



**Balancing Work, Study, and Family Demands: Experience of Thai Working Mother
Enrolled in Doctoral HRD Program**

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จากประสบการณ์ของคุณแม่วัยทำงานที่กำลังศึกษาต่อในระดับปริญญาเอก

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Abstract

This study investigates the experience of four Thai working mothers who enrolled in part time, the Ph.D. in the HRD program in one Thai university. Data was collected by an interview. Each respondent was interviewed twice with two different interview guides. Four theoretical constructs emerge. Theoretical construct one illustrates that the Thai tradition of women being responsible for major childcare and household tasks is existed. Theoretical construct two is that subjects have both internal and external motivations to studying and motivation from work can be both negative and positive drives. Theoretical construct three presents various types of work-study relation; i.e., agreeing opposing and agreeing in one direction and opposing in another. Theoretical construct four reflects the 'tough' experience of these participants to various responsibilities. Researcher argues that strategic life management and ability to integrate study to work and family demand are key characteristics of subjects to manage their lives. However, they need family and workplace supports to integrate three parts of work-study-family demands and responsibilities.

Keywords: Work life balance, Doctoral study.

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้เป็นการศึกษาประสบการณ์ในการจัดการกับหน้าที่ความรับผิดชอบหลาย ๆ ด้านที่เกิดขึ้นพร้อม ๆ กัน ผู้วิจัยทำการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์สตรีที่แต่งงานมีบุตรแล้ว และกำลังศึกษาต่อในระดับปริญญาเอกไปพร้อม ๆ กับการทำงาน จำนวน 4 ท่าน โดยทำการสัมภาษณ์ 2 ครั้ง ในระยะเวลาที่ห่างกัน 12 เดือน ผลการวิจัยสามารถแบ่งเป็น 4 ประเด็นหลักคือ (1) ขณะที่ศึกษาต่อผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยยังมีหน้าที่รับผิดชอบด้านการเลี้ยงดูบุตรและงานในครัวเรือน ซึ่งสะท้อนบทบาทหน้าที่ของสตรีในสังคมไทย (2) แรงจูงใจในการศึกษาต่อมีทั้งแรงจูงใจจากภายในตัวผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัย และแรงจูงใจจากภายนอก ส่วนแรงจูงใจจากการทำงานสามารถเป็นได้ทั้งแรงผลักดันบวกและลบในการทำให้ผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยตัดสินใจทำการศึกษาต่อ (3) ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการทำงานและการเรียนมีหลายรูปแบบ ทั้งส่งเสริมกัน ชัดแย้งกัน และส่งเสริมกันในบางด้านและขัดแย้งกันในบางด้าน และ (4) ผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยทุกคนประสบความยากลำบากในการตอบสนองต่อความรับผิดชอบที่เกิดขึ้นหลาย ๆ ด้านในเวลาเดียวกัน ผู้วิจัยพบว่าการจัดการเชิงกลยุทธ์ของการดำเนินชีวิต และความสามารถในการบูรณาการการตอบสนองต่อความรับผิดชอบด้านครอบครัวและงานเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในการบริหารชีวิต ซึ่งการสนับสนุนจากครอบครัว และสถานที่ทำงานเป็นสิ่งสำคัญในการส่งเสริมให้ผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยสามารถบูรณาการการตอบสนองต่อความรับผิดชอบด้านครอบครัว และงานได้

คำสำคัญ: ความสมดุลระหว่างชีวิตและการทำงาน การศึกษาระดับปริญญาเอก



Introduction

Thailand is a country scored best in women's advancement among Asia-Pacific nations (Pesek, 2005) but women still do not have a status equal to men in Thai society (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security [MSDHS], 2008). Thais had a traditional belief that women did not need high education because they would soon get married and have to take care of their children and household responsibilities. Many Thai firms believe that women employees are more obedient, less rebellious, and more willing to work for less pay than men (Sunanta Siengthai & Orose Leelakulthanit, 1994).

Education is perceived as a channel for climbing to higher social class. Part-time study offers an opportunity for employees to return to education at different stages of their career without interrupting full-time employment. Opportunities for part-time study are exploding in Thailand. In 2002, there were 335 part-time or international

programs available in public universities at bachelor and higher degree levels (Ministry of University Affairs, 2005).

Working mothers have work and family responsibilities. When they enroll in a part-time study, they add study responsibility to their existing work and family responsibilities. It is not easy to maintain work-study-family balance (Kember, 1999). In addition, doing doctoral study is a huge undertaking. It is a hard work and requires perseverance. Why do they do so? And how do they live with work-study-family demands? These are interesting questions.

