being subjected solely to work-family roles, negotiate their identities and reinvent themselves.

Following Bhabha's logic, the binary paradigm through which scholars have examined the domains of women's life helps to reflect societal expectations of women and to perpetuate the stereotypes associated to them. This kind of scientific attention also helps to reaffirm a cultural framework in which women's role is stigmatised, confined and constrained by these two domains. This results in a reductionist approach to the conceptualization of womanhood by which women's identities are often defined in relation to their motherhood [90]. This conceptualization of women's life domains contests hegemonic views of women's life spheres/dimensions and affords an epistemic stance that represents the complexity of competing domains where individual and social identities are conceived as multiple (rather than binary) [91]. From this perspective, Bhadha's Third Space concept opposes notions of identity fixity and allows for some dynamism and fluidity in the dimensions of women's life that constitute the domain at different given points in their life trajectories, and the interrelations among those dimensions at both individual and collective levels.

From a gender perspective, then, we claim that this Third Space domain decolonizes often-taken-for-granted assumptions of the role of work and family domains in working mums' lives (and even women's lives more extensively) to recognize that there is also an agentive, individual domain that plays a vital part in attaining life satisfaction and self-fulfilment, and maintaining and/or improving women's mental health. This Third Space domain interacts with work and family domains to redefine mums' WF roles and the positive relationship among these domains contributes to achieving a healthy balance in women's lives.

Conclusions

A sociolinguistic approach to the study of working mums' microstorias in an online supportive forum during the Covid-19 pandemic served to highlight the need to revise identity understandings of WF domains to include a third domain (Third Space domain) that better reflects working mums' actual identity needs and lived experiences. A discursive analysis of their microstorias showed how working mums manage their work-family-personal self conflicts, work towards building preferred self and other identities and get readers to empathize with them to, thus, help fulfil the aim of the forum, that is, be a support group space for these working mums. Altogether, this approach helped to show that the bi-directional relationship between work and family domains and roles is more intricate than often made out to be. From this point of view, sociolinguistic studies of this nature may offer new insights into the struggles and relationships among roles and domains, and may help identify new domains, roles and relationships.

These findings raise the question of whether working mums' personal self emerged more strongly in their discourses because they were going through times of great uncertainty and even despair, or whether such discourses are always present in their microstorias, yet we, as scholars, have been asking the wrong questions and not allowing 'space' for these narratives and identities to emerge.

In this light, future studies should address these concerns and focus on operationalizing the idea of the Third Space domain proposed in this study. It also seems relevant to propose that future studies develop in different contexts to enable us to draw cross-cultural comparisons that advance the field towards investigating those factors that contribute to the universality of the phenomenon and/or those culturally specific ones that help working mums navigate the complexities of negotiating multiple identities. Moreover, because this paper draws on data collected in a public online forum, participants' sociodemographic information was not available to us. Future studies may wish to investigate other kinds of forums and/or online sites where this information can be more easily retrieved and integrated into the analysis in order to explore differences in mums' identity constructions according to their social class, children's ages and occupation, for instance. Last but not least, within-domain role interference (that is, how being a mum interferes with being a wife, for instance) has also been scarcely investigated in the field and even less so when considering women's identity struggles in juggling both these family roles. Scholarly interest in this regard has viewed family roles as an all-encompassing construct within the family domain and further investigation is needed to understand the ways in which different roles within the family domain conflict, balance and/or nurture each other, and how these family roles separately relate to work and Third Space domains.

Acknowledgements
Not applicable.

Author contributions
MLS contributed to the conceptualisation, design and data collection of the study. SB carried out the data analysis. MLS and SB prepared the initial draft manuscript. MLS reviewed results and drafted subsequent stages of the manuscript. MLS and SB read, revised and approved the final manuscript.

Funding
This study was funded by ANID, FONDECYT N°11190052 (2019–2023).

Data availability
Available upon request.

Declarations

Ethics approval
Ethics approval for this study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at Universidad Católica del Maule, approval number 46/2021. All methods were carried out in accordance with relevant guidelines and regulations of the Declaration of Helsinki and The Singapore Statement.

Consent for publication
Not applicable.

Competing interests
The authors declare no competing interests.

