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The blurring of work–family boundaries: Finnish mothers’ strategies to control the boundaries of work and family life during the COVID–19 pandemic

During the spring of 2020, the COVID–19 pandemic changed the everyday life of many families due to remote work recommendations and the closing of school premises and childcare centres. In this study, we examine Finnish mothers’ experiences of combining work and family life from the boundary theory perspective in the context of the COVID–19 pandemic. The data were collated from an online survey on Finnish families’ experiences during the COVID–19 lockdown in the spring of 2020, and a mixed–methods approach is employed. The results reveal that the majority of mothers experienced a blurring of work–family boundaries. Role violations between work and family roles became evident in mothers’ strategies to control the boundaries of paid work and family life. Mothers also differed in their ability to develop new kinds of strategies to cope with work and family responsibilities.