

**A STUDY ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND
'MATERNAL BODIES' POST-MATERNITY
LEAVE IN BRUNEI**

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Abstract

The link between work-life balance, the concept of ‘maternal bodies’ and maternity leave has been underexplored in the management literature, particularly from the stance of continuing breastfeeding and pumping at work activity post-maternity leave. Moreover, previous studies have mainly been conducted from Western perspectives; this study explores the topic from an Asian Muslim context, particularly Brunei. This study provides empirical evidence on the impact of ‘social support’ factors on professional women’s perception of work-life balance post-maternity leave. The study was carried out using qualitative methods, including primary research using interviews and projective drawings, and secondary research was done on societal policies and context.

The main finding of this study is that the concept of the maternal body, particularly breastfeeding and pumping at work, is an essential aspect of the professional women returning to work post-maternity leave. This study contributes empirically by showing how these professional women integrate their pumping at work with the help of the ‘social support’ systems, which include a ‘pumping buddy’ and technological advancements in the breast pumps. In addition, this study also contributes theoretically by introducing an extension to the maternal body concept namely the post-modern Islamic/Muslim Maternal Body derived from the Brunei context.

Furthermore, projective methods such as drawing have been used to research subjects that are difficult to express or narrate. This study adopted projective visual methods and drawing; however, it did not give a deeper understanding of what work-life balance meant to these women. The illustrations were just overviews of traditional depictions of family composition and balancing scales. Some participants used metaphors, but they were not discussed further. Nonetheless, this study shows that some things, like breastfeeding and pumping, *are* difficult to draw.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
LIST OF TABLES	6
LIST OF FIGURES	7
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	10
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	11
1.1. AIM AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	11
1.2. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY AND THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	16
1.3. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS	17
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	19
2.1. INTRODUCTION	19
2.2. THE CONCEPT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE	19
2.2.1. <i>Work-Life Balance – the Definition</i>	23
2.2.2. <i>The Idea of 'Balance.'</i>	25
2.2.3. <i>Perception of Work-Life Balance in selected parts of the world</i>	26
2.2.4. <i>Research on Work-Life Balance in South-East Asia</i>	30
2.2.5. <i>Work-Life Balance at Work</i>	34
2.3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND LIFE	53
2.3.1. <i>Boundaries at Work</i>	56
2.4. MATERNAL BODY AND BREASTFEEDING	60
2.4.1. <i>Interrelations between Pregnant Body and Employment</i>	62
2.4.2. <i>(Breastfeeding) Adjustment Arrangements at Work</i>	64
2.4.3. <i>Breastfeeding and Expressing Milk at Work for Maternal Professional Women</i>	68
2.5. GAPS IDENTIFICATION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	73
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	75
3.1. INTRODUCTION	75
3.2. ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY	75
3.3. WHY ORGANISATIONS IN BRUNEI?	79
3.3.1. <i>Maternity Leave Provision in Brunei</i>	80
3.3.2. <i>The Chosen Organisations</i>	81
3.4. GETTING ACCESS AND SELECTING PARTICIPANTS	82
3.4.1. <i>Selecting Participants</i>	86
3.5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND JUSTIFICATIONS	87
3.5.1. <i>Semi-structured individual interviews</i>	88
3.5.2. <i>Individual Interviews</i>	90
3.5.3. <i>The Focus Group Interview</i>	91
3.5.4. <i>Visual Method</i>	94
3.6. THE 'BIG BREAK.'	96
3.7. APPROACHES TO DATA ANALYSIS	98
3.7.1. <i>The Coding Process – Thematic Analysis</i>	100
3.7.2. <i>Data Analysis for Visual Methods</i>	102

3.8. THE SECOND DISRUPTION TO STUDY	102
3.9. ETHICAL APPROVAL	103
3.10. CONCLUSION	103
CHAPTER 4: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY – BRUNEI	105
4.1. INTRODUCTION	105
4.2. BRUNEI IN BRIEF	105
4.2.1. <i>The Governance of Brunei</i>	110
4.3. THE CULTURE OF BRUNEI	113
4.3.1. <i>Extended Family Culture</i>	113
4.3.2. <i>Bruneian Socio-Malay Islamic Culture</i>	114
4.3.3. <i>Islamic Practices Culture in Brunei</i>	115
4.3.4. <i>The Maid Culture</i>	116
4.4. BRUNEIAN WOMEN RELATED TO CULTURE AND RELIGION	117
4.5. THE LABOUR FORCE AND THE INCREASING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE	118
4.5.1 <i>Women’s Employment and Education</i>	121
4.6. THE MATERNITY LEAVE PROVISION	123
4.7. THE MATERNITY LEAVE AND THE BREASTFEEDING INITIATIVES	124
4.7.1. <i>The Policies and Initiatives</i>	126
4.8. WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN BRUNEI	130
4.9. CONCLUSION	136
CHAPTER 5: INTERVIEW DATA FINDINGS	138
5.1. INTRODUCTION	138
5.2. MATERNAL BODIES CONTEXT	139
5.2.1. <i>Pregnant Bodies at Work</i>	139
5.2.3. <i>Professional versus Maternal Bodies</i>	143
5.3. SHIFTING PRIORITIES AND ADJUSTMENTS POST-MATERNITY LEAVE	145
5.3.1. <i>Different Experiences of Returning to Work Post-Maternity Leave</i>	150
5.4. BREASTFEEDING AND BREAST PUMPING ACTIVITIES	152
5.4.1. <i>Pumping Activities at Work Post-Maternity Leave</i>	153
5.4.2. <i>Enthusiasm for Pumping</i>	154
5.4.3. <i>History of Pumping</i>	154
5.4.4. <i>Towards Normalising Pumping at Work</i>	157
5.4.5. <i>The ‘Pumping Buddy.’</i>	159
5.4.6. <i>The ‘Understanding’ Colleagues</i>	161
5.4.7. <i>The Unsympathetic Colleagues</i>	163
5.5. THE USE OF ORGANISATIONAL SPACE – THE PUMPING VENUE	165
5.5.2. <i>Individual Room</i>	168
5.5.3. <i>Boss’s Room</i>	169
5.5.4. <i>Meeting Room</i>	170
5.5.5. <i>Pantry Room</i>	171
5.5.6. <i>Other Closed and Private Spaces at Work</i>	171
5.6. PUMPING OPENLY AT DESKS – ‘VISIBLE BUT HIDDEN.’	173
5.7. THE ‘PUMPING MACHINE’	176
5.8. CONCLUSION	180
CHAPTER 6: THE DRAWINGS	181
6.1. INTRODUCTION	181
6.2. DEPICTION OF ‘SELF.’	181
6.2.1. <i>Family Unit and The Smiling Faces</i>	189
6.3. DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF THE ‘HEART’ SYMBOL	198
6.3.1. <i>Heart-Shaped Equals Support</i>	200
6.4. SEGREGATION OF ROLES AND ACTIVITIES	202

6.4.1. <i>Boundaries of Space and Time</i>	204
6.5. INTEGRATION OF ACTIVITIES	212
6.6. USING METAPHORS FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE	214
6.6.1. <i>Using Metaphor: Prayer Mat and the Spiritual Aspect of Work-Life Balance</i>	214
6.6.2. <i>Using Metaphor – Flower</i>	217
6.6.3. <i>Using Metaphor – Colourful and Harmonious</i>	219
6.7. THE ODD ONE OUT	220
6.8. CONCLUSION	222
CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION	223
7.1. INTRODUCTION	223
7.2. BRUNEI AS THE STUDY CONTEXT	224
7.3. POST-MATERNITY LEAVE: SHIFTING PRIORITIES	229
7.4. THE MATERNAL BODY IS NOT ALWAYS ABJECT	230
7.5. THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT TO BREASTFEEDING AND PUMPING AT WORK	233
7.5.1. <i>Paternal Support</i>	234
7.5.2. <i>Social and Emotional Support</i>	235
7.5.3. <i>The Physical Support – The Pumping Venues</i>	236
7.5.4. <i>‘Male Colleagues’ Social Support</i>	237
7.5.5. <i>Technological Advancement as a Supporting Factor</i>	238
7.5.6. <i>Disgusted Faces – Negative Spillover of Breastfeeding and Pumping</i>	239
7.5.8. <i>Organisational Space and Modesty</i>	240
7.6. IS BREASTFEEDING A LEGITIMATE USE OF TIME?	241
7.7. THE THEORIES OF ‘BORDER’, ‘MATERNAL BODY’ AND ‘BOUNDARY’ AT WORK	242
7.7.1. <i>The Border and Maternal Body Theories</i>	242
7.7.2. <i>The Boundary Theory and the Invisible Pumpers</i>	244
7.8. THE METHODS USED	246
7.9. CONCLUSION	248
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION	250
8.1. INTRODUCTION	250
8.2. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LITERATURE	250
8.3. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RESEARCH METHODS	254
8.4. CONCLUSION	255
8.5. IMPLICATION OF THIS STUDY	256
8.6. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	257
APPENDIX 1: SIGNED ETHICS FORM AND APPROVAL	260
APPENDIX 2: TOPIC GUIDE - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	279
APPENDIX 3: TOPIC GUIDE - VISUAL METHOD – DRAWINGS	282
APPENDIX 4: LETTERS TO ORGANISATIONS	283
(VIA EMAIL)	283
APPENDIX 5: PARTICIPANT’S INFORMATION SHEET	287
APPENDIX 6: CONSENT FORM	289
APPENDIX 7: INVITATION LETTER	290
APPENDIX 8: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	291
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	294
REFERENCES	295

List of Tables

<i>Table 3.1: Access processes to organisations selected for this study</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Table 3.2: Summary of selected organisations and participants</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>Table 5.1: Rooms participants used for pumping</i>	<i>166</i>

List of Figures

<i>Figure 4.1: Map of South-East Asia</i>	108
<i>Figure 4.2: Map of Brunei Darussalam</i>	108
<i>Figure 4.3: Population by Districts</i>	109
<i>Figure 6.1: The Balancing Scale by Bella (I-4) – Organisation B</i>	182
<i>Figure 6.2: The Three Balancing Scales by Badriyah (I-13) – Organisation B</i>	183
<i>Figure 6.3: Family and Management by Dahlia (I-5) – Organisation D</i>	185
<i>Figure 6.4: Work, Funds and Travel by Dana (I-7) – Organisation D</i>	185
<i>Figure 6.5: Harmonious and Colourful by Daniella (I-8) – Organisation D</i>	186
<i>Figure 6.6: House and Office by Dalila (I-10) – Organisation D</i>	186
<i>Figure 6.7: Intention by Damia (I-11) – Organisation D</i>	187
<i>Figure 6.8: Bird’s Eye View by Daftiyah (I-12) – Organisation D</i>	187
<i>Figure 6.9: Work From Home by Balqis (I-14) – Organisation B</i>	188
<i>Figure 6.10: Support System by Belinda (I-15) – Organisation B</i>	188
<i>Figure 6.11: Flower by Daisy (I-6)</i>	218
<i>Figure 6.12: The See-Saw by Diana (I-9) – Organisation D</i>	221

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Aim and Background to the Study

This study aims to contribute to the theory on the impact of maternal bodies on professional women's bodies after maternity leave in a non-Western majority Muslim context.

The concept of work-life balance and its related issues have been discussed extensively from the Western perspectives (Lowry and Moskos, 2009; Kalliath and Brough, 2008). The concept can be traced back to the latter of the 19th century when the campaign against long factory hours galvanised the labour movement in the United States and Europe (Hunnicut, 1984). This campaign has resulted in reductions in working hours without impacting the output levels. From this point forward, more studies were being done in the early 20th century to demonstrate the complex relationship between time spent at work and the output level. Historically, the work/life programs, such as financial and time-related, can be traced back to the 1930s and initiated by the WK Kellogg Company, the program aimed to reduce the working hours to four shifts of six instead of the usual three daily eight-hour shifts. This initiative has enhanced employee morale and productivity (Lockwood, 2003). Although the term work-life balance was not yet invented during the 1960s and 1970s, factors like health and safety at work, equality and flexible labour market were identified that affect the current policy mix. Hence, the concept's origin can be traced earlier in developed countries like the United States and Europe, with the increasing participation of women in the labour market to help working women balance their time between paid work and care responsibilities (Harris and Foster, 2003).

In the West, i.e. Europe and North America, new rights and regulations for work-life balance have emerged and evolved, including the ability to work fewer hours, the right to family leave

and workplace flexibility (Hobson, 2011). For example, in the US, the Equal Pay Act of 1963 was amended based on the Fair Labor Standards Act to protect men and women against wage discrimination based on sex. In the UK, the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act were introduced in 1970 and 1975, respectively, to recognise the importance of equality. While in the European countries, Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament was implemented and enforced to ensure equal pay and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of sex with regard to all aspects and conditions of work remuneration. As women's participation grew significantly in the workforce, research on working mothers and dual-earner families has also increased (Lewis *et al.*, 2007). Other factors like changes in technology, new forms of organisations, increased women's participation in the workforce, and diverse working time needs of individuals, have also led to this turning point. Technological advancements and computerisation reduced the dependence on physical strength in factories which led to gender division by facilitating greater participation of women in the workforce (Snooks, 1996). With the increasing participation of women in the workforce, dual-earner couples and single parents also increased, which immediately enhanced the child and elder care burden on a large number of employees and also created new challenges in balancing work and family life (Naithani, 2010). Hence, the idea of work-life balance then spread across the European continents, with more and more countries, governments, and organisations creating legislative conditions for young families, women and men caring for children to facilitate their work performance and one that best suited their culture and way of work (Hobson, 2011; Wattis *et al.*, 2012; Žofcînova and Barinková, 2020)

Research has suggested that developing countries have lagged Western countries in discussing work-life balance (Le *et al.*, 2020; Xiao and Cooke, 2012). The concept of work-life balance has gained momentum in developing countries that recognise the need to maintain and protect

a sustainable workforce, particularly with the increasing number of women participating in the workplace. However, work and family issues are only beginning to gain attention in parts of Asia like Hong Kong and Japan (Lu and Cooper, 2015). This was due to the pressure of rapid social change and increasing global competition mixed with the long hours of work culture, particularly in the Pan-Confucian societies, which include Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea. Brunei has only been 'introduced' to this concept in 2012 during the 5th East Asian Ministerial Meeting on Families when Brunei hosted the meeting with a theme of discussion around work-life balance as the theme was "Ensuring Work-Family Balance". From this Meeting, Brunei has adopted the Brunei Darussalam Statement, which acknowledged that work-family imbalance could lead to social, psychological and somatic problems, family instability and reduced productivity at the workplace.

A significant theme in work-life balance studies is maternity leave (Ogbanu *et al.*, 2011; Beauchert *et al.*, 2016; Mirkovic *et al.*, 2016; Baker and Millingan, 2008; Zhuang *et al.*, 2018; Jantzer *et al.*, 2017). A few studies have extensively discussed different relationships that maternity leave provision has on different aspects of the working environment. Generally, Ogbuanu *et al.* (2011) concluded in their research that neither total nor paid maternity length had any impact on breastfeeding initiation or duration. Beauchert *et al.* (2016) stated that increasing the length of maternity leave may affect not only the health of the child but also the physical and mental health of the mother. Other research linked maternity leave with breastfeeding outcomes. Baker and Millingan (2008) indicated that longer maternity leave results in breastfeeding continuing for more time. Furthermore, Mirkovic *et al.* (2016) found that 87.3% of women who received 12 or more weeks of paid maternity leave were more likely to initiate breastfeeding than women without paid leave. Other research linked breastfeeding support at work to increasing the likelihood of these women returning to work post-their

maternity leave and facing reactions to stigma where most co-workers generally support lactating women at work (Zhuang *et al.*, 2018). Jantzer *et al.* (2017) also discussed the provision of workplace breastfeeding support, mainly providing adequate time for pumping at work predicted work enhancement of personal life (Jantzer *et al.*, 2017). From these past studies, there is a need to explore the impact of social support factors that influence the breastfeeding continuation and pumping at work activity of women returning to work post-maternity leave.

Further research related to mothers and the effects of maternity leave duration has focused on labour market outcomes (Dahl *et al.*, 2013; Lalive and Zweimüller, 2009; Rasmussen, 2010), fertility and, to some extent, mental health (Chatterji and Markowitz, 2005; Chatterji *et al.*, 2013; and Liu and Skans, 2010). Beauchart *et al.* (2016) found that for maternal health, some evidence showed that mothers benefit from increasing the length of maternity leave in terms of fewer hospital admissions within one to five years after childbirth. Two reviews that have examined maternity leave and maternal health are Borrell *et al.* (2014) and Staehelin *et al.* (2007), where both reviews suggested that maternity leave, be it paid or unpaid, improves maternal mental health. Only one study found a positive association between longer leave and self-reported health (Clark *et al.*, 1997). However, there has been less emphasis, if none, placed upon the impact of maternity leave and examining these women's perception of work-life balance post-maternity leave, particularly on continuing breastfeeding and pumping at work activity.

In Brunei, there was no maternity leave until the 1970s. In the beginning, it was only allowed for only 28 days. This was then increased to 56 days in 1992, and in January 2011, an increase to 105 days of maternity leave. This increase has been shown to impact breastfeeding duration

positively (Taib, 2014). The reason to focus on Brunei as a context is because of its different cultural and religious standpoint compared to the majority of past studies of work-life balance that were driven by the Western perspectives. The context of Brunei will be elaborated on in detail in Chapter 4.

My situation is relevant here. As a professional woman with previous experience taking maternity leave in 2011 with difficulties continuing breastfeeding and pumping at work due to the little support and knowledge, I received at home and work. Therefore, I am personally inspired to understand what other professional women experienced in the process of understanding their perception of work-life balance, especially coming back to work post-maternity leave. Therefore, this study is motivated to explore more in-depth than previous work in the areas of work-life balance, maternity leave and maternal bodies, particularly breastfeeding and pumping at work post-maternity leave, which have not been addressed yet.

The impact of continuing breastfeeding and pumping at work post-maternity leave is still underexplored. To fill this gap, the current study provides empirical evidence of the underexplored issue of the day-to-day pressure of coping with breastfeeding and work. It will extend to understanding the idea of work-life balance through the concept of maternal bodies. Aiming to extend the previous literature, this research will consider the western perspectives of work-life balance and explore the perception of non-western perspectives of the same idea. The research will highlight the non-Western Muslim context of breastfeeding and pumping activities and compare it with previous research on the same issue which are predominantly westernised.

The study context takes Brunei as a Muslim country. Four organisations which were a public higher institution, a public department, a private company and a private bank, were selected for two methodological reasons. First, the types of organisations, including professional, activity and ownership, are different across private and public sectors. Secondly, the population dominance of the organisations to explore the extent of support available for the women post-maternity leave. With the *Melayu Islam Beraja* (Malay Islamic Monarchy) as national philosophy embedded in the society, these different organisations will provide evidence on how this philosophy is translated into their organisational culture in relation to maternal bodies. In brief, this study aims to understand the different contexts in terms of the laws, policies and societal norms (which will be further elaborated in Chapter 4) and some women's experience of work-life balance post-maternity leave.

1.2. Contributions to the Study and the Research Questions

Based on the above background, it shows that gender equity, societal good, and child welfare in the studies of work-life balance have been extensively researched from the Western perspectives. Despite the potential of the concept of maternal bodies to create 'subtle barriers' toward continued breastfeeding activities post-maternity leave and women's career advancement, this study provides empirical evidence on the different supports identified to help professional women to continue breastfeeding post-maternity leave. In addition, the thesis provides evidence on how professional women in Brunei viewed work-life balance and maternity leave. This study therefore challenges the existing conceptualisation of the maternal body within the context of Brunei and the stereotypes about Muslim women.

Therefore, to fill the gaps discussed earlier, this study will aim to answer the research questions: *how do professional women in Brunei perceive the idea of work-life balance and maternal*

bodies? In addition to this main research question, two research sub-questions will be addressed:

1. How do these professional women portray their work-life balance and work experiences post-maternity leave?
2. What facilitates or constraints these professional women returning to work post-maternity leave?

1.3. Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters. It begins with an introduction (Chapter One), followed by a literature review (Chapter 2), the research methods used (Chapter 3) and the research context (Chapter 4). Next, the data findings from the interviews and drawings will be presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Finally, having presented the data, Chapter 7 will discuss and relate to the relevant theories before concluding the thesis in Chapter 8.

Chapter 2 will review the literature on work-life balance and the concept of maternal body. Then, the gaps will be identified based on the literature.

Chapter 3 will discuss the methodological processes by describing the selection of the organisations and participants as well as the research methods used. In addition, qualitative research methods were used, including interviews and visual data in drawings. There were reflexivity processes both during and after the research processes. The rationale for the chosen methods will also be presented.

Chapter 4 will introduce the research context. This chapter begins with a brief description of the geographical characteristics of Brunei, followed by a brief justification of why employed

women were chosen for this study. The concept of work-life balance in the context of Brunei will also be discussed.

Chapters 5 and 6 will present thematic analysis of the interviews and drawings. In Chapter 5, the concept of maternal bodies will be examined, followed by the different types of support available for pumping mothers and the idea of changing priorities and adjustments post-maternity leave. Chapter 6 will analyse the drawings from the participants of two organisations on their perceptions of work-life balance.

In Chapter 7, the data presented in the previous chapters will be related to relevant theories. This chapter will show that some of the findings can be explained by existing theories while others cannot, such as the different types of social support that women received post-maternity leave can impact the continuation of breastfeeding and pumping at work activities.

Chapter 8 will conclude by presenting a summary of the findings, the research contributions, the study's implications and limitations, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter examines how the concept of work-life balance is interpreted and applied. The aims of this chapter are first, to provide a review of the concepts of work-life balance adopted and researched, including a discussion on the idea of balance and the other domain of life before exploring the different work-life balance literature in selected countries. Secondly, this chapter investigates the relationship between work and life by looking at the different aspects of boundaries, borders, spillover effects and adjustment arrangements of work-life balance for employees at work. It will further review the legitimate and illegitimate use of time at work and how the concept of maternal body, particularly breastfeeding, fit into the theory of work-life balance. Finally, this chapter sets out the research questions of the thesis.

2.2. The Concept of Work-Life Balance

Maintaining and obtaining a work-life balance is a business issue due to its supposed benefits (Clutterbuck, 2003). Much of the literature around work-life balance has been deeply connected and involved with women and family responsibilities (see Clark, 2000; Poelman *et al.*, 2008; Waldfogel, 2012; Barnett *et al.*, 2003; Lakshmi Priya and Neena, 2008). Since the second world war, the idea of work-life balance has evolved due to the growing number of women involved in paid employment outside of their home while retaining their role as homemakers with primary responsibility for childcare (Kelliher *et al.*, 2018). This, in turn, creates a need to balance work with the non-work domain (Gatrell *et al.*, 2013).

The focus shifted from working mothers to incorporating work-life balance among dual-career couples (see Gilbert and Rachlin, 1987; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976), although the main focus continued to concentrate on women negotiating their work and childcare responsibilities in couples' relationships (Kelliher *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, Hoshchild's book titled "The Time Bind", published in 1997, points to a work-family crisis, with working parents struggling to balance the increasing demands of work with childcare and the stresses of home life. A line of enquiry in the area of work-life balance research concerns individual outcomes of employees achieving or not a satisfactory work-life balance (Kelliher *et al.*, 2017). Work that indicated the positive effects of work-life balance on individual well-being include studies by Lingard and Subet, 2002; Lunau *et al.*, 2014; McGinnity and Russel, 2015 and argues that a 'buffering effect' protects individuals from negative experiences in either domain of work or life and may reduce stress caused by tension between roles (Kelliher *et al.*, 2017).

Lockwood (2003) argues that work-life balance has a chameleon characteristic, which gives different meanings to different groups and depends on the context of the conversation and the speaker's viewpoint. Gatrell *et al.* (2013) assessed a comparative review of definitions of work-life balance and parenthood and found how the term itself has been defined on a limited scale according to the area of literature it represents. In trying to find common ground on the definition of work-life balance, Gatrell *et al.* (2013) stated that the description of the term offers a means to analyse complex debates around discourses and practices surrounding parenthood. Various studies such as Burnett *et al.* (2010 a, b), Fleetwood (2007a), Ford and Collinson (2011), Gatrell (2007), Gregory and Milner (2009, 2011), Lewis *et al.* (2007), Özbilgin *et al.* (2011) and Tomlinson (2007) have identified three field areas of research concerning work-life balance: organisational psychology, sociologies of work and family practices and management studies.

For the first field, the literature on work-life balance is centred on how to define and address the conflict between work-family roles (Gareis *et al.*, 2009; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985) and the desire to understand the conflict between work-family relationships that led to a focus on role theory (Kossek *et al.*, 2011, Katz and Kahn, 1978). However, the occupational psychology literature that focuses mainly on work-life balance with role conflicts experienced by employed parents has failed to translate work-life balance into workplace practices and thus is considered a serious limitation of the discipline (Gatrell *et al.*, 2013).

Secondly, the sociologies of work and family practices literature have prioritized the quest to understand how far mothers and fathers find it enriching to balance paid work with a personal investment in children's upbringing (Gatrell *et al.*, 2013). As Gatrell (2008) observed, social policy literature and feminist scholars sought to improve women's social situation through interpreting ideas of work-life balance with maternal rights and paid employment (Firestone, 1970; Oakley, 1984; Rich, 1977). However, this area of literature pays limited attention to the problems of class and intersectionality, and work-life balance among work-rich, such as professionally employed parents, appears to have been the focus (Blair-Loy, 2003; Hewlett, 2002).

Thirdly, the management studies literature emphasised disparities between theoretical work-life balance policies and the practical problems experienced by parents attempting to use such policies (Gatrell *et al.*, 2013). The definition of work-life balance and parenthood from a variety of disciplinary traditions is widely spread in the literature (Lewis *et al.*, 2007; Fleetwood, 2007 a, b); Ransome, 2007; Gregory and Milner, 2009), making this area of research a proactive avenue seeking to influence social change. However, its limitation comes

from their focus on the ‘time poor and income rich’ instead of the different other gender and those who are ‘time poor and cash poor’ (Gatrell *et al.*, 2013). Management studies on parenting and work-life balance also prioritize parents' difficulties balancing work and childcare commitments. Through this research, I intend to contribute to the literature through the question of how professional women find a balance between work and non-work activities done at work through the concept of maternal bodies.

The field has become more multidisciplinary in the 21st-century era, with increasing interest in looking at the consequences of work intensification and the heightened significance of professions focusing on law, education, finance and consulting sectors (Campbell and Van Wanrooy, 2013). As mentioned earlier, the field has expanded its literature from the areas of organisational psychology to sociologies of work and family practices and management studies. Through the advanced research on work-life balance terminology over the years, different terms have been used to describe the idea, which include ‘work-life integration’ (Lewis and Cooper, 2005); ‘work-family conflict’ (Minnotte, 2012); ‘work and family practices’ (Morgan, 1996); ‘work/family balance’ (Hochschild, 1997) and ‘work-life interface’ (Özbilgin *et al.*, 2011). Even though each of these descriptions reflects subtle differences in interpretation, the term ‘work-life balance’ as depicted by Gatrell *et al.* (2013) is more familiar as it embraces the range of approaches listed above. The term they used also encompasses how parents of dependent children balance their responsibilities and commitments to paid work and parenthood. For this reason, I will continue to use the word ‘work-life balance’, taking the perspective of Gatrell *et al.* (2013). This will help prevent assumptions that may look at balancing responsibilities, between paid work and parenthood, as either enriching or conflictual.

2.2.1. Work-Life Balance – the Definition

In general, work-life balance refers to the relationship between work and non-work aspects of an individual's life, where achieving a satisfactory work-life balance is generally understood as restricting one side (usually work) to have more time for the other (Kelliher *et al.*, 2016). Scholars like Lowry and Moskos (2008, p. 170) defined work-life balance as “the ability of individuals, regardless of age or gender, to successfully combine work and household responsibilities”. Visser and Williams (2006, p. 14) defined it as “having sufficient control and autonomy over where, when and how you work to fulfil your responsibilities inside and outside paid work”. While Felstead *et al.* (2002) defined work-life balance as “the relationship between the institutional and cultural times and spaces of work and non-work in societies where income is predominantly generated and distributed through labour markets” (p. 56). In contrast, Pocock (2005, p. 43) stated, “the impossibility of achieving work-life balance is commonly expressed by echoing a gender order where the unpaid labour of domestic work and childcare remains culturally associated with women, regardless of the amount of time spent in paid employment”.

The term ‘work-life balance’ was first used in the United States in 1986 to help explain the trend of people spending more time on work-related tasks while allocating less time to other aspects of their lives (Swarnalatha and Rajalakshmi, 2015). However, the study of work-life balance has focused on western ideologies, and it mainly adopted a restricted conception of what ‘life’ entails and is based on a traditional model of work which does not incorporate recent developments in work and employment relationships (Kelliher *et al.*, 2018). On the one hand, Lewis and Cooper (2005) and Lewis *et al.* (2007) used the language of work-life integration instead and suggested another way of approaching questions of work-life balance that attempts to resolve some of the dilemmas of terminology that work-life balance creates. For example,

they stated that the domains of work and life could be mutually reinforcing. ‘Work’ in this context has largely been premised on the traditional model characteristics of full-time, permanent employment with one employer and a conventional understanding of what work involves (Kelliher *et al.*, 2018). It can also be considered paid employment and unpaid work for an employer (Lowry and Moskos, 2008). The word ‘life’, on the other hand, has been addressed partially in a few research (see de Janasz *et al.*, 2012; Eikhof *et al.*, 2007; and Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2011), which refers to non-work, comprised of free time spent in leisure activities and family time (Lowry and Moskos, 2008). ‘Life’ has also been primarily viewed as activities that include caring for dependent children, which points to work-life balance as a concern for working parents. This other domain called ‘life’ will be further discussed later.

In the context of work and life, Guest (2002) argues that balance does not refer to an equal weighting of the two but rather a good, stable relationship and the desired point may differ considerably between individuals. For such a difference in how work-life balance is perceived, it means that employees see it as how they maintain and integrate their work, personal and family time with a minimum role conflict (Clark, 2000; Ungerson and Yeandle, 2005). Employees’ professional satisfaction and personal freedom are contributed by work-life balance. Therefore, balancing a career with personal or family life can be challenging, but it also greatly impacts a person’s work and life satisfaction (Sayers, 2007; Broers, 2005). While Dundas (2008) argued that work-life balance is about managing and juggling efficiently between job and all aspects of personal matters, it also looks at to what extent an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her job and personal life (Greenhaus, 2003). Studies by Virick *et al.* (2007) and Omar (2013) also supported this claim stating that employees who experience a high level of work-life balance tend to exhibit similar investment

of time and commitment to work and non-work domains. The word ‘balance’ for this chapter will be further discussed below.

2.2.2. The Idea of ‘Balance.’

Clark (2000) introduced and developed the concept of work-family border theory based on the problem of finding the balance between work and family. She defined the word ‘balance’ as satisfaction and good functioning at work and home with a minimum role conflict. She indicated that different countries have different approaches because people are cross-borders. This means that individuals frequently adjust their focus, goals, and interpersonal style to meet the demands of work and family. Moreover, responsibilities in non-work domains also revolve around one’s family and social and spiritual roles, and hence there is variation in the definition of ‘balance’ in some of the eastern literature (see Paul *et al.*, 2015).

In trying to understand the overall framework of work-life balance research, a debate in the literature also lies in what constitutes ‘balance’, which creates further confusion in the field (Voydanoff, 2005). Some scholars have understood balance as the equal distribution of time, energy and commitment to work and non-work roles (Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw, 2003). Others have adopted what Reiter (2007) refers to as a ‘situationist’ approach where balance depends on the individual’s circumstances. A study by Kalliath and Brough (2008) concentrated on the subjectivist stance by arguing for more attention to be paid to individual perceptions where in order for a person to experience an excellent work-life balance, it will depend on how they perceive their situation, rather than any predetermined idea of what ‘balance’ is (Kelliher *et al.*, 2018). In contrast with this study, the individualist stance is used as the sample of professional women to represent their personal view of what constitutes work-life balance.

Working long hours is an expectation that does not fit with family life. Notably, men and women in managerial and professional roles are likelier to put in long hours, especially if they work full-time (Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Fielden and Cooper, 2002; Worrall and Cooper, 1999). Both men and women's experience in crossing over their roles as workers, fathers/mothers and husbands/wives between work and non-work life domains is an area that needs to be excavated deeper to challenge the norm of the 'ideal worker', which is generally attributed to male employees with the perception that family and other life commitments unburden them (Sav *et al.*, 2013, p.673). Nevertheless, the difference would probably fall heavier for women to make those decisions and sacrifices, as women might forgo having children to achieve professional success (Schwartz, 1989). Jacobsen (2004) states that women who remain single or childless surpass men with family responsibilities.

Research on work-life balance heavily relied on the western perspectives of cultural, social and economic norms. The following subsection will look into the different perspectives of work-life balance adopted by selected countries being researched.

2.2.3. Perception of Work-Life Balance in selected parts of the world

As mentioned earlier, the different perspectives on the work-life balance concept are bound to be presented and understood by individuals. These perspectives could differ in western and eastern countries depending on their culture, geographical position and economic contexts. Most of the studies on work-life balance and its provisions are done in the western context, and the way the eastern countries view work and family is different due to the differences in cultural traditions, family structures and societal institutions (Hassan, 2010). Differences between these countries in the prevalence of various types of work-life arrangements rest, in part, on the

differences in the legal and institutional supports available for working families as well as on the cultural assumptions about appropriate behaviour of men and women as parents, spouses and as employees (Fagnani and Letablier, 2004). Although a similarity can be found between the west and the east regarding the women who are still facing challenges balancing their roles and fitting in a working environment, most researchers do not look at the religiously inclined backgrounds.

As part of the Anglo-Saxon country geographically located in the Eastern part of Asia, Toffoletti and Starr (2016) interviewed 31 scholars at an Australian university to examine how discourses on work-life balance are appropriated and used by women academics. They found that female academics' ways of speaking about work-life balance respond to gendered attitudes about paid work and unpaid care that predominate in Australian socio-cultural life. These women constructed their relationship to work-life balance as a personal management task, an impossible ideal; detrimental to their careers and unmentionable at work. Furthermore, they view flexible working arrangements as necessary for juggling work and family responsibilities, and they are expected to manage a boundless workload and tend to feel guilty for not fulfilling expected responsibilities (Toffoletti and Starr, 2016). A similar study was done by Swarnalatha and Rajalakshmi (2015), whereby using 241 valid questionnaires, they found a significant relationship between organisational initiative and work-life balance, indicating that there is an association between work-life balance and organisational commitment, job satisfaction and turnover intention among faculty members of an engineering college in India. These two studies were done in similar backgrounds of academics but from two different countries and with two different findings. The Australian university viewed the option of flexible working arrangements as an initiative to help them manage their responsibilities, while the Indian college found the positive impact of work-life balance on the well-being of their employees.

Japan is another country that adopts Western managerial practices. Demerouti *et al.* (2013) conducted a study on work-self balance focusing on the effects of job demands and resources on personal functioning in Japanese working parents. The findings suggest that the demands and resources encountered at work can spill over to the home domain and impact personal functioning and context-free well-being. Japan is known to be where long hours prevail, and the workforce struggles to balance their work and family lives (Shimazu *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, the collapse of the bubble economy in 1991, followed by an economic depression, led many Japanese companies to increase competition, led to wide-scale restructuring and an increase in part-time employment, employment lease and temporary employment (Demerouti *et al.*, 2013). This, in turn, resulted in Japan facing a more significant challenge in balancing work and family lives since women entering the workforce has become increasingly common (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2010).

Japan shares a typical Asian culture where the work hours and hours spent on child care and housework are still separated by gender, with women playing a more critical role in child care and housework than men (Demerouti *et al.*, 2013). Culturally, work to a Japanese individual is the process of carrying out obligations owed to society and oneself as a social being (Snir and Harpaz, 2004) where it symbolises a statement of submission to managerial power and loyalty to the organisation since hard work and effort are more highly valued than ability in collectivistic cultures like Japan. Interestingly, the distribution of work-nonwork hours and the work-self interface that the Japanese find as relevant as work can positively and negatively impact personal interests (Demerouti *et al.*, 2013).

The examples presented above show that the reactions to work and family demands differ among people across countries and societies at various levels of economic development. On the contrary, Chandra (2012) conducted a study comparing and contrasting the eastern and western perspectives of work-life balance. He used the methods of reviewing selected literature, looking at secondary data on working hours and parental leave in different countries, the work-life balance policies and practices of 25 large firms of both western and eastern origins and comparing the work-life balance ratings across companies using a website. This study also interviewed heads of Human Resources on family-friendly policies from 50 multinational companies and 50 Indian companies in both the private and public sectors (Chandra, 2012). The study showed how work-life balance is viewed globally and individually. It also expanded the findings on work-life conflict and interference with family and the different work-life balance initiatives practised by the organisations being researched. His study found significant differences in the perception and practice of work-life balance and family-friendly policies within western countries compared to Asian countries (Chandra, 2012).

Nevertheless, countries in South East Asia like Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, which are known to be different in terms of their way of life, politically and culturally speaking, have not been given the spotlight to shed if there are any differences worthy of being debated and included in the literature. It is also acknowledged that some majority-Muslim countries in South East Asia might provide a different discovery than other countries in the Eastern part of Europe known to be more 'Islamically inclined'. Such countries are Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, where the literature that exists sanctions either against women working or against women holding jobs that give them power over and prestige above men (Tayeb, 1997). So, it is imperative to emphasise the case to study the South East Asian region's different contexts

and cultures in exploring the perspectives of work-life balance. The following discussion will focus on South East Asia countries, particularly Malaysia and Brunei, on the current debates and research on the idea of work-life balance.

2.2.4. Research on Work-Life Balance in South-East Asia

Most studies on women's work-family behaviour focus heavily on western countries (see Rapoport and Rapoport, 2007; Pocock *et al.*, 2013; Chandra, 2012; Hennig *et al.*, 2012; and Appelbaum *et al.*, 2006), and increasing interest is beginning to concentrate on the eastern part of the world in places such as the Middle East, India and Pakistan (see Chandra, 2012; D'enbeau *et al.*, 2015; Aslam, 2015; Rajadhyaksha, 2012; Swarnalatha and Rajalakshmi 2015; Tims *et al.*, 2015; Le *et al.*, 2020). In South-East Asia, particularly, the concept of work-life balance needs more attention as there have been few empirical studies on work-life balance and its related issues. Haar *et al.* (2014) investigated the effects of work-life balance on several individual outcomes across seven different cultures, including Malaysia and China. Their study provided evidence that work-life concepts originated in Western cultures are generalizable beyond the cultural dimensions of individualism, collectivism, and gender-egalitarianism. Malaysia, in particular, is similar to Brunei in its Malay culture, which is different from Arab or Western culture. However, unlike Malaysia, the 'Malay' family culture in Brunei is embedded with Islamic values in a monarch country governed by deep Brunei(an) nationalism. The following few studies show the growing interest of the subject in an environment culturally similar to Brunei's context.

The following studies were conducted in Malaysia with different aims and data collection methods used to add to the current literature on work-life balance. For example, in the research on work-life balance satisfaction perceived by academics in three public universities, Mohd

Noor (2011) found that satisfaction in work-life balance was negatively correlated to leaving the organisation, while job satisfaction and organisational commitment are the partial mediators for the relationship between work-life balance and intention to leave. A similar line of research that looked at life satisfaction across seven cultures was investigated by Haar *et al.* (2014). They looked at the effects of work-life balance on several individual outcomes across seven cultures of Malaysia, China, New Zealand Maori, New Zealand European, Spanish, French and Italian. The result showed that work-life balance was positively related to job and life satisfaction and negatively related to anxiety and depression across the seven cultures.

Implementing an organisation's initiative ensures that the employees are treated accordingly when it comes to the idea of work-life balance. For example, studies by Subramaniam and Selvaratnam (2010) found that many workplaces in Malaysia have implemented various family-friendly policies, but a gap exists between employees' practical needs and the availability of family-friendly policies. A similar study conducted by Subramaniam *et al.* (2015) used evidence from a primary survey using self-administered questionnaires at 14 organisations in the services industry. The women answered based on their perception of the relationship between flexible working arrangements and work-life balance. They used the MANOVA analysis and found that flexible working arrangements have the potential to achieve work-life balance.

Furthermore, a study by Omar *et al.* (2015) identified the effects of workload and role conflicts on employees' work-life balance. Their quantitative research using a cross-sectional survey concluded that workload was the most dominant factor affecting the employees' work-life balance, followed by role conflict. Jamadin *et al.* (2015), on the other hand, adopted the Workplace Scale developed by Tate, Whatley and Clugston (1997) to investigate the influence

of work-family conflict among the employees of a semi-government organisation and measure the effect of work-family conflict and stress level among these employees. They found that employees appear to have lower work-family conflict and job stress levels. However, since this study was only done at one semi-government organisation, it was recommended to further this study to include both public and private organisations.

In line with conflict that is undeniably present in work-life balance research, work interference also plays a significant role. For example, Hassan (2010) conducted a study to prove that Malaysians scored significantly lower on work interference with family than Westerners. However, he found a significantly higher score on family interference with work compared to all other 14 samples of western countries. Furthermore, the study showed that in eastern cultures, the importance of family in an individual's life is different from the western cultures. Hassan (2010), therefore, argued that when multinational companies operate in eastern settings, they should consider cultural aspects such as collectivism as part of understanding their employees. This statement is particularly noteworthy as Brunei has a similar cultural background to Malaysia in terms of organisational context. Hence it is essential to notice any previous studies that could indirectly contribute to the understanding of taking Brunei as a study context. Compared to these studies conducted, there is only one study from the perspective of Brunei that has focused on the broad idea of women and human capital (see Low and Zohrah, 2013).

Brunei is an Islamic Muslim country, with most of the population being Muslims. However, Brunei exercises different employment structures compared to other South-East Asian countries, making it a different political system ruled by a strict policy of conformity and consensus (Syed and Pg Omar, 2017). Power distance is not a key concern in Brunei's context

as it is often regarded as a sign of respect for authority and one's superiors (Syed and Pg Omar, 2017). In addition, Brunei is also well-known for its close-knit socio-culture, whereby family relationships significantly impact workplace relations with supervisors and co-workers (Syed and Pg Omar, 2017). This relationship positively impacts the employer/supervisor-employee relationship and participation in problem-solving and decision-making processes at work. Furthermore, the findings of this study can justify this fact through employees' negotiations on their usage of time at work doing non-work activities, as well as the idea of boundaries and adjustments.

In Brunei, organisations or individuals are not allowed to challenge the government and its policies. The monarchical government also limits the ability for freedom of speech, freedom of association and collective bargaining due to its Malay Islamic Monarchy (*Melayu Islam Beraja* – MIB) philosophy that is the very central and core of how things are done in Brunei (this will be discussed in the Context Chapter – Chapter 4). Using Hofstede's (1984) study of culture, Syed and Pg Omar (2017) indicated that Brunei has a hierarchical relationship, particularly in the government sector. Nonetheless, its public sector provides good service conditions, including high levels of job security and leave entitlements, specifically the amended longer maternity leave for women. This is where the study is motivated to focus on the impact of the increased number of days for women to be away from work and how they construct their work-life balance post-maternity leave.

The above studies provide evidence of how work-life balance is perceived on the other side of the world. This includes the impact of work-life balance on the different areas of sociology, psychology, health and work-life balance practices using quantitative or qualitative methods. Furthermore, there is less research, if none, that links the relationship between maternity leave

provision as a work-life balance initiative and work-life balance itself as a notion, especially for professional women in the usage of their time at work and during work, specifically upon returning to work post-maternity leave.

2.2.5. Work-Life Balance at Work

Changes in technology, new forms of organisations, increased female participation, and more diverse working time needs of individuals have led to the turning point in recognising the importance of equality. However, the need for effective implementation of work-life balance policies in the work environment should not just focus on any gender (Chaudhuri *et al.*, 2020). The following sub-sections will analyse the literature on how work-life balance impacts employees at work, the use of time and religious practices at work affects the work-life balance of employees, the impact of work-life balance initiatives used and how the usage of technology does contribute to the idea of work-life balance.

2.2.5.1. The Impact of Work-Life Balance on Employees

Research in work-life balance has shown that the individual's demands and resources for participation in the paid work or family domain can influence the individual's performance and the quality of experience in one domain or the other (Guest, 2002; Rothbard *et al.*, 2005). Although the definition of subjective well-being remains debated in the academic literature, it is generally associated with an individual's sense of satisfaction and with having sufficient energy and time for involvement in activities that are meaningful and engaging (New Economics Foundation (NEF), 2009; Thompson and Bunderson, 2001). In relation to paid work, well-being assumes an absence of employee stress or strain (Clarke *et al.*, 2007) and an achievement of both physical and psychological health and need satisfaction (Lewchuk *et al.*, 2008; Quinlan, 2007; Quinlan and Bole, 2009).

A framework to reduce stress and emotional exhaustion both inside and outside of the paid work domain was introduced by Taris and Schreurs (2009) by pointing out the importance of achieving a balance between resource demands in the workplace, a sense of individual control over work, and having supportive networks in place. Hakim (2007), Grote and Raeder (2009) and Thompson and Bunderson (2001) also indicate that having a personal sense of control over work-life activity enhances subjective well-being but also identify the importance of spending time in doing activities that are 'identity affirming' in achieving a sense of well-being in everyday life.

Another perspective of employee well-being comes from the male managerial side of the workplace. Burke (2010) researched the relationship between managerial and professional men's perceptions of organisational values that support a balanced commitment to work and personal life. Out of the 1,000 questionnaires sent out to male MBA graduates, a sample of 283 was analysed to discover the men's work experiences, work and life satisfaction and their levels of psychological well-being. This research contributed to the literature on work-life balance from the managerial male's perspective that could help encourage organisations to examine their values on these issues. The results indicated that organisations offering more supportive work-life balance led to greater job and career satisfaction, less intention to quit and higher levels of emotional well-being. Hence, organisational values that support work-life balance do have meaningful work and personal consequences for men where men can reduce their involvement time with work, which leads to more time available for the family to reduce work-life conflict. In contrast to this, many studies (Bunting, 2004; Gambles *et al.*, 2006; Voydanoff (2005a, b, c) specifically question how women who are labelled as individuals who traditionally carry greater responsibilities for caring and unpaid domestic tasks can achieve

sustainability in the well-being of self and others when personal resources in time and energy are continually eroded by paid work.

Furthermore, Arif and Ilyas (2013) conducted a quantitative survey that explored the various dimensions of quality of work-life (QWL) as it affects the life and attitudes of teachers at work in private universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Since the ultimate aim of service organisations like universities should be to develop satisfaction with life while enhancing personal lifestyles, contrasting agendas of the twenty-first century are taking their toll. This is where these universities are being operated as businesses, governing the workforce with tools crafted by modern management theories focused upon efficiency; and, on the other hand, maximising the human potential through enhancing individual self-worth and self-esteem through emphasizing positive identity with work and the workplace (Arif and Ilyas, 2013, p. 283). The findings from this research include that the employees perceived high quality of work-life were able to enhance their personal lives, making them more meaningful and purposeful, through engaging in a positive attitude at work, valuing their work and appreciating their work environment (p.293).

Other studies have also shown the association of work-life initiatives with employee outcomes such as job satisfaction and turnover intentions (see Grover and Crooker, 1995; Gonyea, 1993; Greenberg *et al.*, 1989 and Asadullah and Fernandez, 2008). Those studies revealed that work-life balance practices contribute to an increased affective commitment and decreased turnover intentions among all employees (Grover and Crooker, 1995, Swarnalatha and Rajalakshmi, 2015). This is particularly imperative as organisations realise that it is more costly to hire new employees than retain current employees; hence implementing a work-life balance policy to benefit the workers could be one reason for such loyalty to be earned. Furthermore, Balmforth

and Gardner (2006) found that work-family facilitation was significantly related to several factors. These include increased job satisfaction, increased organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs), affective organisational commitment, and decreased turnover intentions. This further supports the fact that having a balance in the work and life aspects not only benefits the individual but also brings positive outcomes to the organisations that take the extra mile to support and implement such a notion.

Stepping out of the mainstream focus of work-life balance research has directed recent attention emerging to identify issues of work-life balance for specific people. These include people without dependent children or caring for older people instead of young children, as well as pursuing further education, attending non-work related training, spending time doing hobbies and exercising, maintaining and recovering health or even engaging in religious or community activities (Kelliher *et al.*, 2018). While it was assumed that those could do these activities without dependents, it does not exclude those with dependent children from also wanting to carry out these activities on top of their prior responsibilities. Eventually, the various limitations to how work-life balance is understood and conceptualised highlight that the term itself is discursively constructed in ways that rest upon gendered assumptions underpinning what constitutes work and life and in what context (Toffoletti and Starr, 2016). For this study, the sample concentrated only on professional women in selected private and public sectors who have returned to work post-maternity leave. It examined how they construct their time, roles and responsibilities doing non-work activities during working hours.

2.2.5.2. Use of Time at Work

As previously discussed, the idea of work-life balance has been widely elaborated in various aspects of management (Clark, 2000; Ashforth *et al.*, 2000; Gatrell, 2010), organisational

psychology (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Gareis *et al.*, 2009; Kossek *et al.*, 2011) and social context (Firestone, 1970; Rich, 1977; Oakley, 1981). And much of the existing literature that explored work-life balance identified the positive (Applebaum *et al.*, 2006; Barrett and Mayson, 2008; Pocock *et al.*, 2013) and opposing sides of this idea (Applebaum and Golden, 2002; Galinsky and Swanberg, 2000; Lewis, 2000). However, there is still a gap in the research that links the relationship between the legitimate use of time at work with work-life balance and how professional women in a male-dominated workplace construct their work-life balance after returning from maternity leave. Where present, research has illustrated that women do spend more time interchanging roles and creating boundaries between work and home, and most work-life balance policies tend to be assumed by organisations to be fit just for women employees (see Clark, 2000; Ashforth *et al.*, 2000; Gatrell, 2010).

A full-time employee has continuous employment and works, on average, depending on countries, around 38 to 40 hours per week for five days. The employee's actual working hours in a particular job or industry depend on the agreement set between the employer and the employee or set by a particular government of the country. The standard work week usually consists of 5 eight-hour days, commonly starting as early as 7.45 am to 4.30 pm or 9 am to 5 pm. When an employee is at work, their time is dedicated to doing the 'work' assigned to them within the time frame of working hours. However, employees are also humans who need a time out during working time to do other non-work activities in between their allocated tasks. Lim (2002) used the term 'cyberloafing' on the act of employees using the companies' internet access for personal purposes during work hours. This raises the question of legitimate and illegitimate use of time at work that can be applied to this study. As employees are known to be the drivers and significant contributors to the successful running of any organisation, work-life balance plays a crucial role in shaping employees' attitudes towards their organisations and

life (Scholarios and Marks, 2004). According to Omar *et al.* (2015), employees who obtain a balanced life and work tend to perform better than those who do not. Hence this study is motivated by examining how these professional women interpret the concept of work-life balance.

Other designations in the literature when talking about time at work include “time wasters” (Haynes, 2004) and “banana time” (Roy, 1959) which pertain to situations where employees develop several time-based rituals such as lunchtime, coffee time, break time, prayer time, toilet time and other non-work related activities. Haynes (2004) mainly talked about two types of time wasters: employees who are self-generated time-wasters who procrastinate and are usually disorganised at work and/or are unable to say ‘no’. The other type is environmental contextual time-wasters, whereby family visits, phone calls, e-mails, waiting times, and meetings are all part of the non-work activities the employees do during their working time. Although the literature is not definite about the positive or negative outcomes of this behaviour developed at work, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) distinguished pleasurable from non-pleasurable breaks and revealed that the first was associated with positive outcomes, such as well-being, creativity and restoring concentration. A break during working hours can be considered a positive behaviour, as it improves task vigilance by restoring attentional resources (Zijlstra *et al.*, 1999; Warm *et al.*, 2008), helping decision-making (Speier *et al.*, 1999) and helping employees deal with stressful workplace events (Uleman and Bargh, 1989).