Author details
[1]Centro de Investigación de Estudios Avanzados del Maule, Universidad Católica del Maule, Avenida San Miguel 3605, Talca, Chile
[2]Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Concepción, Chile

References
1. Marshall NL, Tracy AJ. After the baby: work-family conflict and working mums' psychological health. Fam Relat. 2009;58(4):380–91. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2009.00560.x.
2. Zhang H, Tang L, Ye Z, Zou P, Shao J, Wu M, et al. The role of social support and emotional exhaustion in the association between work-family conflict and anxiety symptoms among female medical staff: a moderated mediation model. BMC Psychiatry. 2020;20(1):1–9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-020-02673-2.
3. Aarntzen L, Derks B, van Steenbergen E, van der Lippe T. When work–family guilt becomes a women's issue: internalized gender stereotypes predict high guilt in working mums but low guilt in working fathers. Br J Soc Psychol. 2023;62(1):12–29. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12575.
4. Hosseini Z, Yarelahi M, Rahimi SF, Salmani F. Investigating the factors related to work-family conflicts experienced by Working women: a systematic review. Health Scope. 2023;12(1). https://doi.org/10.5812/jhealthscope-129738.
5. Greenhaus JH, Beutell NJ. Sources and conflict between work and family roles. Acad Manag Rev. 1985;10(1):76–88. https://doi.org/10.2307/258214.
6. Mesmer-Magnus JR, Viswesvaran C. Convergence between measures of work-to-family and family-to-work conflict: a meta-analytic examination. J Vocat Behav. 2005;67(2):215–32. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2004.05.004.
7. Jerg-Bretzke L, Limbrecht-Ecklundt K, Walter S, Spohrs J, Beschoner P. Correlations of the work–family conflict with occupational stress—a cross-sectional study among university employees. Front Psychiatry. 2020;11:134. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2020.00134.
8. Guille C, Frank E, Zhao Z, Kalmbach DA, Nietert PJ, Mata DA, et al. Work-family conflict and the sex difference in depression among training physicians. JAMA Intern Med. 2017;177(12):1766–72. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2017.5138.
9. Zhao L, Wu J, Ye B, Tarimo CS, Li Q, Ma M, et al. Work–family conflict and anxiety among nurses of the maternal and child health institutions: the mediating role of job satisfaction. Front Public Health. 2023;11. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1108384.
10. Lazzaro-Salazar M, Zayts O. Gendered crises? Bringing in the voices of women in the workforce in the times of health, socioconomic and other global crises. In: 2020 Expert Panel for International Pragmatics Association Conference, 2021; Winterthur.
11. Trógolo MA, Moretti LS, Medrano LA. A nationwide cross-sectional study of workers' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: impact of changes in working conditions, financial hardships, psychological detachment from work and work-family interface. BMC Psychol. 2022;10(1):73. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-022-00783-y.
12. Pujol-Cols L, Arraigada M, Lazzaro-Salazar M, Foutel M. Work–family conflict and emotional exhaustion during the COVID-19 pandemic in Argentina: the moderating role of Personal, Family, and Job resources. J Fam Issues. 2024;online first. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X241257231.
13. Salud Mental en Situación de Pandemia. In. 2020 Mesa Social Covid-19. Santiago; 2020.
14. Caccia PA, Simaes A, Mancini N, Gómez F, Schetsche C, Pedrón V, Estrés de pandemia por COVID-19 y el conflicto trabajo-familia y familia-trabajo en Buenos, Aires et al. Argentina. Interdisciplinaria. Revista de Psicología y Ciencias Afines. 2023; 40(2):445–60. https://doi.org/10.16888/interd.2023.40.2.26
15. Coyle EF, Fulcher M, Baker K, Fredrickson CN. Families in quarantine: COVID-19 pandemic effects on the work and home lives of women and their daughters. J Soc Issues. 2023;79(3):971–96. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12589.
16. Zayts-Spence O, Edmonds D, Fortune Z. Mental Health, discourse and stigma. BMC Psychol. 2023;11(1):1–5. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-023-01210-6.
17. Zayts-Spence OA, Tse VWS, Fortune Z. Feel like going crazy': Mental health discourses in an online support group for mums during COVID-19. Discourse Soc. 2023;34(2):255–70. https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265221116302.

18. Lazzaro-Salazar M, González-Tapia G. Discourses of perceived empathy: A sociolinguistic analysis of chronic patients' narratives of medical practices. In: 2023 18th International Pragmatics Conference, 2023 Jul 9–14; Brussels.

19. Barone S, Lazzaro-Salazar M. Forty bucks is forty bucks': an analysis of a medical doctor's professional identity. Lang Commun. 2015;43:27–34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2015.04.002.