Women and Thai culture

Traditional Thai women work side by side with their men in the rice fields, involve in childcare, and manage household finance. The Thai proverb 'to wield a sword as well as to rock a cradle' projects the ability of women. Thai has many heroines. Queen Suriyothai was a legendary queen. She fought against Myanmar in the 16th century.



Khunying Jun and Khunying Muk saved Thalang from Myanmar and Khunying Mo saved Nakorn Ratchasima from the Lao army during the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851).

Theravada Buddhism has a profound and pervasive influence over way of Thai life. Buddhist texts are a rich and complex source of paradox (Esterik, 2000, p.70). Buddhism encourages everyone, no matter which gender, to learn and practice the Buddha's teaching. Although women are not prohibited from entering the monkhood, it is difficult for them to practice the 227 precepts required for monkhood since the Buddha's time. The interpretation from different perspectives creates the gap between doctrine and everyday life. Thai women play less important role in public sphere than men. Women are denied to ordain and to access the same Buddhist resources as men. Sons have chance to study when they become monk while daughters are required to be under strict supervision of

their parents. According to traditional Thai culture, a good wife is one who obeys and serves her husband and looks after children and household responsibilities (Sunanta Siengthai, & Orose Leelakulthanit, 1994, p.161).

Nowadays, the gap between Thai men and Thai women is smaller than in the past. In education, the enrolment rates of both sexes at primary and lower secondary levels are very high. Women scored a higher enrolment rate than men in upper secondary and tertiary level. However, the household and childcare gaps are still existed. Women spend six hour per day on household and family care while men spend only three and a half hours (MSDHS, 2008). Moreover women are paid less than men. Thai men earn 10,732 \$US while women earn 6,695 \$US per year (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2007, p. 327). Women trail men not only in income, but also in career opportunity. During 2002-2005, the portion of female executive in the civil service was



23.5%. In 2006, only 21.65 % of the directors of the companies registered with The Stock Exchange of Thailand were women. In 2007, women occupied 11.3% of the executive post in major political parties (MSDHS, 2008). Major psychological factors limiting Thai women becoming managers are cultural and social attitudes towards women, education, legislation, top management's perception of women, and women's own self-perception.

Education and career success

Education is an important factor affecting women's entry into management level (Sunanta Siengthai & Orose Leelakulthanit, 1994). Higher degrees lead to more rapid career advancement. Supaluck Liamvarangkoon (2002) did a quantitative study on the 'Effect of gender role on career advancement in Thai civil service'. Women with a doctoral degree take 21.67 years to reach level 9, while master's degree holders take 31.43 years and those with a bachelor's degree take 38.11 years.

Suntaree Komin (1991) investigated values and behavioral patterns of Thai. She found that Thai give prestige and social recognition to a degree as a goal for success in life. Higher education means a step to reach higher prestige and higher salary rather than knowledge. Or, in short, Thai respect the form of the degree more than the content or substance of education.

When graduated women re-entry to a university, they have both work and non-work related reasons. Padula and Miller (1999) studied enrolment motivation of female doctoral students in one US university. Major reasons for enrolment were (i) vocational reason—teaching was a target after completing the degree—and (ii) family reason—developing themselves after they had been raising children for a long time. Jang and Merriam (2004) studied the re-entry motivations of graduate women in Korea. Researchers found four distinct themes: (i) to have meaningful activity, (ii) to escape from the status of full-time housewife, (iii) an



interest in learning, and (iv) an employment opportunity.

With regard to doctoral enrolment motivation, in a qualitative study of six doctoral candidates in one university in Taiwan, Lien, Chou, and Wang (2007) found four themes: (i) doctoral study was a lifetime goal and an important step in career planning; (ii) study was a sign of self-achievement and self-respect; (iii) it was the only way to fulfill life time learning; and (iv) gaining doctoral degree was one of the highest individual's achievements.

Work and non-work relations

Men and women have different goals when they approach work. While men emphasize a higher pay, women are more concern with a better life (Farrell, 2005, pp. 133-134). Women are reported to have been involved with greater child care and household responsibilities both in the US (Keene & Quadagno, 2004) and in Thailand (MSDHS, 2008).