To understand whether employees can accurately keep track of the time they spend on personal activities performed at work, Ferreira and Esteves (2016) measured how employees in a Portuguese Information technology company spend their time on personal activities at work. They grouped personal activities developed at work into three dimensions: physiological needs

such as going to the bathroom and eating; psychological addictions such as smoking and drinking coffee; and recreational needs such as engaging in social conversation, using the phone, surfing the internet, reading or even daydreaming (Ferreira and Esteves, 2016). In addition, their research examined gender differences and motivations behind personal activities employees do at work, as well as individuals' perceptions of the time they spend doing these activities. They sampled 35 individuals using the ethnographic method with a 5-day non-participant direct observation and questionnaires with open-ended questions. The five working day period of 8 hours per day showed that individuals spend 58 minutes doing personal activities, including socialising, internet use, smoking and taking coffee breaks. With descriptive statistics, this evidence is consistent with previous studies published by other methodologies (D'Abate and Eddy, 2007; Eddy *et al.*, 2010). However, their findings are not focusing on work-life balance but more on how men and women spend their activities at work and found that men spent more time on personal activities.

Ideally, when boundaries are drawn up, there is a balance between life and work as an employee aims to keep the two spheres of work and non-work in harmony so that one does not suffer at the expense of the other. However, in the post-modern condition of time-space compressions (Harvey, 1989), this is becoming increasingly difficult, which causes the work-life balance to become an essential theme in both the research and practitioner literature. When discussing balance and flexibility issues, employees must structure their daily lives around their time use. How a person decides to spend and use his or her given time should not interfere with productivity at work or lack of attention at home. For example, a study by Verton (2000) found that 30-40% of employee productivity could be lost due to certain activities, such as employees surfing the internet for personal purposes.

There can be positive outcomes for employees taking work breaks. For example, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) described pleasurable breaks were associated with positive outcomes such as well-being, creativity and restoring concentration. Furthermore, both studies by Zijlstra *et al.* (1999) and Warm *et al.* (2008) also indicated that a break during working hours could be considered a positive behaviour as it improves task vigilance by restoring attentional resources and helping decision-making (Speier *et al.*, 1999) and helping employees deal with stressful workplace events (Uleman and Bargh, 1989). Furthermore, D'Abate and Eddy (2007) showed that employees who spent about 80 minutes per day doing personal activities such as engaging in social conversation, using the internet and taking coffee breaks tend to have positive effects as a result of feelings of 'refreshment' which increase productivity and creativity.

Eriksen (2001) defines time taken by an individual for personal gratification, for example, to read or spend time with family, as "slow time", whereas time spent on checking voice mail while waiting for an egg to boil 'fast time'. Fast time in this sense happens when people multitask or use a short period when they are not engaged in an activity at that particular moment to carry out another activity rather than simply relax. Areni and Grantham (2009) state that the attentional models have theoretically conceptualised the concept of time. That attention is split between two stimuli: processing temporally irrelevant stimuli and temporally relevant stimuli. The former stimuli include activities which provide pleasures or positive emotions, such as games, gambling and smoking. At the same time, the latter includes time waiting for someone or going to the bathroom, which implies more attention towards time, thus increasing the amount of perceived time (Zakay, 2000).

Islam, like most religions, prescribes several obligatory practices for its followers, such as daily prayers and fasting. Some of these practices are performed within working hours, requiring

time and energy to be completed, such as fasting (Sav *et al.*, 2013) and prayers. One concept to highlight the legitimate or illegitimate use of time at work is praying. Almost universally, prayer constitutes an integral component of spirituality. Despite a lack of empirical evidence projecting the effects of prayer in work settings, a few studies have proved the positive impact of spirituality on business movement (Benefiel, 2005; Biberman and Tischler, 2008; Cavanagh and Hazen, 2008, cited in Biberman and Tischler, 2008). Evidence indicated that managers perceived prayer as a source of accuracy or a lesser margin of error in their corporate decision-making (Cavanagh and Hazen, 2008, cited in Biberman and Tischler, 2008); Vasconcelos, 2009).

Furthermore, McGee and Delbecq (2003) also stated that prayer benefits executives as it helps them maintain their mental and emotional capacities at work and inspires them to make decisions. McCarty (2007) also reported that the participants in his study had reported that prayer activities increase employee morale and productivity and decrease employee turnover. Based on these findings, this study also aims to see the effect of prayer in the daily lives of professional women since they take a few minutes off during their working hours to perform their obligatory prayers at work. However, the effects of taking time off from work doing the non-work activity are less likely or more likely to impact their balance, roles and productivity.

While discussing the use of time at work, Eddy *et al.* (2010) also have inclusively designated three different concepts for behaviour that individuals perform at work that is not directly related to their daily professional tasks. They categorised these under non-work-related activities, workplace deviance and presenteeism. Other designations in the literature mentioned previously by Haynes (2004) and Roy (1959) pertain to situations where employees develop several time-based rituals, as discussed earlier. Epstein *et al.* (1999), on the other hand,

described people who flout the time norms of professional life as ‘time deviants’ as they considered it a part of politics of the time when an old tradition in the legal profession uses the number of hours logged and its visibility to colleagues and managers to measure its practitioners’ excellence and commitment. Their research has found that women lawyers who opted for part-time arrangements have more predictable work lives with more defined boundaries but struggle to gain recognition for their skills and respect for their seniority (p.4). Although these time concepts have been elaborated, it is still considered acceptable and legitimate use of time since human beings are the drivers of an organisation, not robots. Hence, such use of time is considered a natural cycle of life. Even though the literature has identified a vast amount of personal activities developed at work, the idea of a maternal employee expressing milk at work is not considered one of them and has not been vastly studied previously.

There is scant attention in the literature to breastfeeding women returning to work following maternity leave. Yet these women will be actively involved and spend time pumping their breastmilk at work during working time to keep up with their pumping schedules and milk demands. It is, therefore, personal use of time during work which deserves investigation. Pumping at work is quite common in Brunei organisations as the country is in full support of breastfeeding activities that organisations are setting up designated rooms for their women employees to do their daily routine undisturbed. This activity also falls under how these women balance their time between work and home, as their interchanging roles (as an employee, a colleague, a wife, a mother) at work and home with work and non-work activities to perform all day long. Evidently, the women spend more time doing the same activities due to home-related motivation (Ferreira and Esteves, 2016).

To sum up, the usage of time at work dealt with employees doing non-work activities during working time. Most research has focused on activities ranging from coffee or lunch breaks to bathroom breaks and surfing the internet. However, limited studies have been done explicitly focusing on maternal women who sacrifice their regular breaks to do other vital non-work activities, expressing milk at work and how they juggle their time post-maternity leave. Hence, that is one of the primary focuses of this study.

2.2.5.3. The Effects of Spillover at Work

Fleetwood (2007) observes that the concept of work-life balance has been widely disputed within the literature. There are assumptions that the two spheres are, or should be, treated as distinct rather than seeing work as a dimension and a part of life. He also questions whether there is a common unit from which work and life can be feasibly compared and deemed to be in balance or out of balance, whether achieving balance is parallel to achieving equity in these spheres simply by trading off time in one for the time in the other (Fleetwood, 2007, p. 353). This is what has been addressed by Staines (1980) through the compensation theory. Arguably, the integration between work and non-work life activities could bring positive or negative spillover to employees. A positive spillover effect on work, for example, sports training, could lead the employee to be healthier and less prone to being sick and absent. On the other hand, the demands to continue or further education or perform religious and community commitments may disrupt or conflict with work, but it may also allow the employees to bring additional knowledge and skills required through these activities to work, and this is called a spillover effect (Kelliher *et al.*, 2017).

For example, if an employee is having a bad day at work, it will impact her mood negatively at home. Katz and Kahn (1978) introduced the open system approach, assuming that work

events affected home events and vice versa. On the other hand, compensation theory is an inverse relationship between work and family such that people make differing investments in each role to make up for what one is missing in the other. For example, if an employee is experiencing unhappy family life, the person will try to pursue work activities that will bring satisfaction to compensate for his or her lack of achieving satisfaction in his or her family life. Additionally, Champoux (1978) noted that spillover and compensation could coincide within individuals, thus giving no way to predict or explain why individuals choose one reaction over the other (see Lambert, 1990).

These theories showed that they treat individuals as reactive only, rather than having the ability to enact or shape their environments. The most serious problem with spillover and compensation theories is the limited focus where such research generally addresses only emotional linkages such as satisfaction or expression of frustration and gives little or no acknowledgement of spatial, temporal or social behavioural connections between work and family. Zedeck (1992) also points out that spillover and compensation theories miss the critical issues in the problem of work and family balance, whereby the relationship between employees and families and work organisation members, and the way that individuals mould the parameters and scope of their activities and create personal meanings.

2.2.5.4. Impact of Work-Life Balance initiatives at Work

Another aspect of work-life balance concerning work is flexible work arrangements which depend on various factors. Research by Beham *et al.* (2012) indicated that those with significantly reduced working hours experience a more satisfying work-life balance than those who work longer hours. As the work-life balance is commonly used to describe policies that have been previously termed as ‘family-friendly’, this term is now extended beyond the scope

of the family as it refers to the flexible working arrangements that allow both parents and non-parents to gain the benefits of working arrangements to provide a balance between work and personal responsibilities (Redmond Valiulis and Drew, 2006). Work-life programmes that allow employees to have a greater involvement at home also appear to be linked to employee well-being for men and women (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003; Burke, 2000). Because of this, organisations can then benefit through reduced absenteeism and better integration of women returners after maternity (McDonald *et al.*, 2005). In line with this, McDonald *et al.* (2005) stated that employees' work-life balance priorities fall within three general categories: working time arrangements, parental leave entitlements and childcare subsidies or direct provisions. When these are met through organisational work-life programmes, McDonald *et al.* (2005) indicated that employees are found to have increased organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and a greater sense of control over their work schedules leads to improved mental health. Beaugard and Henry (2009) also found a similar finding, whereby they observed a positive effect on employees based on organisational work-life balance practices being implemented. They found that employees reciprocated by showing increased loyalty, effort and productivity in exchange for the organisation's practical assistance with managing work-life demands to show their appreciation demonstrated by their organisation on work-life balance policies and practices.

It is important to understand that employees perceive work-life balance by how their organisations act upon providing the support necessary to create such an environment. A direct linkage between perceived usability of flexible working schedule and three dimensions of work-life balance, which include work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work and work/personal life enhancement, was also found in a study conducted by Hayman (2009) in a large university in Western Australia. This study found that employees

with flexitime work schedules displayed a significantly higher level of work-life balance than traditional fixed-hour schedules.

Furthermore, drawing on social exchange theory, Konrad and Mangel (2000) argued that work-life initiatives could increase employee effort even though they are not tailored to individual employee contributions. This suggests that the relationship between the provision of extensive work-life benefits and productivity may be stronger in firms that employ higher percentages of professionals and women. This is further supported by Tsui and her colleagues (1997) by demonstrating that employees tend to be committed to performing better on both assigned job responsibilities. Moreover, the overall effort is beyond what is required when organisational concerns for their career advancement and well-being are looked after (Tsui *et al.*, 1997).

Other research has also examined the relationship between flexible working arrangements and work-life balance (see Allen *et al.*, 2013; Kelliher *et al.*, 2019, Timms *et al.*, 2015; Prowse and Prowse, 2015) and the outcomes of an employer in designing policies such as providing flexible working options to help employees achieve a more satisfactory work-life balance (Farivar *et al.*, 2015; Lero and Lewis, 2008). Findings of such studies indicated that employers' concern for work-life balance made a positive impact on motivating, recruiting and retaining employees (Farivar and Cameron, 2015), which can also impact employees' attitudes to be committed and find satisfaction in their job (Chang and Cheng, 2014; Shanafelt *et al.*, 2012). This positive impact on performance has also been explained using social exchange and gift exchange theories to enhance employee effort or commitment (Kelliher and Anderson, 2010). An example of this gift is flexible working arrangements which could stimulate better performance (Konrad and Mangel, 2000) and greater organisational attachment due to employer's concerns for their employees' well-being (Casper and Harris, 2008). Furthermore,

for the different types of working arrangements to be effective, employers need to respect employees' other life commitments and create an environment that allows them to engage fully with life outside of work (Kelliher *et al.*, 2017). These are examples of how employers' concern about employees' work-life balance does make a difference in employees' overall performance at work.

2.2.5.5. Work-Life Balance and Spirituality at Work

Religion is often associated with spirituality, which can lead individuals to experience consciousness deeper, enhancing their intuitive abilities (Vaughan, 1989, cited in Agor, 1989). However, spirituality can be approached from various perspectives and contexts, as the meaning could differ between individuals and cultures. Spirituality comes from within (Turner, 1999); for some, it has a religious connotation, and for others, it does not (Neck, 1994). Zohar (2010) defines spirituality as being holistic and interconnected with everything else. Thibault (1991), on the other hand, defined it as something related to one's inner resources, especially one's ultimate concern; the primary value around which all other values are focused; the central philosophy of life which guides conduct and the supernatural and non-material dimensions of human nature. Howard (2002) defined the terms from the faith perspectives of four connections: connection with self, others, nature and environment, and the higher power.

When linking spirituality with the workplace environment, Mahoney and Garci (1999) proposed that spirituality involves a sense of giving and service, community, compassion and forgiveness. While Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) defined it as a framework of organisational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy. Kinjerski (2004) states that it is about

the experience of employees who are passionate about and energised by their work and find meaning and purpose in what they do, as well as feeling that they can express their complete selves at work through feeling connected with those with whom they work. An awareness of spirituality in the workplace can also help one understand employee work behaviour in the working environment, as spirituality can positively affect employees and organisational performance (Neck, 1994). An individual irrespective of workplace or personal life, who practices spirituality tends to exert positive job-related attitudes, work effort and contextual behaviours by enhancing social exchange processes, which in turn maintains balance in work and life (Paul *et al.*, 2015).

Hungelmann *et al.* (1985) stated that the acclimatisation of work-life balance and workplace spirituality predominantly supports the proposition of transpersonal (relationship with God), interpersonal (relationship with friends and family) and intrapersonal (relationship with one's inner self). However, in an organisational context, personal and professional life balance usually refers to shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organisation supports integrating employees' work and family lives (Thompson, Beauvaise and Lyness, 1999). It is where employees experience an interconnectedness among those involved in the work process, which is instigated by genuineness, mutuality and personal generosity caused by a profound feeling of importance in the organisation's work, which results in a tremendous enthusiasm and authoritative magnificence (Marques, Allevato and Holt, 2008). Additionally, Mitroff and Denton (1999) conducted one of the earliest empirical studies of spirituality in the workplace through interviews and questionnaires administered to top executives from businesses across the USA. Their findings revealed that nearly all participants believed in the higher power of God, and half agreed that they felt the effects of spiritual power while at work.

Research has also indicated that workplace spirituality can support positive outcomes for organisations and employees. For example, a review by Karakas (2009) identified three different perspectives on how spirituality benefits employees and supports organisational performance: spirituality enhances employee well-being and quality of life. Secondly, spirituality provides employees with a sense of purpose and meaning at work and lastly, spirituality provides employees with a sense of interconnectedness and community. Later studies conducted by Nur (2003) and East (2005) found that self-described Christian companies exhibited higher levels of satisfaction and found a strong significant relationship between a person's job satisfaction and workplace spirituality.

2.2.5.6. Impact of Technology on Work-Life Balance

One aspect of developing a work culture is work schedules that seem to be changing recently. With the emerging and vigorous usage of technology that employees in specific sectors, for example, in information technology (IT) sectors, work schedule is moving from a standard eight-hour a day to operating twenty-four hours a day for seven days a week (Bharat, 2008). Emerging research in countries like Pakistan and India as examples of the rapid increasing participation of women IT professionals has also emphasized the need to offer work-life balance to the demands of the job. Many employees are required to forgo their weekends with family in order to fulfil their job obligations.

Evidently, technology has blurred the boundaries between employers and employees as employees are accessible virtually at any time of the day, even after working hours, which could mean they do not have to leave their work at home. Instead, work continues to be within reach, even at home. This increasing workload commitment and responsibilities tend to be

inevitable because people spend more time on their phones with their telecommunication applications like Whatsapp and Telegram. Ishaya and Ayman (2008) claimed that employees are pressured to display their commitments to work in a more obvious way due to increasing workloads which could mean that they have to be present at their workplace for longer periods, hence reducing the time available for their families at home.

With the emergence of the digital era, the act of performing work using Information Technology (IT) is no longer limited to specific hours at a specific location. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) makes it possible to be as productive outside the office and during conventional working hours, as inside the office, during working hours. Mobile technology also makes invisible boundaries between two experiential categories of home and work. Towers *et al.* (2006) conducted a mixed-methods using quantitative data survey tool and qualitative in-depth interviews for office workers. They found that mobile technology enables work extension in a way that enables the workers to work outside the office and the regular hours. This provides flexibility to the timing and location of work and makes it easier for the employees to accommodate work and family. The ability to be productive outside traditional office hours also means that work can be extended in the dimension of time, and the fact that it is possible to work outside the office means that work can also be extended in the dimension of space (Towers *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, Duxbury and Higgins (2001) conducted a study of over 33,000 Canadian office workers and indicated that 38% of the sample said such technology had made it easier for them to balance work and family.

However, the use of modern technology can be viewed as a two-sided coin where a positive indication of the Internet and mobile phones could mean that the organisations can constantly communicate with their employees via e-mails, Telegram, Whatsapp, and Text Messages.

Gleick (1999) holds that modern technology is the sine qua non of a move toward speed and that the outcomes of the ability to complete tasks more quickly do not mean an increase in the amount of free time available to an individual; instead, it means there is an increase in the number of tasks to be completed. Such constant communication intensified the work demands of the employees, even when they were already at home. This culture has begun to show the negative side of technology as it also increases the expectations of managers and colleagues alike (Towers *et al.*, 2006) and expects employees to be still available to do work which leads to more significant burnout even though they are already at home. This means that they sacrificed their supposedly 'family time' at home, where presently they are home, but their attention is still on the unfinished task or work given by their bosses. Such usage and forgo of time for these employees to do non-work activities at work and workload at home indicates how individuals perceive their time management to achieve a balance in both spheres.

Another spectrum of impact of technology that was not covered extensively in the previous literature is the usage of breast pumps. Rasmussen and Geraghty (2011) indicated that qualitative research is needed to develop a more nuanced understanding of women's reasons for expressing their milk with a pump. In addition, further studies should also look into how these women strategize in managing the integration of direct feeding with extended use of improved breast pumps. A related study by Mitoulas *et al.* (2002) found that with improved electric pumps, women could express as much milk as their infants would require in a comparable period of breastfeeding. Similarly, a qualitative descriptive study by Buckley (2009) found increased breast pump use among lactation consultants due to improved marketing. She found that society's views of pumps have changed from being a necessity rather than a luxury with the impact of technology (Buckley, 2009). This study will examine how

pumping mothers at work integrates their pumping activity with work responsibilities with the help of advanced technological breast pumps.

From the evidence above, indeed some theorists and research literature have suggested that employees in organisations that embrace and foster spirituality will experience improved productivity (Garcia-Zamor, 2003), increased job satisfaction (Connolly and Myers, 2003) and better performance, as well as more tolerant and less susceptible to stress (Marques, 2005). The discussions of the uses of work-life balance initiatives, the impact of technology, usage of time and the influence of religion at work bring to the following discussion on the idea of legitimate and illegitimate use of time at work. However, the gap exists in reviewing the impact of technological advancement in helping pumping mothers at work to become more productive, despite doing ‘something’ personal during working hours.

2.3. The Relationship between Work and Life

As mentioned earlier, much of the literature that involves work-life balance has been deeply connected and involved with women and family responsibilities (see Clark, 2000; Poelman *et al.*, 2008; Waldfogel, 2012; Barnett *et al.*, 2003; Lakshmi Priya and Neena, 2008). However, work-life balance practices in the workplace increase the flexibility and autonomy of the employee in negotiating their attention, time and presence in the workplace. Work-life balance policies are often introduced and implemented in private and public companies to give women more flexibility to be as competitive as their male counterparts (Applebaum *et al.*, 2006). According to McDonald *et al.* (2005), work-life interfaces are divided into three segments: time management, the inter-role conflict caused by role overload and interference, and care arrangements for dependents. Preferences are shaped by individuals’ values, predispositions, current reality, and objective factors within each individual’s life (McDonald *et al.*, 2005).

One of the most common problems when discussing work-life balance is work-life conflict. Existing research examined the extent to which conflict or interference may arise between the demands of work and life domains and how one domain may be a source of enrichment to the other (Kelliher *et al.*, 2018). For example, a study by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) looked at seminal work on the sources of conflict between work and family roles when employees' home activities and commitments interfere with their work responsibilities. Sav (2016) examined the role of religion within the concept of work-life conflict, work-life facilitation and work-life balance using survey questionnaires, face-to-face and online, for 301 Australian Muslim men. He found that religiosity can benefit work-life balance, rather than competing with work and non-work roles for time and energy. This study, however, did not focus on non-work roles, for example, life, although Islamic religiosity may be best measured by qualitative research, which generally could provide more rich and in-depth insights and perspectives of respondents. Furthermore, Sav, Sebar and Harris (2010) proposed that religiosity can be negatively associated with work-life conflict, suggesting the possibility of rewarding and enriching religious roles rather than conflicting.

Individuals' social roles outside work help shape their everyday lives. The multiple roles that women employees play can positively and negatively impact oneself. A role is defined as a set of expectations of a person occupying a particular structural position as manager, father or daughter (Katz & Khan, 1978). Workplace settings allow employees to apply for their roles as set by the job requirements. "Gender role attitude is likely to be a significant determinant of allocation decisions, such that people with more traditional gender role attitudes allocate their resources in ways that fulfil the traditional gender assignments of women to homemaking tasks and men to income-generating tasks" (Konrad, 2013, p. 381).

Evidently, women have made the adjustments necessary to accommodate work and family responsibilities (Papalexandris and Kramar, 1997) as anticipated in a society where men are the breadwinners and women are the natural homemakers. Nevertheless, they (the women) continue to do most of the housework and childcare and bear the stress and conflict associated with combining employment and family responsibilities (Keith and Schaeffer, 1980; Pleck *et al.*, 1980; Wolcott, 1991). Hence, supportive organisational cultures and work-life flexibility practices can help employees manage the interface between paid work and other life domains (Konrad, 2013), especially when employees have to put on multiple roles in performing their tasks at work and home.

The roles these individuals adopted from self-defined boundaries are stated by Frone (2003). In turn, these roles serve to create behavioural (how an individual behaves), relational (with whom an individual interacts), affective (how an individual feels), spatial (an individual's physical local) and temporal (how an individual uses time) boundaries. Work and non-work roles that individuals adopt provide both meaning and structure. Hence the balance or imbalance shaped by these social roles could impact the working and personal lives of employees at work and at home. The multiple roles that an individual assumes do not necessarily imply an outcome of role conflict. Instead, role transitions have both positive and negative effects (Sieber, 1974). Early organisational behaviour scholars have argued that to assess the impact of multiple roles on an individual accurately, it is crucial to consider both the negative and positive outcomes such as strain, burnout and stress as well as satisfaction and rewards, respectively (Sieber, 1974). It shows that employees who swap or substitute one role for another need to consider multiple roles' negative and positive impacts on their work productivity and relationships. Ezra and Deckman (1996) found that organisational policies

and supervisor understanding of family duties are positively linked to job satisfaction and work and family balance. Based on these arguments, other concepts that debated the relationship between work and life are explained in the next sub-theme.

2.3.1. Boundaries at Work

This sub-section explores three approaches to theories relating to boundaries at work, namely Clark's (2000) border theory, Ashforth *et al.*'s (2000) boundary theory, and Gatrell's (2010) maternal body. It then proceeds with examining other related studies done on the concept.

2.3.1.1. Border Theory

Clark (2000) introduced the concept of work-family border theory based on the problem of finding the balance between work and family. She defined the word 'balance' as satisfaction and good functioning at work and home with a minimum role conflict. She indicated that various countries have different approaches to work-life balance because people are cross-borders. This means that they make frequent adjustments to their focus, goals, and interpersonal style to meet the demands of work and family. Border theory (Clark, 2000) indicates the relationship between border crossers and others at home and work, influencing their work-life balance. Though many aspects of work and home are difficult to alter, individuals can shape the nature of the work and home domains and the borders and bridges between them to create the desired balance (Clark, 2000, p. 751).

One of the central concepts of border theory is where the lines of demarcation between domains are defined to identify the point at which dominant-relevant behaviour begins or ends. According to Clark (2000), these borders are physical, temporal and psychological. The physical border, such as the walls of a workplace or the walls at home, defines where domain-relevant behaviour occurs. Creating such a physical border identifies a separation of roles and

behaviours the employees perform. Temporal border, on the other hand, includes examples like set working hours, which indicate and separate when work is done from when family responsibilities take over. Individuals may use physical and temporal borders to determine the rules that make up psychological borders. Psychological borders are rules individuals create when thinking patterns, behaviour patterns, and emotions are appropriate for one domain but not another (Clark, 2000). According to Lewin, psychological borders are largely self-created (Rychlak, 1981), whereby Weick (1979) used the word 'enactment' to describe how psychological borders are created.

Clark's (2000) border theory also involves the idea of permeability that characterised the borders, which is the degree to which elements from other domains may enter (Beach, 1989; Hall and Richter, 1988; Piotrowski, 1978). An example of this is where an individual may have an office at home whose physical doors and walls create a sort of border around his or her work, and permeations are where interruptions occur to remind the person of other important domains such as life. Such invasion can be a negative or positive spillover. Evans and Bartolome (1980) highlight that psychological negative spillover is commonly documented in research findings. Although less commonly identified, positive spillover can create creativity and lead to the application of skills learnt at work at home, which in turn can increase harmony (Clark, 2000).

Another characteristic of a border theory introduced by Clark (2000) is the ability for individuals to work in any location they choose when the physical border is flexible, which means that the individual is not confined between the walls of a workplace or a home. When the psychological border is flexible, an individual can think about work at home and vice versa, and emotions flow between domains more quickly. Furthermore, psychological blending can

also occur when a person uses their personal and family experience in their work or uses their work experience to enrich their home life.

2.3.1.2. Boundary Theory

Ashforth *et al.* (2000) introduced boundary theory which relates to how individuals manage the boundaries between work and life and how this is influenced by perceived relationships between different roles. They stated that where roles are perceived as mutually exclusive, individuals engage in segmentation, whilst where these roles are perceived as overlapping, they engage in integration. According to this theory, role transitions refer to psychological and/or behavioural switches employees make between the work role and the home role to juggle their work and home responsibilities. Boundary theory also discusses how role transitions can either reduce or enhance work and home conflicts which depends on these transitions. According to them, some role transitions may facilitate combining work and home roles, such as school runs, and other roles, such as starting work again in the evening, may enhance conflict. Staines' (1980) spillover theory also found that emotions and behaviours in one sphere would carry over to the other despite physical and temporal boundaries between work and family. Furthermore, Hall and Richter (1988) stated that when boundaries between work and home are less clear, employees have a more difficult time negotiating with family and employers about when and where work and home responsibilities are carried out.

A study by Walseth (2006) showed that there are differences between different ethnic identities when it comes to their ability to maintain their boundaries. However, her study showed a connection between young Muslim women's identity to their sports and physical activity involvement. She found that young women engaged in sports are perceived as challenging the boundaries of their ethnic identities. Her study also found that "young women who positioned

themselves clearly within the framework of their ethnic identities are not interested in sport because doing sport is not seen as a respectable femininity” (Walseth, 2006, p.75). However, her study did not discuss how these young women negotiated their identities while maintaining their boundaries. In relation to what this study entails, an invisible boundary that Muslim women create does not exclude themselves being different to describe them as Muslims and a sportswoman or an employee. The Muslim women practice modesty by creating a physical boundary through the panels or a piece of board to separate activities between Muslim men and women, or an invisible boundary in the form of a ‘veil’ or headscarf to cover their hair and neck. Similarly, these women prefer to be ‘invisible’ when breastfeeding and expressing milk at work by using a ‘veil’ or a nursing cover covering their upper body parts. As Muslim employees also include their daily obligatory prayers as ‘part’ of work activities, these women do not separate their identities between being a Muslim and an employee at work.

Moreover, Essers and Benschop (2009) conducted narrative studies of four businesswomen of Moroccan and Turkish origin and came up with the terms ‘identity work’ and ‘boundary work’. The first refers to people engaged in farming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness (see Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p. 1165). While the latter refers to the strategies to cultivate differences between groups, for example, processes of inclusion and exclusion (Bartkowski and Read, 2003). Through this study, they found that boundary work in the context of migrant Muslim businesswomen entails strategies in which Islam is used as a basis for distinction, stratification and demarcation to facilitate entrepreneurship. For example, by the hijab she wore, one of the women symbolically creates a boundary between her male and female clients to conform to gendered norms without jeopardizing her business (p.419).

To date, boundary theory has focused on managing the relationship between work and family, and a call for a broader range of boundaries should be given attention in future research (Kelliher *et al.*, 2018). Further, interference and enrichment might occur between jobs and work and non-work. Therefore, borders and boundaries theories should include the intersection between work and a broader range of non-work activities to be included such transition between work and activities such as hobbies, religious commitments and volunteering (Kelliher *et al.*, 2018).

In its entirety, borders and boundaries theories should include the intersection between work and a broader range of non-work activities, for example, hobbies or religious commitments (Kelliher *et al.*, 2017), and further research on the potential for integration and how this varies across different non-work life activities should focus in response to understanding the complex nature of work and life. Further research on the potential of integration and how this varies across different non-work life activities are further analysed below, which leads to our next point of discussion: the idea of maternal body and breastfeeding, specifically on professional women who just came back from their maternity leave.

2.4. Maternal Body and Breastfeeding

When it comes to linking women in employment with work-life balance, literature often focuses on work-life balance provisions provided by organisations, such as maternity leave (Applebaum *et al.*, 2006; Barrett and Mayson, 2008), paternity and paternal leave (Ray *et al.*, 2010; Anxo and Boulin, 2006; Pocock *et al.*, 2013), flexible working arrangements (Lewis, 2000; Galinsky and Bond, 1998; Applebaum *et al.*, 2006) and child care subsidies (Applebaum and Golden, 2002; Galinsky and Swanberg, 2000; Hennig *et al.*, 2012). However, a few, if none, specifically discuss maternity leave and how it impacts the work-life balance. In addition,

when women in employment become pregnant, they usually have different experiences at work with their changing maternal body and hormones that could affect how they do their work compared to their non-pregnant colleagues (Gatrell, 2010; Buzznell and Liu, 2007). These are supported by Hopfl and Hornby Atkinson (2000) and Warren and Brewis (2004) with the term ‘leaky bodies’ whereby pregnant women are often associated with hormonal changes, which threaten to spill over into workplace settings in the form of unpredictable emotional behaviour.

Moreover, Acker (1990, p.152) asserted that it is ‘women’s bodies – their ability to procreate and their pregnancy, breastfeeding and childcare’ which invoke organisational tendencies to ‘exclude’ women. Drawing from this notion, Gatrell (2013) introduced the concept of maternal body by studying 27 professional women in the UK. She argued that one of the causes of negative consequences in the materiality of women’s maternal bodies is in the context of paid work. Her study also argued that organisational commitment to mothers is reduced when their maternity becomes visible through the spectacle of their pregnant bodies. Her findings showed that 22 women felt marginalised at work, experiencing borders between maternity and organisation as unmalleable. These women also felt that they were primarily excluded from opportunities to advance in their careers upon returning to work. In contrast, 5 of the women treated borders between reproduction and organisation as more fluid by setting a high value on their skills, making them irreplaceable and vital to the organisation, even when they were on maternity leave. This supports her statement that mothers who continue to work full-time are less likely to experience barriers to career progress (Gatrell, 2016).

Gatrell *et al.* (2017) further explored in one study how judgements about women’s performance may be distorted by the organisational focus on maternal bodies, which are perceived at work as fragile, uncontrolled, and taboo (Douglas, 1966, 2002; see also Acker, 1990; Hopfl and

Atkinson, 2000). This is drawn from Acker's observation that women's bodies may be unwelcome at work due to employer fears that motherhood would potentially, materially 'intrude upon and disrupt the ideal functioning of the organisation' (Acker, 1990). In sum, being pregnant at work and visible post-pregnancy bodies are judged to be incompetent due to the disruptions that the maternal body is associated with 'leaky' and 'unstable emotions'.

2.4.1. Interrelations between Pregnant Body and Employment

The core concept of the maternal body as a term defined by Gatrell (2010) includes pregnancy and new motherhood. In her research, she evaluated the interrelations between the pregnant body and employment from three disciplinary perspectives: management and behavioural; health-related and cultural/feminist; and feminist, sociological and cultural theories. The first perspective indicated that employers' anxieties about pregnant women's commitment to employment run very deep as pregnant and post-birth bodies are apparent at work, resulting in lowered employer commitment towards expectant and new mothers (Acker, 2003). EOC (2005) suggests that pregnant women in managerial roles are especially vulnerable to such unfair treatment, terming it "unfair treatment" of employed women as others usually perceive them as less competent than non-pregnant women. Halpert *et al.* (1993) termed this as 'discounting of women's abilities', which can lead to the exclusion of pregnant employees from influential team projects as other workers believe pregnancy reduces productivity and lowers the whole group's performance.

Research by Corse (1990) indicated that their colleagues evaluate the workplace effectiveness of pregnant managers based on their bodies rather than the nature of their performance. This suggests that assessors imagined pregnancy to reduce women's intellectual and managerial competencies and thereby lessen their management capability compared to non-pregnant

workers. However, this study yielded no material evidence to substantiate these views. Likewise, Geutal and Taylor (1991) and Halpert *et al.* (2003) believed that pregnancy to be an indicator of lowered performance, but the data with which assessors were presented did not bear this out. Additionally, Halpert *et al.* (1993) evaluated women's performance to be seen to have plummeted after pregnancy, yet the study yielded no material evidence to substantiate these views and concluded as unfounded.

On the other hand, Lyness *et al.* (1999) have observed how suppositions regarding the low work orientation of pregnant employees are unsupported by evidence showing that fears about corporate costs intensify mainly employers' perceptions about these pregnant women's unreliability. UK EOC has also found that employers connect pregnancy with illness, vulnerability, poor performance and workplace absence (EOC, 2005). In addition, employers are seen to be fearful of the potential for pregnant bodies to 'leak', change shape and produce liquids such as tears, blood and breastmilk, all of which threaten to disrupt workplace routine (Gatrell, 2011). For such claims, women often felt pressure to hide their changing bodies at work (p.103).

Witz (2000) conducted a study that treats maternal bodies as sites of negotiation, defined through social and cultural attitudes and practices. Moreover, Annandale and Clark (1996) indicated that in the context of maternal bodies as culturally defined, their study acknowledged the benefits of a post-structural approach in challenging workplace norms where mothers are commonly associated with corporeality, mutability, leakage and abjection, but rarely with sociality, rationality and intellect (Ashcraft, 1999; Hopfl and Hornby-Atkinson, 2000). Hence, this study also aims to explore how women interpret and negotiate the position of their maternal bodies at work.

Other studies that demonstrated employers' reduced commitment toward the careers of women with infant children have been well documented within organisational psychology (Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Desmarais and Alksnis, 2005; Eagly and Karau, 2002) and management studies (Acker, 2003; Blair-Loy, 2003; Gatrell, 2005, 2008; Pringle, 1998, Williams, 1999). Gatrell *et al.* (2017) also found that judgements regarding the capabilities of women managers may be based on their maternal bodies rather than their competencies, which caused a serious barrier to women's career advancement in senior management or professional capacity. All the research mentioned above demonstrated how women's career progress might stall once they become mothers, primarily if they work in managerial or professional roles.

A feminist perspective that examines women's employment has found that non-pregnant women's body already stands out from what Hausman (2004, p.276) terms as the 'norms of male embodiment'; what more of the visible body of a pregnant woman who may feel out of place at work (Gatrell, 2008; Longhurst, 2001, p.62). The challenges that pregnant women at work face prove how much unfair treatment is being placed upon them. Despite having to deal with nausea, exhaustion and other pregnancy symptoms, these women were still determined to remain at work (Buzzanell and Liu, 2007; Gatrell, forthcoming; Haynes, 2008a; Longhurst, 2001; Warren and Brewis, 2004) for fear that sickness absence could damage their reputation as reliable and competent workers (Gatrell, 2010). Thus, this study aims to contest this statement by providing a different sample background which I hope can contribute to the increasing literature on the maternal body and work-life balance.

2.4.2. (Breastfeeding) Adjustment Arrangements at Work

Evidence from the literature state that women returning to work post-pregnancy suffer emotional and psychological mistreatment, especially those who want to continue to breastfeed their children exclusively but lack the support from their organisations (see Witters-Green, 2003; Hopfl, 2000; Longhurst, 2001; Gatrell, 2008; and Hausman, 2004). Longhurst (2008) and Wainwright *et al.* (2011) indicated that the experience of motherhood remains undertheorized because the extant idea of ‘body work’ is too broad to capture the intensive bodywork undertaken by women coping simultaneously with the conflicting demands of maternity. Both nurture the maternal and infant body and employment (Shilling, 2008). Maternal lived experience requires further reflection because motherhood remains complicated within some ‘malestream’ sociologies of the body (Tyler, 2000).

Haviland *et al.* (2015) identified three factors of concern for lactating mothers returning to work. These include lack of availability of a private space to pump breastmilk, supervisor and co-worker concern about reduced work time and interrupted productivity of the lactating mother, and co-worker discomfort and resentment about pumping breastmilk in the workplace, which can be disruptive to the work environment (Kozhimannil *et al.*, 2016; Nguyen and Hawkins, 2013). In contrast, there was a lack of research about these lactating mothers expressing their breastmilk at their desks without needing a private space. It makes them as productive as their co-workers because they do not have to leave their working area to pump.

Jantzer (2017) used a self-report survey design from 87 women in a rural community sample who indicated that they had pumped at work or anticipated needing to pump in the future. Their study found that providing workplace breastfeeding support and adequate time for expressing predicted work enhancement of personal life, improving job satisfaction. Gatrell (2016) also stated that workplace facilitation of breastfeeding could enhance the well-being of mothers

who seek to continue nursing on their return to work following maternity leave. The negotiation of metaphorical borders, as developed by Clark (2000), between women's 'private world of reproduction' (Ashforth *et al.*, 2000) and the more public contexts of their organisations extends the theoretical idea of 'body work' while also undertaking what Shilling (2008) terms 'presentational' body work on maternal self in order to comply with workplace norms. These studies indicate that upon returning to work, maternal mothers have to arrange and adjust their work activities to fit their non-work activities.

Zhuang *et al.* (2018) assessed the impact of co-worker support on lactating mothers' breastfeeding self-efficacy after maternity leave through a cross-sectional survey of 1000 working adults. They found that 1 out of 4 co-workers showed moderate to strong stigma against lactating mothers, stating that the breaks these mothers take to pump are considered unfair and even showed less intention to help new mothers. Lactating women are likely to encounter disapproving co-workers who may discourage them from continuing to breastfeed (Zhuang *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, Repetti (1987) studied working women and found that husbands' lack of support and approval for their wives' employment led to higher family conflict. This brings to the notion of the importance of receiving support for lactating mothers at work that could give them the boost to continue to breastfeed after coming back from their maternity leave, as stated by a survey conducted by Galinsky and Stein (1990) in 2000 women returning to work following childbirth and found that supportive supervisors and supportive spouses were equally crucial to the women in lowering stress during this transition.

Looking at such result and comparing it to the situation in Brunei, whereby breastfeeding is highly recommended and the government support this agenda nationally, more organisations are opening up empty (office) spaces to cater to breastfeeding mothers at work, on top of the

already existing prayer rooms provided for the use and benefit of the Muslim employees. Alhaji *et al.* (2017) conducted a sole study on breastfeeding activities in Brunei to compare the effects of exclusive breastfeeding activities before and after the extension of paid maternity leave between employed and nonworking mothers. They used a cross-sectional review of feeding records for infants born in 2010 (before the amended maternity leave) and 2013 (after the amended maternity leave) and found that exclusive breastfeeding prevalence at six months postpartum increased from 29% in 2010 to 41% in 2013. More interestingly, the most significant increases were seen among employed mothers, indicating the necessity further to understand the needs of maternally employed mothers at work. Since this is initial research being done in Brunei that has a link with maternity leave and breastfeeding through a cross-sectional review of feeding records only, my study aims to further excavate the qualitative side of the coin by sampling professional women who are experiencing maternally employed bodies and lactating activities at work. This is where this research contributes to the currently existing literature about women in management and their experiences balancing their work and life, as well as fulfilling their roles as mothers, employees, wives, and fellow Muslim individuals.

In a nutshell, the evidence put forward by previous studies indicates that a range of non-work activities such as breastfeeding or expressing milk at work still requires more understanding to support the idea of achieving happy, committed and supportive employees and the environment through work-life balance initiatives. There is still a need to understand how maternal professional women adjust their non-work activities around their working time. These adjustments should also be observed from the perspectives of supporting parties such as family, colleagues and organisations and how they constrict or tolerate these non-work activities in achieving a balance in work and life. Research should also consider being carried out to prove

that these non-work activities can be considered legitimate activities to be carried out at work without negatively affecting the employees and the organisations as a whole.

2.4.3. Breastfeeding and Expressing Milk at Work for Maternal Professional Women

When discussing maternal bodies and professional women, the following related issue of concern is breastfeeding or pumping milk at work. Much of the literature is written from a health and feminist perspective (see Boswell-Penc and Boyer, 2007). However, there has been a shift within the management studies from psychological research since 2000 on the maternal body's perceptions that brings towards socio-cultural studies on the materiality of the maternal body (Gatrell, 2016). Boswell-Penc and Boyer (2007) observed that only 10% of employed mothers in the USA continue breastfeeding six months after birth, as opposed to 30% of stay-at-home-mothers. Apart from that, many employed mothers who breastfed successfully tend to give up breastfeeding upon returning to work after maternity leave due to the prospects of managing their lactating bodies in the workplace (Gatrell, 2011). Based on the research by Gatrell (2011), it was viewed that when employed women decided to breastfeed or pump at work, the obligation to make space and time for this activity falls on the employees rather than the employers. Other studies by Boswell-Penc and Boyer (2007), Giles (2004) and Hausman (2004) indicated that few employers offer breastfeeding or feeding breaks and suitable space for breastfeeding infants or expressing milk. Hausman (2004) and Hopfl (2000) also focused on problems for women in integrating the post-childbirth body into the workplace. This is an example of the negotiation of time and boundaries explained earlier.

To understand the life of breastfeeding mothers at work, one study by Valizadeh *et al.* (2017) conducted in-depth and semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis of 12 Iranian breastfeeding and employed mothers to understand responsibilities that lead to health concerns.

They came up with two themes that emerged from the findings: working and mothering alone and facing health concerns. Their subthemes for the first theme include feeling guilty, an unsupportive spouse and an unsupportive environment. Similar findings are found in the study conducted by Zhuang *et al.* (2018) through a cross-sectional survey of 1,000 working adults to assess the effects of perception of fairness, co-workers' support for breastfeeding colleagues and ick response on willingness to help mothers needing breaks to pump breastmilk at work. They found that female co-worker support was a significant factor in influencing lactating mothers' decision to continue breastfeeding after returning to work. However, this study did not indicate whether the female co-worker was a breastfeeding mother since they used the quantitative method and interpreted the outcome. Nevertheless, the result of this study suggested that while most co-workers are generally supportive, lactating women are likely to encounter disapproving co-workers who may discourage them from continuing to breastfeed (Zhuang *et al.*, 2018).

The stigma attached to breastfeeding at work has been shown to lead to a devaluation of the contribution of a co-worker by conveying verbal and nonverbal disapproval towards them, or ostracising them from social contact are usually directed towards breastfeeding women in the form of being labelled as unprofessional, standing in the way of team productivity, and even selfish for wanting to continue to breastfeed (Zhuang *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, a large body of research has established the negative impact of stigma on the duration of breastfeeding (Acker, 2009; Spitzmueller *et al.*, 2016; Van Alphen *et al.*, 2012) and that even though these women pump their breastmilk in private, they were still deemed as being unprofessional. Furthermore, a study by Burns *et al.* (2022) found that breastfeeding obstacles exist even when gender-inclusive policies appear to support women. Their study concluded that the level of workplace apathy was surprising, especially in female-dominated professions such as teaching,

nursing and midwifery. Similarly, Witters-Green (2003) found why employers resist providing this flexibility and feeding breaks by expressing concerns that breastfeeding at work is considered inappropriate because it might embarrass other employees or clients, which can cause them to feel 'discomfited'. Other studies by Hopfl (2000), Longhurst (2001) and Gatrell (2008) suggested that organisational antipathy to breastfeeding is due to employers' deep-seated fears about women's bodies which they regard as unreliable and unpredictable as opposed to the bodies of men and non-mothers.

Evidence from the literature stated that women returning to work post-pregnancy suffer emotional and psychological mistreatment, especially those who want to continue breastfeeding their children exclusively but lack support from their organisations. Warren and Brewis (2004) and Shilling (2008) discussed the notion of disgust among colleagues towards pumping mothers because the notion was associated with the theoretical concept of abjection, in which bodily fluids are seen to threaten social norms (Kristeva, 1982). Studies by Joshi *et al.* (2015) and Little *et al.* (2015) stated that employers and co-workers are known to resent practical disturbances to everyday work routines should mothers seek, for example, to access flexible working or time away to pump. Cockburn (2002, p. 187) also asserted that organisational hostility towards senior pregnant or breastfeeding women occurs because their bodies intersect the line between home and work, bringing into organisations the 'uninvited' spectre of the child: 'an unwelcome domestic odour; or even 'a... whiff of the nursery'.

Numerous studies demonstrated that workplace support in the form of an accommodative break policy for pumping breastmilk and a family-friendly organisational climate contributes to the duration of breastfeeding for women returning to work after maternity leave (Atabay *et al.*, 2014; Chow *et al.*, 2011; Seijts, 2002; Seijts and Yip, 2008; Tsai, 2014). A lack of workplace

support directly impacts breastfeeding duration, and this is an important gender equity consideration in the workplace (Vilar-Compte *et al.* (2021). This support is needed especially for working women who have returned to work after taking their maternity leave and aiming to continue breastfeeding their child.

Additionally, there is also a substantial body of research on the impact of co-worker support for lactating mothers that can reduce emotional exhaustion and work burnout, which often results in a more positive work-life balance (Baeriswyl *et al.*, 2017; Jantzer *et al.*, 2017, Smith *et al.*, 2008, Thoits, 2011). For example, Killien (2005), McGovern *et al.* (2007) and Wang and Tsai (2014) reported improved work-life balance among working mothers who had network support. Furthermore, Jantzer *et al.* (2017) conducted a quantitative online survey that examined the relationships between workplace breastfeeding support, job satisfaction and the work-life interface. Their findings supported that workplace breastfeeding support indirectly improves job satisfaction by increasing work enhancement of personal life, which then increases job satisfaction. Due to this, there is a pressing need to provide family-friendly policies so women would thrive more, increase their performance, and minimise their guilt (Hofmeyr and Mzobe, 2012).

Interestingly, this study further revealed that the support necessary for women to advance in the workplace is not restricted to male colleagues and employers but also extends to the support of husbands and partners, confirming that social, cultural and gender stereotypes which prevail in the home environment may also affect the work environment (Cohen *et al.*, 2016). Contrasting other studies that support the idea of a supportive working environment contributing to the positive well-being of lactating mothers (see Killien, 2005; McGovern *et al.*, 2007, Wang and Tsai, 2014), Valizadeh *et al.* (2017) highlighted the opposite. They

conducted a qualitative study and found that a support system for breastfeeding mothers within the family and workplace was crucial. Their finding was based on the evidence that the breastfeeding mothers experienced extreme physical and emotional stress as a result of a lack of support from family and in the work environment. Furthermore, unsupportive spouses and employers were repeatedly mentioned in the interviews as mothers reportedly experienced stress and exhaustion from breastfeeding and working for financial gain (Valizadeh *et al.*, 2017). However, as the approach to this study is quite similar to mine, to my best knowledge, there are no Bruneian studies done to focus on the connection between maternity leave and professional women's lived experience of work-life balance, whereby the findings tend to be the opposite of the study piloted by Valizadeh *et al.* (2017) which was conducted in the Islamic country of Iran.

Similarly, Zhuang *et al.* (2018)'s study indicated that they did not measure other sources of support for lactating women outside of the workplace, such as from their significant other, friends, parents, and online, which might also contribute to the duration of breastfeeding. Hence, with all the recent research and findings, little attention has been paid to care given to children by other individuals, such as siblings, grandparents, relatives, family friends or even maids or helpers, as most studies have focused on parents or mothers only. Looking at the context and culture of a close-knit family in Brunei, this research also aims to find out the impact of the support of these extended family members in ensuring that the participants can achieve a balance in their work and life.

The above research has been extensively gathered and analysed from the perspective of the western world. The results from these studies show that workplace generated overt and subtle barriers to breastfeeding, forcing women to stop earlier than they intended or creating ongoing

worry about maintaining breastmilk supply (Burns *et al.*, 2022). However, interestingly, in the context of South East Asia, particularly Brunei, pregnancy and the employed maternal body are highly celebrated at work. By looking at such a result and comparing it to the Brunei situation, breastfeeding is highly recommended. The government support this agenda nationally (as will be explained in Chapter 4), and more organisations are opening up empty (office) spaces to cater to breastfeeding mothers at work, on top of the already existing prayer rooms provided for the use and benefit of the Muslim employees. This is where this research contributes to the currently existing literature about women in management and their experiences balancing their work and life, as well as fulfilling their roles. Through these findings, I look into the work-life balance experiences of professional women returning to work after maternity leave and how they integrate their non-work life activities at work, particularly pumping breastmilk.

2.5. Gaps Identification and Research Questions

Analysis of the literature has shown that the idea of work-life balance has been widely discussed in various aspects of management, psychological and social contexts. However, the literature review reveals that the link between work-life balance, maternity leave, and maternal bodies, particularly pumping at work, has been underexplored in the management literature. In addition, a majority-Muslim country as a contextual background for supporting breastfeeding has not been addressed. Therefore, aiming to understand how professional women view the idea of work-life balance, particularly in understanding what happens after these women return to work post-maternity leave, would open up a more interesting addition to the existing theories and literature.

To fill the gaps, this study will aim to answer the research questions: *how do professional women in Brunei perceive the idea of work-life balance and maternal bodies?* In addition to this main research question, two research sub-questions will also be addressed:

1. How do these professional women portray their work-life balance and work experiences post-maternity leave?
2. What facilitates or constraints these professional women returning to work post-maternity leave?

The next chapter examines the methods used to collect and analyse the data.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will present the methods I used to collect and analyse the data. Firstly, I want to briefly describe the ontological and epistemological stance that will form this study's research strategy and method (Saunders *et al.* 2012). Then, I will describe the research strategy and its justification, which is phenomenology. Next, I will discuss the chosen organisations, getting access and selecting participants. Then, I will include a sub-topic of 'my big break' that changed my entire study plan before discussing the data collection and analysis methods. Finally, the chapter will end with a discussion of ethical considerations taken for this research.

I would like to provide a guided tour of my research journey, pointing out life-changing decisions that I had to make, opportunities that presented themselves, either by chance or by good networking skills I acquired along the way, as well as the challenges that I encountered and overcame. I, therefore, see this chapter as a reflexive review of the research design, taking into the context of myself as the researcher, student, mother, professional woman and a cancer survivor, which all add to the formula of the collection, and interpretation and construction of the empirical materials. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic also halted my study and analysis as I had to adapt to the 'new norm' of working from home.

3.2. Ontological and Epistemological Framework of the Study

Qualitative research rarely follows a strict and rigid plan. Instead, it supports inquiry into selected issues in great depth with careful attention to detail and allows flexibility in collecting and analysing data (Oke, 2006; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). The approach and methods used in the study are developed explicitly with an interpretivist methodology research design

focusing on capturing the individual's subjective experience and personal meaning in everyday life (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Moreover, qualitative research tends to be led by non-probability sampling (Berg, 2007), where in this case, the participants are not generally seen to be representative of a larger population in the same way as quantitative studies. However, the responses given are highly individualistic and specific to the given situation and social context, though this does not mean that they are not seen in terms of their population membership (Ward, 2009). Furthermore, the choice and appropriateness of the qualitative research method as the methodological design for this research aligns with Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008). They claim that researchers are attracted to research problems that are compatible with understanding the world around them and that they tend to choose and defend the methodology they are more familiar with on the platform of their prior knowledge.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the research question aims to understand the professional women's work experiences and attitudes towards their post-maternity leave and work-life balance. Through this study, I also want to investigate how these professional women perceive their breastfeeding and pumping experiences at work after maternity leave.