20. Cesaroni FM, Sentuti A, Pediconi MG. Fading and transformation: how a woman entrepreneur's multiple identities interact throughout her life. Int J Entrepreneurial Behav Res. 2021;27(4):1033–53. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-04-2020-0239.

21. Xu S, Kee K, Mao C. Multitasking and Work-Life Balance: explicating Multitasking when working from Home. J Broadcast Electron Media. 2021;65(3):397–425. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2021.1976779.

22. Nath K, Dwivedi R. Tribal women's work-life balance: an identity-based approach. Gend Manag. 2020;36(4):482–97. https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-07-2020-0219.

23. Lazzaro-Salazar M. Social-constructionism. In: Bernadette, Vine, editors. The Routledge Handbook of Language in the Workplace. London: Routledge; 2017. pp. 89–100.

24. Aryee S, Luk V. Balancing two major parts of adult life experience: work and family identity among dual-earner couples. Hum Relat. 1996;49(4):465–87. https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679604900404.

25. Hwang S, Hoque K. Gender-ethnicity intersectional variation in work–family dynamics: family interference with work, guilt, and job satisfaction. Hum Resour Manage. 2023;1–18. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22165.

26. Frone MR, Yardley JK. Workplace family-supportive programmes: predictors of employed parents' importance ratings. J Occup Organ Psychol. 1996;69:351–66. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8325.1996.tb00621.x.

27. Frone MR. Work-family balance. In: Quick JC, Tetrick LE, editors. Handbook of Occupational Health Psychology. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association; 2003. pp. 143–62. https://doi.org/10.1037/10474-007.

28. Jang SJ, Zippay A. The juggling act: managing work-life conflict and work-life balance. Fam Soc. 2011;92(1):84–90. https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.4061.

29. Gherardi S. Authoring the female entrepreneur while talking the discourse of work–family life balance. Int Small Bus J. 2015;33(6):649–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242614549780.

30. Cho Y, Kim N, Lee MM, Lim JH, Han H, Park HY. South Korean women leaders' struggles for a work and family balance. Hum Resour Dev Int. 2015;18(5):521–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2015.1076562.

31. Ladge JJ, Little LM. When expectations become reality: work-family image management and identity adaptation. Acad Manage Rev. 2019;44(1):126–49. 0.5465/amr.2016.0438.

32. Neneh BN. Role salience and the growth intention of women entrepreneurs: does work-life balance make a difference? Span J Psychol. 2021;24(e4):1–16. https://doi.org/10.1017/SJP.2021.9.

33. Thrasher GR, Wynne K, Baltes B, Bramble R. The intersectional effect of age and gender on the work–life balance of managers. J Manag Psychol. 2022;37(7):683–96. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-03-2021-0169.

34. Reverberi E, Manzi C, Van Laar C, Meeussen L. The impact of poor work-life balance and unshared home responsibilities on work-gender identity integration. Self Identity. 2022;21(5):588–607. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2021.1914715.

35. Lester J. Cultures of work–life balance in higher education: a case of fragmentation. J Divers High Educ. 2015;8(3):139–56. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039377.

36. Casper W, Eby L, Bordeaux C, Lockwood A, Lambert D. A review of research methods in IO/OB work-family research. J Appl Psychol. 2007;92(1):28–43. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.1.28.

37. Zayts O, Lazzaro-Salazar M. A sociolinguistic investigation of professional mobility and multicultural healthcare communication. In: Demjén Z, editor. Applying Linguistics in Illness and Healthcare contexts. London: Bloomsbury; 2020. pp. 295–320. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350057685.0021.

38. Ochs E. Constructing social identity: a language socialization perspective. Res Lang Soc Interact. 2013;26:287–306.

39. Lazzaro-Salazar M. Investigating professional identity construction in intercultural health settings in New Zealand. Ph.D. diss. Victoria University of Wellington; 2013.

40. Lazzaro-Salazar M, Zayts O. Migrant doctors' narratives about patients: a study of professional identity in Chile and Hong Kong. Narrat Inq. 2023;33(1):153–75. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.21038.laz.

41. Lazzaro-Salazar M. Ingroups and outgroups in complaints: exploring politic behaviour in nurses' discourse. Logos: Revista De Lingüística. Filosofía Y Literatura. 2017;27(2):319–33. https://doi.org/10.15443/RL2725.

42. Kelly DG, McAdam M. Scaffolding liminality: the lived experience of women entrepreneurs in digital spaces. Technovation. 2022;118. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2022.102537.