Research on the work-family interface has evolved unevenly due to changes in behavior pattern and popular beliefs (Voydanoff, 1989, p.2). In the 1970s, people believed that balancing work and life is impossible. Today people are more concern with the balance. More and more people prepared to sacrifice some professional success to solve work-family conflict (Greenblatt, 2002).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-family conflict as a form of inter-role conflict in which simultaneous demands of work and family roles are incompatible so that participation in one side will make it difficult to participate in the other. Work-family conflict can be studied from each domain separately. Work to family conflict refers to work role interfering with family performance and family to work conflict refers to family roles interfering with work performance (MacDermid, 2005, p.13).

Under the study of conflict framework, the negative outcomes of work-family relations



have been extensively documented (i.e. Kim & Ling, 2001; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Lee & Hui, 1999; Lo, 2003; Voydanoff, 2004). Poelmans, Driscoll, and Beham (2005) summarized findings on negative work-family relations into four main groups: (i) physical and mental health problems, (ii) work and family dissatisfactions, (iii) lower work and family performances, and (iv) lower work and family commitments.

Freidman and Greenhaus (2000) proposed that work and family can be an ally or an enemy. Arranging work schedule, prioritizing work and family responsibilities, employing work-family supported resources, and accessing behavioral and emotional supports from others are factors that determine positive or negative work-family relations. Halpern and Murphy (2005) described that work-family interaction is the combination of two situations and the outcome provides something that is greater than predicted. Voydanoff (2004) studied work-study facilitation. Work-family

facilitation is defined as a form of synergy in which resources are available in one role enhance or make easier participation in another role.

The terms work-family ally, interaction, and integration argue that it is possible to experience positive outcome when living in multiple roles interaction. For instance, women who work outside their home are happier and healthier than those who do not (Halpern & Murphy, 2005, p.4). Working students attending a weekend college program experienced that attending school enriched their life, study set a good example for family members, study increase business knowledge and skill, and part-time students have more respect at work (Kirby, Biever, Martinez, & Gomez, 2003).

Methodology

This article draws on eight qualitative interviews with four working mother who were studying part-time doctoral program in Human Resource Development (PhD HRD)



in one public University located in Eastern Thailand. The subjects were selected purposefully emphasizing the information-rich respondent. According to the critical case sampling (Patton, 1990, p. 174), married working mothers who enroll in part-time doctoral programs are information-rich sample because they have more responsibility than single women or full-time students.

PhD HRD is an international doctoral degree program. The program is taught and assessed in English. The program has two curriculums, plan A (Dissertation) and plan B (Coursework and Dissertation). All participants in this article are plan B students. These students enrolled with Master's degree. They have to study four subjects, two core subjects—Advanced Research Methodologies and Analysis of Qualitative and Quantitative Research and Seminar in Human Resources Research—and two elective subjects before doing doctoral dissertation. The class is held on Sundays. Students have to pass these

4 subjects—normally within the first year—before sitting the qualifying examination. Only students who pass the qualifying examination can proceed to do their dissertation.

Data collection tools

Semi-structured, face-to-face interview with interview guide was used as main data collection method. The interview guides were developed following the principles advocated by Patton (1990). Each respondent was interviewed twice with different interview guides. The second round of interviews took place about twelve months after the first round of interviews.

The first interview guide had three sections. Section 1 investigated biographical data, family and work responsibilities, enrolment decision, and time demands of study. Section 2 investigated time distribution before and after enrolment and the effects of changes in time on the ability to fulfill commitments in each domain and on overall



balance. Section 3 investigated the effects of enrolment, the nature of any conflicts that emerged, and coping strategies adopted.

The second interview had six main questions. It aimed to investigate (1) changes in family, work, and study situation during the previous twelve months, (2) perceived relevance of doctoral studies to work, and (3) respondent's perceptions of organization management related to their study.

Interview guides were piloted with two female doctoral students and revised. Interviews were conducted in Thai, taped and transcribed. Transcriptions in Thai were member checked.

Analyses

Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) coding process is followed. Coding began by reading through the transcription with research concern in mind and underlining the relevant texts. The similar relevant texts are grouped. A 'repeating idea' is developed to capture the essence of each group of relevant text.

The similar repeating ideas or the repeating ideas that have something in common are grouped together into 'themes'. Which are grouped further into 'theoretical construct', and author reports the theoretical constructs in a narrative way.

Collaborating coding is implemented. The collaborative coder is a female part-time PhD HRD student. The author and collaborative coder coded the first case's transcription separately. The disagreements in repeating ideas are discussed and clarified. Finally the author coded the next three cases by himself.