I, therefore adopted a phenomenological method to explore the meaning and focus on the description of the situation. In this context, the researcher is a vital component in the research design and is reflexively engaged in the data collection process (Wimpenny and Glass, 2000). This requires the researcher to master a questioning approach during the interviews to understand and identify that sense of meaning (Smith and Osborn, 2008). Smith *et al.* (2009) point out that in the context of the phenomenological interest in personal experience, the purpose of questioning is not to judge, challenge, or investigate points of suspicion but rather to gently inquire and clarify in order to facilitate 'expansive, honest and reflective accounts' in

order to explore greater depth and meaning (Pringle *et al.*, 2011, p. 23). For this study, I pay closer attention to phenomenology as the philosophical framework and discuss in-depth the approach that has been undertaken to conduct this study.

The notion of lived experience in phenomenology makes it distinct from other types of qualitative research, as phenomenologists are committed to understanding what participants' experiences in the world are like and should be examined as it occurs on their terms (Smith *et al.*, 2009a). A phenomenology approach usually describes or interprets participants' experiences, describing 'the characteristics and structure of the phenomenon' under study (Tesch, 1991, p. 22). Researchers undertaking qualitative research, therefore, become the research instrument (Janesick, 2000). As the context of participants' lives or work affects their behaviour, researchers have to realise that the participants are grounded in their history and temporality, be sensitive to the research context, and immerse themselves in the setting and situation. The whole context of participants' lives includes the condition in which the researchers gather the data, the locality, the time and history as these events and actions are studied as they occur daily, 'real life' settings. Respecting the context and culture in which the study takes place is vital as when researchers understand the context, they can locate the actions and perceptions of individuals and grasp the meanings they communicate. In a broader sense, the context includes the economic, political and cultural framework.

For this study, I position myself in the role of an interpretive observer during the interview sessions who take on the special responsibility of transforming information provided by participants as they explore and elucidate a particular phenomenon. As Willig (2008) stated that researchers are as central as observations made during analysis as they "are necessarily the product of interpretation" (p.97). I immersed myself in the setting of the participant's 'real'

world by using the strategies of observing, questioning and listening as I took a reflective stance in order to understand the nuances of my own experiences of the phenomenon in order to appreciate the subtleties of being a person experiencing the phenomenon in a specific context (O'Brien, 2003). It does question who I am as a researcher, both professionally and personally, with a concomitant set of experiences and contexts that inform my thinking and position as a researcher, which requires me to "interrogate [as] something from the heart of our existence" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 43) as a crucial part to the research process. I could communicate and put the participants at ease (Streubert Speziale and Rinaldi Carpenter, 2003), which helped me collect deep and meaningful data. Haynes (2006) stated that "in qualitative research, we cannot separate reason from emotion. We are embedded subjectively in our work whether we like it or not, and, I would argue, should be explicit in acknowledging it" (p. 218). This can provide an in-depth study of a culture that includes behaviour, interactions, language and artefacts to understand another way of life from the native point of view by focusing on ordinary, everyday behaviour (Bloor and Wood, 2006). The culture does not just consist of the physical environment but also particular ideologies, values, and ways of thinking of its members, which need sensitivity from the researchers to describe or interpret what they observe and hear. As human beings are influenced by their experiences, thus qualitative methods encompass processes and changes over time in the culture under study.

This study is trying to answer the question about an experience using questions of 'what', 'why it happened' and 'how does it' using the interview method. Since I chose to employ a phenomenological technique, I observed the participants during the interview sessions. The main reason for using this method is that it is best suited to address the topic under study. In addition, using a qualitative method like phenomenology provides data such as work-life balance, breastfeeding and pumping, which can be explored further with complex, unclear,

changing, and subtle meanings. Since most work-life balance literature is written from the western perspective, this study focuses on the complex and subtle processes of work-life balance in Muslim culture.

In focusing on the subjective experience of the influence of maternity leave provision on work-life balance on selected professional women, a 'less is more' approach is considered appropriate (Reid *et al.*, 2005, p. 22) because a smaller sample size allows for a thick description and in-depth analysis (Smith, 2004; Smith and Osbon, 2008). Tracy (2012) also stated that sample size in qualitative research is not as critically important as in quantitative research. These participants came from the same cultural background as myself, so that I could understand them, and the interview sessions have helped shape and influence the understanding of their point of view. The organisations I chose comprised different participants to represent the organisational cultures they embedded in. The private and public organisations also contributed to understanding if they impacted the overall 'acceptance' and 'implementation' of work-life balance through the context of maternal bodies.

Being reflexive also allowed me as the researcher to think about how my thinking came to be, how a pre-existing understanding is constantly revised in the light of new understandings and how this, in turn, affects my research. Finally, I focused on participants' accounts and allowed the themes to emerge inductively, even though prior to the interviews, I have prepared and identified themes through supposition or pre-conceived notions from personal experience or literature.

3.3. Why Organisations in Brunei?

Morse and Field (1996) indicated that the participants selected in qualitative research must be appropriate and adequate for the study. Even though work-life balance is a common idea and concept for people who work in many different fields globally, for organisations in Brunei, this term is considered relatively new, and the concept is seldom used in the working environment. The concept of work-life balance is brought into the country (Brunei) via the western literature and ideologies that link with finding a balance between families and work.

I considered numerous possible organisations that may provide me with meaningful feedback in the field of my study before deciding on the four organisations. I also considered how easy or difficult it is to gain access to organisations in Brunei. Particularly the public sector, because organisations in Brunei, particularly the public sector, are either 'closed', 'private', or 'confidential,' which means that engaging in research activities or volunteering for research studies is not a common attribute of the public sector or its employees. Furthermore, they are not used to having an 'outsider' look at how they do things and manage people. I also had a previous experience in conducting a data collection sample during my Master's degree at one of the top private sectors in Brunei, and that experience initially gave me more confidence in choosing a similar organisation this time around.

The selected four organisations have different organisational context, but have in common the cultural context of “Malay Islamic Monarchy” (this will be explained in detail in the Context Chapter - Chapter 4).

3.3.1 Maternity Leave Provision in Brunei

Professional women are the key informants for this study to provide a potential source of rich information. This is because of their active participation in the working sector of Brunei. One

important justification for this sample selection is the maternity leave experience of these women. Even though the public and private organisations enjoy the same privilege of 105-days of maternity leave for their female employees, there was one exception for a private organisation, which offered 5-months maternity leave. Aside from that, a difference between the four organisations was paternity leave that was only offered at three of the organisations, as this is not a nationwide entitlement. Because my interest is looking at how maternity leave provision influences the work-life balance of these women, I considered the organisational settings in which the women worked as a vital contribution in selecting the organisations. With the research question of exploring what constraints or facilitates these professional women returning to work post-maternity leave, it is imperative that the experiences of these women are compared across different organisational settings in Brunei.

3.3.2. The Chosen Organisations

After contacting several potential organisations via email (ref Appendix 4) and getting some positive responses (which will be described in sub-section 3.4), I ended up with two public organisations: a higher education institution under the Ministry of Education and a public department under the Ministry of Finance and Economy. The other two private organisations comprise an oil and gas company and a private bank. I selected the organisations because they seemed to have different cultures and organisational settings from reading reports and news articles. Moreover, their individual contributes to the overall research aim of comparing the professional women's lived experiences across these organisations.

To safeguard the confidentiality, these organisations will be known as Organisation A, Organisation B, Organisation C and Organisation D, respectively. The organisations were ordered A, B, C and D according to the gender dominance and the number of participants

involved. Organisations A and B were male-dominated, with 2 participants from Organisation A and five from Organisation B. Additionally, Organisation C and D consisted of predominantly female employees, with three participants involved in a group interview in Organisation C and eight from Organisation D, making it the most participants for this study.

The second reason for selecting these organisations was because of the organisational structures. Whereby the first two, Organisations A and B, have predominantly male employees and are led by a female managing director (MD), chief executive officer (CEO), or vice-chancellor (VC). On the other hand, organisations C and D have more female employees and were led by a male managing director (MD) or chief executive officer (CEO). The dynamics of these organisations are essential in determining how much the organisation and management play their part in providing the expected support for their female employees. To assume that organisations with a male CEO would provide less support than a female CEO or MD might be rebutted by the findings from this study.

3.4. Getting Access and Selecting Participants

Approval and access were sought before collecting the data to ensure that the organisations agreed for research to be carried out in their respective organisations. Three of the organisations replied to my emails with positive responses, but it was not until I returned to Brunei towards the end of January 2017 that I could recruit the participants. The organisations disseminated the Invitation Letter, Participant's Information Sheet and Consent Form (attached as Appendices 4 to 7) to their employees. Table 3.1. below summarises the processes of getting access to the selected organisations. Some of the participants from one organisation contacted me directly via email informing their willingness to volunteer for the study, and contact numbers were exchanged. Later, our communications were WhatsApp-based to determine the

agreed schedule date, day and time for the interviews. Other organisations appointed one staff as their focal point of reference to arrange meetings with me to discuss my research needs further and eventually set up interview schedules for the participants from their respective organisations who wanted to be part of the research. The fourth organisation was recruited in April 2017, but I only rescheduled the interviews for August 2018 after my post-surgery recovery period. It should be noted that the duration it took for me to recruit participants and actually conduct the interviews was around 6-12 weeks which did not include the initial contact I had made earlier with the respective organisations, which was 2-3 months earlier.

Each participant was provided with an information sheet before the interview. Participants were given time to read this information sheet and were invited to ask questions for further clarifications. Sufficient information was provided regarding the purpose and nature of the research so that the participants could give their informed consent to participate in the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured at all times. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without giving any justification. Each participant signed a consent form at the time of the interview (see Appendix 6).

Table 3.1: Access processes to organisations selected for this study

Organisations	Initial contact via email	Focal point selected	Meeting schedule	Interviews schedule
<i>Organisation A</i>	10 th October 2016, responded 19 th October 2016	Human Resources, Communication and External Relations Officer	9 th February 2017	17 th February 2017
<i>Organisation B</i>	1 st September 2016, responded on 10 th October 2016	Assistant Registrar (Academic)	Individually contacted	20 th February 2017, 25 th February 2017, 11 th March 2017, and two interviews on 21 st August 2018

<i>Organisation C</i>	16 April 2017, responded 17 th April 2017 (but had to postpone due to Leave of Absence). Re-contacted again on 13 th August 2018 and responded on 14 th August 2018	Human Resources Programme Manager	27 th August 2018	27 th August 2018 – Group Interview
<i>Organisation D</i>	1 st September 2016, responded on 5 th September 2016	Corporate Communications Manager	15 th February 2017	8 th March – 10 th March 2017

As mentioned earlier, before my coming back to Brunei to collect the data, I contacted several prospective organisations about getting permission to their organisations and use their employees as respondents for my study. Three organisations responded positively to my email which was sent months prior to my plan to return to Brunei. Being able to plan gave me ample time to search and get positive responses earlier. This also meant that by the time I returned to Brunei, I had a few weeks to prepare myself for the set appointments made with respective organisations.

Organisation A was the furthest organisation that I have to travel back and forth. I had to meet with the Human Resources, Communication and External Relations Officer a week before the scheduled interviews with the participants. Since I had to travel back and forth, it was a hassle because I could not get more participants to volunteer for this study. I ended up with just two participants from this organisation, whom I interviewed on the same day. Each interview lasted for about less than 1.5 hours.

For Organisation B, I had to send a few reminders to the focal person to disseminate my email regarding my search for volunteers for this study when I only received a small number of

employees contacting me personally. However, since each participant's availability was different, I had to cater to their schedules and the interviews were done on different days at different locations and rooms such as the library, the meeting room and the participants' rooms. The interviews lasted between one hour to one and a half hours each.

Organisation C, on the other hand, was only contacted via email after I had conducted the interviews at the other three organisations. The reason behind this was that this organisation introduced their 5-month maternity leave in 2017 and it made the news on paper. Initially, the organisation was able to set an interview date soon after the organisation agreed to be a part of the study, however, it was postponed due to my health condition. I re-contacted the organisation again post-recovery in 2018 and I was instructed to come for a scheduled interview time, without knowing that it would be a group interview. And because I put a halt to my study, it took me a while to get familiar again with the interview. However, I quickly adapt to the unanticipated group interview situation. The interview lasted for an hour in the organisation's meeting room.

And lastly, Organisation D was the fastest organisation to respond to my email and a meeting was set up three weeks before the scheduled interviews were confirmed. Being the only organisation with the highest number of participants for this study, access was mitigated and the three weeks duration gave me ample time to reflect and prepare for the interview since I have conducted interviews at the other two organisations. I was more confident conducting the interviews at Organisation D, even though the interviews were scheduled for three straight days, but the participants were passionate to share their experiences. Each interview lasted between one hour to one and a half hours and it was held in the same meeting room provided by the organisation.

3.4.1. Selecting Participants

Since the focus is on professional women's lived experience of work-life balance post-maternity leave, Saunders *et al.* (2012) indicated that what is important in qualitative research is selecting logically related samples to the research objectives. This is because maintaining the small samples chosen for a particular purpose might provide rich information that would meet the research objectives.

The use of sample selection implemented for this study was Purposive Sampling because the sample has the potential to contribute to the understanding of the research questions and objectives (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Therefore, in recruiting participants for the study, I included the selection criteria whereby the participants could be in any of the following categories:

- Women who are currently pregnant;
- Women who have returned to work from maternity leave;
- Women with older children and experienced the 56-day maternity leave and/or 105-day maternity leave.

I recruited eighteen (18) professional women for this study from across two districts in Brunei, namely Brunei Muara and Kuala Belait. Brunei Muara is the country's central business district, where most of the country's public and private organisations are based and established. On the other hand, Kuala Belait is known as the Oil Town because it is where Brunei's black gold areas are located, and thus many private oil and gas companies are based.

Table 3.2 below summarises the organisations selected and the number of participants who volunteered for the study. In addition, the number of days of maternity leave experienced by

the participants was also considered to compare the different numbers of maternity leave days.

The method of data collection used will be further explained below.

Table 3.2: Summary of selected organisations and participants

Organisations	Number of participants	Maternity leave experienced	Method of data collection used
<i>Organisation A</i>	2	105 days	Semi-structured interviews
<i>Organisation B</i>	5	56 days and 105 days	Semi-structured interviews and drawing illustration
<i>Organisation C</i>	3	105 days and 150 days (5 months)	Group interview
<i>Organisation D</i>	8	56 days and 105 days	Semi-structured interviews and drawing illustration

The term participant is be used to denote the professional women employees participating in the study. Pseudonyms were used, and personal details have been deliberately kept brief to reduce the risk of recognition by others involved in or external to the research process. Details of participants with pseudonyms can be seen in Appendix 8.

3.5. Data Collection Methods and Justifications

I used three different methods of data collection – individual interviews, group interview and visual method – to get broader reflexivity of the methodology aiming at understanding the essence of lived experiences of the participants. A combination of individual and group interview methods of data collection was used due to the limited choices given by the last organisation. I intended for a one-to-one interview, however, I had to change to conducting a focus group by the focal officer due to the limited time the participants had to spare. Although

this was the only organisation that offered the longest maternity leave for their women employees, it gave me the least time to collect the data.

I also requested some participants to engage in a drawing activity after the individual interviews and understand their idea of work-life balance. This visual method helped in encapsulating how these women viewed themselves when asked to explain what their drawings meant to them. Unfortunately, only two organisations were involved in this activity. Each of these methods are outlined in detail below, drawing attention to the advantages and limitations of each.

3.5.1. Semi-structured individual interviews

Interviews are one of the most common forms of data collection in qualitative research because they are a flexible form of social encounter that can take place in natural environments and prepared interview rooms (Kuhn 2006; Silverman 2001). As a method, they require both respondent and interviewer to engage in dialogue and consequently require some level of social interaction and communication skills (Fontana & Frey 2003). Furthermore, due to their dialogic nature, issues can be clarified and points discussed within the interview to provide detailed and in-depth data for analysis (Coffey & Atkinson 1996).

While various interview techniques can be used in data collection, in-depth interviews are the method of choice in phenomenological studies (Wimpenny & Gass 2000). Most literature explain the uses of in-depth interviews and signify those phenomenological studies require a focus on ‘depth, detail, vividness, nuance and richness’ in data collection (Rubin & Rubin 2005, pp. 134 & 145). One point to remember is that in-depth interviews require grounding in the ‘theoretical tradition of phenomenology’ (Marshall & Rossman 1995, p. 82). A non-judgemental approach, excellent listening skills and observation of non-verbal, both of

interviewee and interviewer, are also essential tools in the process. Miller and Crabtree (1999b, p. 105) suggest creating a comfortable and natural environment for the researcher and interviewee and establishing the researcher's competence and credibility. They also added remembering the importance of activating the narrative process and collecting the details in a safe and supportive way. In getting to what they describe as deep information gathering, they stated that a researcher requires a sharing of reflexive and personally meaningful information—and lastly, closing the interview by moving from the deeper levels of the encounter to tone down the emotional level leads to a safe closure.

3.5.1.1. Advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face interviews

A critical factor in semi-structured interviews is that it emphasises validity as this type of data collection tries to obtain answers close to the respondents' real views (Langley, 1987). Nevertheless, there are advantages and disadvantages that researchers need to keep in mind when choosing this particular method, which includes:

Advantages of face-to-face interviews allow for more in-depth data collection and a comprehensive understanding of the body language and facial expressions more clearly identified and understood during the interview. The interviewer can also probe for an explanation of responses if unclear and help the participant understand the question. In addition, interview lengths can be considerably longer since the participant has a more significant commitment to participate and can answer the questions in as much detail as they want. This data collection method also allows for flexibility whereby the interviewer can adjust the questions and change direction as the interview takes place, keeping control of the flow of the session.

The disadvantages of this data collection method include that interview is more time-consuming to recruit, conduct and analyse and most of the time, it can be costly to the researcher in terms of travelling time and conducting the interviews. It can also deliver biased responses and the possibility of an unknowing manipulation of the session. Respondents may also feel uneasy about the anonymity of their responses (Syed Muhammad Sajjad Kabir, 2016).

3.5.2. Individual Interviews

All interviews were conducted at the respective participants' workplaces as arranged by their respective focal persons for convenience since the interviews were set during working hours. Some interviewees were assigned a room to conduct the interviews, some were done in the participants' office rooms, and one interview was done in the organisation's library. I prepared an interview schedule (refer to Appendix 2) before the interviews to assist and prompt my thinking and as a tool to provide a frame for the dialogic process and to keep the focus on the individual.

The interviews were digitally recorded with permission using a voice recorder so that it gave me more focus to listen to what they had to say and concentrate on the flow of the conversation. I believe this has helped me in analysing the data in more detail. By recording the interviews also, I could respond appropriately and ask further questions based on the participants' responses. All participants agreed to the recording of the interview sessions.

The initial stage of the interview process was to create a natural and comfortable situation. This was done by building a sense of rapport and security in collecting biographical details from the respondents and placing their personal, family and work situations into the dialogue of work-life balance. I started the interview by asking them to share their day-to-day live activities. Key

information such as age, working hours, number of children, family commitments and interest were also collected during the interview to contextualise the data in terms of any relationships or patterns that have become evident in these factors.

After accumulating the key information and their daily activities, I continued the dialogue by asking an initial, open-ended question about their maternity leave experience. This facilitated the participant to lead in the interview situation allowing her to share personal experiences. I maintained this throughout the process by taking an empathic stance, listening attentively, responding and probing where appropriate, being non-judgemental and adopting a relaxed and open posture (Wengraf, 2001). The interviewee needed to take the lead during the conversation, and quite often, the resulting interview data were very different from what I might have initially anticipated. Listening attentively to the participants and responding where appropriate to elicit further details or explore points raised was done throughout the process. At the end of the interview, I summarised the issues gathered as a tool to conclude with the participant.

Fifteen (15) participants from three organisations (Organisation A, B and D) were involved in the semi-structured face-to-face interviews, which were done individually. Out of these 15 participants, twelve (12) participated in a drawing illustration exercise at the end of their interview session. In contrast, the other three participants were the first three being interviewed and were not offered this exercise due to their limited time allocated for the meeting. They were given one hour slot for their interview session. By the end of the one-hour slot, I did not want to keep them for the drawing exercise. This will be deliberated further in Section 3.5.4 below.

3.5.3. The Focus Group Interview

The group interview is designed for small groups of individuals, formed by an investigator or a researcher to discuss a particular topic (Barbour, 2008). Researchers using this approach as a data collection method strive to learn through discussion about conscious, semiconscious, and unconscious psychological and sociocultural characteristics and processes among various groups (Larson, Grudens-Schuck, & Lundy, 2004; Lengua *et al.*, 1992; Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2006). Focus group interviews explicitly use group interactions as part of the data-gathering method addressing a particular topic of interest or relevance to the group and the researcher (Edmunds, 2000).

By definition, Hughes and DuMont (1993, p. 776) characterised focus groups as group interviews which are “in-depth group interviews employing relatively homogeneous groups to provide information around topics specified by the researchers”. Kreuger (1998, p. 88) categorised group discussion as “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined environment”. Beck *et al.* (1986) defined it as “an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics”. In general, focus groups can be viewed as performances in which the participants jointly produce accounts about proposed topics in a socially organised situation. An essential characteristic of focus groups is that groups are the primary unit of analysis (Kreuger, 1994; Morgan, 1988) and should be analysed as discussions occurring in a specific, controlled setting rather than in a naturally occurring discussion.

For this research, as mentioned earlier, a group interview was carried out at Organisation D comprising three (3) participants due to the limited amount of time available to gather the participants individually due to their nature of work. It is important to note that this is the only organisation that offers 5-month maternity leave instead of the ‘normal’ 3-month maternity leave. Therefore, three participants volunteered to participate in the interview. As a group

interview consists of individuals with similar experiences, in this case, maternity leave and work-life balance, I anticipated comparable data during the sessions when they talked about and shared their experiences as collective voices constructed collectively. This was noted by Smithson and Diaz (1996), stating that collective voices are a group process of collaboratively constructing a joint perspective or argument, which emerges very much as a collective procedure which leads to consensus rather than as an individual's view.

An issue for group interview research is to what extent my actual or perceived attributes affect the group behaviour, and should the moderator ideally be from a similar cultural background as the participant. The answer to this is that watching the participants answer the questions posed during the interview had helped me to shape and influence my understanding and be “a part of” the group dynamic whilst maintaining the concept of “the other” as the moderator because I was also coming from a similar cultural background like the participants.

In any group setting or focus group interview, a dominance effect where a dominant individual shapes the discussion is commonly encountered (Nyumba *et al.*, 2018). Individuals in a focus group interview may be unable to foreclose a particular topic in a way that is possible in an individual interview, particularly in the presence of a more dominant group member (Sim and Waterfield, 2019). Smithson (2000) also considered having one or several dominant individuals within a group to be one of the three issues which arose when using focus groups as a research method. Therefore, during the session, I had to be alert for dominant voices among the participants, whereby I tackled this by encouraging silent individuals to speak within the group. However, doing so does not resolve the underlying question of how focus group analysis can treat the group as the primary unit of analysis when it is not always clear whether the emerging ‘dominant voice’ may overrepresent the opinions of one or two enthusiastic

members. The analytic focus was not on what the individuals say in a group context but on the discourses constructed within this group context. Morgan (1997) and Krueger and Casey (2009) also recommended that participants within a focus group should be homogeneous to minimise differences in status and power which could limit the ability of some members to influence the discussion.

Using group interviews also gives some insights into the ‘public’ discourses on a set of issues to views expressed by peers (Kitzinger, 1994). These may differ from ‘private’ views expressed in individual interviews (Radley and Billig, 1996; Lambert and Loiselle, 2007) and from views expressed away from research contexts. My job was to draw out information from the participants regarding topics of importance to a research investigation. The informal group discussion setting is intended to encourage participants to speak freely and entirely about their behaviours, attitudes, and opinions but to stay on the subject (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Therefore, focus groups are an excellent means for collecting information from informants who might otherwise tend to go off on their topics, and moderators are there to keep everyone on track on the topic of discussions. However, it is ironic to note that the organisation that gives the most days of maternity leave for the female employees gave me the least time to conduct the interview and collect the data needed as I was arranged for a ‘forced’ group interview instead of a one-to-one individual interviews with the participants.

3.5.4. Visual Method

The third method I used for the data collection in this study is the visual method. Twelve participants were involved in this exercise after their interview session. Visual methods for data collection are progressively becoming more common in organisational behaviour studies (for example, Stiles, 2004; Meyer, 1991; Symon and Cassell, 2012). However, compared to

verbal methods, the spoken and written texts tend to be somewhat ‘visually illiterate’, especially in work and organisation studies (Strangleman, 2004). Visual representations such as drawing, painting, sculpture, diagrams, computer graphics and videos, among others, can be used to gather empirical material (Ward, 2011). Visual representations are argued to be more effective at generating and maintaining discussion as meanings, questions, and notions can be read into the representations. this approach suits the interpretivist perspective since it allows the researcher “to access the range of possible constructions and meanings that people place upon their subjective experiences as represented through their drawings or paintings” (Broussine, 2008, p. 84). Jensen *et al.* (2007, p. 348) highlighted, “...each drawing continuously provided a way of discussing the common topic and the drawings’ potential for inspiring and for playing with the different interpretations which emerged...the most significant moments of this phase happened when insight would suddenly hit the person who had made the drawing; showing that she or he had not realised fully what he or she had drawn”.

There is a symbolism of gender categorisation that is apparent whereby, on the one hand, a conventional research method like semi-structured interview is being used to collect personal data to describe these participants; their jobs, their positions, and their family details. However, on the other hand, through the drawings, as previous researchers (Pink, 2007 and Shortt, 2012) have found that drawings help people articulate things that cannot be articulated through conventional interviews. Moreover, Kearney and Hyle (2004, p. 380) also stated that drawings “create the opportunity for meaningful and honest verbal reports – arguably the methodology helped participants reveal more than what may have been captured with only the unstructured verbal interviews”. For these reasons, I used drawings as a visual method for this research as it helps to express non-verbal communication and capture a different perspective or insight.

The drawing activity took place at the end of the individual interview session, where I asked the participants to draw for me on a piece of A4 paper what they think work-life balance means to them and later on explain to me what their drawings mean. With this in mind, I stepped back in interpreting the participants' drawings and concentrated more on their interpretation of the drawings instead of creating a link or relationship to their interview data.

The procedure used in this study follows Broussine's suggestion (2008), which involved four phases; first, I asked the participant to draw her view of work-life balance. The exercise lasted between one to six minutes. Then, after they finished drawing, the participants showed me their drawing, and I asked them to explain what their drawing symbolises and meant to them. This lasted for five minutes. In the next stage, I repeated their interpretations of their drawings to ensure that I understood how they perceived the drawings. In the final stage, when they concurred with the interpretation that best described their drawing, they reflected on how they had never thought of it (work-life balance) like that until now. The whole session took about fifteen minutes.

3.6. The 'Big Break.'

I named this sub-heading the 'big break' because I *really* took a big break from my work. I had carried out three-quarters of the interviews between February 2017 and April 2017 and intended to return to the UK to analyse my findings when an unexpected turn of events occurred. I was admitted to the hospital due to some abdominal pain. I had to extend my flight for two weeks until the doctors ran some clinical tests. My worst fear came true, and I was diagnosed with Stage 3 Rectal Cancer in April 2017, which disrupted my research plan. I had to take a Leave of Absence from April 2017 until October 2018 and stayed in Brunei to undergo

cancer treatment. Between that duration, I underwent two surgeries, one major and one minor. I also went through countless blood test procedures and multiple appointments for Ultrasound, CT Scans, MRI, PETScan, Fluoroscopy, and Colonoscopy. I also went through the agony of six cycles of chemotherapy sessions and 28 radiotherapy treatments, of which I experienced major difficulties coping post-treatment every single time. I have to admit; there were times I felt that I could not take any more needles poking me, or another dose of antibiotics injected into me to keep the bacteria from spreading, or the bags of blood that had to be transfused into me because I seemed to be losing blood. It was indeed a journey I never wish for anyone else to experience.

Nevertheless, there is always a silver lining. My faith was one of the most vital things I held dear during my treatment and recovery. My husband was the second one. Without his unwavering support, I did not think I could even want to face another day. This big break also gave me time to reflect on my research in terms of what I have done so far, the data I collected, and what I can do to improve the impact of the data collected.

After my major surgery, I decided to return to my research slowly. I hired someone to do the transcriptions of the interviews that I had done previously. As I knew all I had was time; on the contrary, since I was at the same time facing unknown 'time left' (are we not all?), I decided to give her a few good months to do the job she was paid for. It certainly eased my responsibility a bit. After my second surgery in July 2018, my recovery phase was a bit quicker, and I was planning to return to the UK in the next couple of months. While waiting for approval from my physician and attending doctors, I recruited new participants, adding more insight to my data collection. Interestingly, it was the only organisation where I was forced to conduct the focus group interview instead of a one-to-one which I did previously. After collecting all the data

needed for this study, I resumed my research and returned to the UK in October 2018. The next step was analysing the data collected.

3.7. Approaches to Data Analysis

Data analysis is a crucial step in the research process, and for the phenomenological study, it represents the stage in the research process in which the essential nature – the essence – of the phenomenon of interest may be understood and represented (Priest, 2002). According to Grbich (2007) and Liamputtong (2010), the first step of the data analysis was reading and re-reading so that the participants' experiences become the researcher's focus. A detailed and time-consuming task of the initial note-taking process is the following process following the reading process, as the researcher notes everything of interest while maintaining an open mind. The following process involves isolating meaning units selected as emergent themes considered central to the experience in question. Here, the researcher simultaneously attempts to reduce the detail while maintaining the complexity of relationships, connections, patterns and notes. Finally, the researcher identifies the explicative themes and sub-themes, or those that appear to have referential characteristics, while bracketing their thoughts and biases about the topic. The complexities and intricacies of the phenomenon need to be captured in ways with which others can understand and engage (Grbich, 2007; Liamputtong, 2010).

The analysis, therefore, involves interpretation (Blumer, 1969) since researchers are considered the translators of other persons' words and actions (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The analysis process implies my understanding of the events as conveyed by participants, as Denzin (1989, p. 322) states:

“Interpretation is a productive process that sets forth the multiple meanings of an event, object, experience, or text. Interpretation is transformation. It illuminates and throws

light on experience. It brings out, and refines, as when butter is clarified, the meanings that can be sifted from a text, an object, or slice of experience” (p. 322)

One of the methods used to identify and analyse patterns of meaning in a dataset is thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2014, 2021). Thematic analysis is a useful method, as argued by Braun and Clark (2006) and King (2004), because it examines the perspectives of different research participants, highlights similarities and differences, and generates surprising insights into the data. It also provides methodological translation and conceptual bridges between two or more approaches to discovery (Cresswell, 1994), as thematic analysis is considered a ‘translator’. As a researcher, the thematic analysis also allows me much flexibility to interpret the emerging data and enables me to examine the patterns of meanings that the participants attached to their lived experiences.

Since thematic analysis refers to themes, the idea of a theme must be examined more closely. It also shows which themes are central in describing the event under investigation (Daly *et al.*, 199). A theme refers to a specific pattern of meaning found in the data. It can contain something directly observable, such as mentions of stigma across a series of interview transcripts called manifest content. Alternatively, it can also contain references in the transcripts that refer to stigma implicitly, called latent content (Joffe, 2012). A theme can also be drawn from a theoretical idea that the researcher brings to the research, and this is called termed deductive or from the raw data itself and called termed inductive. For this study, these two will be combined to create preconceived categories derived from theories and remain open to new concepts that might emerge during the data collection.

Boyatzis (1998) stated three stages of thematic analysis: first, deciding on sampling and design issues. Secondly, developing themes and a code and validating and using the code. Within the

second stage, three ways emerged to develop a thematic code: theory-driven, prior data or prior research-driven, and inductive (from raw data) or data-driven. For this study, I went for the data-driven code and developed and finalised the codes inductively.

The analysis started with transcribing the interviews discussions, whereby out of the eighteen interviews, eleven of the transcriptions were done by someone credible to transcribe interviews based on her previous experience transcribing her interview data for her Master's degree at the same university. The rest of the interviews were transcribed personally following my resumption of study in October 2018. While transcribing the interviews, I also double-checked the documents to help me familiarise with the data and ensure that the transcriptions were done accurately. From my inspection, all the data transcribed were verbatim, including pauses and repetition. I also included the emotions captured during the interviews, such as giggles and laughter, as I re-listened them to double-check with the transcribed documents.

Since all the interviews were conducted in two languages, English and Malay, the transcriptions were done precisely the way the interviews were conducted in both languages. However, I tried to translate the first few transcriptions to English, but I faced challenges and feared that the data might be lost in translation. In supporting my decision to maintain the original value of the data in its original form and language, the works of Cooke (2013) and Jankowicz (1994) supported this, stating that not all the words can be translated literally without losing their meanings, nuance, and context. However, in the second stage of thematic analysis and forward, the codes and themes were labelled in English.

3.7.1. The Coding Process – Thematic Analysis

Since all the codes in my data analysis emerged during the coding process, I initially used a more traditional approach to coding the data. Without using any modern tool like NVIVO or Atlas.ti, I found myself lost because managing a large number of codes is impossible, especially when it involves many respondents over a long period. I took a step back after failing to understand what needed to be done and was instructed to re-read a methodology book to revisit what I had learnt previously. I then decided to repeat the coding process, but this time, I subscribed and utilised Atlas.ti as a tool to help me organise the codes and find the common themes. After repeating the coding process, a thorough code list was produced by going through each transcription according to one or more paragraphs into a broader category but with common themes (Cassell *et al.*, 2009). Some broad themes are ‘concept of maternal body’, ‘the use of organisational spaces as pumping venues’, ‘the shifting priorities’, ‘colleagues’ attitudes towards pumping activities’, ‘the pumping machine’ and ‘the idea of privacy and breastfeeding’.

In the later phase, I found more specific sub-themes for each broad theme. For example, ‘acceptance on pumping at work’ and ‘pumping buddy’. Using this strategy has enabled me to keep the detail to track down the data without losing the context. The data was interpreted by examining the relationship and pattern between themes. I analysed the interviews and drawings separately for each method because I wanted to compare and contrast the themes from different methods. For interviews, I gathered themes related to breastfeeding or pumping at work. While for the visual analysis, the question posed prior to drawing activities was ‘what do you understand with the idea of work-life balance?’, hence the participants mostly illustrated how they viewed work-life balance and their family and work domains. Similar themes around ‘family composition’, ‘house buildings’, ‘office settings’, ‘office buildings’, ‘working time’, ‘happiness’ and ‘smiling faces’ are found in the drawings. Other distinctive themes that arise

include using the metaphor of a ‘flower’ and viewing it as the ‘family’ and a ‘prayer mat; which symbolises ‘faith’. These metaphors signify the importance of such interpretations in that participant’s life. The drawings helped me to position, describe and interpret each participant through the themes that arise across these individuals.

3.7.2. Data Analysis for Visual Methods

There has been limited literature on analysing materials produced in visual research (Pink, 2007, Vince and Warren, 2012; Shortt, 2012). Literature on using drawings as a method explain how drawings can reveal something that speaking would not otherwise capture. This study adopted Shortt’s (2012) method of visual data analysis whereby she constructs her framework comprising three parts which are (1) participant-led image analysis, (2) participant and researcher-led image analysis and (3) researcher-led analysis. The first part was conducted during the interview, whereby the participant was asked to draw their interpretation of Work-Life Balance at the end of the interview session. The second part was also carried out during the interview, where the participant was asked to explain the drawing to the researcher and discuss its meanings collaboratively. The researcher does the last stage by transcribing the interviews and looking for themes that best suit the interpretation.

This framework also fits Pink’s (2007) suggestions that (1) data analysis is not always done after the fieldwork but can be carried out throughout the research process; (2) analysis does involve not the only interpretation of the visual materials but also an examination of different subjective meanings from different participants.

3.8. The Second Disruption to Study

The Covid-19 Pandemic that hit the world at the end of 2019 managed to halt almost all normal activities. I was not excluded from this impact that I had to request extensions of my study. This was primarily due to the effect of this pandemic, whereby I had to adapt to the ‘new norm’ of working from home. As a full-time employee of my organisation, I am also a mother and wife to my kids and husband. The changing routines that I experienced by working from home affected my mental, emotional and physical well-being. I was not able to fully concentrate on multiple things at home. Aside from the extra administrative appointments I hold at work, I struggled between managing my lecture and administrative commitments with my thesis writing. Working from home was a new concept for most of us, including myself. I ended up feeling vulnerable and stressed out most of the time. Luckily for me, both my supervisors were very understanding and empathetic. I applied for an extension of the study, and the University approved both requests. This disruption allowed me to rearrange my priorities and be adamant about letting go of unnecessary burdens so I could return to my writing activity and eventually submit my thesis.

3.9. Ethical Approval

This research adheres to rigorous ethical principles. Before emailing my request and permission to conduct research at the selected organisations, I applied for ethical approval from the University of York. The approved ethics form was conveyed via my university e-mail on 31st October 2016. As clarified earlier, I contacted the selected organisations via email to request permission to conduct the research.

3.10. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described and justified the steps to design this study. I chose an

interpretive approach by paying closer attention to phenomenology as the philosophical framework. Qualitative methods were chosen to understand an experience from a participant's point of view. It is therefore an appropriate approach to explore how a participant sees the experience of work-life balance post-maternity leave. Alongside traditional interview methods, visual methods, in the form of drawings were used as an alternative way to study work-life balance. I used thematic analysis to analyse the in-depth semi-structured individual and group interview data and drawings, Moreover, I noted the processes I underwent during the research process in terms of taking a reflexivity standpoint and the validity and reliability of this research outcome.

CHAPTER 4: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY – BRUNEI

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides background information on Brunei to provide a brief introduction to the context of the study. First, this chapter will focus on the attention towards Brunei as a country, its Malay culture that overlaps with the Islamic religion and its teachings. Next, I will discuss the perspective of Bruneian women through the lens of culture and religion and the impact of increased education levels and women's participation in the workplace. Finally, I will review the Maternity Leave Provision and the Breastfeeding Initiatives that the country has provided before explaining the idea of work-life balance in Brunei.

4.2. Brunei in Brief

About the size of Northern Ireland, Brunei Darussalam is an independent constitutional sultanate and a monarch country currently ruled by the 29th Sultan in line, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, The Sultan of Brunei Darussalam. The official name of Brunei Darussalam, which literally translated as 'Brunei, the Abode of Peace', is abbreviated to just 'Brunei' during everyday communication. His Majesty The Sultan is the head of state and head of Government of Brunei, as well as the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Minister of Finance and Minister of Foreign Affairs. His Majesty is also the Supreme Executive Authority in Brunei Darussalam, where the Privy Council, the Council of Succession, the Religious Council, the Council of Ministers and the Legislative Council assist the Sultan in performing his duties. Moreover, His Majesty retains the final say in decision-making, making Brunei's governance an absolute monarchy.

Historically, before the Brunei Kingdom was founded in the 7th century, archaeological evidence indicates that Brunei had been inhabited at least as early as the 6th century. Chinese historical records used the name 'Poli' or 'Puni' to describe ancient Brunei during this period. According to Chinese sources, when Islam arrived in Brunei, the people used an Arabic-like script called 'Jawi' as their communication alphabet. The cultural, economic, and political influence of the early Borneo Kingdom was largely influenced by the Hindu and Buddhist Kingdoms of the Indonesian archipelago.

Being a monarchy that has been going on for almost 700 years, this long-standing history was strengthened when the king, Awang Alak Betatar, converted to Islam in 1363. He became the first ruler and monarch of Brunei, established the Sultanate of Brunei, and changed his name to Sultan Muhammad Shah. Through this lineage and ruling, the country's official religion remains Islam until today. In the 19th century, the Bruneian Empire collapsed with the loss of much of its territory to a dynastic monarchy of the English Brooke family in Sarawak, eventually leading to Brunei becoming a British protectorate in 1888. The discovery of oil in Seria in the 1920s became the main driving force of Brunei's development. For this reason, too, motivated 10,000 Japanese troops to land on Brunei just eight days after the attack on Pearl Harbour and occupy the country until June 1945, when Australian forces retook Brunei town. Under British governance, a new constitution was written in 1959, introducing the self-government system for Brunei. As oil became the primary source of the economy since its discovery, it became economically advantageous for the country following a failed attempt at a revolution in December 1962. It also prompted the country to remain independent from being under the ruling of the Federation of Malaysia. In 1971, Brunei became a self-governing

country except in foreign affairs and defence and finally gained independence from Britain on 1 January 1984.

Geographically, Brunei is located in South East Asia on the island of Borneo and shares its border with the Malaysian State of Sarawak and Sabah. The population in 2019 was estimated to be 459,500 people, with the country's land area of about 5,765 square miles. There has been an annual growth of 3.9% reported in the population compared to the previous year. Brunei has four districts, namely Brunei-Muara, Tutong, Belait and Temburong, and the capital city is Bandar Seri Begawan, located in the Brunei-Muara district. To get a picture of the location of Brunei in South East Asia, Figure 4.1. (below) shows the map of South East Asia with a circle and an arrow to indicate the location of Brunei on the Borneo Island. While Figure 4.2. shows the map of Brunei on the island of Borneo. According to the Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook (2019), Brunei-Muara is the most densely populated (69.5%) as the central government and major commercial areas are located in this district. This is illustrated in Figure 4.3. indicating the Population by Districts.



Figure 4.1: Map of South-East Asia

Source: <http://www.geographicguide.com/asia/maps/southeast.htm>



Figure 4.2: Map of Brunei Darussalam

Source: One World Nations Online (2019)



Figure 4.3: Population by Districts

Source: Department of Economic Planning and Development (2019)

Brunei is pursuing a 30-year development plan called the Long-Term Development Plan, or *Wawasan 2035* (Vision 2035). In time, it wishes to be recognised for, among others, having a high quality of life and the accomplishment of its well-educated and highly skilled people. Brunei was ranked 39 out of 189 countries and territories by the United Nations Development Programs (UNDP) in 2017. Brunei's human development index (HDI) has a value of 0.853, which has increased from 0.782 in 1990. Brunei's human development index (HDI) has a value of 0.853, which has increased from 0.782 in 1990. In the 2022 Global Gender Gap Report produced by World Economic Forum, Brunei is placed 104th out of 146. Brunei's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is among the highest in Asia because of its high standard of living. In addition, its reputable standards in education and healthcare are accessible to the people (Abdul Razak, 2012). The Department of Economic Planning and Development (DEPD) recorded the statistics for Brunei in 2018 as having a) GDP per capita of BND41,366.8, b) GDP (BND million) of BND18,300.7 million, and c) a GDP positive growth rate of 7.1% year-on-year at constant prices recorded on the fourth quarter of 2019. As a result,

the total GDP of Brunei recorded in the fourth quarter of 2019 was BND4,82 billion. Since the discovery of oil and gas in 1929, these natural resources have been Brunei's economy's primary source of income and revenue. The oil and gas industry contributed BND2,919.8 million to the country's GDP. The average crude oil production for January 2019 was 114 thousand barrels per day.

The official language is Malay, but most people can converse in English. At the same time, Jawi is still used mainly in signage and is understood by most of the population. Malay (people) makes up about 67% of the population, 15% Chinese, 6% Indigenous, and 12% characterised as others. According to the Brunei Nationality Status Act in 1961, the government recognised and acknowledged the existence of the seven groups of people in the country that are given the designation of *Puak Melayu Jati* Brunei or Brunei Ethnic Malay Groups. These groups of people are divided into Melayu Brunei, Melayu Tutong, Melayu Belaitu, Kedayan, Murut, Dusun, and Bisaya and fall under the category of 'Malays'. Furthermore, the 'indigenous' category in the population census includes other ethnic groups of Iban, Murut, Melanau, and Dusun, which are not recognised under the country's Brunei Ethnic Malay Group. For 'others', these people are not in any population categories but live in Brunei, including Indians and other labour workers.

4.2.1. The Governance of Brunei

As an Islamic Malay state known on a global and international level, Brunei practices a uniquely Bruneian blend of the Malay tradition, which makes up the ideology of the Malay Islamic Monarchy (*Melayu Islam Beraja*, MIB) as its national philosophy. The philosophy incorporates the ways of daily life and thinking. The Brunei government states that the nation's philosophy is "a blend of Malay language, culture and Malay customs, the teachings of Islamic

laws and values and the monarchy system which must be esteemed and practised by all. [...]

The nation hopes that through the true adoption and practice of the MIB philosophy, the purity of Islam, the purity of the Malay race and the institution of Monarchy can be maintained and preserved as a lasting legacy for the future generation" (Government of Brunei Darussalam, 2007b).

When this national philosophy was introduced, it became the backbone of the Bruneian cultural identity, which aimed to forge a stronger sense of identity and foster a sense of unity, respect and stability. This philosophy is broadly accepted as the roots of the country and is at the heart of Brunei. In dealing with all aspects of governmental policies and daily practices, this respect for others is evident through Islamic values that must be present and instilled amongst the Bruneians at work and home. MIB also incorporates strong influences of Malay culture, which stresses the importance of using Islam as guidance in one's daily life and governance, and respecting His Majesty, the 29th Sultan, as the monarch. The concept of MIB must adhere to any decision-making to maintain Bruneian traditions and cultural and religious values. The unique factor that highlights Brunei from the rest of the world is the shaping forces that transpire the way the country stands. These forces can be identified in two ways. The first is that it is predominantly an Islamic country where it still uses the traditional Islamic way of doing things by referring back to the Holy Book Quran and authentic Hadith as the main sources. Secondly, the ruler, the monarch, or the sultan has the absolute power to say how things should run, with minimum objections from the people.

Brunei inevitably needs to change to improve the country as a whole further. At the same time, the country must uphold its core values that have been the foundation of its stability, harmony, and prosperity. Any changes deemed to be done must go through layers of approval in the

relevant ministries and shall be guided by the MIB concept at all times by focusing based on the philosophy. These include; one, a commitment to the monarchy and nation; two, a belief in the values of Islam based on the *Ahli Sunnah Wal-Jemaah*, Maddhab Shafi'i (the school of taught of Shafi'i based on the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet); and three, the tradition of compassion, tolerance and social harmony (Zakir, 2017).

While Brunei is indeed a devoutly Muslim country, the national philosophy also respects tolerance by allowing the practice of other religions and beliefs to maintain a harmonious environment, as depicted in the name 'Abode of Peace'. The reassertion of Islamic values is apparent in how the country is ruled. MIB emphasises tolerance, where people are free to practice other cultures and religions individually. For example, the Christians in Brunei are free to celebrate Christmas Day. However, no ornaments can be decorated in public places like shopping malls, complexes, and government offices. There are also several churches and one Chinese temple built in the country for the Christians and other faiths to observe and practise their religion. However, it is prohibited for anyone else to spread the teachings of other religions except Islam. Although Brunei is an internationally renowned Muslim country, it still limits the free flow of other religions to be spread apart from Islam, as ordered by the Sultan. Failure to do so can lead to punishment in terms of a fine, prison time, or both.

This study will explore how the professional women working in selected public and private organisations adapt and conceptualise the idea of work-life balance following their return-to-work post-maternity leave. I will highlight Brunei's national philosophy of MIB and cultural differences compared to other Islamic states like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, or Malaysia. This perspective is imperative to understand how these women view their work-life balance before, during, and after taking their maternity leave, indicating a significant change

in their life's purpose and responsibilities that are mixed with having to perform at work and home at the same time. Additionally, the aspects of cultural and religious norms are considered by taking Brunei as a context to be explored.

4.3. The Culture of Brunei

The culture of Brunei mainly originated from the Malay Archipelago that covers the area between mainland Indochina and Australia. The culture is, therefore, deeply rooted in its Malay origins, which are enacted in the nation's language, architecture, ceremonies, and customs that govern the Brunei people's daily life. Although various foreign civilisations have significantly impacted the development of Brunei's rich history, the Old Malay World traditions still played a significant role in the culture of modern Brunei. The cultural makeup of Brunei indicated that there is a prevailing culture that depicts diversity within itself, whereby the Malay culture that is widely accepted and practised supports the usage of the Malay language in everyday conversation. At the same time, it (the culture) also overlaps with religion. Therefore, if Malay traditions are considered Brunei's cultural root, then Islam as a religion and way of life is its heart.

4.3.1. Extended Family Culture

One Malay culture that is quite common in Brunei is that extended families choose to live close to each other. This familiarity is considered a mutual 'model for living' in Brunei, instilling the need in younger generations to look after the elders. It is also an expectation embedded within family members that the responsibility of looking after and caring for the elderly rests with the family to decide. This close-knit society is distinctly communal and cohesive, and every Bruneian is expected to uphold the family institution as the dominant aspect of the culture. With just under 500,000, it is also quite common that marriage within families is not a foreign

concept, and extended family relationships are usually strengthened with marital commitments. The implication of extended families in this study context could lead to two extreme results. The first one is whether having an extended family, for example, living with or close to parents, can be a supportive factor in achieving this work-life balance concept. Alternatively, secondly, it could be a restraining factor that hinders the achievement of a balance between work and life. This will be further discussed in the analysis chapter.

Furthermore, in an organisational context, one might be working with someone or someone who turned out to be a relative or a family member due to the typical practice of marriage within the family. Therefore, it is highly predictable that one could be working alongside one's paternal or maternal uncles and aunties, or distant cousins or related family's aunties or uncles. Due to this factor, such family relationships built on and off the working environment could impact how the women for this study create boundaries and change roles, especially in the work-life balance initiatives discussed below.

4.3.2. Bruneian Socio-Malay Islamic Culture

Primarily, both men and women of the country have equal opportunity to contribute to the economic development progress in line with the nation's Vision 2035. Any developmental plans to modernise the country must comply with the teachings of Islam and be seen as relevant to the Malay culture and the governing of the Monarch in order for such plans to be accepted in Brunei.

Brunei has also embedded its culture and religion into shaping policy and practice like other Islamic states. Examples of such policy and practice being implemented include ensuring that Muslim women properly cover their bodies. This is done through the embodiment of the Malay

culture element in the dressing etiquette in the form of a Malay-custom dress called *Baju Kurung*. Such dresses can be worn daily as work attire or for formal functions like weddings or national events. For the men, the *Baju Cara Melayu* is a traditional attire usually worn alongside *Baju Kurung* for special occasions.

Apart from that, social etiquette is also taken seriously in Malay culture. This etiquette is taught to the youngsters, such as lowering their bodies like bowing when they walk in front of the elders as a sign of respect. It is also socially acknowledged that the youngsters should never address their elders with their names, except to replace them with Malay titles like *Babu* (which means Aunty) or *Nini* (which generally goes for grandparents, both men and women) or *Tuan* (which generally refers to men) or *Haji* and *Hajjah* or *Awang* and *Dayang* for the general public to replace the titles of Mister and Madam/Miss. This sentiment of respect is also applicable in a working environment where the same regard for name-calling is replaced by either *Tuan* or *Puan* in addressing their superiors or bosses.

For any social conventions in Brunei, the embedded Malay culture with the teachings of Islam is highly regarded and expected to comply as visitors should observe to dress modestly. Shoes must be removed when entering mosques and Muslim homes. Some Bruneians do not shake hands with people of the opposite sex, and it is regarded as impolite to point with the index finger; instead, they use the right thumb to point. Food may be served without cutlery, and they use their right hand to eat instead. It is widely regarded as discourteous to refuse refreshments or to eat in public during the fasting month of Ramadan.

4.3.3. Islamic Practices Culture in Brunei

Additionally, as Islam is the official religion of Brunei, there has also been an increasing development of mosques across the country and small prayer rooms (*surau*) in organisation buildings and public places. This is done to enliven the culture of worshipping among the people and make the daily prayers obligation effortless. Most workplaces usually include designated prayer rooms or make-shift prayer rooms if no *surau* has been built. This indicates a sign of inviting the people, particularly employees, to perform their worship duties and prayers at work or outside the home, as access to these places is available almost everywhere and anytime. This act of worship further supports the spiritual culture that Islam shapes within the employees' lives to maintain consistency in fulfilling their duties at work, at home, and duty as servants of God.