43. Freeman GZ. Reconceptualizing cyberspace: real places in digital space. Int J Soc Sci Bus. 2014;3(2):91–102. https://doi.org/10.18848/1836-6236/CGP/v03i02/51318.

44. Audretsch DB, Lehmann EE. Narrative entrepreneurship: bringing (his)story back to entrepreneurship. Small Bus Econ. 2022;60:1593–612. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-022-00661-2.

45. Cunningham J, Fraser SS. Images of entrepreneurship: divergent national constructions of what it is to 'do' entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship Reg Dev. 2022;34:532–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2022.2071997.

46. Saylors R, Lahiri A, Warnick B, Baid C. Looking back to Venture Forward: exploring idea and identity work in public failure narratives. Entrep Theory Pract. 2021;47(2):398–429. https://doi.org/10.1177/10422587211057027.

47. Compagni A, Mele V, Ravasi D. How early implementations influence later adoptions of innovation: social positioning and skill reproduction in the diffusion of robotic surgery. Acad Manage J. 2015;58(1):242–78. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.1184.

48. Esteban-Guitart M. Towards a multimethodological approach to identification of funds of identity, small stories and master narratives. Narrat Inq. 2012;22(1):173–80. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.22.1.12est.

49. Hyvärinen M, Hatavara M, Rautajoki H. Positioning with master and counter-narratives. Narrat Inq. 2021;31(1):97–125. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.20014.hyv.

50. Bamberg M, Georgakopoulou A. Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. Text & talk - an Interdisciplinary Journal of Language, Discourse Communication studies. Text Talk. 2008;28(3):377–96. https://doi.org/10.1515/TEXT.2008.018.

51. Ginzburg C. Microhistory: two or three things that I know about it. Crit Inq. 1993;20(1):10–35. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004274709_012.

52. Trivellato F. Microstoria/microhistoire/microhistory. French politics. Cult Soc. 2015;33(1):122–34. https://doi.org/10.3167/fpcs.2015.330107.

53. Lee J. A narrative analysis of the labour market experiences of Korean migrant women in Australia. PhD dissertation, Doctor of Philosophy, University of Sydney, 2005.

54. Corvellec H. Narrative approaches to Organization. Int Encyclopedia Social Behav Sci. 2015;16(2):194–97. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.73118-7.

55. Imas JM, Wilson N, Weston A. Barefoot entrepreneurs. Organization. 2012;19(5):563–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508412459996.

56. Bhabha H. The location of culture. New York: Routledge; 1994. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203820551.

57. Lazzaro-Salazar M. Clinicians' narratives in the era of evidence-based practice: a sociolinguistic exploration of the role of narratives in staff meetings. Narrat Inq. 2022;32(1):108–29. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.20057.laz.

58. Sowińska A, Lazzaro-Salazar M. A discourse approach to patient expertise in the management of invisible conditions. Revista Signos. Forthcoming.

59. Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.02019. Association of Internet Researchers. 2023. https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf. Accessed 21 Feb 2023.

60. McAllum K, Fox S, Simpson M, Unson C. (2019). A comparative tale of two methods: how thematic and narrative analyses author the data story differently. Commun Res. 2019;5(4):358–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2019.1677068

61. Roberts C, Sarangi S. Theme-oriented discourse analysis of medical encounters. Med Educ. 2005;39(6):632–40.

62. Kump B. No need to hide: acknowledging the researcher's intuition in empirical organizational research. Hum Relat. 2021;1–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726720984837.

63. Grodal S, Anteby M, Holm AL. Achieving Rigor in qualitative analysis: the role of active categorization in Theory Building. Acad Manage Rev. 2020;46(3):591–612. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2018.0482.

64. Harley B, Cornelissen J. Rigor with or without templates? The pursuit of Methodological Rigor in qualitative research. Organ Res Methods. 2020;25(2):239–61. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428120937786.

65. Labov W, Waletzky J. Narrative analysis: oral versions of personal experience. In: Helm J, editor. Essays on the verbal and visual arts. University of Washington; 1967. pp. 12–44.