Within-Case findings

Case 1: SH

SH is a first year student. An English teacher in a secondary school, forty-nine years old, has two sons. She does basic childcare and household works such as cooking and supervising children's homework. However, she claimed that her husband does family responsibilities more than



she does. *"I do only mine, he does it for himself and the children's (clothes washing and ironing)."*

As a teacher, SH has a lot of work and she does not have enough time to complete work at school. She always takes work home. The subject experiences work stress and work dissatisfaction. She is unhappy with her work and she wants to change her work: *"I work hard, so I need to change, change to do other work so that I have some free time."*

SH's enrolment motivation came from her perception of the status of a doctoral degree: *"I think that, in terms of being a scholar or knowledge acquisition, it (being doctor or not) doesn't make any differences. But it is different in terms of social acceptance."* She enrolled the program without consulting her boss.

SH experienced mismatch between work and study. The subject is an English teacher. She did not have basic HRD knowledge and work exhaustion hinders her

from acquiring it: *"I try to read books every night. I can do it only half an hour or one hour."* SH cannot apply her study to her work. She decided to enroll in another Master's program in Teaching English as a Second Language: *"I'm English teacher. The new program benefits my teaching."*

The subject's work and family roles are affected by study. At first, she thought that she could manage her time. But study consumed time more than expected: *"It doesn't consume only Sunday. It takes much time."* SH had less time for both children and husband. This context affected SH's physical and mental health. She felt guilty with her children: *"My sons are still young. I'm afraid that they don't understand me."* With study, she experienced stress and sickness because she cannot submit assignments on time.

SH does not get support from her workplace: *"Boss think it is unnecessary for a school teacher."* SH dissatisfies her situation and experiences work withdrawal:



"I think that I have a potential to graduate if I have time. But if I have to live or to stick with this amount of work, it is hard to graduate."

Case 2: PH

PH is SH's classmate. She is 42, lives in lower northern Thailand—about 452 km from the university. She has a 14 year old son and an 8 year old daughter. PH raises children together with her husband. She takes major childcare and family responsibilities. Her husband does these when she is not available: *"When I'm not at home, my husband will take care of them."*

PH is an Assistant Director of Academic and Research Division in a public university hospital. She always visits other smaller hospitals and health care networks in the region. Sometimes she has to stay overnight. PH always takes work home: *"When I come back from visiting the network, I have to submit report. I have to complete it. If I left it, I will forget it."* However, taking work home or being away from home for a few

days does not affect her family: *"We live in this way for a long time."*

PH's major motive for enrolment came from her perception that the doctoral degree can support her career. She holds an MBA degree but it is insufficient for her career when working in the university. She discussed enrolment with her husband: *"We have a deal. If he does not agree, I will not study."* The respondent also informed her boss about her study and she got strong support from him.

PH experienced that study takes time and effort. Each class involved one and a half days travel for. She left home on Saturday afternoon to attend the Sunday class and arrived home on Sunday midnight. PH realized that attending classes is not enough to get a doctoral qualification. She attended additional courses that are necessary for her dissertation when she came back to her university: *"During coursework, I have basic knowledge. After coursework, I attend additional course. At that time, I know that*



there are many things that I have to learn.”

PH manages her situation, for instance, with family; she manages taking children back from school with her husband. If he is available, she will stay at workplace until night. She tries to keep time at home for study. On weekends, if her husband stays home, he will take care of children. If he has a job, she will ask her mother to come and look after her children.

PH also manages study and work time. She said: *“When I come back from class, I have to plan my work and study assignments. Which task should be done first? Which one should be done later? If not, I cannot complete it on time.”*

Case 3:YH

YH is second year student. She is 45 years old and lives in Bangkok. She has three sons: 18, 14, and 12 years. She manages a small construction company with her husband. Her husband has major work responsibility and YH has major family

responsibility. After preparing breakfast and sending her children to school, YH tidies the home and does some household works for an hour before going to office. In the afternoon, she leaves office before husband and employees. She collects her youngest son from the tutoring school. She cooks dinner and oversees her children’s homework. She concerns about her children’s study: *“While my son was preparing himself for university entry examination...I have to give him a time...tutor him, stimulate him to do the exercise, talk with him, and give support to him.”* YH’s husband also helps with household responsibility and childcare: *“We have no maid, I do it by myself. Sometimes he helps me.”*

YH enrolled for self actualization, stemming from her experience in raising children: *“I always take my children to science camp and religious youth camp. I feel that it develops me. It makes me interested in human development.”* YH



discusses enrolment with her husband who supports her decision.