4.3.4. The Maid Culture

Another context of a culture in Brunei that seems relevant to the findings of this study is the 'maid culture' or 'domestic workers culture'. It is undoubtedly becoming an increasing trend for families to have a maid or maids working. By definition, 'a maid' or 'domestic worker' is a person explicitly employed to assist in or take complete charge of the domestic work in a household (Nurul Umillah *et al.*, 2015). These domestic workers are expected to perform tasks ranging from cooking and cleaning to caring for the children or elderly in the household they are employed in. There has been a rising trend in hiring these domestic workers. They usually come from developing countries like Indonesia and the Philippines and have a contract that binds them to work under a household or employer for two years. Since most of the Bruneian population is Malay, there is a tendency to hire an Indonesian maid rather than a Filipino maid because the Indonesian maids share a similar culture and language with the Bruneian Malays. They are almost always Muslims which thus reduces the risk of conflicting beliefs and practices in the household (Nurul Umillah *et al.*, 2015).

The culture of hiring maids in Brunei is imperative to this study as the findings beg the question of whether the women (participants) who have maids to help them out with the household chores and responsibilities have better chances of achieving a balance in their work and life or not. This will be further discussed in the following chapters.

4.4. Bruneian Women related to Culture and Religion

Ho (2019) mentioned that the definition of Malayness is built upon the MIB ideology declared by the Sultan. This ideology has provided a legitimate platform for the language and culture of Malay to be valued and intricately associated with the Islamic religion. To strengthen the country's Islamic identification, the Syariah Penal Code was implemented in 2018 to elevate the *Melayu Jati* that enshrines a superior status for the Malay language and culture while reinforcing Islam as the official religion of its people (Ho, 2019).

In line with this, Ho (2019) indicated that the Malay culture embedded in the country includes actions, manners, and conducts that apply to both men and women. As mentioned earlier, examples may include speaking the language of Brunei Malay and dressing in Malay clothes like *Baju Kurung* or *Baju Cara Melayu*. Besides, demonstrating the use of the Malay language in speaking and wearing the female cultural attire also promotes the people's faithfulness towards the nation's philosophy. Additionally, for the women, these deeds incorporate the need to adhere to prescriptive social and cultural taboos, performing housework which includes taking care of the children and family and submitting to the husband. The patriarchal social structures in Brunei also support the cultural and social taboos, which usually include the housework duties assigned to women and wifely submission rooted in the teachings of the Islamic principles. In other words, there is an overlap between traditional Islamic culture and the Malay culture that reinforces the position of women as subordinates to their husbands.

However, the Malay culture in Brunei has been deeply influenced and shaped by the teachings of the Islamic religion, which are fundamentally accepted by society.

Notwithstanding this statement of 'submission' that the Bruneian women must comply with, outsiders' misconception might go beyond thinking that these women are oppressed and burdened with household and work responsibilities. Personal observation has shown that with the increasing number of educated and career-minded women, there were no signs of compulsion in performing their duties as a mother and a wife on top of being an employee at work. However, research on the effect or impact of such responsibilities should be further investigated on a national level. To date, the religion practised is widely understood by the women in the context of relying on the men or the husband as their caretaker, as stated in the Qur'an and Hadith. Moreover, they believed that following the teachings of both these sources of the religion, these women felt that it impacted how they viewed and balanced their work and life perspectives. Furthermore, the fact that there has been an increase in the participation of Bruneian women in the workforce indicates a social acceptance in acknowledging the potential that the women have and partake in the country's economic development.

4.5. The Labour Force and the Increasing Female Participation in the Workforce

According to the latest Labour Force Survey in 2019, there has been an increase in Brunei's labour force, whereby the total working-age population (above 15 years of age) recorded 337,895 persons in 2019 as compared to 310,514 persons in 2014. From 2014 to 2019, the labour force has been boosted from 203,651 persons to 237,944 persons. Out of these labour force numbers; the total number of employed persons was 221,711 in 2019 compared to 189,537 people in 2014. From this total number of employed persons, the survey recorded that

the male population still held the majority positions of 135,800 persons, which is equivalent to 61.3%, compared to only 85,900 women, which is equivalent to 38.7%. In the survey taken in 2019, out of the 370,000 persons aged 15 years and over in Brunei Darussalam recorded, 237,900 persons were in the labour force compared to 221,000 persons in 2018. This represented a growth rate of 7.7% from 2018 to 2019. Even though the rate for males was considerably higher at 72.5% than that for females at 54.8%, the labour force participation rate decreased to 64.3% in 2019 from 65.4% in 2018. The share of employment by type of economic activity showed that the services sector dominated, particularly in public administration at 19.0% with 42,000 persons, followed by wholesale and retail trade at 16.0% (35,500 persons), and accommodation and food services activities at 9.6% (21,300 persons). The distribution of the employed persons by occupation shows that service and sales workers accounted for the highest share of 20.2%, which is equivalent to 44,900 persons, followed by professionals at 17.5%, equivalent to 38,800 persons, and workers in elementary occupations at 15.8% equivalent to 35,000 persons. As a result, the proportion of public to private sector employment was around 40:60. The number of locals employed in the private sector increased from 70,900 in 2018 to 74,400 in 2019. The share of private-sector employment also increased from 62.6% in 2018 to 66.2% in 2019.

The Labour Force Survey 2019 also indicated that the average hours usually worked per week differed between male and female employees. In 2018, it was recorded that male employees worked 48.6 hours per week as compared to their female counterparts, who worked 46.4 hours per week. This data showed similar differences in 2019, whereby the male employees worked 48.1 hours per week while their female counterparts worked 45.7 hours per week. Furthermore, the average monthly income showed a narrow gender gap between the two genders in a comparison between 2018 and 2019, whereby the local male employees earn BND1,640.00

per month on average compared to their female counterparts earning only BND1,526.00 in 2018. However, there was a slight decrease in the amount for female employees in 2019 by earned only BND1,440.00 on average per week as compared to their male counterparts earning BND1,743.00. These gender gaps and hours worked indicators could be explained by many factors, including women's involvement in family-related issues that made them appear less committed to their work. Although in reality, both men and women employees receive the same benefits on top of their basic salary. However, the deductions for their Employees' Trust Funds and Supplemental Contributory Pensions also depended on their basic salary income. This means that the higher their basic salary, the higher the monthly deductions taken to be put in these two state-funded pension schemes for public servants.

As reported by the Government of Brunei Darussalam in the Eight National Development Plan Meeting, the Government will ensure that women in Brunei continue to be given equal opportunities in all aspects of life, including education, employment, and business. In particular, the advancement of Bruneian women in terms of labour force participation has been considerable over the last 40 years. In 1971, women accounted for 22.4% of the total government workforce (Anaman and Kassim, 2004), and by the year 2001, this share had increased steadily to about 44%. In the recent statistics provided by the Public Service Department in April 2019, the total women's participation in the public service was recorded at 27,602 persons, which shared a total of 50.4%, as compared to their male counterparts. Out of this portion, in 2017, 9.1% held senior management posts, while 22.6% held professional posts. These figures have shown an increase in the percentage compared to 2011 and 2014, whereby they were only represented by 4.1% and 6% respectively in the posts of managers, senior officers, and professional posts. This increase in women's participation in the workforce has been one of the driving forces for this research to be conducted.

For this study, it is important to highlight that there has been an increase in the number of women in employment in the last five years, dating from 2014, whereby 81,041 women were working in 2014, and this number has increased to 85,900 women recorded in 2019. The breakdown of this increased participation of women in employment can be seen in the statistics of the employed population by occupation as reported by the Labour Force Survey 2019. There has been an increase in women's employment from 3,962 persons in 2018 to 5,633 persons in 2019 for Managers and Senior Officials. This represented an increase in the percentage from 4.8% in 2018 to 6.6% in 2019. Furthermore, 18,947 women were employed in 2018, which increased to 21,545 persons in 2019, with an increased percentage from 22.8% to 25.1% respectively for the occupation set under Professionals. The same increase in women's participation in employment can also be seen in other occupations, such as Technicians and Associate Professionals, whereby participation of 8,673 women recorded in 2018 increased to 9,397 women in 2019. Moreover, an increase from 122 women in Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers in 2018 to 242 women was recorded in 2019.

4.5.1 Women's Employment and Education

A significant factor responsible for the rapid labour force participation is the increasing level of highly educated women in Brunei. A statistic data provided by the Ministry of Education showed that female enrolment in higher education in 2016 was 7,174, accounting for 59.6% compared to the male enrolment of 4,853 students. This number has increased to 7,239 female students compared to 4,896 male students in 2017. Furthermore, the number of female graduates in 2016 was recorded at 1,597 from the four main universities in the country, which is doubled their male counterparts. Even though this number decreased to 1,520 female graduates in 2017 but still doubled from the male graduates of 858 in 2016 and 780 in 2017

(Brunei Darussalam Education Statistics 2013-2017, DPDR). With these figures in mind, it shows the increasing pattern of female students in education, which eventually leads to increasing participation of women's employment in the workforce. By foreseeing an increasing number of women employees, organisations in Brunei must start to raise and intensify awareness and act accordingly to cater to the needs of these employees at work as they are and will be a crucial factor contributing to the development of the country.

Evidence shows that there has been an increase in women's participation in the workforce and employment in Brunei. Thus, the country is the chosen context for this research. In particular, the fact that it is an Islamic state where the majority of the population is Muslim and embraces Islam as the official religion and way of life will benefit in contributing to the knowledge of literature. Furthermore, the increasing literature discusses rapid social change and pressure to change the social norms of how women are always viewed to put family first before career. With the increasing global competition to participate in the country's economic activity, Brunei is joining the bandwagon to enhance and ensure that the aspects of work-life balance synonym with women in employment are also being taken into serious consideration.

Some examples of Western countries researching women's progression at work indicated a regressive society being quite progressive. Authors like Bouteiller *et al.* (1972, p. 180) and Keiffer and Marry (1996) argued that when women were included in their comparison of Franco-German study, looking at crucial institutional components of the relationship between the educational system, the structure of the business and the sphere of industrial relation, they found the evidence to be quite the opposite. These authors concluded that while German men appeared to be better qualified and rewarded more than their French equivalents, the women from the same country faced devaluation in their qualifications compared to the French women

of the same equivalent. These authors also stated that comparing women's employment within this framework highlighted the difference in the economic structure between the two countries. And they found that a large majority of women in France are employed in the service and agricultural sectors, which are more significant compared to the women in Germany.

Apart from that, the concept of maternity leave provision has long been introduced worldwide. However, when it comes to linking women in employment with work-life balance, literature often focuses on work-life balance provisions provided by organisations, such as maternity leave (see Applebaum *et al.*, 2006; Barrett and Mayson, 2008) and paternity or paternal leave (see Ray *et al.*, 2010; Anxo and Boulin, 2006; Pocock *et al.*, 2013). With different duration and other flexibilities that come with different countries' maternity leave provisions, it is imperative to highlight how maternity leave provisions and work-life balance have evolved in Brunei.

4.6. The Maternity Leave Provision

Before the 1970s, Brunei had no maternity leave provision for working women. When it was first introduced, they were only allowed 28 days of maternity leave. In 1992, this was increased to 56 days, equivalent to 2 months of entitled maternity leave. On 8th January 2011, an official circular under the Prime Minister's Office was released with the consent of His Majesty the Sultan. The circular was to inform the amendment of an increase of 105 days of maternity leave in the Maternity Leave Regulation. The newly amended Maternity Leave Regulation 2011, effective January 2011, states that women officers and staff in the public sectors are eligible for 105 days of maternity leave. This regulation also applies to local and permanent residents' women workforce in the private sectors as an addition and amendment to the existing

Employment Order 2009. This extended duration of maternity leave has shown a positive and promising increase in continuing breastfeeding activities amongst working mothers. Thus, the duration of maternity leave was further increased to 105 days, equivalent to 3 months' paid leave.

In addressing the challenge with the increased maternity leave provision to 105 days in 2011, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports (hereon MYCS) also highlighted the need for Brunei to attach the importance of work-life balance to its policies. Examples of such policies are, giving special leave allowance for civil servants to take holidays with their family members and granting special leave to look after sick members of their family. Other examples include skills training such as time management, stress management, parenting and caring for family members. Furthermore, he hoped that with the endorsement of the 'Brunei Darussalam Statement on Ensuring Work-Family Balance', the East Asian Ministerial Meeting on Families (hereon EAMMF) would be able to reaffirm their commitments and contribute toward a better future for families. Efforts to strengthen the family institution with a family-friendly social environment have always been a part of the Sultanate's development agenda. It is also reflected in the nation's Vision 2035 and the National Development Plan (NDP), which is reviewed every five years. However, to date, no paternity leave provision is being introduced or given to any male government servants, but private companies have initiated this leave; some happened to be the selected organisations for this research.

4.7. The Maternity Leave and The Breastfeeding Initiatives

Before the 1970s, the breastfeeding culture in Brunei was seen as a positive involvement of mothers and children. However, since the 1970s, there has been an alarming decline in breastfeeding rates in Brunei due to economic development that required more women to

partake in the workforce and aggressive marketing of commercial infant formulas in the region. In addition, breastfeeding was neglected due to the economic boom after that, with just 28 days of entitled maternity leave. As a result, the formula milk industry aggressively entered the market as an alternative option for parents and mothers who decided to discontinue breastfeeding their babies.

Brunei took the first step to recognise the importance of breastfeeding activities among mothers by quoting the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recommendations. It promotes the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life to achieve optimal growth and continuing to introduce complementary feeding after that. The National Health and Nutrition Survey Status (hereon NHNSS) 's first cross-sectional survey was conducted between 1995 to 1996. Over one thousand children aged from birth to five years old were sampled. The result indicated that breastfeeding was initiated by 84% of mothers, of whom 76% of them discontinued the activity within the first four months. Only 6% went beyond five months (Taib, 2014). Following the recommendation from WHO and UNICEF and looking at the result of the first NHNSS survey, Brunei identified an urgent need to strengthen the breastfeeding culture to attain the same enthusiasm as in the 1960s. The trend of breastfeeding culture began to reverse in the efforts to raise breastfeeding awareness in the late 1990s. In 1999, a breastfeeding course was first organised in Brunei, attended by several prominent policymakers and administrators from the Ministry of Health. In 2001, the Ministry of Health endorsed the first National Breastfeeding Policy by adopting the UNICEF and WHO recommendation for exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of life.

Like the increasing establishment of mosques across the country and small prayer rooms in public buildings and offices, breastfeeding rooms are also mushrooming in line with the nation's rigorous efforts to normalise this breastfeeding culture among mothers. Such evidence can be seen through the government's continuous efforts to modify current policies and initiatives to support breastfeeding activities in the country.

4.7.1. The Policies and Initiatives

To date, no known research can support or disagree that the practices and initiatives introduced by the government have improved women's position in organisations. However, a study was done by Alhaji *et al.* (2017) to compare exclusive breastfeeding practice at six months between non-working mothers and working mothers. However, there are pieces of evidence based on the information shared by the participants of this study that showed increased support from their respective organisations to set up breastfeeding rooms at work, to cater their breastfeeding employees and support the country's initiatives for exclusive breastfeeding activities. Although, evidently, these women still face challenges in trying to change the perspectives of their colleagues to consider and accept breastfeeding in public or pumping breastmilk at work as a norm.

Moreover, the government also enacted its policies in public institutions such as the hospitals through another program adopted from the WHO and UNICEF, the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (hereon BFHI), which was designed to assist hospitals in maximising their ability to help mothers to breastfeed. This BFHI was initiated in all government hospitals in the country in 2000. The success in implementing this initiative was primarily because almost all hospitals in Brunei are government-owned.

Following the progress of this BFHI initiative, the Second NHNSS was carried out between March to August 2009 in health centres throughout the country to assess the impact of 10 years of breastfeeding promotion. This survey involved 1,300 children from birth to five years of age and resulted in having 98.7% of children being breastfed at some time in their lives, and 92.2% were breastfed within one hour of birth (Ministry of Health, 2009). It was found that half of the mothers had introduced formula milk which coincided with the 56 days of maternity leave given to working women. They chose to stop breastfeeding because of a perceived lack of breast milk and returning to work (Taib, 2014). However, the survey concluded that a 26% exclusive breastfeeding rate was recorded for infants at six months compared to the previous survey of only 12.4% of infants breastfed at six weeks. The encouraging result from this survey was compared to the first survey conducted, and a positive outlook was expected on raising awareness to build a breastfeeding culture. Unfortunately, no other indication or research is being conducted to investigate this finding further. Nevertheless, this finding showed a relationship between ongoing breastfeeding activities for working mothers and the duration of maternity leave, as findings were similar to research conducted by (Ogbuano *et al.*, 2011; Mirkovic, 2016).

Moreover, in the effort to increase awareness of breastfeeding and promote breastfeeding activities on a national level, a religious aspect of breastfeeding was also highlighted through understanding the benefits of breastfeeding, both medically and spiritually. A specific verse in the Holy Quran mentions the recommended duration for breastfeeding a child to be until two years, which becomes a benchmark for mothers when it comes to breastfeeding activities:

“Mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period] ...” (Surah al-Baqarah [Chapter 2], Verse 233)

A mandatory pre-marital breastfeeding counselling also started in 2009 as part of this effort. In addition, every year between 1 to 7 August, the World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is also held where various activities and promotions related to breastfeeding are organised. This WBW was first established in 1992 by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), endorsed by the WHO and UNICEF, and adopted in Brunei as one of the main drivers to promote breastfeeding and an opportunity to push forward the breastfeeding agenda into the public domain. Brunei has participated in the WBW since 1999 with various activities to promote breastfeeding throughout the week. And to date, up to 120 nations have participated in this annual event.

In 2013, the Ministry of Health (MOH) formally established a Maternal and Young Child Nutrition (MYCN) Taskforce following the recommendation of the 65th WHO, with one of the main aims to further improve the rates of exclusive breastfeeding in the country. Through this task force, more opportunities were opened to promote breastfeeding through education, research, training, and advocacy, as well as providing a supportive environment conducive to breastfeeding (Taib, 2014). In addition, aside from vigorously campaigning to introduce the work-life balance concept nationwide, Brunei has been actively providing breastfeeding and baby changing rooms at shopping malls to promote breastfeeding activities.

Additionally, a new assistance scheme was also introduced in April 2017. Through this scheme, the provision of free diapers for 12 months is given from the date of birth and a supply of breast pumps for mothers at every birth of a child for two years, subjecting to which period is longer. The then-Minister of Health stated that the objective of this scheme was for the betterment of society as a whole. He underlined that if the child's health is well taken care of from the early stages, it will guarantee better health by reducing the chances of contracting chronic diseases

and obesity. He also claimed that research had been conducted before the scheme was announced and approved by His Majesty the Sultan, whereby the need to give children the best opportunities in life and ensure that their welfare, nutrition, and health are taken care of. Furthermore, the free breast pumps given to mothers are an effort to motivate mothers to continue exclusive breastfeeding as it is known to give multiple benefits to a baby in terms of development and immunity from infections. The scheme was introduced and came from a revenue tax generated from the revised tax and excise duties on food and beverages with high sugar and sodium content.

The latest initiative introduced by the MOH is the publication of The Code of Practice 2019 for Health Workers on Ending Inappropriate Marketing of Foods and Related Products for Infants and Young Children (0-5 years) in Brunei Darussalam. This publication aims to provide essential information for health workers to abide by the ethical guidelines and code of conduct to prevent aggressive and inappropriate marketing of breast milk substitutes and related products, which is to be practised by all health workers in Brunei. Furthermore, by adopting the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (WHO, 1981) and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolutions, this Code also devises the same aim. It aspires to provide safe and adequate nutrition for infants and young children by having all health workers protect, promote and support breastfeeding. In doing so, these health workers can give clear, consistent and accurate information about the importance of breastfeeding, among other objectives mentioned in the Code. The Code also includes appendices listing the benefits of breastfeeding for infants and children, mothers and society (Ministry of Health, 2019).

Furthermore, a few researches specifically discuss the relationship between breastfeeding activities and how it impacts the work-life balance of working women. When women in employment become pregnant, they usually have different experiences at work with their changing maternal body and hormones that could affect how they do their work compared to their non-pregnant colleagues (Gatrell, 2010; Buzznell and Liu, 2007). Furthermore, these women have to experience and breastfeed their babies upon giving birth. By adopting the concept of the maternal body introduced by Gatrell (2013) through her study of employed women in the UK, this study aims to analyse how the women in Brunei conceptualise the meaning of work-life balance. This was done through their experience of changing the maternal body during pregnancy, breastfeeding activities, and a longer maternity leave duration. Thus, it is essential to understand how the concept of a work-life balance was first introduced in Brunei.

4.8. Work-Life Balance in Brunei

The idea of work-life balance, and its related issues, have been discussed and elaborated all over the world, academically, psychologically and socially, so there is no dearth of literature in the area. Lewis *et al.* (2011) argued that the work-life balance discourse began in the 1990s as a shift from work-family and family-friendly policies to work-life with their implicit focus on women, especially mothers. They also argued that the rise of work-life balance discourse impacts the changes in work and workplaces associated with the global competition and trends (Lewis *et al.*, 2011). Although the idea originated in western countries whereby several studies have been extensively carried out on work-life balance, for example, Voydandoff (2004) for the United States, Dex and Bond (2005) in the United Kingdom, Pocock (2013) in Australia, and even as far as in Asia by Malik, Saleem, and Ahmad (2010), Xiao and Cooke (2012) to mention a few. However, work-life balance is yet to receive the attention in Brunei, which

represents itself individually as a country that practices Islam as the main religion and Malay as the culture that shapes the society in how the people do things. The quest to balance workplace demands and non-work-related obligations of employees that have been a global issue to understand the different perspectives also needs to be highlighted from the perspective of this particular South-East Asian country.

In parts of Asia like Hong Kong and Japan, work and family issues are only beginning to gain attention due to the pressure of rapid social change and increasing global competition mixed with the work culture's long hours. This is mainly associated with the Pan-Confucian societies, including Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea (Lu and Cooper, 2015). However, for the tiny state of Brunei, the term work-life balance has only been 'introduced' in 2012 during the 5th EAMMF hosted in Brunei with the theme 'Ensuring Work-Family Balance'. After this meeting, Brunei adopted the Brunei Darussalam Statement, which acknowledged that work and family imbalance could lead to social, psychological, and physical problems, family instability, and reduced productivity in the workplace. However, the 2012 meeting also highlighted concerns that insufficient policy for assisting workers in balancing work and family responsibilities could cause work and family conflict.

During this event also, the Permanent Secretary of the MYCS stated that managing work-family balance is a global challenge faced by the family institution. With the rise in working mothers due to rapid socio-economic development, their commitments and contributions to such development have undeniably changed their roles from full-time mothers and homemakers to professional maternal women. However, despite the changing roles, not all working parents can spend most of their time with their families, such as taking care of the children, thus the reason why Brunei is initiating the work-life balance concept action.

Additionally, the MYCS admitted the importance of balance between family interests and work as a family institution is the basic unit that plays a significant role in strengthening and adopting a resilient society that is highly integrated. Under the Special Committee of the Institution of Family, Women, and Children, there has been a strategic emphasis on the action plan to enhance unity and family welfare through the development of women. With the Ministry's initiations and supervision, proactive actions have been taken to introduce this work-life balance concept to its organisation. One of the most visible impacts of work-life balance awareness in the region is the recognition of National Family Day, which has been celebrated on a national level on the first Sunday of May annually since it was officially declared in 2012. Its 9th year running this year happened to fall during the month of Ramadan, which is the fasting month for the Muslim community.

Nevertheless, previous activities carried the same slogan and theme of 'My Family My Aspiration', which among the objectives of such event was to commemorate the importance of the family unit and strengthen and improve the well-being of families by bringing them closer together through collaborative programmes. Since Brunei is a close-knit society that is distinctly communal and cohesive, with a national philosophy embedded in every Bruneian, it helps to continue to uphold the institution of family as the dominant aspect of its culture. Through these activities, a platform is created to elevate the role of the family in strengthening relations that could contribute to the positive and effective empowerment of the nation's development via its community members. It is also believed that it could effectively instil greater awareness of the importance of family institutions in the development of the community at large.

Moreover, the Deputy Minister of the MYCS mentioned how vital it is to have a stable and loving family as the best environment to bring up children. Article 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasises the right of children to be raised in a family environment where both parents have the primary responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. She also revealed that research and studies have shown that depriving children of a loving family environment causes lasting damage to their intelligence, emotional well-being, and even their physical stature (Official Speech, Deputy Minister of MYCS). Families, especially parents, play a fundamental role in forming children's values. The ability to cope with and adjust to life problems and demands is based upon the psychological foundations of early family experience. Therefore, a family institution should be the first line of support in the community. A supportive family institution also represents the pillar of national development, strength, and resilience of the society and country that must be preserved and strengthened. This evidence further stresses the need for a thorough understanding and research concerning work-life balance, as the Minister of MYCS admitted that there had been no valid data collected about work-life balance to be shared nationally. He indicated that the increased cases of domestic violence, child abuse, and marital problems could directly connect to understanding work-life balance. In 2018, the Community Development Department (*Jabatan Pembangunan Masyarakat – JAPEM*) (JAPEM website) received 32 cases of domestic violence, 15 cases of child abuse, and 36 cases related to family and marital problems. This further supports the need to develop more research on work-life balance in Brunei's context.

Furthermore, examples that have been apparent from all over the world indicated that creating a family-friendly environment should enable members of society to harmonise further and strengthen their work-family balance. This includes sharing the responsibilities of raising children and supporting families at a social level. Brunei is not excused from having the same,

if not a similar, goal in dealing with work-life balance issues. Therefore, Brunei has considered a conducive environment and regulations in the workplace to promote awareness of the work-life balance notion. In 2014, as a result of this initiative, the MYCS collaborated with the Community Development Department and the Civil Service Institute (*Institut Perkhidmatan Awam – IPA*) to conduct and introduce various programmes and workshops to promote work-life balance, such as the Work and Family Balance Programme. This workshop was launched to involve both men and women employees by focusing on many significant issues such as parenting and communication skills, time and financial management. Some of the workshop's objectives were aimed at obtaining effective rules to enhance confidence in performing their duties and responsibilities. It was also aimed to make a clear conclusion and understanding of the meaning of success and happiness in a balanced lifestyle. Based on the feedback from this 4-day workshop, all participants agreed that it benefited them in obtaining the goals set earlier and recommended that such workshops be offered to more employees with fewer participants to ensure effective engagement between facilitator and participants. They also recommended that such workshops run longer than four hours as they agreed that the workshops gave them a clear understanding of managing their work and family lives. Unfortunately, there has been no continuation from this workshop recorded since then. However, the issue of work-life balance has been highlighted in the State Council Members Meeting and raised by a council member indicating that mental health issues have received attention in the past years. This showed the importance of identifying the source of pressure experienced by women in making adjustments to balance their work and family.

During the 6th EAMMF held in Korea in 2014, further factors to contribute meaningfully to the community, society and national development were recognised. It was indicated that the influential impact of a cohesive and resilient family in shaping future generations with great

appreciation of family values should be instilled at an early age through the school curriculum. It was also agreed that such impact should be present in the 3-month National Youth Service Programme in which the youth participate. Based on this meeting, we recognised that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential to enhance the well-being of families and societies. It was also agreed that the shared responsibility of parents is crucial for the full participation of women in society. In a joint statement held by the ministers and heads of delegates responsible for family policy, they expressed concerns that the family-friendly environment is not yet fully established in society. This is due to insufficient family-work policies, long working hours, and inflexible organisational culture at the workplace.

From these statements and initiatives, it was apparent that Brunei is heading towards the inclusiveness of the idea of work-life balance. However, this can only be done through the commitment from higher authorities to executing initiatives that could lead to a better work environment that can be a branch of the support system placed to cater to the employees, particularly the female workforce. A recent addition to this initiative is a bi-monthly email circulation from the Government Information under the E-Government National Centre (EGNC) to tackle issues relating to mental health and work-life balance by promoting and disseminating posters both in Malay and English Languages designed by the Counselling Section, Civil Service Department. Examples of these posters are shown in Figure 4.4 below.



Figure 4.4. Bimonthly Factoids emailed to all government servants
Source: Personal work email

4.9. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the Bruneian context of Brunei that is useful for this study. Elements of the historical, geographical, and governance nature of Brunei were discussed as an introduction to the context. Furthermore, the culture of Brunei was discussed fully to capture how the lives of the Bruneian women for this study were shaped accordingly based on how things are done and accepted, culturally and religiously. This chapter also discussed the impact of Bruneian women in increasing education and labour force participation. It explained what has been done by the government and organisations and what more can be done to cater for these working women once they enter the workforce. The revised

Maternity Leave Provision that was amended in 2011 was also elaborated in connection with the supportive campaigning of breastfeeding activities that are widely marketed to make breastfeeding culture a societal norm that could be accepted in the organisational context. The idea of work-life balance in Brunei is also discussed in this context that relates to the amended maternity leave provision and the policies and initiatives that are endorsed and authorised by the government to raise awareness and give support to increase breastfeeding activities among working mothers. It is helpful to know this background information to get an overview picture of the Bruneian context to understand the phenomenon of change in the perspectives of work and life balance through the lens of working mothers, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5: INTERVIEW DATA FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will present an analysis of the findings from 18 interviews carried out during the fieldwork. Initially, I was broadly researching Work-Life Balance (WLB) and maternity leave. Moreover, the initial interview question was designed to find out the participants' daily routines. However, some of the participants' reactions to the initial interview question led them to share their breastfeeding or pumping at work experiences. These breastfeeding or pumping at work experiences were a key theme that turned out to be the centre topic of discussion during the interviews, i.e. how a continuing activity commonly associated with the 'life' domain was managed in the workplace. As indicated by previous authors, pumping at work is an important topic (Witters-Green, 2003; Hopfl, 2000; Longhurst, 2001; Gatrell, 2008; and Hausman, 2004) through different aspects and perspectives. Pumping at work simply means women who had gone through maternity leave and returned to work while still breastfeeding their babies and pumping their breastmilk while at work. For this pumping activity to happen, the women need time, space, and technologies to ensure that they can cope with work demands as an employee and life as a breastfeeding mother.

Six themes have been identified from the interviews that indicated how these pumping at work activities shaped these participants' work experiences. It begins with the context of maternal bodies, which includes the pregnancy experiences of participants. Next, the idea of changing priorities and adjustments post-maternity leave will be discussed. Then, it will explore the support and the lack of support for pumping mothers and how it shaped their pumping activities at work. The following section will examine the use of organisational space identified by

participants as pumping venues. And lastly, the impact of the technological advancement of a ‘pumping machine’ will be investigated.

5.2. Maternal Bodies Context

In Chapter 2, Gatrell’s (2003) concept of maternal bodies was introduced. This concept was established within the feminist philosophical stance (Walker 2002), which embraces all aspects of women’s embodied potential for reproduction. As Acker (1990) asserted that this ‘maternal bodies’ concept exerts their ability to procreate through being pregnant, tendency to breastfeed and childcaring, which invoke organisational tendencies to ‘exclude’ women. Gatrell (2013) also evaluated the interrelations between the pregnant body and employment from three different disciplinary perspectives. First, she argued that one of the causes of negative consequences in the materiality of women’s maternal bodies is in the context of paid work. As maternity becomes visible through the growing pregnant bodies of women at work, Gatrell (2013) argued that organisational commitment to mothers is also reduced. This sub-section will examine the experience of being pregnant at work and how one participant, Dafiyah, copes with her pregnancy at work.

5.2.1. Pregnant Bodies at Work

At the time of the interview, Casey and Catherina, both from Organisation C and Dafiyah from Organisation D, were currently pregnant. However, an extensive account was only shared by Dafiyah, who was also the only participant who did not have any breastfeeding experience to be shared. Dafiyah is an Assistant Officer who joined Organisation D in 2008. She has one child and was pregnant during the interview. Unlike the twelve other participants, Dafiyah had no maid to help. The family were living with her husband’s parents. Her husband was a Navy

personnel who she claimed to have flexible working time. Being the only participant in this study who did not have any breastfeeding experience, Dafiyah shared her struggles with breastfeeding because of several factors which included not having any support from her immediate family members and having no extensive knowledge about breastfeeding.

At the beginning of her interview, Dafiyah shared her personal story about her family and disclosed that she was currently pregnant:

“I have to tell the HR because of the National Day Parade... Because everyone has to participate, right? So, I have to inform them that I won't be able to participate in the parade due to my condition (of being pregnant)” (I-12 Dafiyah – Organisation D – first-time mother)

From this statement, Dafiyah had to inform the Human Resources Department about her pregnancy so that she did not need to participate in the annual National Day Parade. Aside from being excluded from participating in national events, Dafiyah also mentioned the ‘treatment’ she is getting from her work colleagues since they know of her pregnancy.

“And then like... I get kind of... like a special treatment (from my colleagues) ... like people tend to...like...respect my morning sickness and nausea... so let's say I have one of those morning sicknesses kicking in... they would like, stay away from eating near me... cos I have that kind of food aversion that I cannot stand the smell of food...” (I-12 Dafiyah – Organisation D)

Dafiyah shared the ‘treatment’ and ‘respect’ that her colleagues gave her to ensure they did not eat near her due to her morning sickness, nausea and food aversion. Her colleagues also offered her any food cravings that she wanted to fulfil.

“Yeah... and also...like... in terms of food (cravings), they will tend to prioritise me, asking me what do I feel like eating... like that... and like if I crave for the food that they eat, I would just ask for it (from them) ...” (I-12 Dafiyah – Organisation D)

She also added that since everyone knew that she was pregnant, even her female boss would remind her to lessen her workload and no heavy lifting to be done by her due to her condition:

“Alhamdulillah (Praise be to God) okay... People like being tolerant. Like my boss did say, ‘don’t give (me) too much work’...” (I-12 Dafiyah – Organisation D)

This tolerance from her boss is also expanded for her to start her work at 8.30 in the morning because she would have to rest in the prayer room by lying down when she arrived before she could start working. She also mentioned that she must have breakfast before starting work due to her pregnancy and morning sickness. Her boss tolerates this ‘flexibility’:

“Alhamdulillah boss is... you know... understanding... Cause like sometimes it takes a while for us to start our work... I have to have my breakfast first soon as I arrive in the office... so 8.30...or 8.45 (in the morning) then we start working...” (I-12 Dafiyah – Organisation D)

Aside from discussing pregnant bodies at work, a past study by Witz (2000) found that maternal bodies are treated as sites of negotiation, which are defined through social and cultural attitudes and practices. Furthermore, Annandale and Clark (1996) also indicated that the context of maternal bodies is culturally defined, which challenges workplace norms since working mothers are commonly associated with leakage and abjection. Therefore, the following themes will discuss post-pregnancy bodies that involve breastfeeding and pumping activities at work. However, an exception will be Dafiyah from Organisation D because she was the only

participant with no breastfeeding experience. She explained there were a few reasons why she did not breastfeed her daughter:

“I didn't breastfeed my daughter...So, she uses the formula milk only... And, I think you want to know why. Yeah...so it's because of the environment. And also, the people surrounding...like my family. Like... people keep on pressuring me, don't have to give breastmilk... just use formula milk... because it will be hard when you return to work... and also, my knowledge, I didn't google much on breastfeeding. Because I thought it's as simple as that. I thought wrong... And then, like, my husband when he saw me struggling... he was like... ok, stop (breastfeeding)...” – I-12 Dafiyah – Organisation D – first-time mother

This statement shows that Dafiyah had an unsupportive environment, including her husband and family members when it came to breastfeeding. She was also pressured into feeding her baby using formula milk because it ‘will be hard’ post-maternity leave. However, she also added that she did not expect it to be this hard with her limited breastfeeding knowledge. She explained further the challenges that she faced on her breastfeeding journey that she compared the ‘pain’ of breastfeeding to giving birth:

“Yeah. It was really challenging! Like, for me, giving birth was as painful as breastfeeding! I actually cried when I tried to breastfeed my daughter...because I have sensitive nipples... I have inverted nipples, and they're not normal like other breastfeeding moms... And my daughter, she did not know how to suck... so it hurts! And the people around me, they didn't support me too... so I made the decision to ease my work... and I can't take the pain... it was the most stressful for me...” – I-12 Dafiyah – Organisation D – first-time mother

Aside from having no time to breastfeed or pump, Dafiyah also made a financial analysis between direct feeding and formula. She claimed that she would have to spend more to buy

formula milk. However, she did not resort to providing the cheapest or the most expensive options. Instead, she went for the in-between the two options.

“Like, there’s always no time (to breastfeed or pump)... so yeah, if we opt for formula milk, it’s easier. But from the financial perspective, we have to spend more on formula milk... like for me, I don’t want to give a cheaper brand... and not going to go for the expensive one... I choose the one that’s affordable and in the between these two...” – I-12 Dafiyah – Organisation D – first-time mother

This statement shows that Dafiyah’s decision not to breastfeed her daughter was affected by several factors. These factors include receiving no support from her husband and family, being pressured into switching to formula milk to ‘ease’ her return to work, having inverted nipples, and having no time to pump. She also weighed the financial impact of increased spending on formula milk. Nonetheless, she prioritised her emotional and physical well-being over her financial ‘burden’.

5.2.3. Professional versus Maternal Bodies

Discussion in Chapter 2 indicated that many employed mothers who were previously breastfeeding tend to give up breastfeeding upon returning to work after maternity leave due to the prospects of managing their lactating bodies in the workplace (Gatrell, 2011). Extensive accounts of breastfeeding were shared by participants on their pumping activities at work. Some participants were comfortable pumping openly at their desks, while others preferred using closed and private spaces to pump at work.

An example of this is Arianna, who is a Contracts Engineer at Organisation A and who is also a first-time mother of an 8-month-old baby. Her family lives on their own and away from their

parents because, in the context of Brunei and its close-knit family, most parents would prefer that their children would stay to live with them after they got married. However, there is evidence from this study that half of the participants chose to live separately from their parents, and Arianna is an example of a participant who made this choice (to live away and separate from her parents and in-laws). She also had a maid to help her out with housework and taking care of the baby. Arianna and her husband travelled together to work at the same organisation. She followed a strict pumping schedule both at work and home. She also pumped diligently at work and used the organisation's designated pumping room when available. Even though Arianna was comfortable pumping in private at work, she did not like her colleagues discussing it with others. She mentioned how 'unprofessional' it was for her colleagues to inform an acquaintance that she had gone out to pump when that information should not be shared recklessly:

“The thing is I found out she told the other person, who is another guy I am dealing with professionally (that I have gone out to pump), so I see that's quite unprofessional, which annoys me. There's no understanding of my privacy. That is awkward...” (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A -first-time mother)

This nuance of the professional role that Arianna portrays as a working employee is different from the idea of the maternal body as discussed in the literature (see Gatrell, 2013; Frone, 2003). The roles that individuals adopt from self-defined boundaries can, in turn, serve to create behaviourally (how an individual behaves), relational (with whom an individual interacts), affective (how an individual feels), spatial (an individual's physical local) and temporal (how an individual uses time) boundaries (Frone, 2003).

Similarly, Arianna considers it ‘unprofessional’ for her colleagues to inform another guy she was dealing professionally with that she had gone out to pump. She deliberated that the information being shared about her going off to pump a ‘private’ matter and should not be disclosed to those with whom she deals on a professional level.

5.3. Shifting Priorities and Adjustments Post-Maternity Leave

Participants from all organisations - Arianna, Badriyah, Casey, Catherina, Daisy, Diana, Daniella and Dafiyah explained how they adjusted to work post-maternity leave and how their priorities changed. For example, Arianna in Organisation A and Daisy and Dafiyah in Organisation D used the term ‘changing priorities’ in adjusting to their new role as breastfeeding mothers. The participants also mentioned how their priorities have shifted after they have given birth. In this context, participants prioritised feeding their baby exclusively over work:

“But for me as a mother, my priority is to feed my daughter...” (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A – first-time mother)

Daisy and Darini in Organisation D also stated that their priorities changed after giving birth and preferred to put family first:

“But I have this one principle... family comes first...” (I-6 Daisy – Organisation D – mother of two)

“...all my priorities have changed...ever since I gave birth... and I don’t really mind... maybe I think it’s a mother thing maybe...” (I-10 Darini – Organisation D – first-time mother)

The statements show that the participants adjust their roles as working mothers at work post-maternity leave.

Other participants, Badriyah in Organisation B and Daniella in Organisation D, used the word ‘sacrifices’ when explaining the changing of priorities at work. Badriyah claimed that she has to make the sacrifice in terms of putting a stop to her work demands and making sure that her family’s time starts after 6 pm:

“I think it's all sacrifice.... And then, knowing what your priority is... So, at the end of the day, we have to sacrifice. That's why we come back home at 6 o'clock. After six (o'clock), there should be no work tasks anymore...” (I-13 Badriyah – Organisation B – mother of three)

Daniella, on the other hand, talked about making the sacrifices by turning down some work because giving birth and adapting to new roles as a wife and a mother is a rewarding and satisfying experience that she wants to enjoy in taking care of her baby in return:

“Amazing actually (talking about giving birth experience) And I know it's sometimes rewarding you have to, you know, sacrifice, turn down some things just because of this (referring to her baby) ...” (I-8 Daniella – Organisation D – first-time mother)

Participants from Organisation C also mentioned the same sentiment of sacrifices. However, they used the word ‘making choices’ in their interviews:

“...choices will always come in your life... you just need to prioritise what you want now rather than you feel regretful in the future...” (I-16 Casey – Organisation C – mother of four)

“...because I know I need to take care of my kids...and I’ve chosen, and I know the consequences, right?... I believe you kind of have to cut off and say I’m stopping now, I’m going home, shutting down and go home. So, it’s a matter of your own... I don’t think anyone would just hand it to you and say, ‘oh, go now... it’s you...it’s you... ..”
(I-18 Catherina – Organisation C – first-time mother)

“(in agreement with her colleagues) it’s up to you to decide whether you want to work or you want to be going home” (I-17 Cecilia – Organisation C – mother of two)

The participants from this Organisation C also continued stating that choosing whether to continue doing work or to ‘switch off’ their work role when the time has come means that making choices is eventually a personal decision that one has to make between work and life roles:

“So, people who whine about it, is either you can’t...you can’t switch off and differentiate it. I think for a lot of mothers, it’s switching off...” (I-18 Catherina – Organisation C – first-time mother)

“... like I’m giving it my all when I’m eight hours or six hours at work, don’t disturb me right... and then when I’m home, I’m switching off work... It’s just...you you make a choice...you make a choice... that I know if I don’t reply to the emails, it would mean tomorrow. And people who are depending on that would say... ‘oh why she’s so slow’, but I’ve made my choice. I’m going home.” (I-16 Casey – Organisation C – mother of four)

Another sub-theme of ‘sacrifices’ would be forgoing the desire to climb the corporate ladder or promotion to concentrate on the baby. Arianna shared this in Organisation A and Diana in Organisation D. In one organisation; ranking time means that each employee can progress based on their yearly performance. Ranking happens at the end of each year to ‘rate’ where employees stand amongst their peers based on how much they have achieved according to their

Goals and Performance Appraisals (GPA), which is the target versus the actual performance. Ranking time also shows how much the employees have progressed against set business goals and how much they have contributed to the organisation. One of the participants, Arianna, stated that her ranking got lower because of her three-month maternity leave. However, it has a considerable impact on her progression in the system. That is what the potential head of department (HOD) of a function sees, apart from reports from the current head of department (HOD) or supervisor or own manager:

“I found out after my maternity leave is my ranking time. And when you rank, they don’t consider the three months as your maternity leave, so it seems like I’m not doing much work. I think that’s all the core company here. If I know that’s not going to happen, I might just as well not take my maternity leave and just as well do my work. What I’m going to do, I found out that based on my ranking is way way lower, and at the same time I need to maintain my performance... so how do you choose?”
(I-1 Arianna – Organisation A - first-time mother)

Despite losing her ranking time, which could affect her career progression, Arianna added that her priority has shifted since becoming a mother. She admitted that she would not compete in climbing the corporate ladder and gave that opportunity to her husband instead. This decision was partly because of her experience when she was little that she felt her parents, particularly her mother, were too busy with her work that she would only spend time with her mother on weekends. So, she does not want to repeat that experience for her daughter.

“I told my husband that I have to decide. I think these few years I’m not even going to think about promotion whatsoever, just going to do it, you know how private sectors are, you’ve to perform. As long as it’s enough for us, it doesn’t matter anymore, and I think he should be fine with it. He’s the one focusing on trying to provide for the family” (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A - first-time mother)

Another participant, Diana, indicated that she chose family over career advancement and reflected that advancement was not her priority because more significant responsibilities mean that there will be less time for her kids.

“(career advancement) That's not my priority... if you hold a higher position, means that there are more responsibilities... for now, my priority... family comes first” (I-9 Diana – Organisation D - mother of three)

Another participant, Diana in Organisation D, used the word ‘selfish’ when explaining her shifted priorities. She mentioned feeling ‘guilty’ for arriving late to work and going home early, but she said that work is endless. When she had to choose her family over work, she noticed that some of her colleagues would not understand her decision to leave early:

“I used to feel guilty...like... I don't know... because probably I was always the one who came to the office late and went home earlier than the rest... so I tend to feel guilty, but sometimes you just... eh, who cares?... my family is important... But, yeah. I think, even though if they think they're... like they don't understand like, sometimes I have to be selfish...” (I-9 Diana – Organisation D – mother of two)

Arianna in Organisation A also stated the same sentiment of ‘guilt’ as a personal emotional history. She shared that she had the experience of spending less time with her working mother when she was younger and did not want the same experience to befall her daughter. So, she made her experience a motivating factor to ‘choose’ to go home on time and prioritise her family first.

“... now I already have a kid, I really have to get back home, because the amount of time I spent with her is not a lot and I do not like that. I remember I didn't want her to

experience how I experienced it. Because I remember my mom who worked in Bandar and my dad works in KB, so we are with my dad. So, we had to wait for her (the mother) and we only saw her at 10 or 11 pm, we didn't see her in the morning. So, all of us would sit in the living room and wait for her from Monday to Saturday. We only get to see her on Sunday, and she would be exhausted by then. So, I didn't want her (the daughter) to go through the same thing, and I didn't want to miss her growing up and everything..." (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A – first-time mother)

These statements showed that participants used different terms to explain their shifting priorities post-maternity leave. Aside from changing their priorities and adapting to their new role as breastfeeding and pumping mother, there is also a sub-theme of 'changes' in the form of daily routines among the participants.

5.3.1. Different Experiences of Returning to Work Post-Maternity Leave

Participants from Organisation D, Daisy and Damia, whom both have two children, reported that they experienced differences between their first and second post-maternity adjustment. They both claimed that during their first time coming back to work after maternity leave, it was hard:

"...for my first baby coming back to work is very hard. I remember I cried. The first day. The first two days. Because people call me, "Ohh, your baby's crying. I don't know what to do. She doesn't want to feed on the bottle". (I-6 Daisy – Organisation D – Mother of two)

"so it's different... between my first and my second (post-maternity leave)... during my first, I focus on my baby...". (I-11 Damia – Organisation D – Mother of two)

However, for the second time post-maternity leave, coming back to work felt a bit more 'relaxed' for Daisy, and Damia 'couldn't wait to get back to work':

“...But with my second baby, I’m a bit relaxed...”(I-6 Daisy – Organisation D – Mother of two)

“...when it’s my second (post-maternity leave) ... a month before work resumes, I was already thinking about work... like... what to do?... and then I start to switch on my laptop, checking my emails... I don’t know... like I miss it (work)... I think I am more pumped (about work) after my second maternity leave” (I-11 Damia – Organisation D – Mother of two)

These statements show that both participants had the experience of returning to work previously during their first post-maternity leave. However, the first time around, they did not know what to expect and felt it harder to transition back to work with an additional role as a mother. However, their coping mechanism improved for the second post-maternity leave as they already knew what to expect and could transition more easily.

However, for first-time mothers like Arianna, she had difficulty adjusting to her new role post-maternity leave. She made a comparison between her work before maternity and after maternity, whereby she was able to work without interruption. Nevertheless, now with her new role and responsibility, she claimed that she had to plan her time at work according to her scheduled pumping time every 3 hours. The challenge that she faced was the disruption of her work routine which made it harder for her to recall back to what she was doing before she left to pump:

“I pump every 3 hours... My work...compared to before maternity, I can work without disruption, whereas now I need to plan accordingly. By the time you finished pumping and took your seat, you’ve got to think, what was I doing? It takes up a lot of my time to start all over again. There’s always a disruption.” (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A – first-time mother)

Another first-time mother, Darini, also found it hard to transition into her role as a breastfeeding mother at work. She claimed that her focus is divided when she is at work. Moreover, she compared when she was pregnant and after she gave birth.

“...the focus is different already...previously when I was pregnant, I can focus on my work...now, with a baby... like... the focus is like... divided...” (I-10 Darini – Organisation D – first-time mother)

She also claimed that it took her some time to return to how her focus used to be prior to giving birth and that it took her a year to be able to manage her work task and pumping activity:

“(my boss) she understands my focus is somewhere else, she said. But she hopes that like, my focus will be back to normal. So that I can deliver more to my work. So, like... so far, like after months, and I think this is almost a year (post-maternity leave)... I think I can manage already...” (I-10 Darini – Organisation D – first-time mother)

From these statements, it can be seen that there is a difference in experience in terms of coming back to work between first-time mothers and not first-time mothers. First-time mothers tend to find it harder to adjust to the new role at work, with ‘disruptions’ making it harder for them to concentrate on work due to thinking about their baby or planning their scheduled pumping time. However, mothers who have had the experience previously tend to cope much better with the second post-maternity leave that they found to be more ‘relaxed’ and even ‘missing work’.

5.4. Breastfeeding and Breast Pumping Activities

There was a range of breastfeeding and breast pumping experiences, from six first-time mothers in the sample to the rest of the participants with two or more children. All but one participant shared their personal experiences, especially on pumping at work post-maternity leave. The first-time mothers indicated that they were still breastfeeding their children and pumping at work post-maternity leave. While the rest of the participants shared their breastfeeding and pumping experiences when discussing maternity leave. Several factors contributed to these participants being comfortable with breastfeeding and breast pumping at work. As discussed in Chapter 4, one factor would be the nation's push and support for increased breastfeeding activities among mothers through the increased number of maternity leave provision from 56 days to 105 days in 2011.

5.4.1. Pumping Activities at Work Post-Maternity Leave

The changes in maternity leave provision from 56 days to 105 days in 2011 were driven by the nation's effort to increase breastfeeding activities among mothers. A study by Alhaji *et al.* (2017) found that exclusive breastfeeding prevalence at six months postpartum increased from 29% in 2010 to 41% in 2013. This study also found the most significant increases among employed mothers at work. The more extended maternity leave thus created a better opportunity for the women employees to continue breastfeeding post-maternity leave, provided necessary support was available for them.

In sharing their experiences of undergoing maternity leave, most participants included their experiences of breastfeeding and pumping their breastmilk at work as part of the 'process of adapting back to work' after taking a break of 3-month maternity leave. Six participants were first-time mothers (Arianna, Bella, Catherina, Daniella, and Darini), and out of the six, only one participant, Dafiya, had no breastfeeding experience. Out of the 18 participants, twelve

have had breastfeeding experience, with seven (Aisyah, Belinda, Casey, Cecelia, Daisy, Dana, and Damia) still active with their pumping at work. This is important to understand whether being first-time mothers make a difference in the process of adapting back to work post-maternity leave.

5.4.2. Enthusiasm for Pumping

Being enthusiastic and ‘comfortable’ about pumping at work varied among participants. However, there were three passionate participants; Arianna and Aisyah from Organisation A and Dahlia from Organisation D. Their enthusiasm and keenness could be seen where Arianna and Aisyah had a dedicated pumping schedule that they adhered to when they were at work:

“...as a mother, my priority is to feed my daughter...because when I am at work, it’s taking 20-30 minutes (to pump) every few hours, so I’m not always on my seat...” (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A)

“...so now I pump everywhere I go, especially at my cubicle, in the car I pump sometimes if I couldn’t find any place, and I needed a peace of mind, I just went to the car park where my car parks and pump in the car. That’s the life of a pumping mom...” (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A)

The statements show that both participants claimed breast pumping is an essential part of the maternal body that is integrated into their daily working life.