66. Georgakopoulou A. Thinking big with small stories in narrative and identity analysis. Narrat Inq. 2006;16(1):122–30. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.16.1.16geo.
67. Georgakopoulou A. Small stories, interaction and identities. John Benjamins Publishing. 2007. https://doi.org/10.1075/sin.8.
68. Zayts O, Norrick N. Narratives of vicarious experience in Professional and Workplace contexts: introduction to the special issue. J Pragmat. 2020;155:64–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.10.010.
69. Moser A, Korstjens I, Series. Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection and analysis. Eur J Gen Pract. 2018;24(1):9–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375091.
70. Dawes J, May T, McKinlay A, Fancourt D, Burton A. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of parents with young children: a qualitative interview study. BMC Psychol. 2021;9(1):1–13. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-021-00701-8.
71. DeGroot J, Vik T. Fake smile. Everything is under control.: the flawless performance of motherhood. West J Commun. 2021;85(1):42–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2019.1678763.
72. Norrick N, Spitz A. Humor as a resource for mitigating conflict in interaction. J Pragmat. 2008;40(10):1661–86. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2007.12.001.
73. Roberts C, Sarangi S. Theme-oriented discourse analysis of medical encounters. Med Educ. 2005;39(6):632–40. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2929.2005.02171.x.
74. Anderson E, Willett C, Meyers D. Feminist Perspectives on the Self. In: Edward N. Zalta, editor, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 2021. Retrieved from: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/feminism-self/
75. Ukrainetz T, Justice L, Kaderavek J, Eisenberg S, Gillam R, Harm H, Speech J. Lang Hear Res. 2005;48:1363–77. https://doi.org/10.1044/1092-4388(2005/095).
76. Hogan P. Affective narratology: the emotional structure of stories. US: University of Nebraska; 2011.
77. Rundberg C, Sartore A. Tank, hurricane, octopus: gender discriminations in metaphors. How women in business overcome male stereotypical roles with self-care. Conference paper (without information), 2020. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350121027_Tank_hurricane_octopus_gender_discriminations_in_metaphors_How_women_in_business_overcome_male_stereotypical_roles_with_self-care
78. Larson C, Persuasion. Reception and responsibility. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning;; 2013.
79. Enli G, Syvertsen T. Disconnect to reconnect! Self-help to regain an authentic sense of space through digital detoxing. In: Jansson A, Adams PC, editors. Disentangling: the geographies of Digital Disconnection. Oxford: Oxford University; 2021. pp. 227–52.
80. Douglas B, Finegan E. (1988) Adverbial stance types in English. Discourse Process. 1988;11(1):1–34, https://doi.org/10.1080/01638538809544689
81. Charles M. Stance, interaction and the rhetorical patterns of restrictive adverbs: discourse roles of only, just, simply and merely. In: Charles M, Hunston S, Pecorari D, editors. Academic writing: at the interface of corpus and discourse. London: Continuum; 2009. pp. 152–69.
82. Van Stekelenburg LH, De Ruyter D, Sanderse W. Equipping students with an ethical compass.'What does it mean, and what does it imply? Ethics Educ. 2021;16(1):91–107. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2020.1860315.
83. Liamputtong P. Motherhood and moral career: discourses of good motherhood among southeast Asian immigrant women in Australia. Qual Sociol. 2006;29:25–53. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-005-9006-5.
84. Soriano CR, Lim SS, Rivera-Sanchez M. The Virgin Mary with a mobile phone: ideologies of muming and technology consumption in Philippine television advertisements. Commun Cult Crit. 2015;8(1):1–19. https://doi.org/10.1111/cccr.12070.
85. Arraigada MC, Pujol-Cols L, Dabos GE. Enriquecimiento trabajo-vida: una revisión de la literatura desde la perspectiva individual. Estudios Gerenciales. 2023;39(166):124–39. https://doi.org/10.18046/j.estger.2023.166.5517.
86. Pujol-Cols L, Arriagada M, Lazzaro-Salazar M, Foutel M. Work-family conflict and emotional exhaustion during the COVID-19 pandemic in Argentina: the moderating role of personal, family and job resources. J Fam Issues. Forthcoming.
87. Schueller-Weidekamm C, Kautzky-Willer A. Challenges of work–life balance for women physicians/mums working in leadership positions. Gend Med. 2012;9(4):244–50. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.genm.2012.04.002.
88. Dewhirst C. Professional identities: Thirdspace and professional development. Int J Educ Res. 2022;114:101979. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2022.101979.
89. Watts JH. Allowed into a man's world'meanings of work–life balance: perspectives of women civil engineers as 'minority'workers in construction. Gend Work Organ. 2009;16(1):37–57. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2007.00352.x.
90. Brekhus WH. Trends in the qualitative study of social identities. Sociol Compass. 2008;2(3):1059–78. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00107.x.

Publisher's Note