YH thinks that study needs more time and dedication than she first expected. *“During coursework, I have little time for my family... I take all of my time during weekday for study.”* After enrolment she goes to office only 1-2 days a week. She uses the rest of her time at home to read and do assignments. YH integrates study with family. *“I try to stay home. Although we cannot talk we can see each other.”* She has less sleep. But overall, she is happy with her life. Reducing work makes her life more settled. *“I have less work but I am satisfied with it.”*

Case 4: MH

MH is YH’s classmate. She is the oldest subject, aged 54 years, and lives with husband and three daughters in Bangkok. All daughters are single and live at home. MH is an executive in an HR company. She goes to office only once a week, more than sixty percent of her work is done at home. She loves to do household tasks and she still

looks after daughters: *“I prepare food and keep their bed tidy... But I will not invade their private zone.”*

MH studies to fulfill her personal need: *“It is a target since I were young that I would study as far as I can.”* She did not consult with her husband or her work colleagues about her enrolment decision: *“I have no boss. I’m a board. All persons in a board have equal status.”* But she asked her daughters’ opinion. She worried that study may affect them: *“Sometimes they don’t have money. I have to help them. They just started work.”*

As an HR consultant, a PhD in HRD would benefit MH’s career. She has more reputation and more clients. But work has negative effects for her studies. When she acquires new knowledge, her main interest is in thinking about transferring it to her clients: *“When I search data for my study, I found that this can make money. It can be used in my work. My study dedication is interrupted.”*



MH has less time for household chores. Study takes more than Sunday. She wakes up at night more frequently than before to read books and do assignments. She has to work more to pay fees. When work and study demands occur at the same time, she chooses work. *“If I miss my class, it affects only me but if I miss my work, it affects many people.”*

MH has health problems: *“I’m old ...Sometimes I forget this fact, reading book until night weakens my health. I have an allergy.”* Apart from worrying about her health, MH worried about her relationship with other students: *“After class, other students go to have dinner. I have to come home because I have problem with driving at night and I have to do my work.”*

Cross-Case findings and discussion

Four common theoretical constructs and key concepts are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

The theoretical construct and key concept

Theoretical construct (cross-case)	Key concepts
Lives with multiple role interactions	All have to do household responsibilities (three more than husband, one less than husband). All have to work. Both employer and employee experience work at home.
Enrolment decision	Impetus: inside (one) vs outside (three). Degree value: form vs content.



Table 1 (continued)

Theoretical construct (cross-case)	Key concepts
Work-study relations	One ally. Two enemies. One both (study is good for work, but work hinders study).
The tough life	Study needs more time and dedication than first expected. Live with difficulties. Need management & support.

Theoretical construct 1: Lives with multiple role interactions

All subjects have fundamental mothering functions. Three—PH, YH, and MH—have major responsibility while SH has a minor role. All have to dedicate time and effort to work and experience a ‘gray’ border between work and family. Employers—YH and MH—have work responsibilities that do not conform to office hours. Employees—SH and PH—have fixed office hours but always take work home.

After enrolment, employees reported that study interferes with family rather than work time. They have less time for family. One explanation of why study affects family more than work is that family activities can be controlled, but not work. Employer subjects can control both work and family domain. Experiencing study to work interference or study to family interference depends on which domain they attach priority



to. YH decides to reduce work, so she experiences only study to family interference; MH sticks with work so has work to study conflict.

Three respondents are mothers whose main family and household responsibilities reflect the traditional Thai family where the woman is 'good wife' (Suntaree Komin, 1991; Sunanta Siengthai & Orose Leelakulthanit, 1994). And these roles are still exist (MSDHS, 2008). All respondents report that work interrupts family. They have similar experience with other Asian working women (Kim & Ling, 2001; Lee & Hui, 1999; Lo, 2003).

Theoretical construct 2. Enrolment decision

Three—SH, PH, and YH—are extrinsically motivated, SH and PH by work factor, YH from personal value. SH, however, is 'negatively' driven. She wants to change her job. PH is 'positively' driven realizing that for career progression. YH derives impetus from her experience of raising her family.

MH is intrinsically motivated. Her target since she was young was to study as far as possible. Another factor is perception of the value of a doctoral degree. SH perceives value in terms of 'form' of degree rather than the substance of doctoral study. The other respondents value 'content' or substance of doctoral study. They specify the program they need to study and plan to use the new knowledge: PH studies for the new position; MH studies because she works in HRD; and YH needs HRD knowledge to improve herself.