5.4.3. History of Pumping

In integrating breastfeeding and breast pumping into the daily life of a working mother, Dahlia from Organisation D offered a history of how pumping evolved in her workplace. Dahlia is an Assistant Executive Director who started working in 2007. She is a mother of three children

aged 9, 7 and 5 respectively. She shared an extensive account of how the breastfeeding and pumping scenario changed over the course of ten years. She had the experience of fully breastfeeding all her children despite the challenges she faced at work such as having no designated breastfeeding room for employees and fewer pumping mothers at work when she started pumping milk during her early days as a breastfeeding mother. Her statement of ‘breastfeeding my 3 kids was the highlight of my early parenting’ showed that breastfeeding and pumping activities were embedded into her working life activities. She stated that it started from the idea of breastfeeding being quite odd ten years ago to now, when it is more widely accepted. She mentioned breastfeeding was ‘not a common sight’ and there were ‘not many choices of pumping machine available’, which made pumping activities at that time ‘obvious’ and ‘loud’ when she pumped at her desk in an open office concept environment:

“This was ten years ago... so they were saying that was very little support (for breastfeeding mothers) ... I was pumping, and at that time there was only madela freestyle or what (breast pumping device), so I was using Avent Manual (another brand of breastfeeding device). This was open, and this floor was open (explaining the office setup). I remember my desk was somewhere here. This was all open, but there were not many of us. Then my colleague at the other end of the hall was asking, chat MSN at that time, ‘Dahlia, are you pumping?’ I said ‘Yes!’. ‘It’s too loud’ she said...cause it was manual, right?” (I-5 Dahlia – Organisation D)

When Dahlia had her second baby, she felt she was quite ‘comfortable’ with pumping at the desk even though there was an encounter with her male boss who did not know she was pumping at her desk:

“Then, I moved up (floor level) when I had my second child. I was already quite comfortable pumping at my desk, and at that time, I remember one of my bosses came

to see me; he got the shock of his life. I was pumping at my desk ... and he was like... shocked but acted as if he didn't know..." (I-5 Dahlia – Organisation D – mother of three)

Dahlia then shared her experience with her third baby, whereby she considered herself a 'pro' at pumping because she would pump at her desk most of the time.

"But when it was my third child...I feel like a pro already, and most of the time I pumped at my desk" (I-5 Dahlia –Organisation D – mother of three)

These statements showed that Dahlia's experience of breastfeeding and breast pumping has evolved after having these three children. This is supported by Aisyah from Organisation A, who is a mother of three and pumped at her desk when she needed to and she could not leave her table to pump away when it was time to pump, even though her organisation provided a designated breastfeeding room. She has a 10-month-old baby who was still breastfeeding. She had a maid to help her clean the house and take care of her older children. It is noted that during the interview, she also pumped by using a nursing cover while sharing her breastfeeding experience. Due to their breastfeeding and pumping milk commitments, Aisyah and Arianna are pumping buddies at work. She shared her extensive experience finding available spaces at work and investing in more advanced breast pumps to pump her breastmilk.

"I have a handsfree pump which I invested in, and a portable rather small breast pump. I have to emphasise that it's quite costly. It is an argument between my husband why I do need to invest in such expensive breast pump and me and handsfree cup..." (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A – mother of three)

The statement shows that Aisyah's previous experience of breastfeeding and breast pumping her other children made her aware and knowledgeable about the different breast pumps and their functions. The theme 'pumping machine' will be discussed further later.

5.4.4. Towards Normalising Pumping at Work

Previously, it was not considered 'nice' to publicly direct-feed your baby even though you have a nursing cover. The generation gap was evident in terms of accepting this natural bond-activity between mother and baby because usually, the older parents were the ones who would complain to the mother to 'hide' the direct feeding. Dahlia from Organisation D stated this based on her experience breastfeeding her baby 'openly':

"I remember when I first started breastfeeding outside, outside your room, in your own house, you are being asked to go inside by my mother or mother-in-law" (I-5 Dahlia – Organisation D - mother of three)

When describing about her pumping experience at work, Dahlia expressed her 'happiness' upon seeing the changes in attitudes towards breastfeeding and pumping at work as she recalled what it used to be before. She was 'so happy' that most of her female colleagues were also pumping at their desks:

"I was like so happy cause... Now I see most if not all my colleagues are pumping at their desk..." (I-5 Dahlia – Organisation D – mother of three)

From this statement, other participants from the same organisation shared experience of pumping together or seeing other colleagues doing their pumping activities at work. Increasing pumping mothers at work became one of the drivers that changed pumping at work activities

among female employees at Organisation D. Dahlia even compared pumping at work activities to a routine like drinking water to indicate how 'normal' pumping breastmilk is for breastfeeding mothers.

“And I think it’s because most people I see pump at their desk because you can’t leave your work, right? (laughter). So, they just... I think it has become part of your normal routine already... It’s like you’re drinking...” (I-5 Dahlia –Organisation D - mother of three)

It is possible that Dahlia’s mention of ‘cannot leave work’ is also an indication of why these pumping mothers opted for pumping at their desks instead of anywhere else to do the pumping. Instead of going away from their desks to do the pumping elsewhere, for example, in the pantry room, these pumping mothers just opted to stay at their desks and pump while at the same time doing their work.

Dahlia stated that everyone was ‘okay’ with the situation as there was no reaction from their male and female non-pumping colleagues upon seeing and witnessing their pumping colleagues at their designated desks.

“We don't have (a) breastfeeding room, but I can tell you that everyone here is so comfortable pumping at their desk” (I-5 Dahlia – Organisation D - mother of three)

Based on this statement, it could be that Dahlia’s perception of her colleagues being ‘okay’ with the pumping activities is due to the ‘no reaction’ given by these colleagues. However, it does not imply that everyone *really* was ‘okay’ with it.

In contrast, Aisyah from Organisation A shared a different sentiment regarding the ‘acceptance’ of the pumping scenario when comparing her previous and current employers:

“I was with XXX, another company. I was the Procurement Manager, so being a boss, I’ve my room, so no problem. I don’t need a cup. I just basically lock my door and pump freely. My management is quite respectful of my schedule, so they don’t really disturb me during my pumping time. ‘It’s just 30 minutes,’ they say, ‘life goes on, and it won’t cause the operation to stop’, so they are more understanding even though they’re men.” (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A - mother of three)

Aisyah’s experience with her previous employer gives a distinctive perspective of ‘acceptance’ because her position was different previously. She was the ‘boss’ who had her own office in which she had the freedom to pump freely by locking the door. She mentioned how her management team is quite ‘respectful’ of her pumping schedule and that she did not get disturbed during pumping. She claimed that her male colleagues ‘understood’ that it was ‘just thirty minutes’. This contrasts with Dahlia’s organisation D as the pumping mothers ‘cannot leave work’ to pump. Hence, it is likely that Aisyah’s perceived acceptance from her colleagues might be because of her position as the ‘boss’, which was why she was treated differently.

5.4.5. The ‘Pumping Buddy.’

Data revealed how participants sometimes had a ‘pumping buddy’ and this could help mothers feel comfortable pumping at work.

Similarly, Arianna and Aisyah, two participants in Organisation A, both revealed how they pumped together:

“Luckily for her, she wouldn’t mind pumping with me so that we would be hunting room together.” (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A - first-time mother)

“I think me and Arianna are the more open-minded; we pump together, have mothers’ talks...” (I-2 Aisyah –Organisation A - mother of three)

In Organisation D, Daisy, Dalila and Dana also revealed how they would pump alongside a colleague:

“...except me. Me and my other colleague. She doesn’t pump openly too. So, we pump together at a little corner in the filing room...Even in terms of pumping...um... in terms of praying in our unit, we have this closed panel (to do our pumping activities)” (I-6 Daisy – Organisation D - mother of two)

“I am still pumping at work... in the office... at my table...since my colleague is also a pumping mother, so we pump together at our (respective) tables” (I-10 Dalila – Organisation D - first-time mother)

Dana shared how seeing her boss, who was also a pumping mother, gave her the confidence to continue pumping at her desk:

“My boss, she’s pumping in the office, she has her own office, but it has a transparent glass, we can see she’s pumping because she’s using the ‘apron’ (nursing cover)” (I-7 Dana – Organisation D – mother of two)

Interview data revealed how the ‘social support’ of colleagues also pumping at work motivated participants to continue pumping at work, as illustrated by Dana in Organisation D:

“Now, (the pumping scene) seems normal, since there’s a lot of pumping colleagues in the office... so ok (I) just pump here (at the desk). Like... how can you do work if you are not pumping, right? So, we don’t care.... there are also male colleagues, and they know, they understand. Many people in (this organisation) are pumping...In our area, there are three of us who are pumping...so we do that (pump) at our desks... and on this level (floor) there’s also a lot of people who pump” (I-7 Dana – Organisation D – mother of two)

The idea of having someone to share the same journey and experience of pumping at work may make these participants willing to endure and continue with breastfeeding and pumping activities.

5.4.6. The ‘Understanding’ Colleagues

Having understanding colleagues who did not question or comment negatively on breastfeeding and pumping activities at work could provide social support, ‘acceptance’ and ‘comfort’. For example, one participant from Organisation D, Damia, claimed that her male colleague understood the need for this pumping activity because his wife is also a pumping mother.

“They (the male colleagues) understand nonetheless...because, ahh.. yeah...because their wives are also pumping (mothers)” (I-11 Damia – Organisation D - mother of two)

Dahlia and Dana from Organisation D also claimed to receive understanding from their colleagues, which strengthened the acceptance of this activity. Furthermore, they claimed that their colleagues are open-minded about pumping:

“And I think it’s because most people I see pump at their desk because you can’t leave your work right (laughter). So, they just (pump at the desk). I think it has become part of your normal routine...” (I-5 Dahlia –Organisation D - mother of three)

“Like...how can you do work if you don’t (pump), right? So, we don’t care... there are (already) male colleagues, they know, they understand... a lot of this organisation’s employees are pumping” (I-7 Dana –Organisation D – mother of two)

Furthermore, Dahlia stated that it was so ‘normal’ and ‘common’ that the pumping activity could happen in the pantry where her colleagues had food to eat, and nobody found it ‘weird’:

“Sometimes in the pantry... it’s the same scene...there are other colleagues too... You know you are having food like your colleague will be eating ... I remember when I was pumping...my friend was eatingas if nothing weird” (I-5 Dahlia – Organisation D – mother of three)

Organisation D seemed particularly supportive of pumping, even though it did not have a private room. This is stated by Dahlia, Dana and Dalila:

“We don’t have a breastfeeding room. However, I can tell you that everyone here is so comfortable pumping at their desk... we pumped at our desk. We pumped at our desk. We just put on our (breastfeeding) cover and pump... Now I see most if not all my colleagues are pumping at their desk.” (I-5 Dahlia – Organisation D - mother of three)

“Now we don’t care. Before, we had to go to surau to pump; at that time, only one male colleague was in our office, but we did that (go to surau to pump). Now, since many people (referring to women employees) pumping in the office, so ok, just pump here... Like, how can you do work if you don’t pump? So, we don’t care. There are

male colleagues, and they know, they understand... much pumping mothers at work”
(I-7 Dana – Organisation D - mother of two)

“Our environment...Alhamdulillah... Sporting and supportive (on pumping at work)”
(I-10 Dalila – Organisation D - first-time mother)

Another experience shared by Bella from Organisation B was about how supportive her colleagues were about breastfeeding mothers at work:

“...the good thing is our (male) colleagues... they are supportive... they understand the feeling of being away from baby...” (I-4 Bella – Organisation B - first-time mother)

This is another example of ‘social support’ from work colleagues in Organisation B.

However, unlike Organisation D and B, participants in Organisation A experienced adverse reactions from their colleagues concerning pumping at work. This will be explained below.

5.4.7. The Unsympathetic Colleagues

The sub-theme ‘unsympathetic colleagues’ explains the contrast between colleagues from Organisation A and D. Unlike participants from Organisation D, the participants in Organisation A experienced adverse reactions from their colleagues. For example, Arianna and Aisyah shared their experiences of receiving negative responses from their male and female colleagues on the pumping activities at work. Their colleagues' attitudes in Organisation A towards pumping at work were expressed verbally and through facial expressions. Even though Organisation A had a mix of colleagues – some were local, others were expatriates from

Canada, the UK, Norway and Germany. The local colleagues were more disapproving than the expatriates in Aisyah's experience:

"Then the locals will find it very offending, but foreigners they would just laugh it off. 'ok go go go, I don't want here to smell like milk' something like that. [laugh]" (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A - mother of three)

Aisyah also shared some of the remarks that their colleagues are making, assuming that pumping mothers are relaxing while pumping:

"From work and people don't understand, like Arianna said, if we go out for our pumping time, people will say 'ooo you can sleep, you can relax' like this. They do actually say that. You see, they will say that 'they can relax, they don't need to do their job'" (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A -mother of three)

Another example stated by Arianna where she mentioned the word 'annoyed' a few times when explaining her pumping activities routines at work below:

"...for me as a mother, my priority is to feed my daughter. Sometimes people are annoyed because it's taking 20-30 mins (to pump) every few hours, so I'm not always on my seat (working at her desk)..." (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A - first-time mother)

"I can tell people are annoyed. Surprisingly these people are both male and female... I can see people are annoyed and saying things like 'this girl (referring to her) is always looking for a room to pump.... And also, I'm annoyed cause these colleagues of mine, when I tell them I've to step outside for a while (to pump), and when people are looking for me, they say 'oh, she's off to pump' (in a condescending tone)" (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A - first-time mother)

These statements indicate disapproval from Arianna's colleagues. The same experience was also acknowledged by Aisyah when she recounted the condescending remarks made by her colleagues. She revealed it hurt more when it came from a female colleague:

“The worst thing, I don't mind men gave me those negative comments, but I do mind it comes from a woman.” (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A - mother of three)

Furthermore, Aisyah also experienced disgusted expressions from her colleagues as well as having colleagues who did not understand when she had to go and pump, especially when she was in a middle of a discussion:

“...then sometimes people who come to see me, the end-users, the operation people, they will have this disgusted face or embarrassed face...” (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A - mother of three)

“I have to say, ‘hey overshooting, I need to go’, and they like ‘wait, wait, I need you here’, but many people don't understand the need to go... That's the thing that people don't understand; if we skip the pumping schedule, the supply drops. This kind of knowledge, not everybody knows.” (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A - mother of three)

This statement shows that the colleagues of Organisation A were less receptive to pumping at work, despite being one of the two organisations in this study that provided a designated space for pumping.

5.5. The Use of Organisational Space – the Pumping Venue

As some previous quotes by participants in Organisations A and D have shown places that women used to pump breastmilk, and patterns varied by the organisation. Table 5.1 below shows the rooms that the participants have identified and used for pumping:

Rooms used for Pumping	Participant
Individual room	Bella and Belinda (Organisation B) Catherina (Organisation C)
Boss's room	Arianna and Aisyah (Organisation A)
Meeting room	Arianna and Aisyah (Organisation A) Catherina (Organisation C) Daisy (Organisation D)
Pantry room	Dahlia (Organisation D)
Filing room/Storeroom	Arianna and Aisyah (Organisation A) Daniella (Organisation D)
The library	Diana (Organisation D)
Prayer corner	Daisy and Dalila (Organisation D)
In the car (parked or on the move)	Aisyah (Organisation A) Dana (Organisation D)

Table 5.1: Rooms participants used for pumping

From the following paragraphs, we can deduce that having a space did not necessarily support pumping at work. Organisations B and D had no specific room allocated, so women pumped at their desks or sought rooms on an ad-hoc basis. The participants in Organisation B had their own offices, so they pumped in privacy. As previously discussed, Organisation D had an open setup and people pumped at their desks or in other communal spaces such as the kitchen/pantry. Organisations A and C did have allocated rooms.

5.5.1. Designated Pumping Room

One might imagine that having a dedicated room would help breast pumping. However, Arianna and Aisyah from Organisation A said using the breastfeeding room for pumping breastmilk was not conducive to the pumping activity.

“Talking of breastfeeding room in Organisation A, it’s rather a tiny room. It’s located just beside the pantry. A room with two chairs, two rather small fridges, there’s nothing else, no hot water, no dispensary for you to clean up or do anything else and when I first entered that room, it was so dusty, humid and I have asked cleaner to clean it up for me to actually pump because it has to be very clean, sterile, for us to store the milk” (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A - mother of three)

The room was small and not set up to help to pump. In addition, the two spaces it afforded were often taken when Aisyah tried to use the room. That meant she had to search for alternatives, explaining why she was down against four different spaces on the table above (ref. Table 5.1) despite having an allocated pumping room at her workplace. She used the word ‘beggars’ to describe how important it is for her to find a place to pump when it is time.

“So we are basically beggars. In layman terms like we need to really look for a place (to pump)” (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A - mother of three)

As space was at a premium in Organisation A; Aisyah found herself resorting to using her car (please refer to Aisyah’s quote on page 153). This experience was shared by another participant from Organisation A, Arianna. She found herself similarly using different spaces on an opportunistic basis. She claimed that:

“Where I pump, depending on the situation, sometimes I pump in the meeting room, sometimes I have to pump in the store room, sometimes if I’m lucky, my bosses are not in, I pump in their room. Worst case scenario will be other people’s meeting room if the meeting room is available. The reason why I do that is because we only have one nursing room, one pumping room, and there’s a lot of people using it” (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A – first-time mother)

In contrast, Organisation C's breastfeeding room was reportedly private, comfortable and multipurpose. During the interview, Casey highlighted that the room where this interview was being conducted was also the breastfeeding room:

"This is actually a breastfeeding room; that's why we have the curtain... I did utilise the room (before), but because we're only given the 105 days right, so I think I breast pumped for about two months, and then I stopped the breast pumping but I still (direct) breastfed until I stopped recently because I got pregnant" (I-16 Casey – Organisation C - mother of four)

This highlights how the designated breastfeeding room was used for other uses in Organisation C.

5.5.2. Individual Room

Three participants from Organisation B and C used their room to pump regardless of whether the organisation provided a designated room. It was notable that in all three cases, participants put signs on their doors to indicate that they were pumping, intending to minimise the interruptions during the pumping session. For example, Bella stated that she had her room to pump, and as soon as she put the sign on the door, she was left uninterrupted. This was not the case previously when she was pumping, and someone was trying to enter the room and inquired what she was doing inside with a locked door, and she had to say that she was pumping.

"...they stop knocking or stop bothering me when they see the label. Fuuh, thank God for the label. (I-4 Bella – Organisation B - first-time mother)

However, for Arianna from Organisation A, a sign on the door of the room she used to pump did not help to keep her pumping activity private and hidden. She described situations where people would push the door open while she was pumping inside the room, ignoring the signage:

“I printed it out (the label), it’s on the door... no one cares”. (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A – first-time mother)

5.5.3. Boss’s Room

For participants in Organisation A, Arianna and Aisyah sometimes used the bosses’ room to pump when they had no alternatives. Organisation A had a dedicated pumping room which participants felt was unhygienic and uncomfortable or often at capacity. However, Arianna mentioned that she would only use her bosses’ rooms when they are not in, and the rooms are empty:

“...sometimes if I’m lucky, my bosses are not in, I pump in their room...” (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A – first-time mother)

This shows that Arianna opportunistically uses her bosses’ rooms to pump without permission.

On the other hand, Aisyah complained about her frustration to her boss about the limited empty spaces available in the organisation. In return, her boss permitted her to use her room to pump when she needed to and when it was not in use:

“My lady boss, I report to...She’s quite open and says I can use her room (to pump) ... she’s open to sharing her room. (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A – mother of three)

This shows that Aisyah's boss was 'understanding' and 'sympathetic' towards her challenges in finding available rooms to pump.

5.5.4. Meeting Room

Four participants described using meeting rooms to pump. This included participants from Organisation A and C with a designated pumping room. For some participants, they were attempting to find any space available:

"Where I pump, depending on the situation, sometimes I pump in the meeting room... Worst case scenario, would be other people's meeting room if the meeting room is available" (I-1 Arianna – Organisation A – first-time mother)

For others, they used a meeting room to conduct pumping concurrently with a meeting and with colleagues present:

"So, there are a lot of instances where I need to go to attend meetings, and people come in for discussion which I exceed my pumping time... Even right now, I am pumping while talking to you (the interviewer)" (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A – mother of three)

"...sometimes, someday I have to pump in a meeting, yeah in a meeting because the meeting is back-to-back or the meeting needs us to be there the whole morning. So, I have to pump in a meeting room during a meeting but our male colleague is quite ok (with it) though..." (I-6 Daisy – Organisation D - mother of two)

"I mean I've sat in meetings where I need to pump, but I can't leave... And then you go. And I've been on conference calls when I'm pumping (laughs). Because it's just... I have to..." (I-18 Catherina – Organisation C – first-time mother)

These statements show that when they were in meetings and the time for pumping came, they had no choice but to find other ‘empty’ rooms, the participants would just pump their breast milk with other people or colleagues present, manually or electronically. It is noted that Aisyah was also pumping during her interview session.

5.5.5. Pantry Room

Although Organisation D did not have a designated pumping room, pumping mothers had commandeered the pantry instead. In the context of organisations in Brunei, a pantry room is a room that employees use for their break time to eat their meals and drink, and usually consists of tables and chairs for the employees’ usage. There were several places to pump in this organisation, and the women had choices. However, participants like Dahlia shared that since the pumping scene is “common” in the organisation, even in the pantry room, pumping mothers were able to ‘comfortably’ pump while their colleagues were present too:

"Most people use the pantry. If they need room to pump, or because we have several meeting rooms too, discussion room...there is a lot of empty rooms that are not, that's not full... sometimes in the pantry, other people are also using it (to eat) and also pumping...like nothing was awkward...so why should you feel weird, you know?" (I-5 Dahlia – Organisation D - mother of three)

5.5.6. Other Closed and Private Spaces at Work

Arianna, Diana, Daisy and Daniella in Organisations A and D, respectively, used a variety of enclosed spaces to pump. Such spaces include a surau (small prayer space), the filling or store room, the library or their corner. The underlying reasons for the use of the different spaces include limited time available to search for other empty rooms, as Diana in Organisation D described:

“...we have a space. It's a library but also a small place to pray. Over there (at the space) we pump, but I have to juggle the time because in the morning I have to pump...in the afternoon, I have to pump again...” (I-9 Diana –Organisation D - mother of two)

Using a small prayer room or space is also relevant to privacy since prayer rooms are always separated between men and women. Moreover, while using the surau to pump, participants like Diana can also use the space to pray.

Daisy in Organisation D also described using a space corner near her desk to pump:

“Yeah, in our quadrant, we have this one little corner with sofa and desk, so I can do work while pumping... and it's hidden behind a panel” (I-6 Daisy – Organisation D - mother of two)

This ‘hidden behind a panel’ also indicates privacy and being invisible to others. This panel is like a piece of board big enough to ‘cover’ a small space used by the participant for private activities like pumping or prayer.

Another participant from Organisation D, Daniella, described her preference to find and use a room that she can lock to ensure privacy and security from being interrupted during her pumping session:

“Yeah, so I don't, I don't pump at my desk. I never pump at my desk... There's a room where... our prayer room in our unit.... So, I use that room, but I lock it because the room is like a multi-room as well where they store files...so I lock, but they

understand if I lock the door that means I'm pumping” (I-8 Daniella – Organisation D - first-time mother)

Dalila claimed that her work desk is located at a corner in the office, and her male colleagues are either at a different corner or not facing her directly. She stated that this ensured that it was not too awkward for her to pump since she can ‘hide’ her pumping activities even though she is doing it at her desk:

“And our male colleagues are okay... they’re at the back (not facing directly to her) and over there at a different corner... so, it's not too awkward to pump...” (I-10 Dalila – Organisation D – first-time mother)

In this case, Dalila could be ‘invisible’ from her colleagues due to the setup of the desks that kept her privacy and made her feel ‘comfortable’ to pump.

From these statements, the participants from Organisation D shared experiences of pumping at work but not openly. Organisation D also did not provide a designated pumping room. This showed that even though the organisation's culture seemed to accept breastfeeding mothers to pump freely and openly, there was still a sense of introverted reluctance among the participants to keep their pumping activities hidden. However, some participants preferred private spaces to pump their breastmilk at work, and some participants are okay with either private spaces or open spaces, as long as they get to pump their breastmilk at work.

5.6. Pumping Openly at Desks – ‘Visible but Hidden.’

Contrary to the above findings, other participants like Dahlia, Dana and Dalila in Organisation D shared their pumping activities at their work desks. Pumping at desks in this context means

that these participants openly pumped their breastmilk at their desks (or cubicles) while doing their work. It should be noted that openly does not mean that it was exposed, but rather, these women pump their breastmilk while using a nursing cover to ‘hide’ their pumping activities while doing work. It is considered ‘open’ because it was done in an open office environment where male and female colleagues can freely pass by. The following quotes illustrate how Dahlia, Dana, and Dalila pumped openly:

“Yes, we pumped at our desk. We pumped at our desk. We just put on our (breastfeeding) cover, and we just pump.” (I-5 Dahlia – Organisation D - mother of three)

“I work, and I also pump at the office on my desk, usually before lunchtime while working, and then before going home while working... Now, since many mothers (also) pump in the office, so ok, just pump here.... So, we don’t care, really. Moreover, the male colleagues know they understand... the number of mothers pumping is increasing... In our department, the three of us are pumping, so we do (pump) at our desk and even on our (floor) level, a lot of the mothers are pumping” (I-7 Dana – Organisation D - mother of three)

“I am still pumping at work... in the office... at my table...since my colleague is also a pumping mother, so we pump together at our (respective) tables” (I-10 Dalila – Organisation D - first-time mother)

Based on these participants’ experiences, it is likely that the idea of an ‘open’ pumping activity at a desk is practised while simultaneously hiding the activity using a nursing cover. The opposite of two situations of ‘being open’ means that the participants are comfortable letting other colleagues know they are pumping. Furthermore, at the same time, the visible nursing cover acts as a ‘shield’ or ‘concealing’ the pumping activity by not exposing the body part that is used to do the pumping.

The idea of ‘privacy’ was inherent in participant accounts of breastfeeding and pumping activities at work. Breastfeeding mothers might consider breastfeeding as an intimate act of bonding with their babies. With an intimate act like breastfeeding and pumping, it might be assumed that this should be done behind closed doors. Other employees in the workplace could emphasise to participants that pumping activities should be done privately. This was illustrated by Aisyah, who described how colleagues challenged her when pumping ‘openly’.

“...even though when I pump at my desk, in the preliminary stage, I was faced with a lot of challenge where people saying like ‘girls with pumping shouldn’t be in public’.” (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A - mother of three)

Similarly, Daisy described a situation when she was pumping inside an (empty) room and caught her manager peeking inside. She felt embarrassed and uncomfortable by this. This manager suggested that the room should be labelled, so it was easier to maintain privacy:

“...And there was this one time, he (the boss) was peeking, and he froze and became uncomfortable, and he said ‘there should be a label or a sign here’ (to let people know what you are doing) (laughs)...” (I-6 Daisy – Organisation D - mother of two)

In contrast, several participants said they were less concerned with privacy. Many were comfortable pumping at their desk (with a nursing cover) while doing their work and conversing with their male and female colleagues. So, this ‘open’ activity somehow reconfigured the idea of pumping breastmilk as something that is considered a ‘private’ activity. The following quotes support this statement:

“Let me tell you what we have here or don’t have. We don’t have a breastfeeding room. But what I can tell you is that everyone here is so comfortable pumping at their desk”. (I-5 Dahlia –Organisation D - mother of three)

“I work, and I also pump at the office on my desk, usually before lunchtime while working, and then before going home as well while working...at our (office) level, there many that are pumping... and in our unit, are three of us who are pumping at our desk...” (I-7 Dana – Organisation D - mother of two)

“Yes, I pump in the office...at my table...” (I- 10 Dalila – Organisation D - first-time mother)

Privacy and breastfeeding stand out as one of the themes in the interviews because as much as the participants shared their breastfeeding and pumping at work experiences, this response was not illustrated in the drawings. The idea of breastfeeding and pumping at work should be a private and personal thing shared between the mother and the baby. However, in some organisational contexts, as found in the interviews, the ‘private and personal thing’ is being eradicated through the acceptance of women employees pumping at work and, at the same time, questions why in interviews, the participants shared their ‘intimate’ activities. However, not one participant actually ‘drew’ their pumping activities.

5.7. The ‘Pumping Machine’

A key theme in the interview material was the type of pumping technology. Experienced pumpers like Dahlia had used different pumps, ranging from Avent manual pump to Madela freestyle pump:

“This was ten years ago... so they were saying that was very little support (for breastfeeding mothers) ... I was pumping, and at that time, there was only Madela

freestyle or what (breast pumping device), so I was using Avent Manual (another brand of breastfeeding device)” (I-5 Dahlia – Organisation D – mother of three)

The use of different electric pumping devices available nowadays range from one side pumping to two sides pumping at the same time, manual or electrical, handsfree or handheld, and the price range of these devices is below \$100 to over \$500 depending on the brand names. When some participants mentioned pumping activities, is it likely that the brand or type of pumping machine (pumping device) they used or chose to purchase could help them ease the pumping process. For example, Aisyah mentioned using a ‘freemie cup’ as a handsfree cup that could store breastmilk (without pumping) while doing her work. The cup held on to the breasts while pumping out the breastmilk, and she did not have to hold it. She can do other tasks with her ‘free’ hands. This was most apparent during the interview, whereby she was pumping while answering the questions with a nursing cover to hide her activities. She claimed that these pumping devices are a worthy investment because even though they are expensive, the breast pumps provide her ‘freedom’ and help her work and pump simultaneously. However, she emphasised that this equipment was costly:

“I have a handsfree pump which I invested in, and a portable rather small breast pump. I must emphasise that it’s quite costly... why do I need to invest in such an expensive breast pump and hand-free cup. So, it allows me to do things while I pump... You can see me right now; I’m pumping in front of you with my cup. Basically, I’m dressed well, and you don’t see any exposed; even though I put it in, you don’t see the boobs, so people hear the sound.” (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A - mother of three)

Asiyah also shared that she pumped her breastmilk in the car while driving to work every morning because it was part of her daily routine and pumping schedule. Furthermore, she could only do so because her breast pumps are handsfree.

“So, during the drive from Lumut to KB, it’s (a) 30-minute drive. I’ll use that time to pump in the car., So that is the first pumping session in the morning...” (I-2 Aisyah – Organisation A - mother of three)

Another participant, Dana, shared her experiences using handsfree pumping machines, whereby these devices have the technology that allows these pumping mothers to walk around while pumping.

“...And sometimes we get so busy and hard to find time (out to go and pump elsewhere), so we just pump at our desk. Even me, I walk around (with my pumping device), and they’d be like, ‘what are you doing walking around?’ [laughs]” (I-7 Dana – Organisation D - mother of two)

The idea of this pumping machine is of interest because it reinforces the impact of technological advancement in the area of pumping machines, whereby there are a lot more choices available for pumping mothers to choose from. Not only do these pumping machines range in the types, the brands, the cost, and the specifications of the devices, but they could also help the pumping mothers to be ‘free’. The device will do its job, ensuring that the pumping mothers can do other things simultaneously while working. Eventually, it is not the brand or the type that is important. However, it is the technology that the pumping machine is equipped with, its affordances, and how these affordances work out for different women. It is almost certain that the features, the size, the noise, and the portability of the pumping machine make these participants continue to carry out their pumping activities at work while doing work. Hence, by doing so, the productivity of these pumping mothers remains the same, if not increased, due to the multitasking activities.

It is also noted in Chapter 4 that Brunei has introduced a new initiative by providing free diapers and manual breast pumps for all mothers who have given birth since March 2017. This was in line with an effort to support breastfeeding activity among mothers after adding more days to the maternity leave. However, breast pump specifications and technology impact the idea of continued breastfeeding and pumping at work, especially for employed women returning to work. The initiative provided by the government to give away free breast pumps may be an indication of how much the government is pushing the idea of continued breastfeeding and pumping breastmilk post-maternity leave. Such initiative indicates the dedication that the government of Brunei portrays in supporting the breastfeeding initiative and support among the mothers, mainly working mothers. Moreover, it may depend on the working mothers' dedication to breastfeeding and pumping. Based on the analysis of this study, some participants would go the extra mile to purchase a much more 'advanced' pumping machine to help them ease the process of pumping at work while doing their work.

From another perspective, the term 'pumping machine' can also connote the idea of women and their bodies whereby the body of a lactating or nursing mother is a 'vessel' to provide food for the child whether by pumping or direct feeding. Hence, lactating mothers can be considered as the 'pumping machine' because of their ability to produce breast milk. This breastmilk can also be 'pumped out' using technology-incorporated devices such as breast pumps as the pumps become an extension of the woman's body. The device that connects to her body gives the notion that the pumping machine is not just about the technology itself and the breast pumps, but it is also almost like the breastfeeding mother *is* the 'pumping machine' or becomes a part of the 'pumping machine'.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a thematic analysis of the interview data. The common theme from this data was the sharing of breastfeeding and pumping milk experiences among the participants. There was evidence of the changing attitudes towards pumping at work from being something that is ‘taboo’ to being something that is ‘normalised’ and ‘accepted’. In addition, participants shifted priorities that occurred once they had given birth and returned to work post-maternity leave. Participants explained how social support in the form of a ‘pumping buddy’ helped them feel ‘comfortable’ about pumping at work. Many participants also reported using various organisational spaces as their pumping venues at work. There was also a notion of privacy on the idea of breastfeeding being discussed by the participants and the impact of technology – in this case – by having a powerful breastmilk pumping tool called the ‘Pumping Machine’, which contributed to the idea of multitasking at work for most of these participants. Furthermore, being a breastfeeding mother who produces and yields breast milk for the baby indicates that there is an extension of the woman’s body as the breastfeeding mother becomes part of the ‘pumping machine’.

In general, breastfeeding experiences and pumping breastmilk at work was the highlight of the interview sessions, as participants explained in great detail how these non-work activities were done at work. The acceptance and the disapproval of such activities at work range across the different organisations under study.

CHAPTER 6: THE DRAWINGS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the visual data from the participants' drawings. The interview data, as covered previously, emphasises participants' breastfeeding and pumping activities at work despite the question posed around maternity leave. The drawings, however, covered different themes from the interviews. The drawing activity was carried out after the interview. Although some participants were initially reluctant, saying they were not good with drawings, the artistic ability was not a criterion for this activity. A4 papers and coloured pens were provided.

The participants were asked the question 'What do you understand with the term Work-Life Balance?' at the beginning of the drawing activity. Then, they spent between one to six minutes drawing. After the drawing was produced, the participants were asked to interpret and describe their drawings.

The themes that emerged from the drawings addressed centrality of self, participants' family composition, balancing priorities and shifting boundaries. The most common theme that emerged was the depiction of 'self'. The use of metaphors as the Odd One Out was also illustrated by two participants. The following sections will examine these themes based on the drawings and the participants' interpretation of their illustrations.

6.2. Depiction of 'Self.'

All but one participant depicted themselves in drawings in the form of the word 'me' or 'self' or illustration of a 'female figure'. This depiction of 'self' is positioned in the centre or the middle. For example, Bella and Badriyah in Organisation B both drew balancing scales for

their drawings and wrote the word 'me' and 'self' respectively and positioned themselves in the middle of the drawing between work and family:

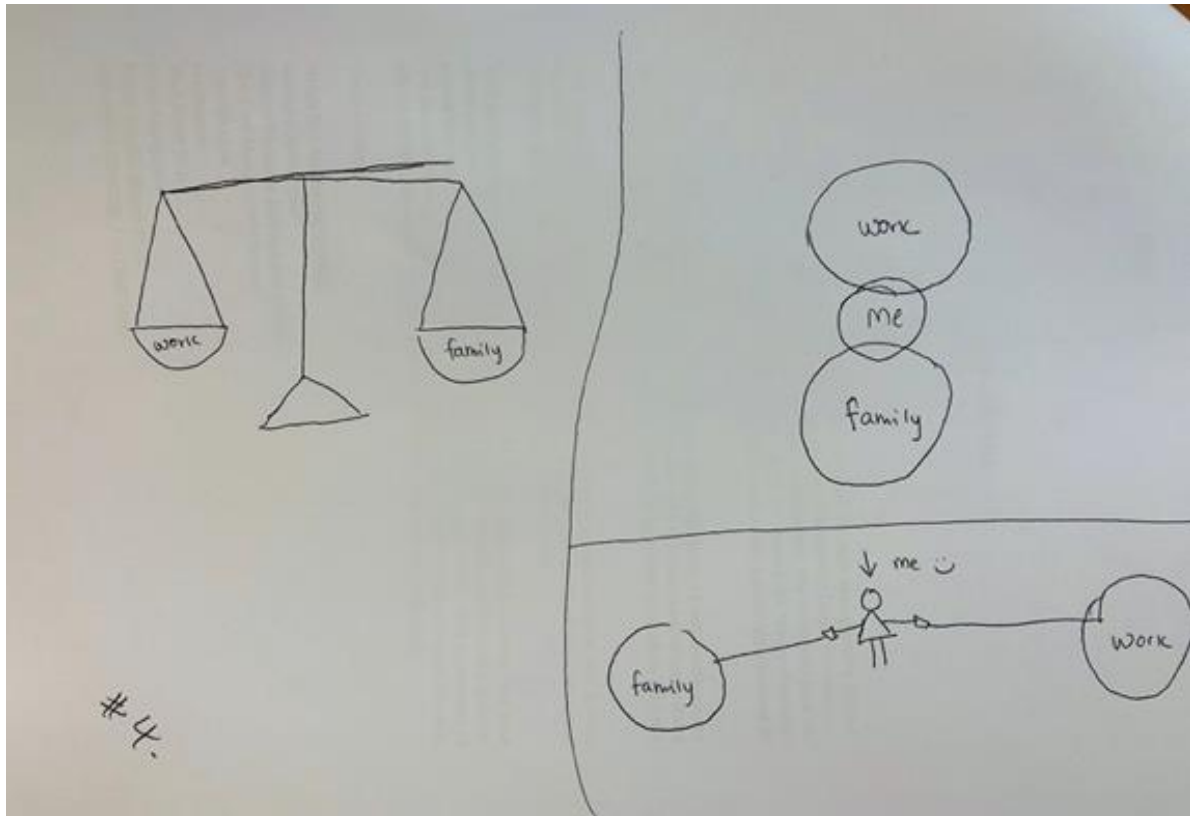


Figure 6.1: The Balancing Scale by Bella (I-4) – Organisation B

Bella (see Fig. 6.1) drew a female version of a person in the middle of both drawings and a small arrow with a description of 'Me' and a smile with two dots (representing eyes). She drew three bubbles at the top right corner with the top labelled 'Work', the middle bubble is 'Me', and the bottom bubble is labelled 'Family'. Her third drawing in the lower right corner indicated two bubbles with the word 'Family' on the left and the word 'Work' on the right. When asked to interpret her drawing, Bella stated:

"I drew three different pictures. The first one is a weighing scale – having a balance between work and family. The second one is the three circles between work and family with 'me' in the middle of the two. The third one is two circles between work

and family and a picture of a girl (me) trying to tie the balance between the two” –
Bella (I-4) – Organisation B

Badriyah (see Fig. 6.2) drew three balancing scales and dedicated each to ‘Work’, ‘Self’ and ‘Family’. In her three drawings, she also placed herself in the middle between the ‘Work’ balancing scale on the left and the ‘Family’ balancing scale on the right.

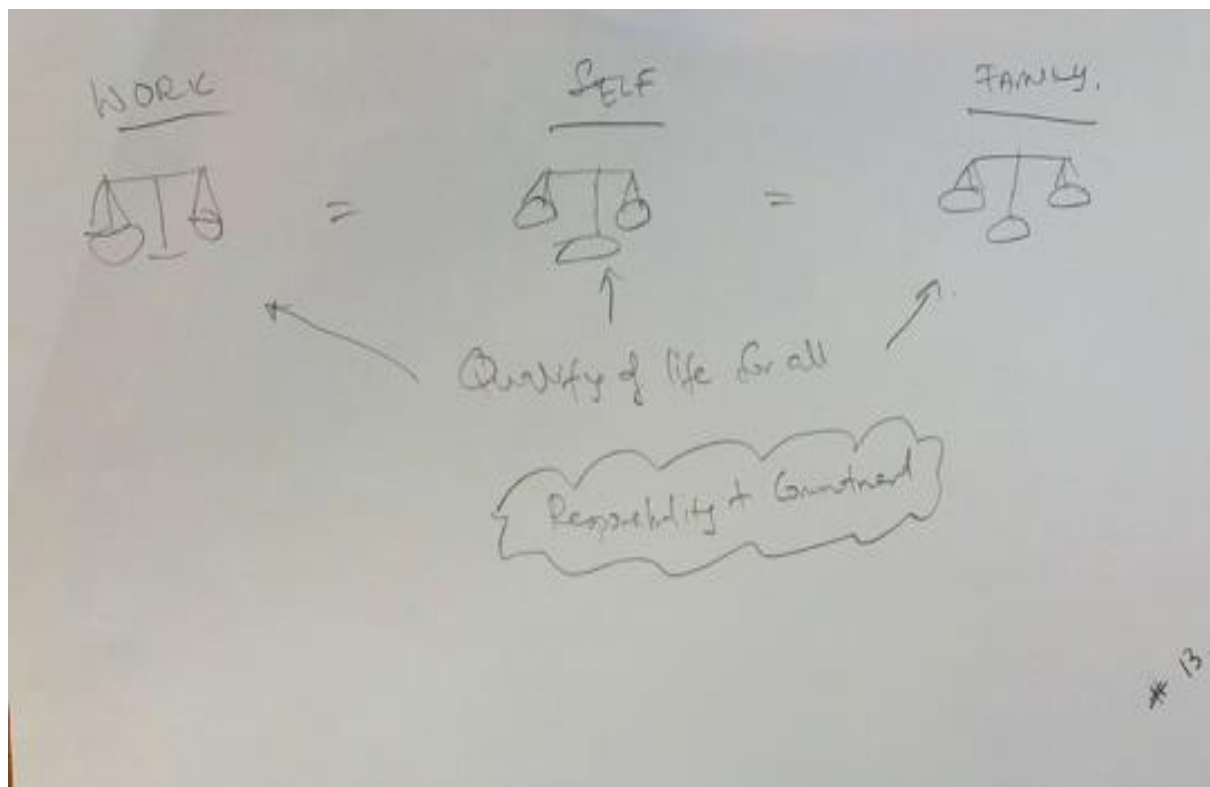


Figure 6.2: The Three Balancing Scales by Badriyah (I-13) – Organisation B

Badriyah and her three (3) balancing scales wrote ‘Quality of Life for All’ below the balancing scales and pointed arrows at the balancing scales. This shows that each element had to balance things within itself. By including the ‘Self’ element in the equation as depicted by Badriyah, she believed that taking care of ‘self’ is also considered an essential factor in maintaining the balance between work and family. When asked to describe her drawings, Badriyah stated:

*“Quality of Life for all because there should be a balance between Work and Family, but yourself as a person is also important. There should be an equal contribution to all. And this ‘responsibility to government’ means that if you are invited to attend a national event, then it is your responsibility as a government servant to attend those events, even though it might be after working hours or even during weekends” –
Badriyah (I-13) – Organisation B*

Aside from taking care and contributing equally to the Work, Self and Family components in her life, Badriyah also mentioned the sole responsibility of being a government servant. That is to fulfil any national event invitation, even though these events could be after working hours or even during weekends. When Badriyah mentioned attending these national events as a responsibility, it should also be understood that attending them on weekends, for example, would also mean sacrificing ‘family time’, usually spent on weekends. This ‘sacrifice’ does not happen regularly; however, when the need comes to fulfil the invitation, every government servant is expected to oblige and fulfil their duty to the government and, at the same time, be able to fulfil their duties to their work and family. In her narrative interview, Badriyah mentioned sacrifices and identifying priorities in her life. However, her breastfeeding experience was not covered in depth during the interview.

It is noted that both participants (Bella and Badriyah) also did not write the word ‘life’ in their drawings. Instead, they wrote the word ‘family’, which means that family is synonymous with Life for them.

Furthermore, this centrality of ‘self’ in the form of a female figure is also illustrated by other participants from Organisations B and D when they positioned themselves in the middle between their spouse and children, as shown below:

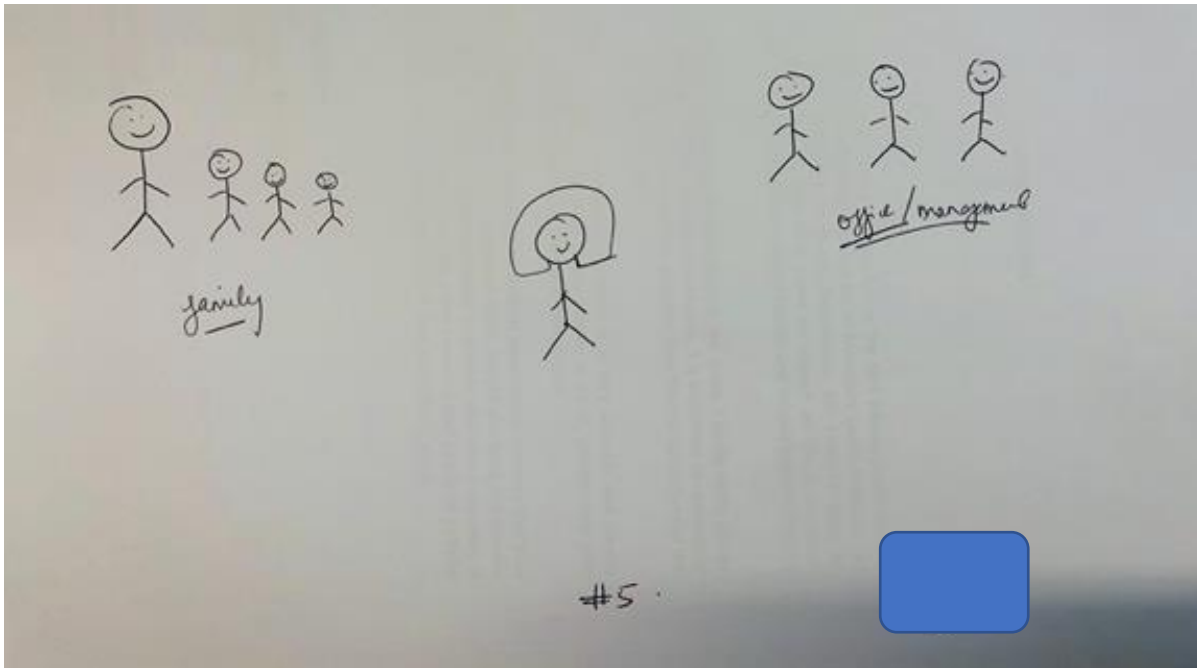


Figure 6.3: Family and Management by Dahlia (I-5) – Organisation D

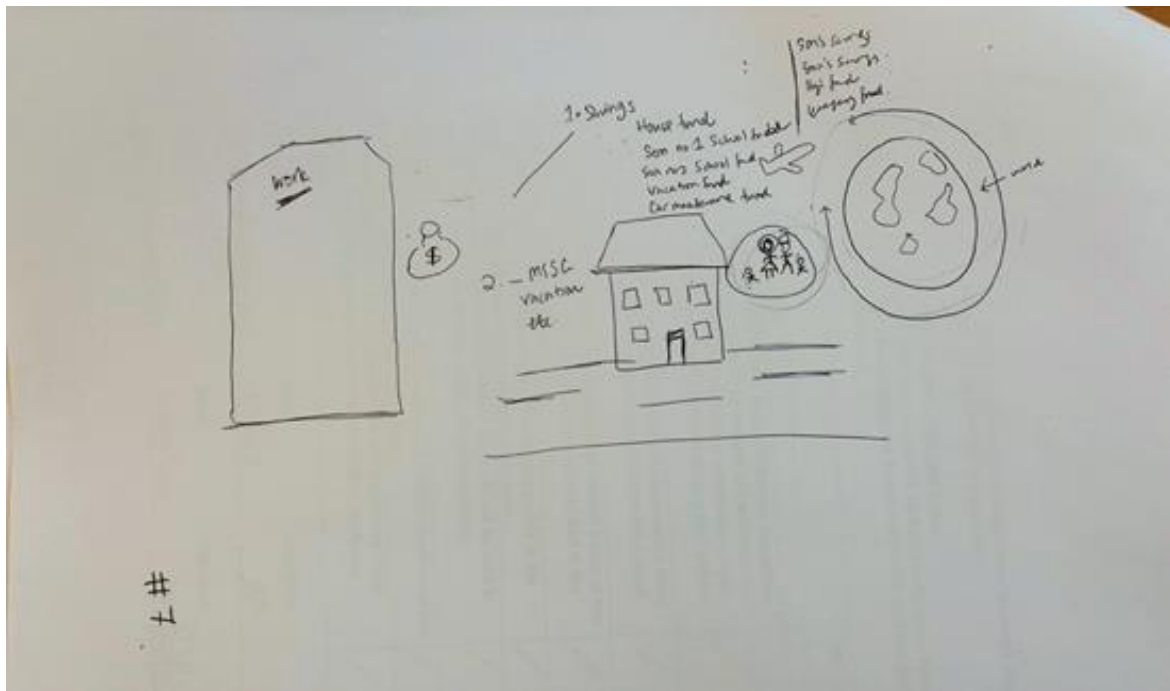


Figure 6.4: Work, Funds and Travel by Dana (I-7) – Organisation D



Figure 6.5: *Harmonious and Colourful* by Daniella (I-8) – Organisation D

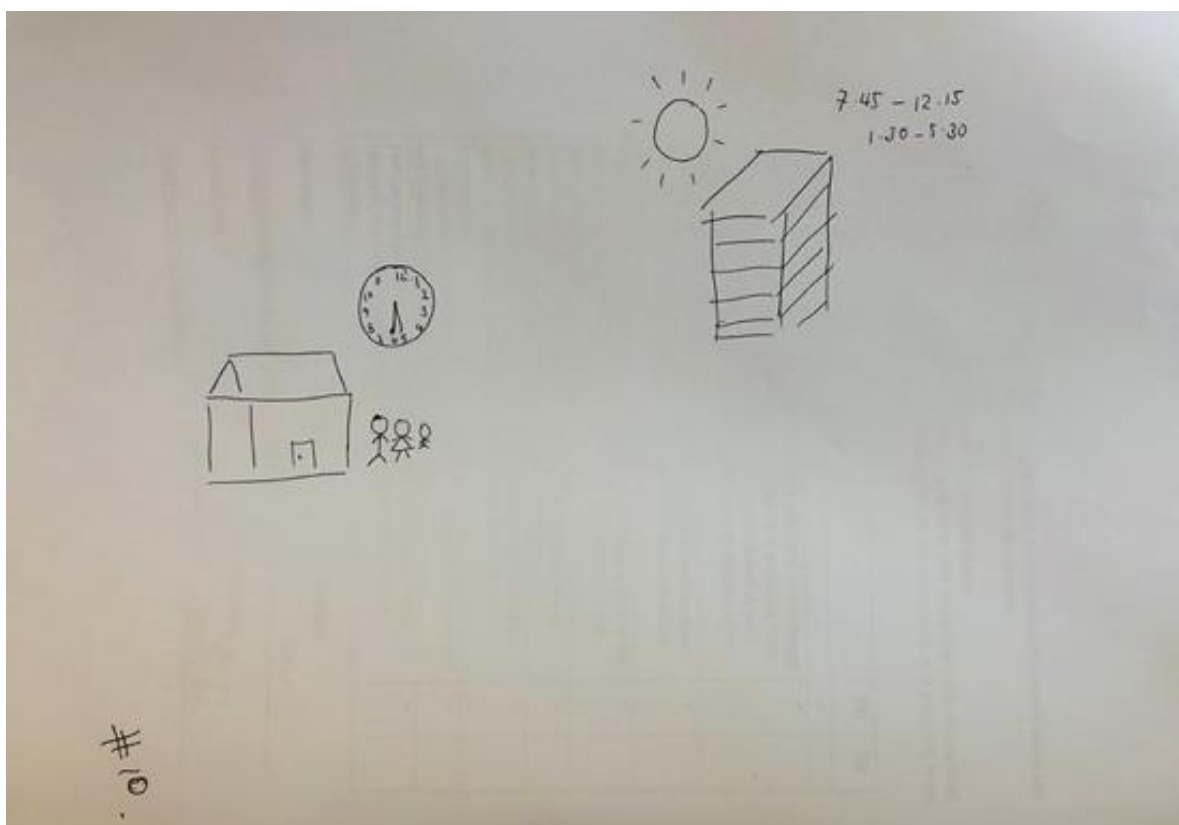


Figure 6.6: *House and Office* by Dalila (I-10) – Organisation D

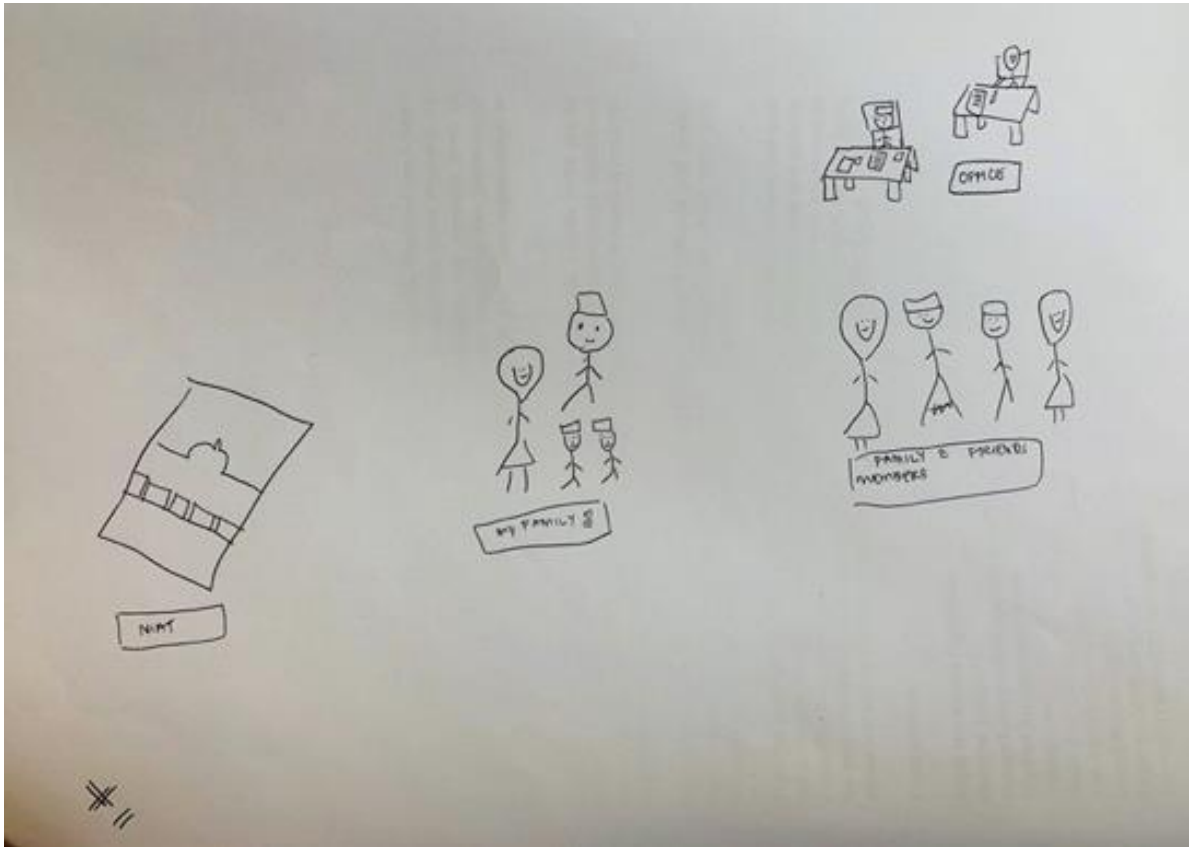


Figure 6.7: Intention by Damia (I-11) – Organisation D

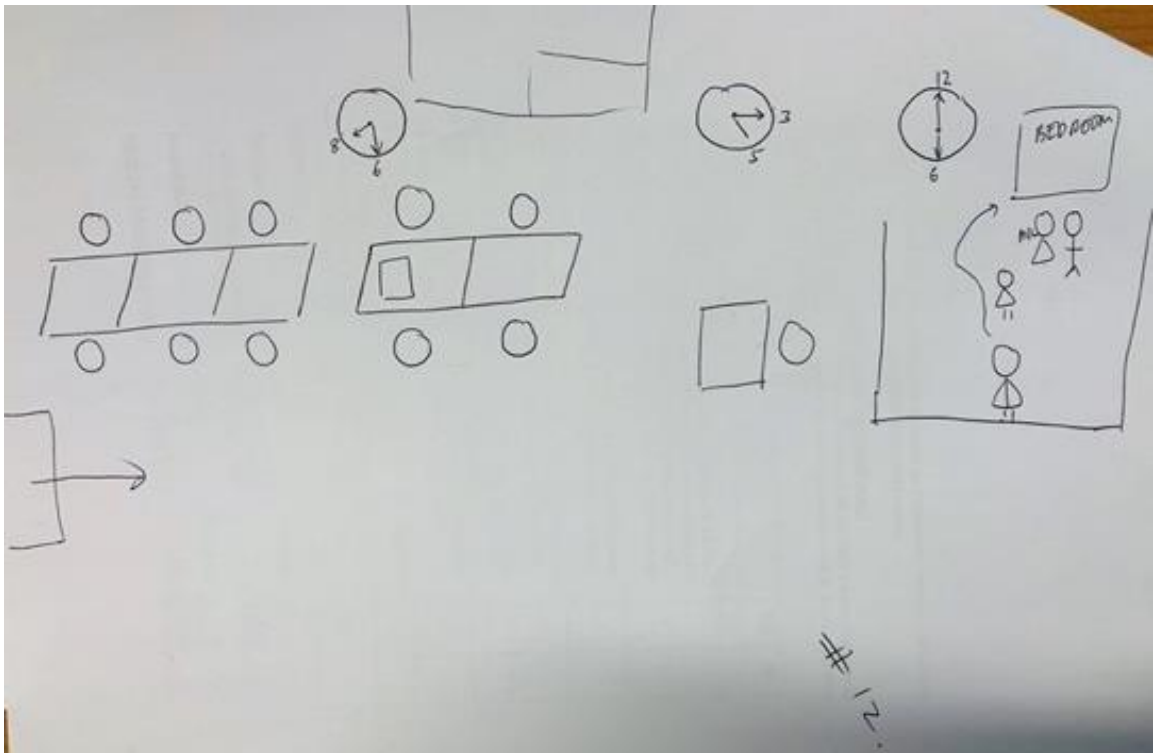


Figure 6.8: Bird's Eye View by Dafiyah (I-12) – Organisation D

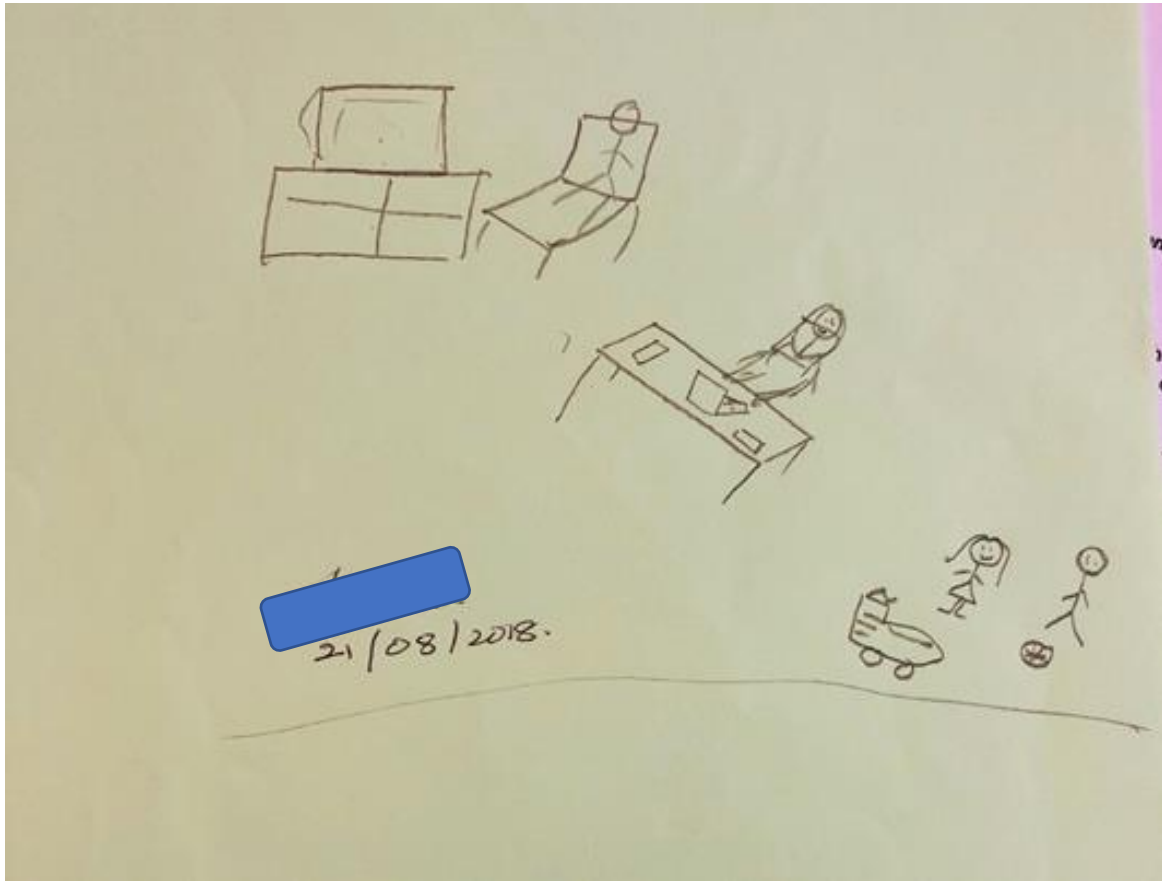


Figure 6.9: Work From Home by Balqis (I-14) – Organisation B



Figure 6.10: Support System by Belinda (I-15) – Organisation B

Moreover, this centrality of ‘self’ (the participant) is themed as ‘the Middle Factor’ because it shows how these participants positioned themselves in the middle between work and life. These drawings depicting the centrality of women in any situation being the middle person or factor is believed to indicate the participants are ‘trying’ to shoulder the responsibility to maintain the balance between the two aspects. This middle factor also signifies its importance in balancing work and life (or family).

Additionally, the second most common theme aside from the depiction of self is the depiction of a family unit, as shown in the figures above. This is expected since these participants are all married and with children. Therefore, the different sub-themes connected with this theme will be further explained below.

6.2.1. Family Unit and The Smiling Faces

A common depiction of smiling faces among the family unit drawings was also picked up. Smiling faces, as interpreted by Dahlia, mean ‘happy’. Dahlia (see Fig. 6.3) drew pictures of herself in the middle, her family on the right, and a picture of her boss and colleagues on the left. She also indicated that she considered having two families in her life – one is immediate, her own family, and the other is her work family. Her centrality in the picture suggests that she needs to find the balance between the two groups of people important in her life and keep them happy in order for herself to be happy too. Interestingly, she did not write ‘Work’ and ‘Life’ but ‘Family’ on the right and ‘Office/Management’ on the left. When asked to explain her drawing, she stated:

“...my family, which is my immediate family, which is my kid and my husband happy and my bosses happy and we are happy” – Dahlia (I-5)

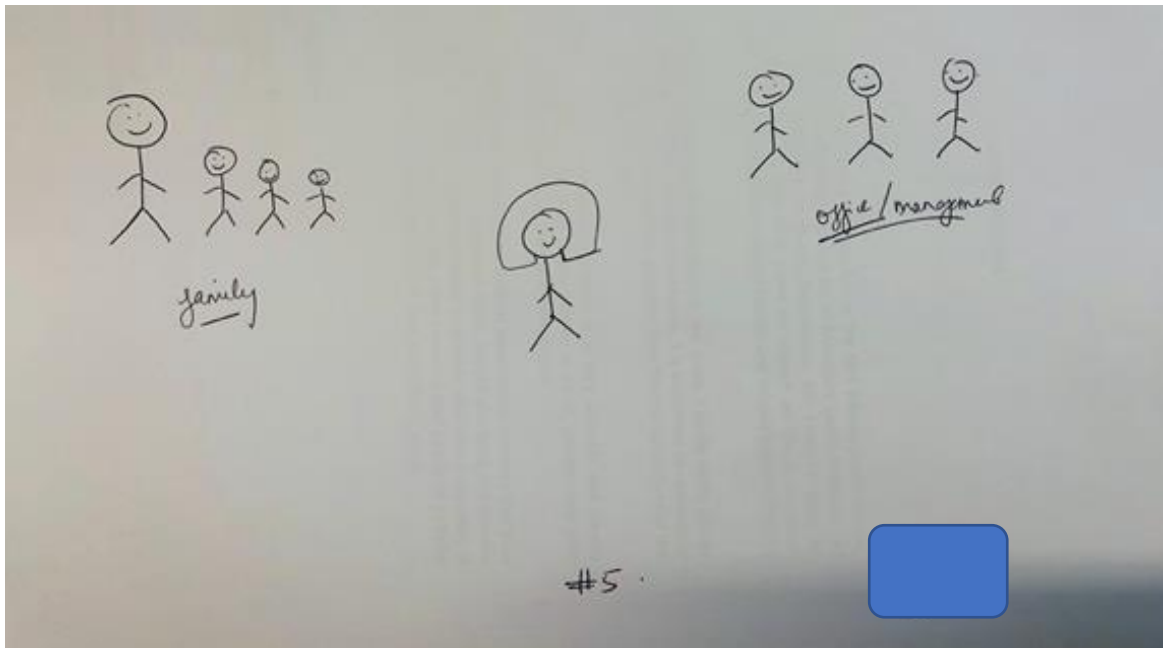


Figure 6.3: Family and Management by Dahlia (I-5)

In her interview, Dahlia mentioned that her husband is the ‘balance’ keeper. This is because her husband demanded them to do their children’s school run routines together at least once daily:

“So I think my husband is very, he is very like..., he makes sure the balance is there. So he always says that we have to send my eldest to school every so at least once... so we have to, we must send him in the morning. So my husband always makes this happens (school run) daily... because he knows that sometimes... I get carried away by work. So I think it’s good. It allows it to be... you get to spend at least half an hour in the car with your kids... and that’s usually the time they (the kids) talk a lot....” – Dahlia (I-5)

The statement shows that Dahlia could keep her family ‘happy’ through this school-run routine, whereby this was the time she spent with her children in the car and communicating or talking about anything. She also mentioned keeping her bosses happy. In addition, her interview

indicated how her office environment and management were ‘supportive’ of providing flexible times for working parents who send their children to school.

“I love my job. I love what I do but I do, and I love the office environment. And I love how our management is supportive of what we do. They are not too rigid about us coming in late by 15 minutes if you have to send the kids to school. They are not too rigid if we have to leave by 11.45 in the afternoon to pick our kids up from school...you just make sure your daily working hour is completed. It’s to compensate the lost time because they understand that most of us are working parents ...” - Dahlia (I-5)

Dahlia also made sure the ‘balance’ between her work and life was upheld by dedicating her weekends (Saturday and Sunday) solely to her family:

“They (the management) understand, and I like how our management is very supportive, trying not to give any work-related things on weekends... But, of course, during the week, they expect you to work hard, but then at the weekend we’re hardly being bothered, almost never (giggles) ...you become comfortable so I can be like... I don’t have to touch (work) on Saturday or a Sunday because it’s family time...” – Dahlia (I-5)

Another depiction of smiling faces was found in the drawings of Daniella (see Fig. 6.5), Damia (see Fig. 6.7), Balqis (see Fig. 6.9) and Belinda (see Fig. 6.10) below:



Figure 6.5: *Harmonious and Colourful* by Daniella (I-8)

Daniella and her smiling faces (see Fig. 6.5) mean ‘happiness’ being with her family. In her interview, Daniella mentioned about hiking was her favourite hobby to do before she got married and became a mother:

“This is why, like, hiking. I don't really like jogging because jogging is like... pollution. Like, cars passing by (while you jog at the side of the road)... but for me, I prefer hiking...because it's good air (in the woods), you know...” – Daniella (I-8)

Her drawing also indicated her love for nature since she drew a ‘tree’ next to a ‘book. Daniella’s drawing interpretation supported this:

“...if possible, bring your family close to nature and you know... breathe some fresh air...” – Daniella (I-8)

However, she mentioned in her interview how she was ‘happy’ to sacrifice hiking as a hobby due to the rewarding experience of taking care of her baby:

“It's a rewarding experience too. Amazing for me.... And I know it's rewarding that sometimes you have to, you know, sacrifice and turn down some things just because of this (taking care of your baby)... but... I'm happy to do it. Like, even though I like hiking, it's okay, it's okay... it's not the end of the world.” – Daniella (I-8)

Her drawing interpretation also supported this:

“you need to, you need to do work because you need to support the family and all that... and when you're home, you're a wife, you're a mother... roles are changing...” – Daniella (I-8)

In her drawing interpretation, Daniella also talked about maintaining a harmonious relationship with her family to gain happiness. This will be discussed in the following sub-section.

Another participant, Damia (see Fig. 6.7), drew three groups of family compositions with smiling faces. The first one was her family, followed by family members and friends, and then her office colleagues.

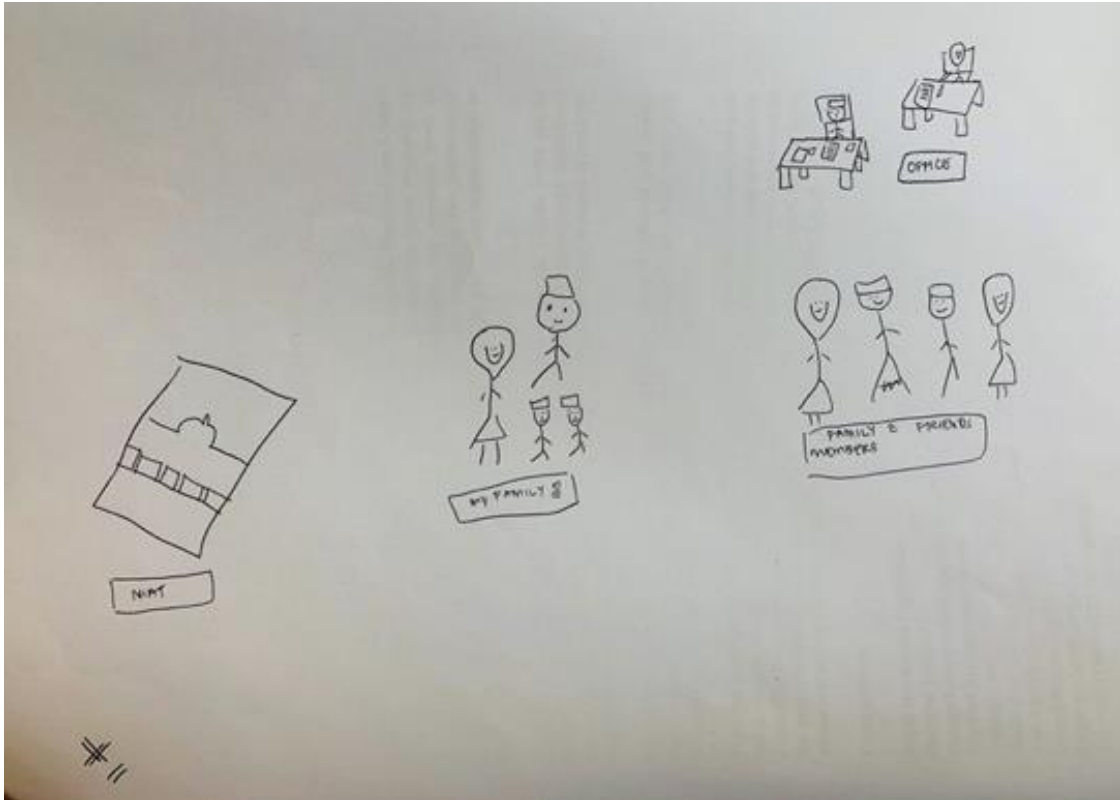


Figure 6.7: Intention by Damia (I-11)

Damia’s drawing (see Fig. 6.7) of smiling faces also indicated happiness, whereby she extended that ‘happiness’ to her work colleagues, family members and friends. Her interpretation of her drawing indicated that ‘happiness’ was in the form of ‘balance’ in providing what is best for her family and maintaining a ‘harmonious relationship’ with other people:

“So, I need to think what is best for me, the best for my family and work. Then, other than that, we need to make better our social relationships... with our family members and friends. So, we need to balance all of that” – Damia (I-11)

Another participant, Balqis (see Fig. 6.9), drew smiling faces, which also indicated ‘happiness’ in the form of being able to be at home and entertain her children while doing her work.

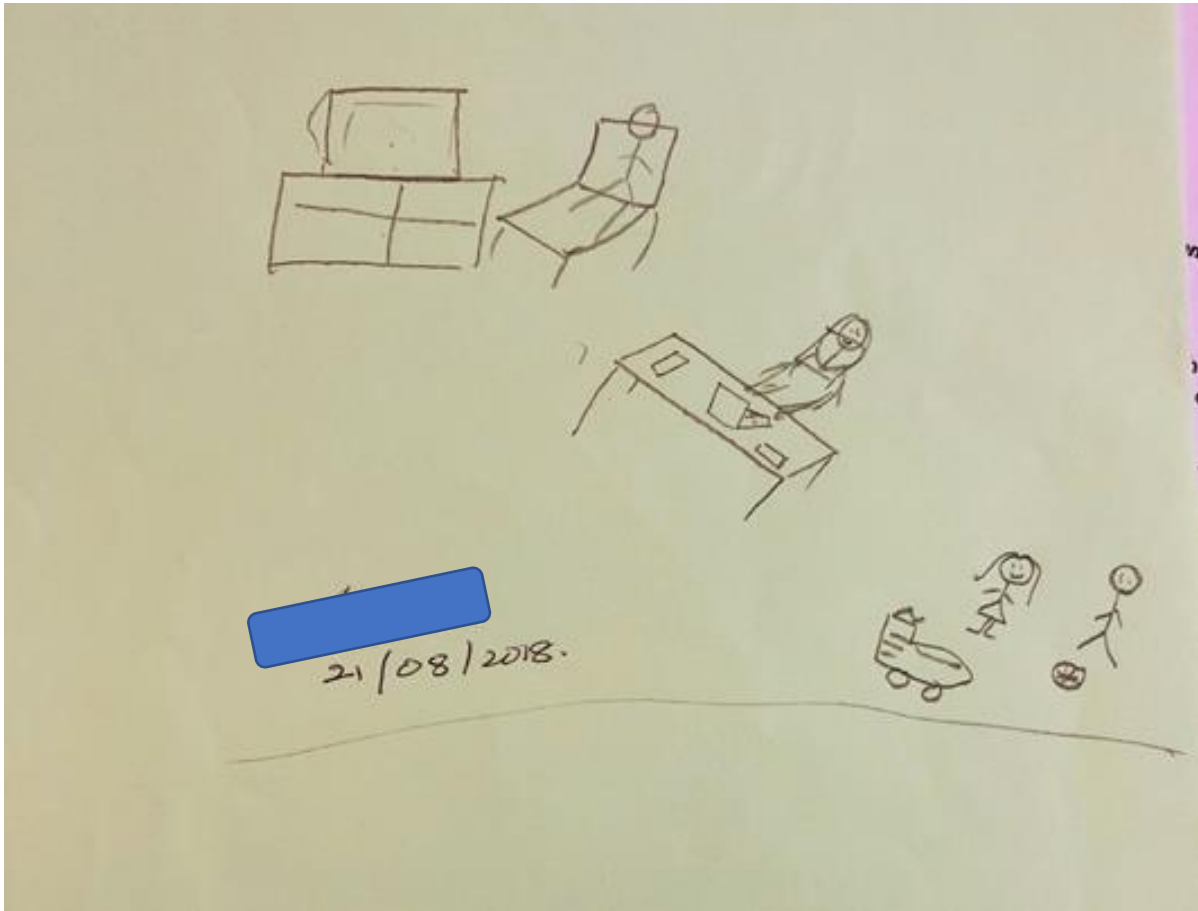


Figure 6.10: Work From Home by Balqis (I-14)

She interpreted her drawing of work-life balance as achieved through spending time with her family:

“Work-Life Balance for me is...me, doing work. While my kids are playing. While my husband is relaxing and I’m also doing that....me being able to be at home for the kids...” – Balqis (I-14)

However, in her interview, Balqis mentioned that doing the school run was one of the most difficult daily tasks she had to do. She would spend a few hours during the working time sending and fetching her son from school. Because of this, she had to spend more time in the

office to compensate for the time she used to do school runs. She also mentioned that she could not get any work done at home because her daughter took control of her laptop:

“So I spend more time in the office to compensate for the time. Because I can’t do anything at home, my daughter takes control of my laptop. She loves that I’m doing work, so when I’m not doing any work on my laptop, she’d take it as her turn to do work...” – Balqis (I-14)

This statement shows that, in the essence of work-life balance, Balqis anticipates spending time with her family at home would be ideal for gaining ‘happiness’. However, as the quote stated, it was also a challenge for Balqis to do her work at home due to the interruption from her daughter.

Another participant, Belinda (see Fig. 6.10), drew her family composition with smiling faces. These smiling faces with the word ‘support system’ written on top of them are significant in ensuring her family is happy. During her interview, she mentioned that her husband bought a car for her sister to be able to do the school runs (on their behalf) to pick up their children from school. In contrast to Balqis and her school run routines, Belinda did not have to do school runs for her children because she had her sister to do that for her.



Figure 6.10: Support System by Belinda (I-15)

Belinda’s interpretation of her drawing indicated that smiling faces means being happy and grateful because of the ability to enjoy work and life with her family:

“One car and the small house with the round window (which represents my dream window for a house) signified always remember to be grateful in what you have and be happy for it as long as it is enough for everyone” – Belinda (I-15)

Furthermore, like Dahlia in Organisation D, Belinda also considered her husband the ‘balance keeper’ whereby she stated that her husband insisted on sending the children to school every morning before he went off to work. Moreover, he also reminded the family of their prayer obligations. Belinda stated:

“Although his work requires him to be far from us, but he tries to...and makes a point to send the kids to school, and then he’s a reminder for the children’s prayer times. He would remind them, including me. Even though he’s far away but he makes us feel

he's around. That's what's wonderful about him. And he is always around whenever we need him.” – Belinda (I-15)

The drawings depicted by these participants likely convey the message of ‘happiness’ or making or keeping everyone else ‘happy’ through fulfilling their role as a mother and a wife. It is likely that by bringing happiness or keeping everyone else happy, these participants can communicate their ‘love’ to the important people in their life.

6.3. Different Meanings of the ‘Heart’ Symbol

Daniella (see Fig. 6.5) drew her family unit with her holding her baby and her husband beside her and drew a ‘love’ or a heart between herself and her husband (Figure 6.5). She also drew a tree on the left side of the picture and a book just below the tree. Her centrality between her husband, the tree, and the book indicates the middle factor discussed above. Interestingly, her drawing is the only drawing that used coloured pens during the time slot given after the interview. This will be discussed further later.



Figure 6.5: *Harmonious and Colourful* by Daniella (I-8)

Daniella interpreted her drawing and stated that:

“...so that’s me, holding my baby. This is my husband. So, this is a heart shape. So, for me, you have to maintain a harmonious relationship with your family. I think they are the most important person in your life...” – Daniella (I-8)

According to Daniella, to achieve a balance between work and life, there must be an effort to maintain a harmonious relationship with one’s family and spouse since they are the most important person in one’s life. In this explanation, Daniella indicated that the ‘love shape’ is a metaphor for harmony and maintaining a harmonious relationship is imperative to achieving a work-life balance. It could also signify the maternal role of a mother to extend the ‘love’ and harmony to the family in the context of taking care of the baby and the family. As a wife and a mother, these roles are naturally embedded in a woman to ensure the family is in a state of happiness and harmony.

The sub-theme ‘harmonious relationship’ can be seen and understood from Damia’s drawing (Figure 6.7). She mentioned that keeping or maintaining social relationships amongst family members and friends is also vital to ensure everyone is happy to be around us. She stated:

“...we need to make better our social relationship...with our family members and friends...so we need to balance all of that...” – Damia (I-11)

According to Damia, we also need to balance our relationships with others apart from our immediate family members to find peace of heart and peace of mind by making everyone happy. This is closely related to her principle of setting the intention right in the first place, to find a balance between work and life:

“... if your intention is not right, sometimes your heart is not at ease or peace, and it can sever your relationship with your family and the people around you” – Damia (I-11)

The statement shows that religiosity and spirituality are an indication of ‘support’ that can be gained through setting the right intention and governed by the law set by the religion. The theme of spirituality will be discussed later.

6.3.1. Heart-Shaped Equals Support

Another explanation of ‘happiness’ is indicated by Belinda (see Fig. 6.10), where she drew a ‘heart-shaped’ depiction on top of her family unit. She mentioned what the hearts represent in her understanding of the word Work-Life Balance:

“Work-life balance for me is to go and leave from work on time – notice the smiling family – it shows everyone is happy and standing outdoor... it means spending time

(activities) together as a family inside and outside the house. The hearts represent the strong support system that surrounds the everyday workings of the family, especially at home...” – Belinda (I-15)



Figure 6.10: Support System by Belinda (I-15)

Belinda specified the ‘heart shapes’ as her strong support system, which is the foundation for finding a balance between work and life. By drawing three heart shapes instead of just one like Daniella, Belinda emphasised the ‘strength’ of this support system and added the word ‘strong’ to her justification. Her illustration of a house and identified it as ‘Home’ by writing the word ‘Support System’ next to the heart-shaped depicted the ‘love language’ that she expressed through other significant material possessions such as the drawing of a ‘car’ next to her family unit. The smiling faces of her family unit could also indicate that the support system written on top of them is significant in ensuring her family is happy. During her interview, she mentioned her husband, who commutes to work daily and is always available for her in times of need. She also mentioned in her interview that her husband bought a car for her sister to be

able to do the school runs (on their behalf) to pick up their children from school. Purchasing a car to be used by a family member can also symbolise a meaning of 'heart' or 'love'. Belinda added:

“One car and the small house with the round window (which represents my dream window for a house) signified always remember to be grateful in what you have and be happy for it as long as it is enough for everyone” – Belinda (I-15)

These statements show that Belinda defined the 'heart' symbol as her 'support system' comprising of her family.

6.4. Segregation of Roles and Activities

Daniella interpreted her drawing (see Fig. 6.5), stating there should also be a separation between professional and maternal roles which can change depending on where the person is. She stated:

“...because work is work, so when you're at home, you're no longer this...the professional woman they (colleagues) see at work. You're completely, like a, you're a wife to your husband and all that, so you have to maintain that harmonious relationship... so you're seen like, I don't know, like a professional woman that supervises the financial institution, but when you're home, you're a wife, you're a mother...roles are changing...” – Daniella (I-8)



Figure 6.5: Harmonious and Colourful by Daniella (I-8)

This compartmentalisation example is also narrated in her interview, where she is among the few participants who still preferred to pump in closed or private spaces at work.

Daniella has compartmentalised and sees the changing roles between a professional woman at work and mother and wife at home play a crucial part in maintaining this ‘harmonious’ relationship between work and family. When one knows how to ‘switch off’ between the roles, then one should be able to value and take care of the responsibilities bestowed upon them. She also added her responsibilities at work and home in her drawing through her illustration of a ‘tree’ and a ‘book’. She described further how these depictions could be interpreted and included in both her work and life aspects:

“So, work is work... and this is like a book. So, a book...at work, of course, you have to read the books and all that, do the research to support... but at the same time, I have to read a book too to my kids...” – Daniella (I-8)

According to Daniella, the ‘book’ represents her responsibilities as an employee. At work, she has to do some readings and research as part of her job (as a financial advisor). At the same time, the ‘book’ also indicated her ‘job’ as a mother to read to her children as a family time activity. This ‘job’ could also symbolise her job to educate her children through reading and instil a love of reading amongst her children.

6.4.1. Boundaries of Space and Time

Several examples of setting visible or invisible boundaries, whether at work or home, can be found in participants' drawings. An example of this can be found in Daniella’s drawing of a tree and a book (see Fig. 6.5). The reason she gave for placing the tree next to the book was:

“...if possible, bring your family close to nature and all that, you know. Breathe some fresh air because I spend almost the whole day in the office. So, you need to go out. In a way, you have to instil this culture where you have to stay healthy for the family. It’s for your family and work. You need to, you need to do work because you need to support the family and all that...” – Daniella (I-8)

From her explanation, Daniella viewed the ‘tree’ to represent nature, which is also important in maintaining a balanced or healthy work and family. She added that being close to the ‘open’ nature (the woods) and spending time with her family is imperative to ‘detoxify’ after spending the whole day in the confinement of ‘closed’ office walls. Although Daniella did not draw any building that indicates her work office element, her explanation indicates that her work was to

get the salary to support her family and keep her family happy. She was also aware that health was more important than anything.

Another participant, Bella, drew bubbles in her drawing (see Fig. 6.1). According to her interview narration, she pumps privately in her room at work with a label on the door to keep her from being disturbed during the process.

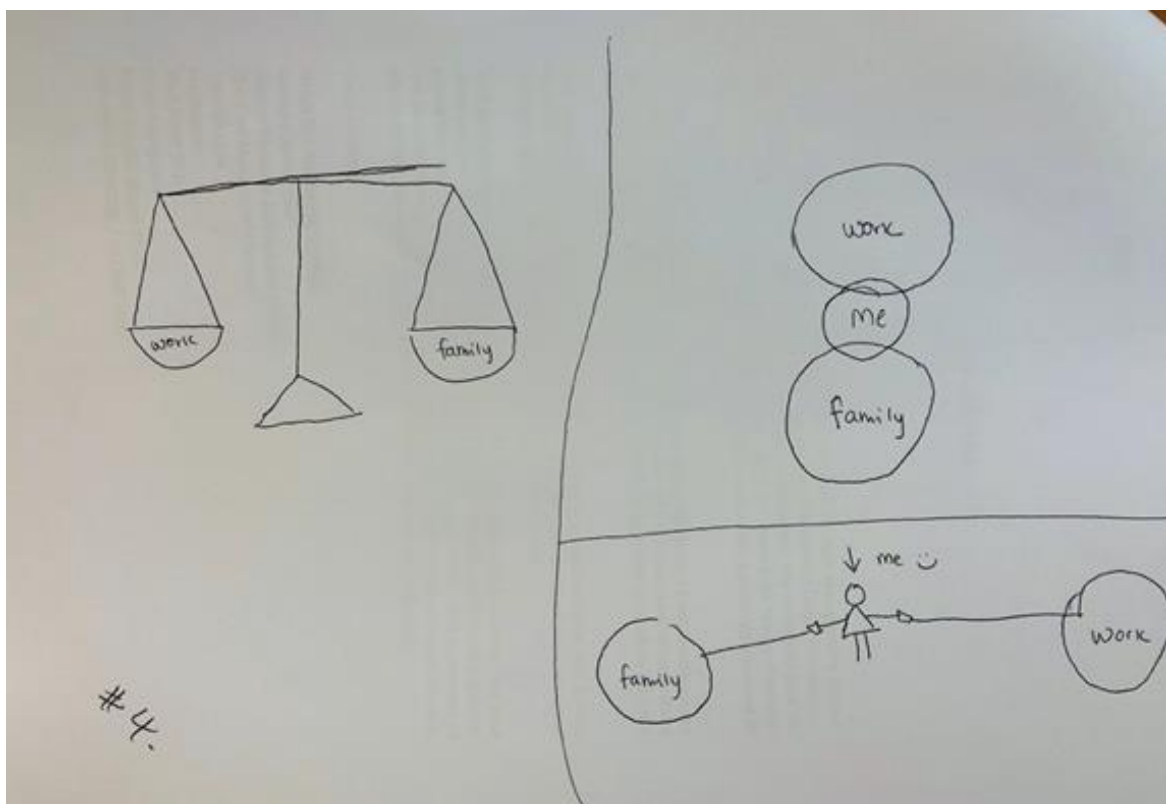


Figure 6.1: The Balancing Scale by Bella (I-14)

In their drawings, several participants (Dana, Dalila and Belinda) represented the space between the office and their homes. Different depictions of office buildings and houses indicate separation between the two spaces. For example, Dana in Organisation D wrote ‘Work’ at the top of her office building which shows a ‘higher’ value because she did not write ‘Home’ on the house. She mentioned that she enjoys her work:

“...like work, you get the money, but yeah, one thing we have to enjoy the work, of course, comes with the salary, you have to have all the fun...which I have right now. I don't know what you mean with work-life balance, but I enjoy my work” – Dana (I-7)

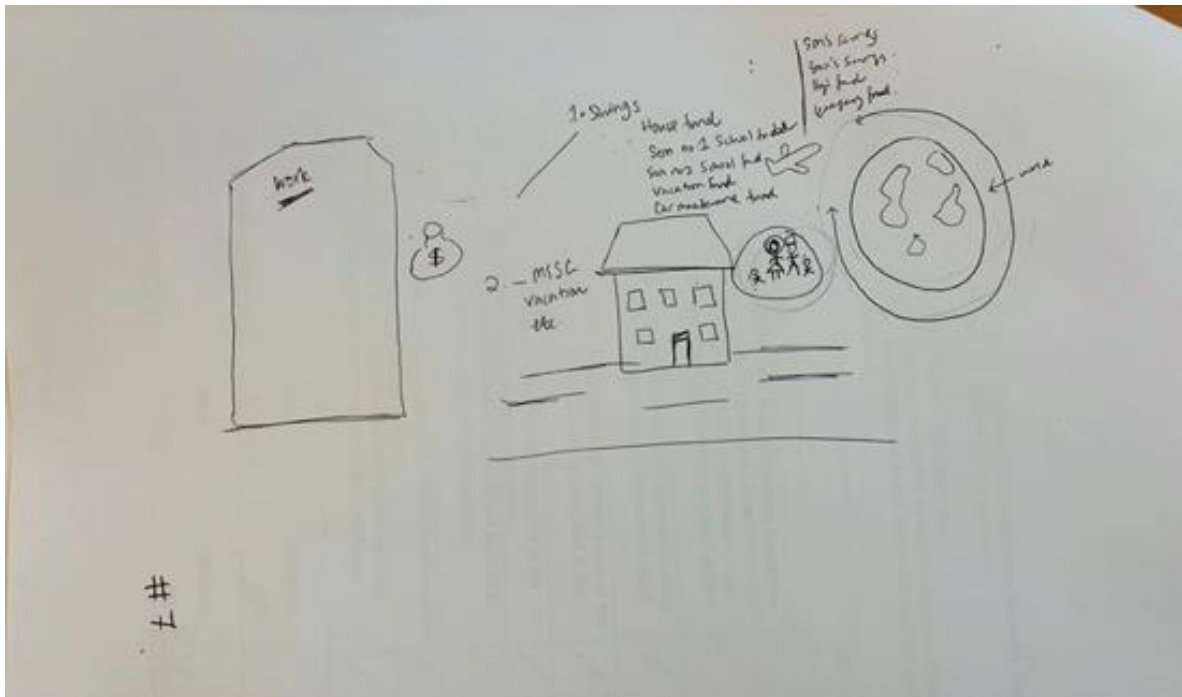


Figure 6.4: Work, Funds and Travel by Dana (I-7)

According to Dana, she enjoyed her work as a manager because that was how she earned money. This can be seen from the depiction of the sack of money with a dollar sign next to the ‘Work’ building. However, she did not elaborate more on her work tasks. Dana stated in her interview:

“I’ve been working here since 2013... I am working as a Manager under the Financial Intelligence Unit, under IT section specifically for the unit...” – Dana (I-7)

Dana indicated that she put a portion away for savings from her salary. This includes a house, vacation, and other necessary funds like emergency and school funds. Furthermore, the other portion she saved for miscellaneous such as family vacations. There is also a small depiction of her family unit next to the drawing of the house. Dana also drew a ‘Globe’, indicating her

passion and love for travelling with her family. She also mentioned travelling as part of her ‘spending time’ activity with her family and the requirement to enjoy her work since it is the source of her fund. By enjoying her work, she can earn money (salary) to fill up her funds and go vacationing as part of striking a balance (or enjoying her time spent) between work and family. She interpreted her drawing and stated:

“...and vacation too by bringing the family travel...and because I rarely have the time to spend with them in Brunei and there’s nothing to see here... so the only way is to get out of this country and spend time with them” – Dana (I-7)

Two other participants, Belinda (see Fig. 6.10) and Dalila (see Fig. 6.6), depicted the separate entities of their office building and their house as shown below:



Figure 6.10: Support System by Belinda (I-15)

In addition to the drawings of an office building and home by Dalila and Belinda, another common theme that can be found in both of their drawings is the indication of time as a boundary. These participants drew a clock or working time indicating their working hours in the office. For example, aside from drawing a tall building of her work, she also indicated the time '4.30 pm' next to it, which means the end of her working hours:

*“...the 4.30 pm clock represents getting home from work before the sun sets...” –
Belinda (I-15)*

Dalila illustrates the same depiction (see Fig. 6.6), whereby she drew the time '5.30 pm' on a clock, indicating the end of her working time and the time for her to go home. This analogue clock indicating the time '5.30' is put next to the drawing of her house, which means that is the time she is expected to be home. She also drew the sun and wrote the time '7.45 – 12.15' and '1.30 – 5.30', which signifies the working hours that starts from 7.45 in the morning until 12.15 noon and starts again at 1.30 in the afternoon until 5.30 pm. This indication was put next to her drawing of a tall office building, as shown below:

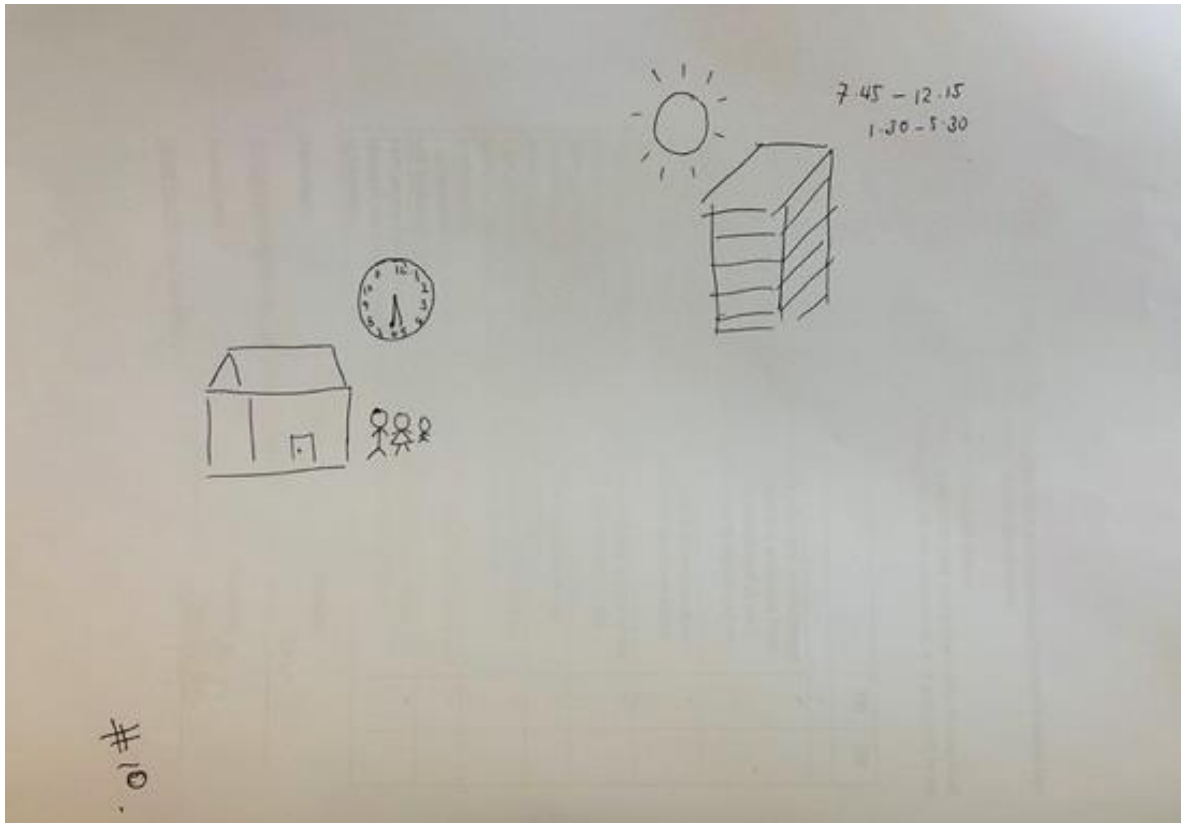


Figure 6.6: House and Office by Dalila (I-10)

When asked to explain her drawing, Dalila mentioned:

“Basically, for the working hours is work itself. And the rest of the time is family time. So, that’s how I balance my work. Especially during the work days... and the weekend is family time – we try not to do anything else other than family time... to compensate our time during working days” – Dalila (I-10)

Dafiyah drew another illustration of a clock and working time (see Fig. 6.9). She drew a bird’s eye view of her office setting with tables, chairs, different clocking times and her colleagues.

She stated:

“Okay,...this represents people with work desks. This is mine (pointing to the one with paper on the table). Okay, why do I draw 8.30 (am) here (referring to the clock), because, let’s say, working hours start at 7.45 in the morning. So, say we arrive at

7.30 in the morning, you know we're settling down like having breakfast or something, I think it could be balanced if I give time to prepare before I can concentrate on doing my work...then work until 5.15 pm, then after working hours, we go home... arrive home around 6 pm..." – Dafiyah (I-12).

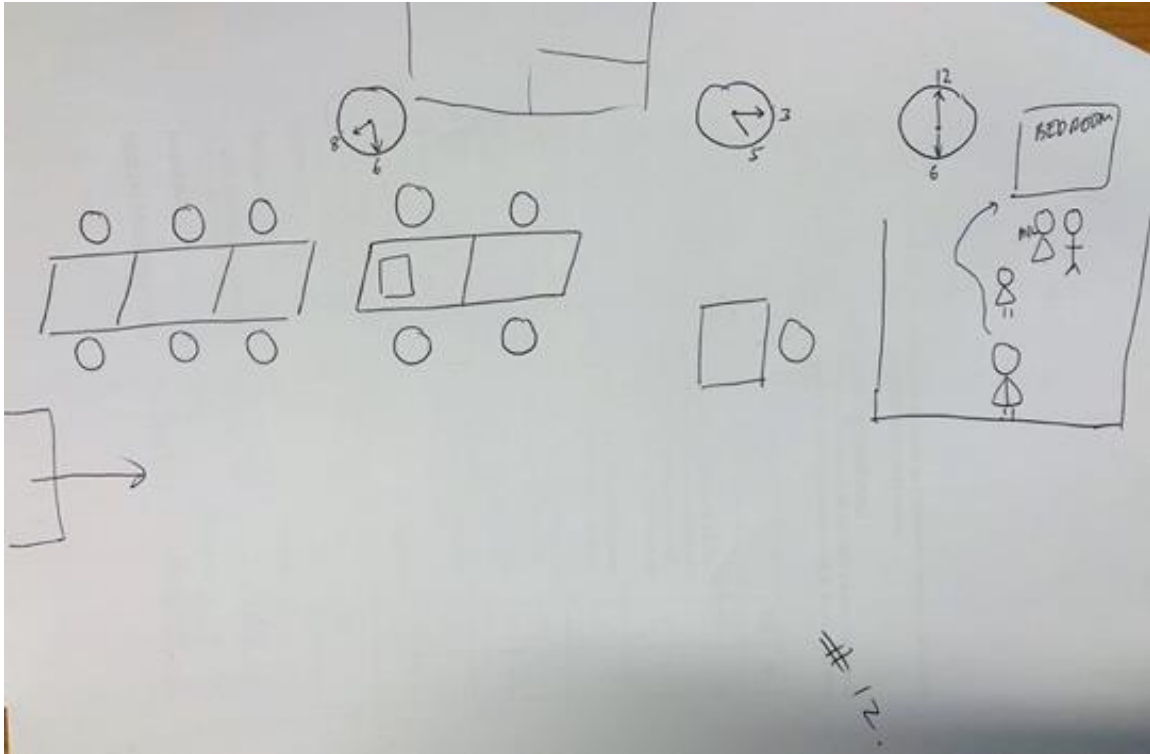


Figure 6.9: Bird's Eye View by Dafiyah (I-12)

Even though Dafiyah's drawing is depicted in a bird's eye view, the separation between her office and home settings is also apparent. This can be seen through drawing her office setting, which is separated by desks. Moreover, she indicated that the desk with a paper in the middle is her desk work. She explained her drawing, stating that:

"...and this layout means there is privacy among us. Although no partition, so far, our work is not too busy and demanding... and our colleagues can make us feel that we want to do work as well as be in that kind of environment where everyone else is working" – Dafiyah (I-12)

There is also an indication of an entry point in the drawing with the arrow pointing in. Dafiya explained this to be the 'door' to the office. Meanwhile, her 'house' setting was drawn in the context of a physical line or boundary and labelled as 'bedroom'. The drawing of her bedroom symbolises a private and personal space for her and her family as Dafiya claimed it to be 'in the room' inside the house:

"So, inside the house, there's me, and my daughter will be waiting for me then I would spend time with her in the room watching tv" – Dafiya (I-12)

Furthermore, Dafiya explained that the moment she arrived home, her daughter would greet her and bring her upstairs (to their room). She also stated that her daughter was the type of person who likes to be indoors (loosely translated from the Malay word 'Pengurung') and preferred to do activities in the bedroom:

"...this is myself, so, as I enter the house, my daughter will run to me and drag me to go upstairs... she is the 'pengurung' (indoorsy) type... So in this bedroom, I play with her... sometimes she colours, watches the tv, jumps up and down... like that...she likes to play here (in the bedroom)... even sometimes if I want to bring her downstairs, she would be reluctant... if she can have her way, she would just stay there (in the bedroom)" – Dafiya (I-12)

Moreover, Dafiya put her working hours which start at 8.30 in the morning until 5.15 in the afternoon and the after-working hours' clock set in her bedroom, which indicates 6.00 pm. According to her, after the end of the working hours (5.15 pm), it is time to be home, and the clock shows 6.00 pm. The drawing of her family unit also indicates that she set a boundary between the time she spends at work and with her family. She manages to separate her roles between being an employee at work and being a mother and a wife at home. She also mentioned

the activities she would normally do with her daughter at home and called it ‘spend time’ (refer to the quote above). In the previous chapter, Dafiya was discussed as being the only participant who did not breastfeed her baby. So, there was no recollection of her needing ‘private’ spaces at work to pump. However, in her drawing, Dafiya drew a visible boundary separating her office and home entities, as depicted above.

6.5. Integration of Activities

In discussing the notion of ‘spending time’, one participant, Balqis (see Fig. 6.10), shared how she integrated her activities at home. Her drawing was set in the living room as she sat and did her work while at the same time, she drew a picture of her husband lounging on the sofa ‘relaxing’. She claims she was also doing the same – watching TV while doing her work. Her kids are seen to be around too in the room, playing together. When asked to describe what her drawing entails, she stated:

“Me, doing work. While my kids are playing. While my husband is relaxing and I’m also doing that (relaxing). So, I’m also watching TV. So, I have to have noise when I’m doing my work—being able to be at home for the kids. Half entertain the kids, half to be able to do work. Which I wish I could do every day. I don’t mind. Being at home” – Balqis (I-14)

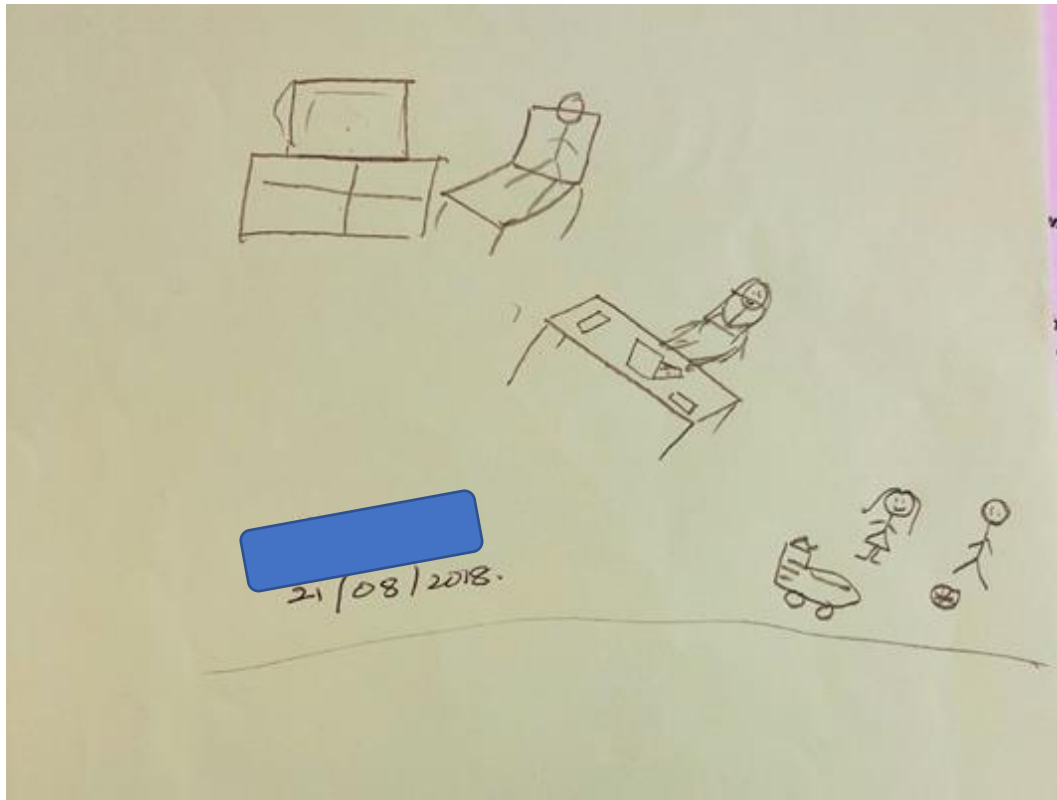


Figure 6.10: Work From Home by Balqis (I-14)

Balqis mentioned that she preferred the noise from the TV and her kids playing at home. She also indicated doing these multi-tasking activities by dividing her tasks fairly as a mother and an employee by using the word ‘half’ in her statement. Some participants revealed in the interviews that they multitask at work by pumping their breastmilk at their desks. At the same time, they tend to work responsibilities, like checking e-mails, discussing with colleagues, and attending meetings.

Although Balqis mentioned in her interview that she breastfed both her children, she did not share in detail about her pumping at work activities. However, her drawing indicates an integration of the home and work activities whereby she claimed to enjoy spending time at home with her family and simultaneously doing her work. Such indication of multitasking was extensively described in the previous chapter. These simultaneous activities, whether done at

work or at home, are believed to be a part of a professional woman's preference for them to fulfil their roles, tasks and responsibilities.

6.6. Using Metaphors for Work-Life Balance

In describing Work-Life Balance, metaphors such as 'flower' and 'prayer mat' were used. In addition, two drawings by Daisy and Damia had different interpretations. On the other hand, Daniella was the only participant who used the coloured pens provided for the drawing activity.

6.6.1. Using Metaphor: Prayer Mat and the Spiritual Aspect of Work-Life Balance

Only one participant, Damia (see Fig. 6.7), included a prayer mat in her drawing, despite all of them pray five times a day. The prayer mat was the first drawing Damia drew and was located on the left side of the drawing. The position of the prayer mat being the first could also symbolise faith, especially for a Muslim. When asked to describe her drawing, Damia stated:

"I think for working with work-life balance... you need to set your intention right. And then, we need to take care of our solat (prayer), our obligation... that's the first thing that I want to note" – Damia (I-11)

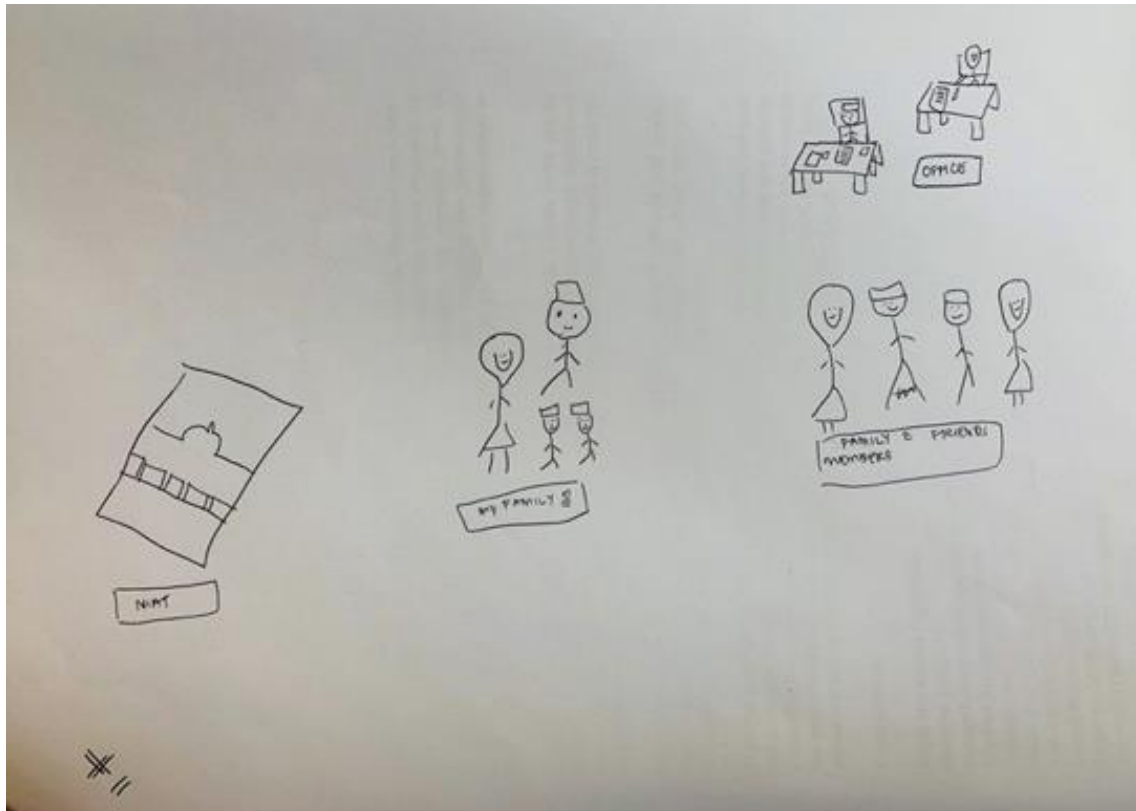


Figure 6.7: Intention by Damia (I-11)

According to Damia, the first important thing for a Muslim when doing something is setting the right intention. She wrote the word ‘Niat’ below the prayer mat, which is translated to ‘Intention’. For Muslims, when one sets to do something, the intention must be for the sake of God. She also added that the prayer mat symbolises a Muslim performing his or her obligatory prayer. Interestingly, she indicated that this was the first thing she wanted to highlight, as mentioned in the quote above. She continued stating ‘my family’ as the second important thing after intention:

“The second one is my family. And then, of course, when working, ensure our income source is halal (permissible). I mean, if we arrive early at work but still ‘play around’ and not yet doing the ‘real’ work, it is considered you haven’t started working. Remember that you’re receiving your salary based on the amount of work you put in to ensure you deserve what you are being paid. Or the other way around, how much

you are being paid, that's how much you should work for it – not to take things for granted” – Damia (I-11)

The mention of setting one's intention right in doing anything in life, whether it is for working or taking care of a family, is considered a vital aspect of a Muslim's life. Taking care of the faith first and centralising everything else around faith, in this case, praying, would trickle down to being able to take care of one's family. Damia also mentioned in great detail how earning one's salary should be equivalent to the effort one has put in doing one's work or job to be considered halal (permissible) in Islam and halal earnings. She explained further:

“So, I need to think what is best for me, the best for my family and work... what's important is I intend to work so I can find a halal way of supporting my family... God knows my intentions (to work) ... that's my first principle... if your intention is not right, sometimes your heart is not at ease or peace, and it can sever your relationship with your family and the people around you” – Damia (I-11)

Damia also drew her family unit after the prayer mat, and next to that is an illustration of her family members and friends. The position is vital to understanding how she views everything in her life. With faith as her number one guide comes her immediate family members, whom she has to take care of. Then come her extended family members and friends, whom all have smiling faces. As mentioned earlier, these smiling faces could also indicate happiness. On top of these drawings of human depiction, Damia also drew work desks at the top right corner of her drawing. She labelled it as 'Office' with her colleague on one of the chair and work desks. There is invisible compartmentalisation between Damia's family, friends, and office colleagues. She also mentioned an 'invisible' acknowledgement when doing something:

“so, first, refresh your intention to work to make it worth it – the idea of your effort is counted regardless if people do not see it that way... but God sees, and God knows...” – Damia (I-11)

This drawing (see Fig. 6.7) was the only spiritual aspect or concept gathered from all the drawings that the participants were involved in. However, the spiritual approach to Work-Life Balance has never been discussed or explored in great detail before, especially from the Islamic point of view.

6.6.2. Using Metaphor – Flower

Only one participant, Daisy (I-6), drew a flower when she was asked to describe and illustrate what work-life balance means to her. This illustration is unique and different from the rest of the participants. When asked what her drawing meant, she said:

“The flower will be family; this is the work, others, stuff” (referring to the branches out of the flower) – Daisy (I-6)

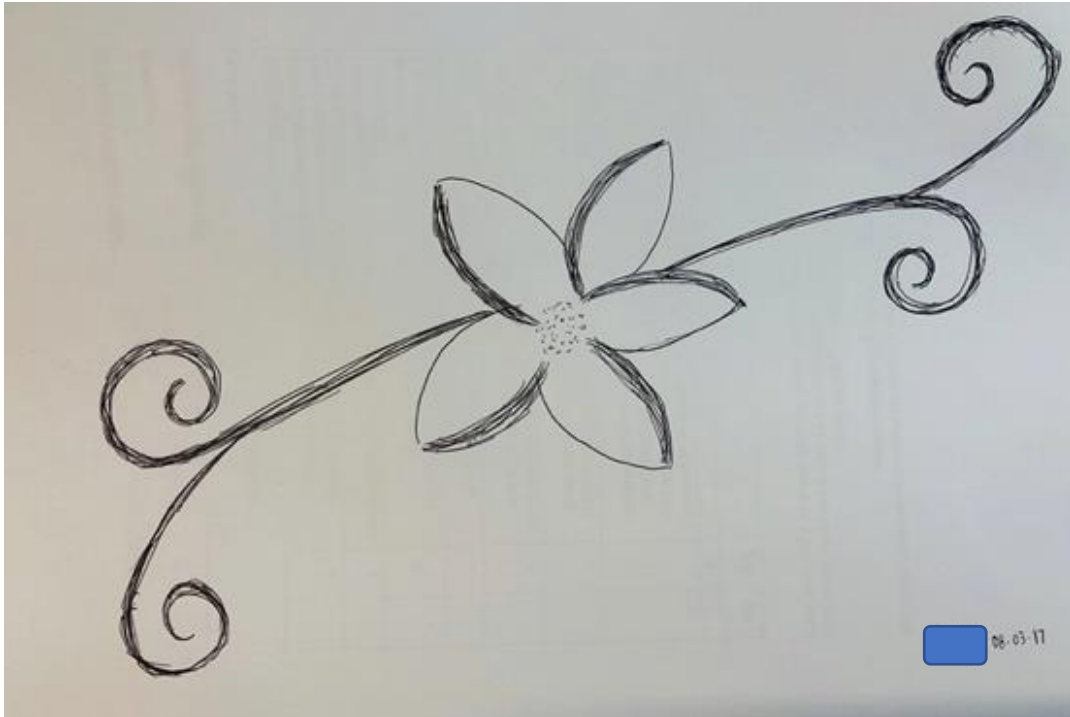


Figure 6.11: Flower by Daisy (I-6) – Organisation D

Daisy put her ‘family’ in the middle (metaphor as the flower) and stated that her family is “the heart of my life” and without it (the family), there would be no work. Work in this sense would be her as a working mother providing for the family. Unlike other participants who drew a ‘heart-shaped’ depiction, however, Daisy only mentioned the ‘heart’ as a symbol of her family, which is the fundamental point of her life.

“...my family in the middle... and they are the heart of my life...” - Daisy (I-6)

The location of this ‘flower’ in the middle also signifies its importance in ensuring a balance between family/life and other stuff such as work. Her indication of putting her work, others and stuff as the branches means that all other things aside from her family exist because her family exists. Without the family, there is no reason for work, others and stuff to exist.

6.6.3. Using Metaphor – Colourful and Harmonious

One participant, Daniella (see Fig. 6.5), was the only participant who used coloured pens provided for the drawing. In the interview, she claimed she was not an artist before she began drawing. However, she claimed that she chose to use the available coloured pens ‘to make it more interesting’:

“I’m not a very creative...artist... I’m not an artist. So, I’ll try to draw...” – Daniella (I-8)



Figure 6.5: Harmonious and Colourful by Daniella (I-8)

The choice of coloured pens used by Daniella in her drawing could also indicate how she wanted to make the drawings ‘more interesting’ to identify the different elements of her depiction. The smiling faces could also symbolise happiness. She mentioned the need to maintain a harmonious relationship with her family to find a balance between work and life.

However, in her interview narrative, Daniella is perceived as a ‘shy’ and ‘reserved’ person, claiming that when she needs to pump at work, she ‘never’ pumps at her desk. Instead, she used other closed or private empty spaces or rooms to do her pumping activities. This is the opposite of her use of colourful pens in her drawing.

6.7. The Odd One Out

Only one participant, Diana (I-9), drew a see-saw when asked to describe what Work-Life Balance (WLB) means to her after the interview. This drawing is expressing a very different nuance as this is the only drawing in which the participant wrote the word ‘Work-Life Balance’ on the paper. This is because the ‘work’ side falls heavier on the right, and the ‘life’ component is on the higher ground up. After the drawing, she was asked to describe her drawing, only to realise that her drawing was slanted. She described it as:

“...like a see-saw, heavier on the work side, although the word ‘work’ comes first, so there is no balance” – Diana (I-9)

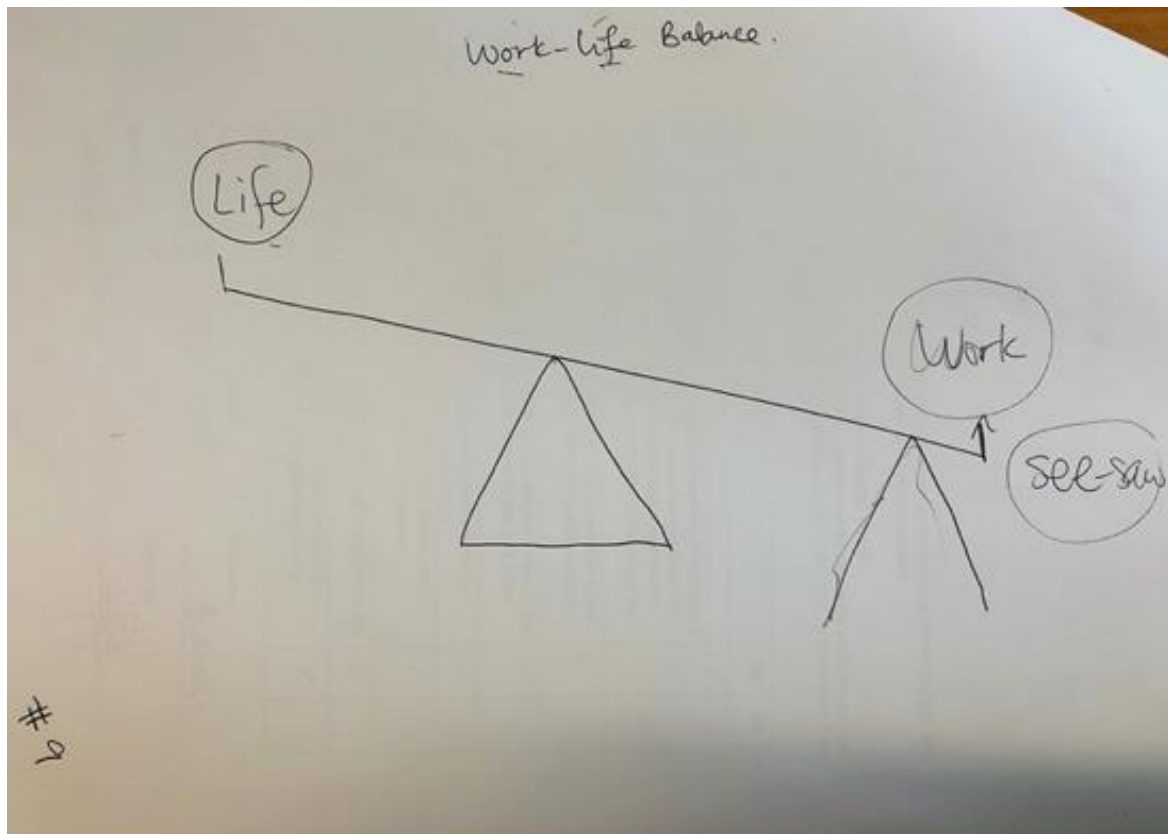


Figure 6.12: *The See-Saw by Diana (I-9) – Organisation D*

Diana described that although the word ‘work’ comes first in Work-Life Balance, it was assumed that the word ‘work’ should come first in the drawing, by which it should be the first word to be drawn or written in the illustration, not ‘life’ as indicated. Diana’s view of having no balance between her work and life could also indicate how much burden in terms of work responsibilities she has to carry on her shoulder. According to her, as mentioned in the interview, her work roles and responsibilities also take most of her time since she holds the position of two heads of Units in her organisation. On the other hand, when she drew and put her ‘life’ component higher up, it could also indicate that she valued her life (or family) more and decided to put them in a higher rank between the two (work and life). Her claim to have no balance between her work and life surprised her a little after reflecting on her interview and life.

However, the drawing of the imbalance between work and life and a see-saw as drawn by Diana (see Fig. 6.12) above is the opposite of the illustration of a balancing scale as depicted by Bella (see Fig. 6.1) and Badriyah (see Fig. 6.2) as discussed earlier. The difference between the drawings is that the participant only realised it to be slanting after drawing and reviewing it. She realised that her work burdened her and how she wished to have less workload. In the interview, Diana was one of the two participants who did not prioritise climbing the corporate ladder. However, her drawing indicates that work did weigh her down.

6.8. Conclusion

The participants used different images and metaphors when drawing and explaining Work-Life Balance. Although the drawing activities came after the interview session, the drawings depicted a more traditional illustration of office buildings, houses, family units and clocks indicating working time. The debate about the meaning of 'balance' as perceived by these participants shows that the same notion may have different meanings for different individuals. Most participants depicted themselves in the drawings by centralising them in the middle. There were also different meanings attached to the 'heart' symbol, such as harmonious and support. At the same time, some participants depicted visible boundaries of space and time in the form of office buildings and houses as well as clock time. Other participants explained about integrating activities through their drawings. There were also different metaphors being used by participants to imply their perception of WLB, such as a 'flower', 'prayer mat', and 'slanting see-saw'. There is also evidence that the data from interviews and drawings can be incorporated even though the participants illustrated no depiction of breastfeeding or pumping.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

7.1. Introduction

Having analysed the interviews and drawings data in the previous chapters, I will consider my findings and relate them to the relevant theories. My review of Work-Life Balance and Maternal Bodies (Chapter 2) shows that most of the previous research on work-life balance has focused on maternal bodies at work in the United Kingdom (UK), Europe and the United States (US). Mothers are commonly associated with leakage, mutability and abjection instead of viewed as intelligent members of the workplace (Gatrell, 2013; Annandale and Clark, 1996). Evidence from the literature (see Gatrell, 2013, Witters-Green, 2003; Hopfl, 2000; Longhurst, 2001) indicates that women returning to work post-pregnancy suffer emotional and psychological mistreatment, especially those who want to continue breastfeeding their children exclusively but lack support from their organisations. In contrast, my research found that maternal bodies can be more normalised in the workplace, enabling many to continue with breastfeeding for as long as possible. Although there were variations between organisations and differences in the personal choices of participants, women were pumping breastmilk at their desks in shared office spaces, which was markedly different to the experiences described in previous research (Valizadeh *et al.*, 2017; Zhuang *et al.*, 2018). This was possible because of modest dresses (a special garment – nursing cover), breast pumping technologies and social and governmental support. Pumping, for some mothers, was a social experience, connecting them with other mothers in dedicated spaces or discussing technologies. Its acceptability might have improved over time because others followed pioneers and government initiatives outlined in Chapter 4. However, it is important to note that some women chose to pump in private, even where there was social support.

A further contribution of this thesis to the literature on methods. Where previous research has indicated that projective techniques such as drawing are useful for enabling the discussion of difficult or complex topics (see Ward, 2012; Jensen *et al.*, 2007; Kearney and Hyle, 2004), my experience shows that some topics or issues might be more difficult to draw than discuss. If anything, the interview material revealed more about women's day-to-day experiences than the drawings. For example, despite breast pumping emerging as the major topic in the interviews, this did not feature in the drawings.

This chapter will begin with a discussion on the context of this study. Then, it will examine the concept of maternal bodies focusing on the shifted priorities that the women experienced post-maternity leave. The following sections will deliberate the issues around breastfeeding, pumping at work, and the different types of support found in the data before concluding the chapter.

7.2. Brunei as the Study Context

Studies of work-life balance are mainly based on the UK, the US, and EU contexts and focus on the perspectives of the Western women (see Rapoport and Rapoport, 2007; Pocock *et al.*, 2013; Chandra, 2012; Hennig *et al.*, 2012; Appelbaum *et al.*, 2006; McKinsey & Company, 2012; Tofolletti and Starr, 2016; Demerouti *et al.*, 2001). There is a paucity of evidence in the context of non-Western women in a Muslim-majority country.

Previous studies (Haar *et al.*, 2014; Mohd Noor, 2011; Omar *et al.*, 2015; Jamadin *et al.*, 2015; Hassan, 2010) found various aspects of the impact of work-life balance on employed women. A study by Konrad (2013) suggests the gender role allocation depends on the traditional assumption that women are assigned to homemaking tasks while men are income-generating breadwinners. Furthermore, Omar and Davison (2001) found that those with strong cultural

beliefs on the appropriate roles for women at home and work still adhere to this assumption. However, the findings in my study contradict this. From this study, I found that the Brunei context is more conducive for women to continue breastfeeding because of three (3) reasons – the religion, the government and their initiatives, and the maid culture. The first area is the role of spirituality in the maternal body concept. Being an Islamic country like Brunei, the Muslim context and religious views are governed by the practice of Islamic law. This means that as Muslims, we believe that every good action is rewarded, and that includes breastfeeding. Since the teachings and practice of Islam are based on two sources – the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), therefore, the act of breastfeeding is stated as a verse in the Qur’an which shows the importance of breastfeeding and how it is highly recommended to be acted upon. Following the teachings of the Qur’an, mothers are urged and recommended to feed their babies up until they are two years old. This command is found in a verse in the Qur’an:

“Mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period]...” (Surah Al-Baqarah [Chapter 2], Verse 233)

This could also be one of the spiritually motivational factors for lactating mothers to continue breastfeeding and pumping post-maternity leave. Therefore, when these participants fulfilled their religious obligation by doing something good like breastfeeding or pumping milk, and they know that these acts of goodness are rewarded, it brings to the issue of work-life balance. Whereby their personal life, domestic life, mothering life and their interaction with their work life are evidence that there is an integration in all these activities that if they are fulfilled, can be translated into the Muslim context having an impact on the notion of work-life balance.

Additionally, when discussing breastfeeding and pumping activities, the participants in this study used nursing covers as a piece of clothing to hide those activities. I would also like to

highlight that the national dress of a Bruneian woman is called ‘Baju Kurung’ and it is quintessentially paired with a headcover called ‘Tudung’ to fulfil the Islamic obligation of ‘modesty’ and covered up. This religious context in the form of a modest dress and a ‘tudung’ can also be used to hide the breastfeeding or pumping activity. Some women even altered their baju kurung with a zipper in the middle for easy access. This invisibility brings out the advantage of wearing a tudung on top of a nursing cover as an alternative way that most women used when they breastfeed or pump milk. In contrast to the stereotypes in the Western context where breastfeeding is viewed to be somewhat ‘immodest’ because breastfeeding and pumping activity requires the lactating mother to show her breasts, even though it is not always the case. Thus, if these activities are deemed to be immodest in the Western context, one would assume them to be immodest within the Muslim context as well but this study defies that cliché.

Secondly, the use of space for pumping at work was apparent in this study. Aside from fulfilling their religious obligation, these participants were also supported by the government through different initiatives. With a strong cultural belief in the *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB – Malay Islamic Monarchy) philosophy embedded in the society (as detailed in Chapter 4), I found that the government supports women’s employment, as are some organisations involved in this study provided dedicated nursing space, and some did not. As explained in Chapter 4, women played a significant role in the country's development, and the increased number of maternity leave provisions strengthened the government’s attention toward supporting women’s employment and breastfeeding activities. The government’s initiatives to support breastfeeding activities among mothers were given through initiating policy changes around the increased days in maternity leave, the distribution of free breast pumps for new mothers and diapers for babies until two years old. This could also motivate employed women returning to work post-

maternity to continue breastfeeding and pumping at work because the government's support in promoting breastfeeding is renowned throughout the country.

Although the policies initiated by the government were accepted positively by the general public, however, there is a difference between the implementation of the policy and the actual culture that exists inside some of the organisations in Brunei. This study found that there were some tensions in the implementation of these policies in the workplace. For example, two of the organisations chosen for this study, Organisations B and D, did not have a designated pumping room available at their respective buildings and these are public organisations. Due to this lack of designated space available, the participants in Organisation D, for example, had to look for available empty spaces to pump. This implies that there is a lack of implementation of the policies initiated by the government regarding breastfeeding and pumping at work. This shows that the policies are not trickled down to make a shift in all of the organisational cultures where breastfeeding was and is an acceptable activity in that organisation considering that there is a growing number of lactating mothers at work. A participant from Organisation D, Dahlia, for example, gave an extensive account of the changes that she observed in her organisation with regard to the acceptance of breastfeeding and pumping activities in a span of 10 years. At the same time, Aisyah, a participant from Organisation A, which is a private organisation, also faced challenges in the acceptance of pumping at work activities. Aisyah and her pumping colleague, Arianna, still had to deal with their colleagues making negative remarks about them going away to pump. This shows that the organisational culture in Brunei, regardless of whether they are public or private organisations, is still in the process of accepting changes and implementing the policy of promoting breastfeeding and pumping at work. This study found that there is a cultural shift found in Organisation D but this took a decade to see the changes. Nonetheless, when the women took charge and grab spaces to pump, the way they 'found'

offices, rooms and even the pantry room, they made the space work for them so that they can pump and yield milk to be stored for their babies.

Furthermore, to enhance and push the nation's agenda of supporting breastfeeding activities, more public spaces have opened up and are dedicated spaces for nursing and prayer rooms. This evidence of public spaces dedicated to nursing partly reflects the cultural shift of how shopping complexes, event halls and indoor playground businesses designate rooms for nursing and praying. This shows the shifts in the acceptance of the importance of nursing in the Brunei culture, where a nursing mother can freely breastfeed her baby in a prayer room or even in mosques due to the segregation of these rooms between male and female. These examples of social mores that Brunei portrays indicated a realistic depiction of a Muslim country that practices a more conducive breastfeeding-friendly environment as opposed to Western perspectives and stereotypes.

Lastly, in addition to how the Brunei context is more conducive for women to continue breastfeeding and can give an important aspect in the notion of work-life balance, the element of the maid culture is highlighted in Chapter 4 (refer to sub-heading 4.3.4). Based on the accounts of participants in this study, twelve (12) out of eighteen (18) participants claimed to have a maid at home. One participant, in particular, Belinda from Organisation B, a mother of five, has two maids. The maid culture indicates that these professional women who have maids have a lesser burden to do domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning and they can concentrate on other aspects of life. This is made possible by having a maid at home, where some of the household chores such as cleaning and cooking, are transferred to the maids to do. This lifts the burden and leaves the women with more time to take care of their baby and their daily breastfeeding and pumping activities, on top of concentrating on their full-time job.

Hence, the maid culture in Brunei is imperative in the context of work-life balance because these participants can lessen their responsibilities as a wife and a mother at home and therefore giving them freer time and more flexibility to manage their other responsibilities both at home and at work. These three key areas contribute to the implication of the Brunei context to work-life balance and pumping at work.

7.3. Post-Maternity Leave: Shifting Priorities

My findings support previous research that found women lost out by being pregnant because they were excluded from opportunities to advance in their careers upon returning to work post-maternity. Gatrell (2013) found mothers who continue to work full-time are less likely to experience barriers to career progress. It is important to note that the working situation in the public sector organisations in Brunei has little to no option for Part-Time work, so all participants involved in this study were full-time.

Pregnancy can also lead to ‘discounting of women’s abilities’ because they are believed to reduce productivity and have lower performance than other workers (see Halpert *et al.*, 1993). In this study, Arianna in Organisation A recounted how she lost her ranking time during her maternity leave. This means that for the duration of her maternity leave, her organisation considered her to have ‘underperformed’ even though maternity leave was a privilege given nationwide. In her interview, Arianna said she was ‘unhappy’ with this situation. However, as a first-time mother, she also stated that she decided and ‘chose’ to forgo career advancement to concentrate on her family. By sacrificing her career progression, Arianna ‘chose’ to let her husband be the one focusing on climbing the corporate ladder.

Regarding changing priorities, Diana in Organisation D revealed career advancement was no longer her priority. Like Arianna, she ‘chose’ her family over her career. This suggests that women might not be ‘excluded’ from advancing their career paths. Instead, they might ‘choose’ to sacrifice and let go of this opportunity due to their changing priorities.

7.4. The Maternal Body is not always Subject

Gatrell’s (2013) concept of the maternal body points to reduced organisational commitment to mothers from the moment their maternity becomes visible through the spectacle of their pregnant bodies. Gatrell (2008, p. 2) also indicated that women’s ‘embodied potential for maternity’ may render them unwelcome within the professional settings. Wolkowitz (2006) and Young (2005) used the term ‘maternal leakage’ whereby being pregnant means there will be bleeding, breastmilk, amniotic fluid or breaking waters, vomiting, and tears. ‘Leaky bodies’ as described by Hopfl and Hornby Atkinson (2000) and Warren and Brewis (2004), assumed that pregnant employees are “boiling with hormones which threaten to spill over into workplace settings in the form of unpredictable emotional behaviour” (in Gatrell, 2013, p. 624). The idea of ‘corporeal generosity’ (Shaw, 2003) similarly indicated that employers fear the potential for pregnant bodies to ‘leak’, change shape and produce liquids such as tears, blood and breastmilk (Gatrell, 2011). These might be perceived as inappropriate in workplaces and could threaten to disrupt workplace routines. Hence, most mothers feel pressure to hide their changing bodies. Similarly, Gueutal and Taylor (1991) and Halpert *et al.* (1993) believed pregnancy to be an indicator of lowered performance.

The study, however, found that breastfeeding was an essential topic when the participants discussed their maternity leave experience. I also found that the participants emphasised their pumping at work activities when they returned to work post-maternity, which became a key

finding for this study. As mentioned earlier, part of the increasing number of lactating mothers at work was because of the government's initiatives and changes in policies related to mothers and maternity. There has been a vast literature discussion on breastfeeding activities among mothers (see Jantzer *et al.*, 2017; Valizadeh *et al.*, 2017; Zhuang *et al.*, 2018). For example, Jantzer *et al.* (2017) found workplace breastfeeding support indirectly improves job satisfaction by increasing work enhancement of personal life and, in turn, increases job satisfaction. Valizadeh *et al.* (2017), on the other hand, found that their participants exerted extreme physical and emotional stress from breastfeeding as a result of a lack of support from family and their work environment (see also Witters-Green, 2003; Hopfl, 2000; Longhurst, 2001). In comparison, Zhuang *et al.* (2018) found that female co-worker support of a lactating mother at work significantly influenced breastfeeding mothers' decision to continue after returning to work. However, their quantitative study did not indicate whether the female co-worker was also a breastfeeding mother.

My study shows that many of my participants continued breastfeeding as they could pump at work. Despite the nature of their work, these participants indicated that several factors could lead to their determination and boldness to pump at their desks. All but one participant in this study had the experience of breastfeeding, with the majority of them were still pumping at work. I identified three participants as passionate breastfeeding mothers, as discussed in Chapter 5, Arianna and Aisyah in Organisation A and Dahlia in Organisation D. They were passionate about breastfeeding and pumping at work since they shared extensive accounts of their pumping at work activities. These include the help of a 'pumping machine' and a nursing cover and the Bruneian women's modest dressing, a 'pumping buddy', supportive colleagues (or not) and a work environment. Arianna and Aisyah, in particular, had dedicated pumping sessions or schedules that they incorporated into their daily work tasks. In addition, as a detailed

account of the government initiatives on breastfeeding had been outlined in Chapter 4, one of the organisations was very supportive of breastfeeding. This will be further discussed below.

This study also found that the Brunei context provides an extension towards the maternal body concept introduced by Gatrell (2011). Although previous literature argued that maternal bodies are not welcome in the workplace and some even perceived it as ‘taboo’ (see Gatrell, 2010; Douglas, 1966, 2002; Buzznell and Liu, 2007; Warren and Brewis, 2004). However, it seems evident from my study that a Muslim environment like Brunei might be more helpful and accommodating towards the maternal body in the workplace. This extension towards the maternal body theory would be named the post-modern Islamic/Muslim Maternal Body and this can be explained through various elements.

An example is a spiritual aspect which is in line with a study by Karakas (2009) that identified the benefits of spirituality on employees which supports organisational performance and enhances well-being and quality of life. Even though previous literature had not discussed and linked spirituality with the other aspects of work-life balance, such as breastfeeding and maternal bodies, however, for Muslims, it is believed that every good thing that a Muslim does is rewarded and this includes breastfeeding. Similarly, the participants of this study felt ‘satisfied’ when they can yield and pump milk stocks for their babies knowing that this act of goodness is being rewarded. And being able to pump milk ‘freely’ at work and feed their babies, these women felt a sense of ‘satisfaction’ that eventually led them to feel a purpose at work and home.

Furthermore, the use of spaces, either provided by their respective organisations or spaces that have been made available publicly for nursing mothers to utilise, proves the increasing support

towards the nation's breastfeeding awareness agenda initiated by the government and the changes in the policy pertaining to breastfeeding. Moreover, the maid culture that is quintessentially Asian, particularly Bruneian, suggests that professional women have the upper hand to concentrate on their baby, breastfeeding and pumping activities as well as their jobs while knowing that their paid live-in maid can take care of the rest of their household chores and responsibilities.

Contrary to previous literature, my study found that the participants received different types of support, which eventually motivated them to continue breastfeeding and pumping their breastmilk at work post-maternity leave. Aside from the religious aspects of breastfeeding, there are also elements of the government's initiative to support and promote the breastfeeding agenda and changes in the policy pertaining to women in employment. The mention of a designated breastfeeding room, prayer room, empty office room, and even their bosses' rooms were some of the places the participants would go and use when they had to express milk at work. My study shows that the work environment has improved over the last ten years because of the different support the participants received at work. The maid culture also becomes one of the factors that contribute to the conduciveness of the Brunei context towards breastfeeding and the maternal body concept as the professional women do not have to bear the real domestic burdens on top of their full-time jobs and looking after a new baby. The following sub-section will elaborate further.

7.5. The Different Types of Support to Breastfeeding and Pumping at Work

As evidenced from the past research by Zhuang *et al.* (2018), a 'supporting' environment tends to be an essential factor that could motivate breastfeeding women to continue breastfeeding

and pumping at work. Their study indicated that a supportive work environment would be a deciding factor for these lactating women to continue breastfeeding post-maternity leave (Zhuang *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, unlike what Valizadeh *et al.* (2017) found in their study, their respondents felt guilty and suffered extreme physical and emotional stress about breastfeeding because of their unsupportive work environment. Therefore, a supportive work environment is essential in motivating breastfeeding and pumping mothers at work post-maternity leave.

7.5.1. Paternal Support

Valizadeh *et al.* (2017) also included the unsupportive spouse as the deciding factor for the women in their studies to continue breastfeeding at work. However, a study by Zhuang *et al.* (2018) did not address other sources of support, such as spouses or other family members, for lactating women outside the workplace. My study agrees on the importance of spousal support to continue breastfeeding. In addition, multiple family members can act in chorus to put a woman off breastfeeding while working, as was the case with the only participant in my study who did not continue after returning from maternity leave. Dafiya in Organisation D stated that the reasons she did not breastfeed were the lack of support that she received from her husband and her family members and a personal ‘challenge’ in the form of ‘inverted nipples’ that made it difficult for her to breastfeed her daughter. This is despite the fact that through this study, I found that her organisation (Organisation D) was the most supportive towards employees who were breastfeeding and pumping milk at work. In the interview, she also agreed on the increased financial cost of buying formula milk. This supports previous literature that stated the lack of support from spouses or work colleagues could affect the decision to continue breastfeeding and pumping at work (Repetti, 1987; Zhuang *et al.*, 2018). Nevertheless, Dafiya stated that she prioritised her emotional and physical well-being over her financial ‘burden’.

In contrast to Dafiya's 'unsupportive' husband and family, Belinda in Organisation B experienced the opposite situation. Belinda's depiction of 'heart-shaped' on top of her family unit illustration (see Fig. 6.10 in Chapter 6) represents the strong 'support system' that she has in the form of her 'reliable' husband and sister. These two people 'supported' her in different ways for Belinda to find a balance between her work and life. For example, she said that although her husband commuted to work daily, he ensured that he would always be 'available' and around for the family through the early morning school runs routine and reminders to fulfil their prayer obligations. On the other hand, her sister took care of her children's school runs, so she did not have to worry about rearranging her work schedules and tasks to accommodate her children's school runs.

7.5.2. Social and Emotional Support

When speaking about 'support', mainly the literature only talked about the support in the form of designated breastfeeding rooms at work (see Jantzer *et al.*, 2017; Gatrell, 2016); employee support (Greenhaus *et al.*, 1987), or the lack of support from a spouse or work colleagues (Repetti, 1987; Zhuang *et al.*, 2018). My study contributes to the study of breastfeeding while working by showing the importance of a different kind of social support. For example, 'pumping buddies' in groups or pairs. Pumping buddies were useful because they helped the pumping mothers at work feel comfortable with pumping. They also feel a sense of solidarity by having a similar colleague going through the same experience of pumping milk at work. There was also an exchange of information during the pumping sessions among these pumping buddies' such as mother's talks. Some accounts support this idea. For example, participants in Organisation A, Arianna and Aisyah, revealed that sometimes they pumped together in the designated room provided by their organisation. Aisyah, in particular, stated that they could

have ‘mother’s talks’ when they pumped together. ‘Mother’s talks’ in this sense include any topic related to being a mother. This idea of ‘pumping buddy’ could resonate with social and emotional support for pumping mothers at work. Other participants in Organisation D also shared the same sentiment. Daisy and Dalila shared how their colleagues also pumped at work by quoting “my other colleague and me...” and “we pump together” in their interviews. The idea of having or knowing other pumping mothers at work doing the same thing – pumping breastmilk – could motivate them to start or even continue breastfeeding their child and pumping at work to stock up.

7.5.3. The Physical Support – The Pumping Venues

Some studies indicated that few employers offer breastfeeding or feeding breaks and suitable space for breastfeeding infants or expressing milk (see Boswell-Penc and Boyer, 2007; Giles, 2004; and Hausman, 2004). However, previous research (see Jantzer *et al.*, 2017, Gatrell, 2016) argued that providing private spaces at work for expressing or pumping milk encouraged returning mothers to continue breastfeeding. My work concurs with this. Two organisations, Organisations A and C, did provide specific rooms solely for this activity. However, although a dedicated pumping room is useful, the dedicated room might be multipurpose and unhygienic. Evidence of this is that participants from Organisation A, Arianna and Aisyah, stated that the designated pumping room provided by their organisation was ‘small, dusty, unhygienic, neglected and poorly maintained’. Moreover, some of my participants did not need a private room; instead, they pumped at their desks. Some did this through necessity; however, others did so through choice.

The physical form of the Border Theory by Clark (2000) can also be found in the idea of identifying pumping venues for the participants. Although it is interconnected with the

Boundary Theory (see Ashforth *et al.*, 2000), I found evidence of physical and organisational usage of space in this study. As mentioned earlier, Organisations A and C provided designated pumping rooms for breastfeeding employees at work. The participants from these organisations who were committed to obeying their pumping schedules made use of such space while at work in order for them to provide breastmilk for their babies.

Other participants from the other organisations that did not provide such rooms resorted to other available and ‘empty’ rooms in their workplace (see sub-section 7.5). This physical border in the form of different rooms being identified to pump breastmilk indicates how these participants use any available workplace spaces to perform non-work activities like pumping or even praying. The ‘milking the cow’ concept is an important aspect of being a breastfeeding mother who is also an employee at work. This is because they are not just returning to work as an employee, but they come back to work as an employee who is also a breastfeeding mother. These changes in roles required these participants to adapt to the working environment with added ‘activity’ to do on top of their already existing work responsibilities.

7.5.4. ‘Male Colleagues’ Social Support

Social support could also come from bosses and colleagues. A study by Moulton *et al.* (2021) found the importance of male allies in creating norms that foster support for workplace lactation. However, their study only indicated the male colleague’s support for having a physical space for breastfeeding or pumping, not for pumping at desk.

My study found that participants in Organisation D like Dana, Damia and Dahlia agreed that their male colleagues ‘understood’ and were ‘open-minded’ when their female colleagues pumped at work. Several accounts were shared where the participants stated that they pumped

in the pantry while other colleagues ate in the same room. Dahlia indicated it was ‘normal’, and stated that the colleague had ‘no reaction’ “as if nothing is weird” (referring to the pumping). She added that pumping at work became ‘part of the normal routine’ in her organisation.

Similarly, Damia claimed that her male colleague ‘understood’ the need for this pumping activity because his wife was also a pumping mother. Therefore, the similarity of his wife’s pumping experience could explain the reason behind her colleague’s ‘understanding’ and empathising response. However, Damia did not further explain whether her colleague’s wife was also pumping at work.

7.5.5. Technological Advancement as a Supporting Factor

The improvements in technologies also facilitated women pumping at work. Expressing milk involves using a pump, and various technologies are available. The participants referred to the pump as ‘the device’ and described the different features that have been added over the years. I found that past literature discussing breast pumps' effect on breastfeeding did not extensively review the different features, functionality and technology that breast pumps encompassed (see Buckley, 2009; Rasmussen and Geraghty, 2011); Mitoulas *et al.*, 2002). My study found that the concept of ‘technology’ in the form of breast pumps impacts the productivity of pumping mothers—a good pump with recent features helped express milk at work. In addition, different types of technology make the pumping breastmilk activity helpful, including ‘handsfree’, ‘quiet’ and ‘small’. In their interviews, as discussed in Chapter 5, participants in Organisation A, Aisyah, and participants in Organisation D, Dahlia, Damia and Dana, indicated these. Aisyah in Organisation A, for example, was able to pump at her desk with her ‘handsfree’ device and simultaneously read emails, did work and entertained her colleagues. These

participants thought they were more productive because they pumped at their desks while working.

7.5.6. Disgusted Faces – Negative Spillover of Breastfeeding and Pumping

However, previous research found that there were instances of women not receiving support in their workplace, such as notions of disgust over seeing bodily fluids that could threaten social norms (see Blackman, 2008 Kristera, 1982). Other studies also found that work colleagues showed disgust towards pregnant women and breastfeeding (see Warren and Brewis, 2004; and Shilling, 2008), and colleagues made negative comments and disgusting remarks about the pumping and breastfeeding activities and found it unfair that these pumping women take long breaks to pump (Zhuang *et al.*, 2018). These notions are supported in this study, whereby participants Arianna and Aisyah in Organisation A both had the experience of negative remarks and connotations aimed towards them for pumping by their male and female colleagues. Their colleagues also made disgusted faces when they knew these participants were pumping at their desks while doing work. As Kelliher *et al.* (2017) indicated that the integration between work and non-work life activities could bring either positive or negative spillover to employees, this study found a negative spillover of breastfeeding and pumping due to the lack of support that the participants received from their colleagues.

Furthermore, previous research found that lactating women are likely to encounter disapproval from co-workers who may discourage them from breastfeeding (Zhuang *et al.*, 2018). However, my research shows it did *not* put some participants off; instead, it made them more determined. This was illustrated by two participants in the same Organisation A who encountered negative comments from their colleagues. Arianna and Aisyah were not discouraged by their remarks and disgusted facial expressions towards their pumping at work.

Both participants emphasised how those comments did not stop them from breastfeeding and pumping breastmilk at work. On the contrary, Arianna and Aisyah stated that it made them more determined to continue breastfeeding and pumping despite facing hurdles and challenges.

7.5.8. Organisational Space and Modesty

As mentioned earlier, past literature stated that women returning to work post-maternity leave suffer emotional and psychological mistreatment (Witters-Green, 2003; Hofl, 2000; Longhurst, 2001), especially those who want to continue breastfeeding but lack the support from their organisations. However, my study found that many participants still continue breastfeeding and expressing milk at work through the different types of support available, such as designated pumping and empty meeting rooms. Some participants also shared that they even pumped openly at their work desk or workstation, with a nursing cover, while doing their work. This certainly challenges some Western stereotypes of Islamic women and what is deemed to be acceptable or not. Previous literature in the western context viewed the maternal body as unwelcome and taboo (see Gatrell, 2010; Buzznell and Liu, 2007; Warren and Brewis, 2004). However, this study found that the participants, who are Muslims, were able to pump milk at their desks and maintain their modesty by using nursing cover or their head cover (tudung). And such occurrence tends to be highly unusual as long as a Western ideology which is known to be more 'advanced' than the rest of the world is concerned.

There is also a lack of research on lactating mothers who pump their breastmilk at their desks without much need for a private space. Even though previous studies on boundary theory in the context of organisational space identified the lack of available private spaces to pump breastmilk as one of the concerns for lactating mothers returning to work (see Kozhimannil *et al.*, 2016; Nguyen and Hawkins, 2013). Through this study, I found that some participants in

Organisation A and D; Aisyah, Dahlia, Damia and Dana stated that they pumped openly at their desk, using a specific garment – a nursing cover – to hide the activity. They stated that while they pump, they also simultaneously do their work. These participants created boundaries between themselves and their colleagues through their work desks or space. Moreover, at the same time, they also created a boundary between their workload and personal load, which is essentially the pumping activity.

Through this study also, I found that one of the main factors influencing participants' boldness to pump at their desks is linked with the 'modesty' part of a Muslim woman's dress. As explained in Chapter 4, a Muslim woman is recommended to wear modest clothes that cover their body properly as part of the practice and teachings of the religion. This 'coverage' can help to 'conceal' the pumping activity. Aside from that, the participants also stated that using a 'nursing cover' would act as the 'concealment' factor that supported and made them feel 'comfortable' pumping at their desks.

7.6. Is Breastfeeding a Legitimate Use of Time?

The term 'cyberloafing' was used by Lim (2002) to explain the act of employees using the companies' internet access for personal purposes during work hours. Pleasurable breaks, as distinguished by Csikszentmihalyi (1975), were associated with positive outcomes, such as well-being, creativity and restoring concentration. A break during working hours can be considered a positive behaviour, as it improves task vigilance by restoring attentional resources (Zijlstra *et al.*, 1999; Warm *et al.*, 2008), helping decision-making (Speier *et al.*, 1999) and helping employees deal with stressful workplace events (Uleman and Bargh, 1989). Furthermore, research has shown that in Muslim countries, enabling prayer and the exercise of

spirituality brings job satisfaction and benefits to both employer and employees (Ali, 2010; Osman-Gani *et al.*, 2012; Neck, 1994; Karakas, 2009; Nur, 2003; East, 2005). Muslim employers expect people to take time to pray, which is a non-work activity. This means that the participants in this study use work time on a personal matter, which is expressing milk. This raises the question of whether pumping at work is considered a legitimate or illegitimate use of time at work. Therefore, the participants in this study might think breast pumping or expressing milk is also a legitimate thing to spend time on.

7.7. The Theories of ‘Border’, ‘Maternal Body’ and ‘Boundary’ at Work

7.7.1. The Border and Maternal Body Theories

The central concept of border theory identifies the point at which dominant-relevant behaviour begins or ends. When discussing border theory, most people debate how work intrudes on life (Clark, 2000; Beach, 1989; Hall and Richter, 1988). However, my work shows that maternal ‘life’ can merge with work. Clark (2000) stated that positive spillover could create creativity and apply skills they learned at work and home, increasing harmony. The idea of permeability in border theory (see Clark 2000) indicates that an individual may have an office at home whose physical doors and walls create a sort of border around his or her work. Permeations, in this case, are where interruptions occur to remind the person of other important domains such as life. An individual can also think about work at home and vice versa, and flexibility allows emotions to flow between domains easily. Moreover, psychological blending can also occur when a person uses their personal and family experience in their work or uses their work experience to enrich their home life (Clark, 2000).

Clark (2000) claimed that individuals can shape the nature of the work and home domains and the borders and bridges between them to create the desired balance (p.751). The physical, temporal and psychological forms of border theory identified a separation of roles and behaviours the employees perform (Clark, 2000). Through this study, I concur with Clark's (2000) idea of Border Theory because of the Brunei context that leads to the extension of an existing theory of the maternal body namely the post-modern Islamic/Muslim Maternal Body due to various factors. The reason behind this is that the participants in this study have constructed borders through the aspects of physical, temporal and psychological when they were involved in pumping activities at work, as explained in the previous chapters. These borders also dissolved differently because of the Muslim context whereby the Muslim dress that the Bruneians wear enables the lactating women to be discreet when direct feeding and pumping milk. It is also noted that the maternal bodies in the context of Brunei are not being objectified in the same way that the concept of the maternal body was conceived from a Western perspective and introduced by Gatrell (2011). As discussed in Chapter 6, I found that some participants in Organisations B and D; Belinda (see Fig. 6.10), Dana (see Fig. 6.4) and Dalila (see Fig. 6.6), articulated the physical border through the illustration of the house and office buildings which shows a separation between the two identities – one is as a mother and another as a working employee. These participants' separated identity roles indicated that these women knew what roles to portray in which environment. Another participant in Organisation D, Dafiyah (see Fig. 6.8), drew a bird's eye view of her office and bedroom. This is also another indication of the physical border in the Border Theory. Dafiyah managed to separate the two roles through her drawing and labelled 'bedroom', symbolising a private and personal space for her and her family. She also explained the activities she did with her daughter in this 'private' space considering her daughter was the 'indoorsy' type who preferred to be 'inside'

the room. In contrast to her drawing, Dafiyah was the only participant who did not need a 'private' space at work to pump since she did not breastfeed her baby.

Aside from the physical border of the Border Theory by Clark (2000), the psychological border was also apparent in this study whereby the support of spouses, pumping buddy and colleagues on breastfeeding and pumping at work, as well as the maid culture have made it possible for the participants to be flexible and permeable. The participants were able to be flexible when they can think about home (or the baby) while at work and vice versa. The permeability of this psychological border also means that interruptions of pumping at work also occur, which is also an important aspect of life for the baby. These examples show that emotions between work and life domains flow more quickly. I also found evidence of a positive spillover effect in this study, as discussed above. For example, a participant in Organisation B, Balqis (see Fig. 6.9 in Chapter 6), drew herself doing work at home while watching her children play. She stated how she wished she could do this – working from home – every day. This shows a sense of permeability with her roles as she was doing her work (her professional role) and at the same time watching over her kids (her maternal role).