Padula and Miller (1999) discussed two factors influencing doctoral enrolment among women living with husband and children: (i) to achieve career goal and (ii) to escape existing family routines. The first reason is positive work drive and the second is negative family drive. This study suggests that, for married Thai women, work is the major influence on enrolment decisions, but it can be both positive and negative reasons. While previous studies found family to be a



negative force for re-entry (Jang & Merriam, 2004; Padula & Miller, 1999), the present study found family to be a positive factor.

The finding that only SH perceives doctoral value in terms of ‘form’ while other respondents value ‘content’ or substance of doctoral study agrees previous study about Thai value on higher education (Suntaree Komin, 1991). These working mothers, excluding SH, enroll with the perception that study will enhance their knowledge rather than wanting a degree for the status it carries.

Theoretical construct 3: Work-Study relations

Work-study relations can be ally, enemy, and ally in one direction and enemy in another. For SH and YH work-study is ‘enemy’. They find no relation between work and study. SH gets no support from her workplace. YH reduce work to study. PH experiences work-study allies. She gets support from the workplace and her study relates to her work. MH experiences study to work as ally: study has a positive effect and

makes her more confident in working. But she experiences work to study as enemy: her study life is undermined by her work because she wants to turn her new knowledge to money as fast as she can.

The ally and enemy relations support Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) that work and family can be ally or enemy depending on how the subject arranges and prioritizes work and study schedules and employs work-study supported resource. In addition to what Friedman and Greenhaus proposed, this study provides the sub-types of work-study relations as positive in one dimension and negative in another i.e. study to work ally and work to study enemy.

Theoretical construct 4: The tough life

All subjects found that study needs more time and dedication than they expected no matter whether they were working in an academic world or not. PH, a university staff, has a plan to stop work to do her dissertation. YH, a business lady, confesses that



she did not know prior to enrolment that she had to do a dissertation. All apply various time and money management methods to deal with their life. Time management includes cutting non-study related activities, sacrificing sleep, and integrating study with family. Money management includes cutting leisure activities and working harder.

All subjects have study problems. SH lacks background to understand topics and is too tired to read books for a long time. PH thinks that classes provided insufficient information and attends courses at her university. Most of MH's knowledge came from reading, not from class. YH asked for a more flexible and effective facilitating system from the program.

Although applying many ways to manage their problems, these students have a tough life. An outcome is physical and mental health problems. PH feels stressed when she has to do an assignment in English. SH and YH are ill resulting from stress. MH claims that she is sick resulting

from reading at night for a long time. This result indicate that adding part-time doctoral study to work and family responsibility have potential to experience negative outcome such as health problem (Poelmans, Driscoll, & Beham, 2005).

Conclusion

This article revealed salient features of married Thai working mothers who enroll in part-time PhD HRD program. Their experience is illustrated through four theoretical constructs. The first theoretical construct reflects the situation that these working mothers already have many roles and many of them experience work interferes with family. The second suggests that, for employee students, work is the major influence on enrolment decisions, but it can be for both positive and negative reasons. For two employer students, their decision to study emphasizes personal or self-actualization goals rather than career advancement. The third is about work-study



relations. Three work-study relations—ally, enemy, ally in one direction and enemy in another are found. The fourth illuminates that a doctoral study is a huge undertaking. Students have to implement many strategies to manage family, work, and study responsibilities. Strategic life management and the ability to integrate work-study-family demands are key characteristics.

To implement work-study-family integration successfully, the subjects need support from family and boss. These respondents have family support so the boss is the important person when employees conduct further studies. Lacking boss support affects study as found in SH case and it leads to work withdrawal.

This article raises questions about the role of part-time study for working mothers in Thailand. From organizational perspective, these includes how to promote part-time doctoral study for working mother, the quality and relevance of such study in

career development, and the organization's perception of taking part-time doctoral studies as a step for professional development. From the individual perspective, there are issues of costs and benefits and how these working mother balance work, study, and family.

Limitation

This article focuses on experiences of 4 married Thai working mothers who are part-time PhD HRD. The participants were encouraged to reflect on their experience in the context of their own life circumstances. It was not a study from the view of organizations, programs or curricula.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews using interview guides were used as the main data collection method to investigate the complex understanding of each subject's experiences. This method is useful for collecting data with small number of participants to illuminate deeper and more complex issues.



Purposive sampling affects the feasibility of generalizing to other contexts. Data Collected from a small group provides initial understanding. The findings can be used as fundamental knowledge for other studies but the transfer of results to other environments is limited.

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