7.7.2. The Boundary Theory and the Invisible Pumpers

The boundary theory introduced by Ashforth *et al* (2000) stated how individuals manage the boundaries between work and life and how this is influenced by perceived relationships between roles. Ashforth *et al* (2000) claimed that roles are mutually exclusive when individuals are engaged in segmentation and roles are perceived as overlapping when they are engaged in integration. Role transitions in the boundary theory suggest that they can either reduce or enhance work and home conflicts. In this study, I found that role transitions are occurring for the participants, particularly in the school-run activities. Several participants such as Dahlia,

Balqis, Belinda and Daisy mentioned their school-run routine in which those times are used for them to bond and communicate with their children. Such role transition from being a parent when doing a school run to being an employee when they arrive at work shows that there are psychological and/or behavioural switches that these participants make between their home role and work role to juggle their home and work responsibilities.

A study by Walseth (2006) indicated that there are differences between different ethnic identities when it comes to their ability to maintain their boundaries. In this case, Muslim women create an invisible boundary that does not exclude them from being Muslims and an employee. An example is segregation during prayers, where Muslim men and women do not mix in the same rooms. By creating a boundary using a panel or a piece of board that segregates them, the participants practised modesty and preferred to be ‘invisible’ while pumping at work. In this study, I found that other breastfeeding and pumping participants across the organisations like Arianna, Bella, Belinda, Catherina, Daisy, Diana, Dalila and Daniella prefer to be ‘invisible’ when pumping at work. They preferred a private and secluded space at work to pump their breastmilk, such as in their rooms, empty meeting rooms, bosses’ rooms, the pantry room, the store/filling room, the library or the prayer corner and even in the car as stated by Aisyah in Organisation A. I also found that using a ‘nursing cover’ helped these women continue pumping at work. The nursing cover acts as a ‘cover’ to hide their pumping activities, and they can remain modest at the same time.

Moreover, in Chapter 4, I indicated that two of the four organisations were male-dominated. These were Organisations A and B. Through this study, I found that male-dominated organisations had ‘unsupportive’ colleagues even though one of the organisations provided a designated pumping room. However, my study found that all participants across the

organisations preferred to be ‘invisible’ pumpers which means that the dominant population factor did not impact the choice of ‘where to pump’, regardless of whether a pumping room was provided or not.

7.8. The Methods Used

This section will discuss the methods used in studies on work-life balance, breastfeeding and professional women’s perception of work-life balance and compare them to the methods I adopted: interviews and visual methods. Traditionally, interviews are used in qualitative research to understand the perspectives of a topic under study (see Valizadeh *et al.*, 2007; Longhurst, 2008; Gatrell, 2013; Burns *et al.*, 2022;). For this study, I adopted a similar qualitative approach to Valizadeh *et al.* (2017) and Gatrell *et al.* (2013) through in-depth semi-structured interviews with professional women from four organisations as the first method. Although I asked general questions about work-life balance (see Appendix 2), the main topic women discussed was breastfeeding, which was, for them, a key issue in returning to work. In discussing their breastfeeding experience, the women emphasised their pumping at work activities, which became a key finding for this study. The second method I used was the visual method in the form of a drawing activity, which theoretically could help participants articulate things that might be difficult to express in interviews (Strangleman, 2004). I adopted Shortt’s (2012) method of visual data analysis with reference to Pink (2007) by following the three parts of her framework as elaborated in Chapter 3. The question posed for this drawing activity was: What do you understand by the term/word “Work-Life Balance?” (see Appendix 3). However, the drawings did not reveal the same issues that participants emphasised in their interviews. Instead, participants focused on traditional and ‘expected’ depictions of work-life balance: family composition, office and house buildings and clocks were common.

Metaphors such as a ‘flower’ and a ‘prayer mat’ were also drawn (see Fig. 6.11 and 6.7 in Chapter 6). However, the drawings obtained through this method were mostly overviews and did not delve as deeply into the day-to-day experiences as the interviews did.

One reflection on the usage of the visual method adopted for this study is related to the questions being asked to the participants. As this was my first time conducting qualitative research, including the visual method, I anticipated a lot of trial-and-error as I go along from one participant to the next participant, particularly Organisation D, because the interviews were done on two consecutive days. As explained earlier, the drawing activity was done after the interview session, in which participants were eager to talk and share their daily activities post-maternity leave. This was done to gather information on how they balance their work and life.

Accordingly, the drawing activities that took place right after the interview was expected to be a continuation of the initial interview question. My instruction was “What does work-life balance mean to you? Can you illustrate that in drawing?” As mentioned earlier, the drawings did not give an in-depth illustration that can be connected directly to the interview findings – which discussed and highlighted breastfeeding and pumping activities at work. This was because I did not mention breastfeeding or pumping in the question for the drawing activity. Had I asked a different question that could relate to the interview experience shared by the participants, it might shed a different light and outcome from the illustration portrayed by these participants. What I learned from this is that linking the question from the previous activity, i.e. the interview is crucial when the drawing method is adopted as an extension to the qualitative research.

I was also initially intrigued when I read about Harriett Shortt's work and how she managed to get some interesting materials. With drawings, I assumed it would add a different dimension to my work. Shortt (2012) constructed her framework using three parts when analysing her data, hence I combined it with Broussine's (2008) four phases of visual methods. One advantage of using the drawing method was pointed out by a participant from Organisation D, Diana at the end of her drawing activity. She claimed that the illustration facilitates her to express her view and interpretation of the word 'work-life balance'. She only realised that she drew a slanted see-saw (please see Fig. 6.12 in Chapter 6) and claimed that she only realised that there was no balance between her work and life after reflecting on her drawing. Therefore, pictures play the role of a catalyst for individual talks as well as for group discussions (Ward, 2009). Despite getting a lesser contribution to the study, I believe there is still a different kind of response that is obtained from the drawing method compared to the interviews, which I believe could enrich the discussion on using a visual method in qualitative research. As Pink (2007) suggested that data analysis is not always done after the fieldwork but can be carried out throughout the research process. And the analysis does involve not only the interpretation of visual materials but also an examination of different subjective meanings from different participants (Pink, 2007).

7.9. Conclusion

The discussion has shown that while some of the findings have been explained by previous theories, others have not. A common thread from the discussion, which is the significant finding of this study, is that previous studies of work-life balance are mainly based on the UK, US and EU contexts and focus on the perspectives of Western women (as suggested in the literature). My study focuses on the context of a non-Western Muslim-majority country in examining how professional women perceived the concept of work-life balance, which

contributes to the literature on work-life balance and the maternal body. The three features I have explained earlier, namely the role of spirituality in the maternal body; the use of space; and the maid culture shape the concept of a post-modern Muslim Maternal Body which is an extension of the theory of maternal body introduced by Gatrell (2011). I, therefore, argue that my findings do not negate the original theory of the maternal body and the concept of work-life balance, but develop it according to the Brunei context.

In discussing the concept of maternal body, my study shows that the participants discussed breastfeeding as an important topic when assessing their perception of work-life balance and maternity leave. My study shows that pumping at work experiences was emphasised as the major 'adjustment' the participants took upon returning to work post-maternity leave. This study finds that the participants received various types of 'social support' to encourage and motivate them to continue pumping at work. The 'social support' includes a 'pumping buddy', a 'pumping machine' with a nursing cover, supportive colleagues (or not) and a work environment.

Furthermore, my study finds that the projective technique such as drawing as a visual method to study work-life balance has limitations. It did not reveal extensive findings as the drawings were mostly overviews of traditional depictions of work-life balance. My study concludes that some topics, such as breastfeeding and pumping milk, *are* difficult to draw.

Next, I will present the conclusions of this study, research limitations, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.1. Introduction

This chapter has four sections. It will begin with presenting the study's contributions to the literature. This will be followed by the contributions of research methods and then the study's implications. The last section will discuss the limitations of the study and make recommendations for future research.

8.2. Contributions to the Literature

This qualitative study aims to understand the perception of professional women in Brunei towards the concept of 'maternal bodies' by looking at the idea of work-life balance and its linkage with returning from maternity leave. My review of the literature found that most of it were written from a Western perspective, and there was scope to study how other cultures thought about work-life balance after maternity leave. My findings show there are some important differences. Firstly, the Brunei context was actually more conducive for women to continue breastfeeding because of three factors namely the religion, the government initiatives towards the growing numbers of lactating mothers at work and the maid culture. Secondly, the women themselves found ways to support each other to continue breastfeeding. Thirdly, advances in technology made breast feeding more possible. And fourthly, the extension of the body as the breastfeeding mother becomes part of the machine. These four factors are the empirical contributions of this study. In addition, it explored the experiences of professional women making adjustments upon returning to work post-maternity leave. The study also found that in the Muslim context of professional women's perception of work-life balance, two new factors of 'social support' motivated these women to continue pumping at work post-maternity leave.

The following paragraph will explain *how professional women in Brunei perceived the concepts of work-life balance and 'maternal bodies'* (answering the first research questions) by relating the findings to the research sub-questions. Despite asking a range of questions in my interviews, women focused on breast feeding as one of the main ways they could keep addressing new family responsibilities while returning to work.

My review revealed that pregnant women were excluded from career advancement opportunities due to taking maternity leave and upon returning to work post-maternity leave (as suggested in the literature). Furthermore, this study finds that the women adjusted their work responsibilities around their pumping schedule at work and took breaks away from their desks to express milk. These findings support the literature on work-life balance whereby women made the necessary adjustments in their lives to accommodate 'family' responsibilities, such as expressing milk for their babies.

Highlighting the negative impact of being pregnant at work, such as the reduced organisational commitments as suggested by Gatrell (2013), with terms being used such as 'maternal leakage' (Wolkowitz, 2006; Young, 2005), or 'leaky bodies' (Hopfl and Hornby Atkinson, 2000; Warren and Brewis, 2004), Brunei as a case for this study proved to be better than the West, insofar as breast pumping was accepted. Aside from that, this study has shown that being pregnant at work in Brunei is somewhat 'celebrated', as explained in Chapter 5 to 7. This is contrary to the literature where pregnant women felt pressure to 'hide' their changing bodies at work.

Finding also reveals that participants pumping at work post-maternity leave are an essential aspect of the concept of maternal body. When talking about work-life balance and maternal bodies, this study has found that the professional women integrated their experiences of breastfeeding and pumping at work with maternity leave, regardless of whether they had the 56-days, 105-days or even 5-month maternity leave. All but one participant in this study experienced breastfeeding throughout their maternity leave experiences. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, the findings show that in one of the organisations in this study, the pumping scene at work was considered 'normal', despite what the literature about breastfeeding and pumping at work suggests (Gatrell, 2013). This study also found that the participants perceived pumping at work as a legitimate time to be used for personal activity. This answers the next research question of *how these professional women portray their work-life balance and work experiences post-maternity leave*.

Furthermore, from the study, I found that context played an important aspect to suggest that the Muslim context of Brunei does not negate the original theory of the maternal body. Instead, it extends and develops the relevant idea that leads to the theoretical contribution towards the existing maternal body concept, which is predominantly westernised. One might assume that Muslim women would be more modest and therefore maternal bodies at work would be taboo when compared to Western women who do not have the same culture of modesty. However, the Muslim maternal bodies were never originally constructed in the same manner as the Western women whose bodies and breasts are objectified and are not physically covered with more modest dress, I have explained earlier how the Bruneian Muslim women dress modestly with the 'baju kurung' and head covering that enable the women to be discreet when breastfeeding and pumping milk, hence the borders were built and dissolved differently because of the Muslim context.

Moreover, the use of physical space in the Border Theory (Clark, 2000) suggests that these women were determined to find ways so they can pump milk at work and they made it work regardless of whether designated pumping rooms were provided or not by their respective organisations. An extension of the Boundary Theory (Ashforth *et al*, 2000) in this study found that the women created an invisible boundary when they pump milk at work by using a nursing cover as well as being 'hidden' away in secluded places just to pump. And these women also engaged in role transitions by managing the boundaries between their work and life whereby they were able to juggle their work and home responsibilities especially when some participants pumped milk at their desks. This shows that there are psychological and behavioural switches that these women made in fulfilling their obligations as an employee and breastfeeding mother. Three key features found in the study, which are the role of spirituality in the maternal body concept, the use of space and the maid culture as explained in Chapter 7 shape the concept of post-modern Muslim maternal bodies. They also contribute to the theory insofar as it extends to the maternal body theory introduced by Gatrell (2011). This newly extended theory would be called the post-modern Muslim/Islamic Maternal Body.

This study also sought to examine *what facilitates or constraints these professional women returning to work post-maternity leave?* As a result, two new factors and empirical phenomena were identified which encompassed the social support for these participants: The 'Pumping Buddy' and the 'Pumping Machine'. These two new factors add to the support system of the pumping women at work to continue expressing milk post-maternity leave. Findings also reveal that these participants created both a 'physical' border, in the form of using empty spaces and rooms to express milk, and an 'invisible' border, when they pump at their desk with the

help of a ‘nursing cover’. This supports the border theory in work-life balance literature (Clark, 2000).

8.3. Contributions to the Research Methods

This study has aimed to understand the perception of professional women’s work-life balance post-maternity leave. Due to the extensive nature of perceptions of work-life balance, visual methods were employed to gather the data, in addition to interviews. Images have rarely, if ever, been used to study WLB. It was expected that images would reveal the unspoken words. However, this study has found that some things *are* difficult to draw, like breastfeeding and pumping, which were covered and articulated extensively in the interviews as presented in Chapter 5.

Previous literature on drawings (as discussed in Chapter 6) reveals a more traditional connotation of work-life balance. However, there was no mention, drawing or illustration to indicate breastfeeding or pumping like the ones provided in the interview (in Chapter 5). This may demonstrate the potential for the drawing technique to unveil participants’ views on work-life balance that does not include depicting themselves breastfeeding if one could ever. However, I found that the drawings were just overviews of work-life balance without delving deeper into the interpretations and meanings. This was probably because I asked a different question that did not follow through from the discussions that were primarily highlighted by the participants during the interview, that is their breastfeeding and pumping at work activities. Instead, I asked the question of what work-life balance means to them and asked them to illustrate those meanings in drawings. Because of the different questions being asked, the participants drew different overviews of work-life balance, whereby some metaphors stood out more than others, for example, the metaphor of a ‘flower’ to symbolise ‘family’ and a ‘prayer mat’ symbolising ‘intention’. Had I asked a different question related to breastfeeding or

pumping activities at work, it might give a different interpretation or illustration that could directly relate to the interview findings. However, participants were not prompted to explain deeper the interpretations of their drawings because either the allocated time was up and they wanted to continue with their work activities, or the following participant had arrived for the interview slot. Nonetheless, I believe there is still a different kind of response that was obtained from the visual method which could enrich the discussion on using a visual method in qualitative research.

The drawing exercise was not done with the group interview for fear that what would be illustrated may be biased or copied from the other participants; thus, individual unique perceptions will be not achieved. Perhaps, further investigation could be required to explain whether individual or group drawings affect how they perceive work-life balance in general.

8.4. Conclusion

This study found that professional women in Brunei perceived the ideas of work-life balance and maternal bodies through discussions around breastfeeding and pumping at work activities. These activities carried on upon returning to work post-maternity leave as the women adjusted and shifted their priorities to accommodate the demands of work and family responsibilities. The Brunei context also plays a part in developing the implication of work-life balance and pumping at work through three key areas that lead to the development of an extension to the maternal body theory namely the post-modern Islamic/Muslim Maternal Body. The women also continued breastfeeding and expressing milk at work post-maternity leave with the help of several 'social support' factors, aside from a supportive work environment and pumping rooms. As discussed in Chapter 7, the 'social support' in the form of a 'pumping buddy' were helpful because it made the pumping mothers at work feel comfortable with pumping, knowing

that they were 'not alone'. In addition, participants stated that they made sure that the time they used to pump together was beneficial as they also had mother's talks during the pumping session. Moreover, the other finding reveals that the 'social support' can also be in the form of technological advancement that provides different features and functionalities on breast pumps.

These findings differ from the Western initiated research that argued that maternal bodies were unwelcome in the workplace, and that women's leaky bodies were a problem. The following section will present some implications of this study.

8.5. Implication of This Study

This study has practical implications for Brunei as a country that has been supportive of promoting breastfeeding activities among mothers and for all organisations that claim to be supportive of providing provisions to cater for their women employees, particularly pregnant and pumping mothers who are returning to work post-maternity leave. Firstly, as a nation, by adopting the UNICEF and WHO recommendation for exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of a baby's life, Brunei could improve and implement to extend the maternity leave provision to more than 105-days. Brunei could use the example of the private organisation in this study that offered a 5-month maternity leave as a case study to review the effects of longer maternity leave on breastfeeding activities. In line with maternity leave, the country could also address the need to introduce paternity leave for the husbands, considering that this entitlement is not new in the Western context. The country could also need to put in more rigorous efforts to promote and increase awareness of breastfeeding activities in the society by doing roadshows and encouraging organisations to provide a pumping-friendly work environment. In addition, more pumping-friendly spaces should be opened up and created at higher education institutions, schools, and public spaces.

The second practical implication is for the organisations in Brunei. In support of the nation's agenda to promote and encourage breastfeeding among mothers, particularly working mothers, 'normalising' pumping scenes at work should be extended to other organisations in Brunei. Apart from that, organisations should consider providing more designated pumping-friendly rooms with facilities on every level or floor that are well maintained for pumping mothers instead of fumbling through empty rooms when they need to pump. Cleanliness and hygiene are two factors that are highly appreciated during pumping activities. Organisations also need to address the 'discrimination' against pumping mothers in terms of disapproval and negative remarks made by other employees by showing employees the importance of 'social support' for pumping mothers at work.

Another implication of this study is the extension of social support. Aside from the contributions that have been highlighted in this study, the social support could also be extended by organising breastfeeding groups among working mothers through their respective organisations and gathering information about the different technologies that exist for pumping. Furthermore, promoting the need to open up more positions for certified lactating counsellors and give them training could also be suggested to help new mothers learn the proper way of breastfeeding and pumping.

In addition to these contributions and implications, this study has some limitations, as described in the next section. Recommendations for future research will also be presented.

8.6. Limitations and Recommendations

This section will address the limitations of this study and provide recommendations for future research.

This is a small study in a small number of organisations; however, I have developed insights that previous research has not uncovered. Furthermore, it was challenging to translate and interpret the meanings of some words as there was a mixture in the language used during the data collection and fieldwork. As the translation was done without professional help, there may be inaccuracies, even though the best possible translation has been sought for particular words.

Having a common characteristic was an advantage in finding common ground to break the ice and build trust and rapport with participants, as explained in Chapter 3. However, the drawback could also lie in the idea of a ‘stranger’ wanting to find out more about their private lives and experiences. Thus, it was challenging to gain more participants among the employees for one of the organisations despite knowing that there were more ‘breastfeeding and pumping mothers’ at work. The other organisation had ‘forced’ a group interview instead of individual interviews. In hindsight, since I did not get an equal number of participants in each organisation, whereas I thought I had captured a range of experiences of returning to work mother, I have not claimed to fully understand what went on in all the four organisations.

This study also took a while due to the different disruptions that occurred in the study period. The first one was diagnosed as a cancer patient and had to undergo cancer treatments. This forced me to take a leave of absence for 1.5 years to recover from the treatments and surgeries. The second disruption was the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, adapting to the ‘new norm’ of working from home was a challenge and a struggle that dampened my emotional, physical and

mental well-being. Such obstacles were finally overcome with the help of my understanding and empathetic supervisors.

With the benefit of hindsight, I could have made more of the lack of connection between the drawings and the interviews to probe more at the time.

Future directions around social support for breastfeeding and pumping activities, particularly pumping machines and pumping buddies, should extend from the findings of this study. I have established that context is essential in studying work-life balance and maternal bodies; thus, more research from non-Western contexts should be conducted. Other religious contexts should also be considered, as this study's findings have disrupted previous understanding of maternal bodies, and further investigations can be executed to understand this better. Moreover, further research should look into the male perception of breastfeeding and pumping colleagues at work because most literature only focuses on the 'female' perception of breastfeeding and pumping at work. As a 'supporting' factor in the activity of breastfeeding and pumping, the male or husband's point of view might shed light and understanding towards strengthening and encouraging more female employees to continue breastfeeding and pumping at work post-maternity leave. This will, in turn, be a step forward towards implementing a breastfeeding-and-pumping friendly environment at work. In addition, it would be fruitful to undertake comparative studies from the same organisations to investigate whether their male colleagues were really 'okay' with the whole breastfeeding and pumping openly scenario.

The last recommendation marks the end of the thesis.

APPENDIX 1: SIGNED ETHICS FORM AND APPROVAL



ELMPS Ethics Committee SUBMISSION FORM (Version of 30 May 2015)

This form is intended to enable you and the Committee to ensure that your proposed research is compliant with the relevant codes of practice and ethical guidelines. The University recognises its obligation to the wider research community and to society as a whole to uphold the integrity of academic research. The University also has a responsibility to ensure that the funds it receives are spent in accordance with the legitimate expectations of the funding providers and the law and in the public interest. The University formally endorses the [UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity \(2012\)](#).

Please ensure that you are familiar with the University's Code of Practice on Research Integrity and the University Data Management Policy as well as any relevant professional guidelines for your discipline (e.g. the Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association) or funding organisation (e.g. ESRC Framework for Research Ethics). Useful links include:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/policies/ethics-code/>
<https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/policies/research-code/>
<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/about-esrc/information/framework-for-research-ethics/>
<http://www.britisoc.co.uk/about/equality/statement-of-ethical-practice.aspx>
<http://www.york.ac.uk/recordsmanagement/dpa/>
<http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/information-directorate/information-policy/index/research-data-management-policy/>

Internet research may involve new and unfamiliar ethics questions and dilemmas. A good place to start is with the Association of Internet Researchers 2002 Guidelines and the BPS 'Conducting Research on the Internet: Guidelines for ethics practice in psychological research online (2007)'.

Note: If you are collecting data from NHS patients or staff, or Social Service users or staff, you will need to apply for approval through the Integrated Research Application System (IRAS) at <https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/Signin.aspx>. If you are a staff member please fill in the IRAS form NOT this one and send your completed IRAS form to ELMPS. Student applications for approval through IRAS should normally be pre-reviewed by department ethics committees or ELMPS.

Completed forms should be submitted by the advertised deadline as follows:

1. **one signed hard copy** (to Debbie Haverstock, Research Centre for the Social Sciences, University of York, 6 Innovation Close, York YO10 5ZF), and
2. **one electronic copy** (including attachments) combined into **ONE pdf file** (email to: elmeps-ethics-group@york.ac.uk).

Initial decisions will normally be made and communicated within two weeks of the Committee meeting.

SECTION 1 ABOUT YOU

1a. Please provide the following details about the principal investigator at YORK

Name of Applicant:	Hajah Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini
e-mail address:	Nhs507@york.ac.uk
Telephone:	07518060697
Staff/Student Status:	Full-Time PhD Student
Dept/Centre or Unit:	The York Management School
Head of Department:	Professor Mark Freeman
HoD e-mail address:	Mark.freeman@york.ac.uk
Head of Research: (if applicable)	Professor Bill Cooke
HoR e-mail address: (if applicable)	Bill.cooke@york.ac.uk
If you are a student please provide details about your supervisor(s)	Supervisor(s) Name: <u>Dr Jane Suter</u> e-mail address(es): jane.suter@york.ac.uk

1b. Any other applicants (for collaborative research projects) Expand as necessary

Name of Applicant:	N/A
e-mail address:	N/A
Telephone:	N/A
Staff/Student Status:	N/A
Dept/Centre or Unit:	N/A
Head of Department:	N/A
HoD e-mail address:	N/A
Head of Research: (if applicable)	N/A
HoR e-mail address: (if applicable)	N/A

SECTION 2 ABOUT THE PROJECT

2.1 Details of Project

Title of Project:	The Impact of Maternity Leave Provision on Professional Women's Work-Life Balance: A Case of Brunei Darussalam
Date of Submission to ELMPS:	29 September 2016
Project Start Date:	January 2015
Duration:	4 years
Funded Yes/No:	Yes
Funding Source:	The Government of Brunei Darussalam under the In-Service Training Scheme
External Ethics Board Jurisdictions (if any):	N/A

2.2 Aims and objectives of the research

Please outline the aims of your project and key research questions. Show briefly how existing research has informed the research proposal and explain what your research adds and how it addresses an area of importance.

The overall aim of the research is to investigate the impact of maternity leave provision on professional women's lived experience of work-life balance in selected public and private organisations in Brunei Darussalam.

The research questions of this project are:

1. How do the professional women construct and identify their maternity leave and work-life balance experiences at their respective organisations?
2. How participants conceptualise the relationship between maternity leave provision and work-life balance?
3. What do the selected organisations have/have not in place to support their employees' work-life balance before, during and after they take the maternity leave?
4. Are there any differences in the experiences of professional women's work-life balance in public and private sectors?

Work-life balance is an important topic discussed and researched in both professional business practice and academic research. The literature shows that work-life balance is a central issue affecting employees' wellbeing, as family and work tend to be the most important elements of everyone's life. Issues relating to maintaining and obtaining work-life balance have received a lot of attention as a business issue due to its supposed benefits for both employees and employers (Clutter buck, 2013). Deery (2008) noted the rising

awareness of the need to explore the development of the concept of work-life balance over the years. Despite this less attention has been focused on the work-life balance context of the Muslim countries, and more looking specifically at the impact of maternity leave provisions on the employees' work-life balance at work. This study will add to the literature on work-life balance and maternity leave provision in the context and perspective of Brunei Darussalam as a Muslim country.

2.3 Methods of Data Collection

Provide a brief summary of the method(s) of the research making clear what it will involve for participants (e.g. interviews, observation, questionnaires). If you (or your research assistants) are meeting face-to-face with research participants, specify *where* you will be meeting them (and you will need to address how any risks associated with this will be managed in Section 2.10)

A qualitative research method will be adopted for this research as it supports inquiry into selected issues in great depth with careful attention to detail and also allows flexibility in collecting data and analysing them. As the aim of this research is to investigate the impact of maternity leave provision on professional women's lived experience of work-life balance, an in-depth qualitative approach is required to be carried out as the research instruments in three selected organisations that represent public and private sector as well as a higher education institution. This type of method is chosen because it builds an understanding of how participants make sense of and decipher questions that are asked of them apart from being able to appreciate context rather than controlling it and exploits human potential to analyse and interpret the findings.

For this study, two types of data will be collected, which are primary and secondary data. Primary data will be collected using semi-structured face-to-face interviews with participants which will be done in the participants' workplaces. The participants will be selected from three different organisations representing a public sector, a private sector and a higher education institution with the expectancy that a sample of a cross section of organisations within Brunei will provide the researcher with rich understanding of the research focus. The public organisation and the higher education institution are both located in Brunei Muara district whilst the private organisation is located in Kuala Belait district.

Each interview will last for approximately one hour. The interview questions are developed around the research questions, and since interviews will be semi-structured, the order of the questions to be asked by the researcher may vary between participants. Additional questions may also be asked, when necessary, depending on the participants' responses. Prior to each interview, the researcher will hand out a Participant's Information Sheet and Participant's Consent Form for the participants to sign before starting the interview. The researcher will ask permission from the participant to record the interview, ensuring that the recordings and any information shared will be held in confidence and will be treated anonymously by the researcher (as stated in the Consent Form). If the participant does not agree to be recorded, the researcher will take detailed notes during the interview.

For secondary data, such as news from mass media, professional journals, and other related

sources which are available openly, no specific consent forms are needed as they are widely open to public.

2.4 Sampling and Recruitment of participants

How many participants will take part in the research? How will they be identified – describe your *sampling* method. How will they be invited to take part in the study – describe your *recruitment* method. If research participants are to receive any payments, reimbursement of expenses or any other incentives or benefits for taking part in the research please give details, indicating what and how much they will receive and the basis on which this was decided.

1. How many participants will take part in the research?

The number of participants that is expected to participate in this research is around 35 people. The sample will consist of professional women of different positions in their respective organisations. Since there will be three different organisations the minimum target participants from each organisation is 10 people. Although the number of participants is relatively small this is appropriate to the qualitative research approach as the research questions require a deep understanding of how individuals construct their views of work-life balance within Organisations in a country with an Islamic Muslim constitution. For this research what is more important is not the number of cases that can be collected, but instead the quality of the information, how the information is studied, and how relevant the information is to the research question (Ragin and Amoroso, 2011).

2. How will they be identified – describing the sampling method.

a) Identifying the participants:

As this study wants to investigate the impact of maternity leave provision on professional women's lived experience of work-life balance in selected public and private organisations in Brunei Darussalam, the participants that are expected to be able to provide rich explanation on the issues, are those who are directly involved in the experience of taking maternity leave as well as those with the intention to have children in the future, which brings to the idea of intended experience of maternity leave. These different range of experiences in taking maternity leave is of interest especially when it is associated to the different career stages in a woman's career life because, one, the participation of women in labour force has increased from 20% in 1971 to 58% in 2010, which now evident that Brunei women constitute about 50.4% of the civil service and have been actively contributing towards the development of this small but wealthy and emerging economy. And secondly, this figure is also linked to the idea that although women are participating actively, joining the workforce and building their career steps, yet they are also interested and participating actively in building their own family life (by getting married and having children) especially at the early stage of their career when they still need to prove their potential at work, and this continues as the women progresses in their career stage and still bearing family responsibilities outside of work.

This sample selection is known as Purposefully Selected Sample or Purposive Sampling, and it is employed in this study because the sample has potential in contributing to the understanding of the research questions and objectives (Bryman and Bell, 2011). At the

moment, the researcher has been able to secure and contact two out of three organisations via emails informing of the intention to conduct the research and data collection at their respective organisations. These two organisations have given their positive approval for the researcher to conduct the research. There is only one more organisation that the researcher is currently trying to contact via email to gain access. Therefore, after gaining approval from the selected organisations, the researcher is now able to liaise with the gatekeepers to identify potential employees to be participants of the study, either selected specifically by the organisations based on the inclusion criteria provided by the researcher or the employees can volunteer to take part in the research interview sessions, provided that they understand what the research aims and objectives are. The researcher will also send a brief summary of the research together with the aims and objectives to the organisations for them to disseminate to their potential selected employees.

The inclusion criteria of selection for this purposive sampling are individuals who meet any one of the following criteria:

- Women who may have children in the future
- Women who are currently undergoing maternity leave
- Women who have returned to work from maternity leave
- Women who have older children who have experienced the pre-2011 Revised Maternity Leave Provision (which only includes a 56-day maternity leave instead of 105 days when it was revised in January 2011).

b) Inviting the participants:

If the participants are selected by the respective organisations based on the inclusion criteria provided earlier, the researcher will request for the contact details of those participants. These potential participants will be sent invitation emails to take part in the research. Attached to each invitation letter are the information sheet, brief summary of the research and informed consent form. This will allow the participants to read and understand the research objectives and the process of data collection beforehand. Those who are willing to participate will be asked to contact/reply the researcher by email or contact via telephone within a period of time (2 to 3 weeks to reply). The researcher will provide two telephone numbers – one is a UK phone number and another one is a Brunei phone number – which are both active and contactable. In the case where the participants fail to reply to the invitation emails, the researcher will send a reminder email to remind them to respond and get in touch. In other cases where the participants do not regularly check their emails (which is highly unlikely) or that they do not receive the invitation emails (which could be due to network failure), then the researcher will seek to obtain their personal contact numbers from the gatekeepers to be contacted via telephone or messages.

Prior to the interview, the researcher will also bring extra Consent Forms and Participant Information Sheet just in case that the participants forget to download and sign the forms to be returned back to the researcher. The consent form indicates the participant's willingness to participate in the study, the nature of their participation (i.e. voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time), how the information will be treated (i.e. confidentially and anonymously) and the safeguard of the data. The participants will be asked to complete, sign, date and return the informed consent forms before taking part in the research. In case the participant wishes to withdraw consent, the researcher will discard the interview data

and will not include it in the analysis.

There will be no payments or reimbursement of expenses or any other incentives that will be given and made available for the purpose of this research.

2.5 'Vulnerable' Participants

Please indicate whether any research participants will be from the following groups; if so, please explain the justification for their inclusion. In most cases, researchers working with vulnerable people will need to be registered with ISA (www.isa.homeoffice.gov.uk) which has links with the CRB. The CRB offers organisations a means to check the background of researchers to ensure that they do not have a history that would make them unsuitable for work involving children and vulnerable adults.

NB: If you are collecting data from NHS patients or staff, or Social Service users or staff, you will need to apply for approval through the Integrated Research Application System (IRAS).

Children under 18	No
Those with learning disability	No
Those who are severely ill or have a terminal illness	No
Those in emergency situations	No
Those with mental illness (particularly if detained under Mental Health Legislation)	No
People with dementia	No
Prisoners	No
Young offenders	No
Adults who are unable to consent for themselves	No
Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or gatekeeper, e.g. those in care homes	No
Other vulnerable groups (please specify) – discuss the issues this raises	No

If yes to any of the above, do you have Criminal Records Bureau Clearance?

Yes/No

Describe the procedures you are using to gain (a) consent and/or (b) proxy consent if applicable

--

2.6. 'Sensitive' topics

During your study, will anyone discuss sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity)? If so, please give details of the procedures in place to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Consider, too, the risks this may pose to the researcher. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities.

No

2.7 Covert research

If the research involves covert data gathering or deception of any kind, please explain and justify the deception. Specify what procedures (if any) will be used to debrief participants after the data have been collected.

No

2.8 Informed Consent

Please attach (1) the project information sheet to be given to all participants and (2) the informed consent form. (It is recognised that in some cases these may be combined into a single document). (It is recognised that in some cases these may be combined into a single document). In line with the University's Code of Practice on Research Integrity, participants and/or their representatives should be provided with details of a first point of contact through which any concerns can be raised: this should be your Head of Department (or if you *are* a Head then the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research).

i. If you are not seeking informed consent...

It is usually the case that informed consent is required for research with human participants. If you do NOT intend to seek informed consent please explain carefully why you believe this is not necessary for your project. You should explain this with reference to the research ethics guidelines for your discipline and cite other recent published research using your methodological approach or ethics discussions about this to support your case.

N/A

ii. Please confirm you have included the project information sheet to be given to all

participants with your submission to ELMPS. . If these have not been attached, please explain why this is the case.
Yes, please see attached.
iii. Please confirm you have included all the relevant informed consent forms. If these have not been attached, please explain why this is the case.
Yes, please see attached.
iv. Are the results to be given as feedback or disseminated to your participants (if yes please specify when, in what form, and by what means). If no, why not?
If requested by the participants, a summary of the findings will be provided after the research is concluded and completed. This will be indicated in the invitation letter and consent form.

2.9 Anonymity

In most instances the Committee expects that anonymity will be offered to research participants. Please set out how you intend to ensure anonymity. If anonymity is not being offered please explain why this is the case. Note that if anonymity is not offered (or cannot be guaranteed) this has implications you must address in relation to the Data Protection Act (see Section 3 below). Note: if you are using a transcriber or translator you must have a signed confidentiality agreement with them.
The data analysis will anonymise any details which might identify individuals. Organisations selected, if requested, can remain anonymous although the research is not a sensitive issue and maternity leave provision is shared equally by all working women both in private and public organisations. Nevertheless, all efforts will be made to ensure anonymity in this research. It will be stated in the invitation letter, information sheet and informed consent form.
To ensure anonymity, the researcher will: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove personal identifiers, including names, from all data files. 2. Use anonymous IDs, such as code names or numbers or use pseudonyms to all data. 3. Store the IDs or pseudonyms separately from the data file (for soft copies), locked in a computer with protected password accessible only by the researcher and store the hard copy in a locked drawer which can only be accessed by the researcher. 4. Present the respondents' identities by their IDs instead of personal identifiers in the reports or publications.

2.10 Anticipated Risks or Ethical Problems

Please outline any anticipated risks or ethical problems that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the university, and the steps that will be taken to address them. (Note: all research involving human participants can have adverse effects.) Please also refer to the [University's Health, Safety and Welfare Policy Statement and associated Management Procedures](#), as well as to any ethical guidelines you have consulted. **Where relevant, risk assessments should be carried out not only in relation to the researchers themselves, but also for those participating in the project or affected by its conduct, and in relation to any impact on the environment. Researchers should ensure that appropriate insurance is in place, liaising with the University's Insurance Officer as necessary (via standard departmental procedures where these exist).**

i. Risks to participants (e.g. emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information...)

The perceived risks that might occur, although this tends to be minor, include:

1. A feeling of uneasiness about revealing/sharing their views and information to the researcher. This may potentially be caused by an apprehension that information might not be handled confidentially. In that case, the researcher will develop a rapport with interviewees, provide reassurance and if necessary refer back to the signed consent form and assure them that all data remains anonymous and is treated with confidentiality through data collection, analysis and report stages of the research. In the case of such uneasy feeling continues, the researcher will offer to reschedule the interview and give them time to reconsider their involvement in the study.
2. Another possible cause of unease for the participants relates to trust in the researcher. A fear of possible reprisals from colleagues within their organisations if they reveal anything that is deemed negative. Participants may be reluctant to disclose information that might jeopardise their position in the organisation or may worry that anything they have revealed could damage their reputation. In this case, I will inform them of my position as an academic researcher and that this is solely for academic purposes and will assure the participants that I will maintain their anonymity and confidentiality. Participants also have the option to withdraw at any time. Participants will be offered the opportunity to review the transcripts should they wish to remove any sensitive information which is not suitable for the public domain. Moreover, the researcher can ask to restrict the thesis thereafter for a period of two years. The policy can be read in the guidance on the presentation and submission of theses for research degree programmes article 10 (<http://www.york.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/support/academic/thesis/submit/>)

ii. Risks to researchers (e.g. personal safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest...)

The perceived risks to the researcher that might occur are:

Personal safety and physical harm - There is a very minimum risk perceived related

to the researcher's safety, as all interviews will be conducted in the offices where the participants work and will be conducted during working hours. Furthermore, the research topic and the data obtained is not a sensitive issue, so the risk is reduced even more. The researcher will be driven by the researcher's husband to the intended organisations' venues, which are located about 45 minutes to 1 hour away from the researcher's home. As Brunei Darussalam is known to be a peaceful country, there is even less harm that could befall the researcher in conducting the research. The researcher will always carry a mobile phone at all times to be used in the case of emergency.

iii. University/institutional risks (e.g. adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection...)

There is no any perceived university/institutional risk.

iv. Financial conflicts of interest (e.g. perceived or actual with respect to direct payments, research funding, indirect sponsorship, board or organisational memberships, past associations, future potential benefits, other...)

None. This study is funded by the Government of Brunei Darussalam under the In-Service Training Scheme. Apart from the requirement for the scholarship awardees to provide satisfactory academic achievements and annual progress reports, there is no known/perceived involvement or intervention from the sponsorship in the subjects, the process involved in the research and how the awardees complete their studies. The choice of the research topic as well as how this research is conducted solely becomes the responsibility of the researcher, without any involvement of other funding bodies-related parties. Therefore, the sponsor does not affect the current research development and there is no perceived conflict of interests.

2.11 Research outside the UK

If you are planning research overseas, you should also take account of the ethical standards and processes of the country/countries in question as well as those of the University. If the research is being conducted outside the UK please specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK. Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which you are conducting research, for example, particular cultural sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants.

This research will be conducted in Brunei Darussalam. As far as the researcher is concerned, up to this time, the ethical standards and processes of Brunei Darussalam in conducting research/data collection is on par with the international standard. There are no other ethical issues raised by the local context, in terms of cultural sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants as the researcher will be identified as a government official

undergoing a PhD research study under the scholarship of the Government of Brunei Darussalam. The selected organisations will only require official letters (from the University) intending the purpose of the study to collect data for research purposes.

SECTION 3: DATA PROTECTION

Please ensure you have read the information on data protection at:

<http://www.york.ac.uk/recordsmanagement/dpa/> before you complete this section

3.1 Does your project involve personal data (as defined by the Data Protection Act): Yes/No.
If yes, please provide a description of the data and explain why you need to collect this data.

The following data will be collected and stored for the purpose of the study:

1. Personal information of participants (job positions, marital status, number of children)
2. Recordings of interviews – digital recording of interviews;
3. Transcribed interviews – transcripts of interviews;
4. Notes – notes taken by the researcher during the interviews;
5. Other documents – photocopies of documents provided by the participants or respective officials from the organisations visited

All efforts will be made to ensure anonymity in this research.

3.2 Does it involve sensitive personal data (as defined by the Data Protection Act) : Yes/No.
If yes please provide a description of the data:

No

3.3. If the research will involve any of the following activities please indicate so and provide further details. Explain how this will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act (and/or any international equivalent)

Electronic transfer of data in any form	Audio recording (MP3), Personal Diary (detailed notes), Transcription (Microsoft Word) and Encrypted USB Stick
Sharing of data with others at University of York	My supervisor – Dr Jane Suter
Sharing of data with other organisations	No

Export of data outside the European Union or importing of data from outside the UK	Yes. The data collected will be from Brunei Darussalam and will be translated in English (where needed)
Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers	Yes. I'm using my personal Bruneian Number for phone calls and SMS as a medium to be contacted in Brunei Darussalam. My university email will also be used to keep in touch with my supervisor and the participants.
Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals	No
Use of audio/visual recording devices	Yes (Digital voice recorder)
Use of data management system (e.g. nvivo, ATLAS.ti)	NVIVO
Data archiving	No

3.4. If the research will involve storing personal data on any one of the following please indicate so and provide further details.

Manual files (i.e. in paper form)	Yes. As this research will require a note-taking (using the researcher's diary), there will be manual files in paper forms. To ensure anonymity, the participants' names will be replaced with pseudonyms prior to analysing the data. These documents will be kept separate from each other and will only be revisited when necessary. These files are ensured to be kept safe and in a lockable drawer assigned for each PhD student at The York Management School, and the room is only accessible by using student or staff ID card.	
University computers	The digital recordings will be shared from the researcher's personal laptop to university computers. Both are password protected and the recordings will be kept in an encrypted folder to secure content data	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N
Private company computers	No	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N

Home or other personal computers	No	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N
Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks	Digital recordings will be transferred to the researcher's personal laptop which is password protected; as well as copies which will be made into an encrypted portable drive to secure data content and will be stored safely.	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N
Websites	No	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N
Other	No	Password protected Y/N Encrypted Y/N

3.5 Please explain the measures in place to ensure data confidentiality, including details of encryption and anonymisation.

Each university's computer provided by the department needs a password for students to access it. Thus, the data shared and stored in the university computers can only be accessed by the researcher. The data which are transferred to the personal laptop can only be accessible by the researcher and the laptop has secure password to enter. All electronic information and digital recordings obtained from the data collection will be stored in an encrypted folder in the researcher's personal laptop as well as a portable hard drive to secure contents. The data analysis will anonymise any details which might identify individuals. To ensure anonymity and data confidentiality, the researcher will remove personal identifiers from all data files which include names of the respondents. The researcher will also use and assign anonymous IDs or pseudonyms to all data and store the IDs or assigned pseudonyms separately from the data file (for soft copies) and locked them in a computer with protected password accessible only by the researcher. The hard copy will be locked in a drawer which can only be accessed by the researcher. The researcher will represent the respondents' identities by their IDs or assigned pseudonyms instead of personal identifiers in any reports or publications.

Other handwritten notes from the interviews, transcripts of interviews, hardcopies of participants' details and their assigned pseudonyms, as well as any photocopies or hardcopy that are obtained from the data collection will be stored in lockable drawer in the PhD room at The York Management School assigned for the sole use of the researcher.

3.6 Please detail all who will have access to the data generated by the study.

The data generated by the study is only accessible by the researcher, supervisors and examiners.

3.7 Please detail who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the study.

The researcher only.

3.8 Please give details of data storage arrangements, including where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.

Note the university policy that “Where possible, relevant elements of research data must be deposited in an appropriate national or international subject-based repository, according to their policies. Data should be kept by the researcher in an appropriate manner when suitable subject repositories are not available.” <http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/information-directorate/information-policy/index/research-data-management-policy/#tab-1>

Digital data (which includes the MP3 voice recordings, transcripts and analysis) will be stored in an encrypted folder in the researcher’s personal laptop and shared to the university’s computer with protected password. Regular backups into portable hard drive which is also encrypted will also be done to ensure that important data cannot be lost.

Prior to doing the analysis, the participants’ personal information will be replaced/assigned with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and will be kept separate from each other after that under different encrypted folders and will only be visited when necessary. Only authorised person (the researcher) can access the protected password computer. All data in hardcopies or photocopies will be kept in the drawer. The drawer is located in the PhD room and accessible only via authorised magnetic card. The key to the drawer is kept with the researcher at all times.

Data, both digital and paper will be kept for 10 years. At that point, data may be destroyed if it is no longer in use.

SECTION 4 SIGNED UNDERTAKING

In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research project will meet the University's Code of Practice on Research Integrity <https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/policies/research-code/>.



..... (Signed Lead Researcher/Principal Investigator)

29 September 2016

..... (Date)



..... (Signed Supervisor (where relevant))

26/09/16

..... (Date)

Submission Checklist for Applicants

Send one **signed hard copy** to Debbie Haverstock, Research Centre for the Social Sciences, University of York, 6 Innovation Close, York YO10 5ZF), and **one electronic copy** (including attachments) in **one pdf file** to: elmps-ethics-group@york.ac.uk

- ELMPS Application form
- Consent form for participants
- Information Sheet for participants
- ELMPS Compliance form

Compliance Declaration

This declaration must be returned, fully completed, along with each submission made to ELMPS.

On completion, please return **two copies** of this form: one by email to elmeps-ethics-group@york.ac.uk, and a second, hard-copy, **signed by the Applicant and, if applicable, the Applicant's PhD Supervisor**.

Those making a resubmission **must also complete section 6, on page 2**.

Return Address: Prof. Tony Royle, c/o Debbie Haverstock, ReCSS, 6 Innovation Close, University of York YO10 5ZF.

1. The Applicant:

Name: Hajah Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini
Position: PhD Student
Centre/Department: The York Management School
Contact details: email address: nhs507@york.ac.uk Telephone number: 07518060697

2. Supervisors:

Doctoral Supervisor: Dr Jane Suter
(if applicable)
Head of Research: Professor Bill Cooke
Head of Department: Professor Mark Freeman

3. The Project:

Project Title: The Impact of Maternity Leave Provision on Professional Women's Work-Life Balance: A Case of Brunei Darussalam

How is the project funded?: Self-Funded External funder

Funder (if applicable): The Government of Brunei Darussalam

4. Other Jurisdictions:

Please indicate whether your proposal has been considered by any other bodies:

- External Sponsor
- Another University of York Ethics Committee
- NHS Research Ethics Committee

5. Declaration:

I confirm that I have read and understood:

- the ELMPS guidelines on consent; and
- the ELMPS information sheets for researchers working with human subjects; and
- the University of York data protection guidelines.

Signature of applicant:
(Type name if submitting electronically)

Hajah Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini _____

Date: 29 September 2016

I confirm that the applicant and myself have read and understood the ELMPS guidelines on Consent and Data Protection)

Signature of Research Supervisor (if appropriate):
(Type name if submitting electronically)

Dr Jane Suter _____

Date: 29 September 2016

6. Additional Declaration for Resubmissions:

I have read and understood the ELMPS response to the initial application, and consider that the attached response deals appropriately with its recommendations.

Signature of applicant:

Date:

Please attach an additional sheet/file with a point-by-point response to the recommendations issued by ELMPS.

I have read and understood the ELMPS response to the initial application, and consider that the attached response deals appropriately with its recommendations.

Signature of Research Supervisor (if appropriate):

Date:

ELMPS decision Hajah N A H Sarbini  Inbox x



Tony Royle <tony.royle@york.ac.uk>
to me, Debbie ▾

Sat, 15 Oct 2016, 00:26 ☆ ↶ ⋮

Dear Hajah

The ethics committee cannot approve your application until the following issues have been addressed:

- 1) Participants contact details should not be passed on to the researcher by the organisation without the consent of the participants. Ideally the researcher should email the organisation with the participant information letters and they can be passed on to the participants, who could then respond directly to the researcher if they wished to take part in the study.
- 2) The organisational gatekeeper should not know the identity of those who take part in the study. This is because the study is likely to disclose plans for future maternity to an employer, which could potentially place women in a vulnerable position, neither could or should the employer be asked to identify such women (that is, it is not ethical for an employer to seek to establish if women are planning to get pregnant or not). It would therefore be better to ask the employer to ask all women in the organisation (or an appropriate sub-set/work group in the organisation depending on the size of the organization) if they wish to take part in the study, so that women can then self-select if they feel they meet the inclusion criteria without the knowledge of management
- 3) The information sheet needs to state the same as the application regards length of data storage
- 4) The question regards data archiving needs to be answered (although its good practice, archiving is not compulsory unless required by funding body)
- 5) The information sheet should state that the project has been ethically approved and contact details for ELMPS should be provided
- 6) Whilst only an advisory recommendation, it might be better to keep the organisation anonymous as this will help to improve the anonymity of participants

You may reply directly to me indicating how you will deal with these issues

Best wishes

Tony

Professor Tony Royle
Chair ELMPS



Tony Royle <tony.royle@york.ac.uk>
to Debbie, me ▾

1 Nov 2016, 03:43 ★ ↶ ⋮

Dear Annisa

You have now satisfactorily addressed the committee's concerns. Your application is now approved

Best wishes

Tony

Professor Tony Royle
Chair ELMPS

...

↶ Reply ↶ Reply to all ↷ Forward

APPENDIX 2: TOPIC GUIDE - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

RESEARCH TITLE: THE IMPACT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE ON PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S LIVED WORK EXPERIENCE POST-MATERNITY LEAVE IN SELECTED ORGANISATIONS IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

RESEARCHER: HAJAH NUR ANNISA HAJI SARBINI

Interview Schedule/Guide

Introduction:

- Thank the interviewee for taking part in the research
- Build rapport by introducing myself and my background
- Explain the aim and objectives of the research and the importance of their information
- Explain and assure the interviewee the issue of confidentiality
- Ask them to read, complete and sign the consent form

I've asked if I could interview you to talk about Maternity Leave Provision and Work-Life Balance. I wonder if we could start by...

1. Work position, role and history

- How long have you worked here in this organisation and in this present position?
- Who do you report to?
- What is the demand of your position day in day out? {are you required to tend to meetings inside and outside of the organisation?}
- What about your pattern of work (in terms on work hours, for example). How has that changed over the years?

2. Personal details, family commitments

- Your age this year.
- What are your family commitments? Any children/partner/caring responsibilities?
- If you are married, how long have you been married?
- If you have children, how many children do you have?
- Is your partner working full-time? As what?
- Do you live in your own house? Or still living with parents?
- Do you have help around the house? (Helper/Maid/Retired Parents)
- What is an average sort of day for you? {are you prepared to volunteer to "record/write" a diary for one week on how your day-to-day activities look like?}
- Do you perform your five times daily prayers?
- Do you have any interests/activities outside of work? How has that changed over time?

3. Understanding of Maternity Leave Provision (MLP) and Work-Life Balance (WLB)

- What does WLB mean to you?

- Do you think you have achieved it in your life?
- Have you taken ML in the last five years (MLP changed in 2011)?
- What is the difference between ML of 105 days and the previous 56 days (if you have experienced both situations)?
- How do you feel the MLP provided by the government has influenced your views on WLB?
- Can you think of examples where MLP has facilitated/constrained your WLB? Before, during and after taking the ML.
 - BEFORE ML:
 - Prior to taking ML (2 weeks before due date), has the organisation assigned someone who will take over your tasks → *how far along is this preparation for the tasks to be handed over before your ML starts?*
 - *Are there any leniencies given by your organisation for you to attend your monthly clinical antenatal appointments? Has this been easy or hard?*
 - *Is your workload being reduced prior to reaching the start of your ML?*
 - *Do you feel you are more relaxed or stressed out before taking your ML?*
- DURING ML:
 - *How do you adopt to/find your new environment with a new baby in the family? – at home*
 - *Are you able to fully breastfeed your baby during this period?*
 - *Did you intend to do so?*
 - *What about the rest of your children (if you have any)? Do you get extra help from them?*
 - *Does your husband help out at home? With the baby? With the other children? What does he do?*
 - *Are you able to do other things apart from taking care of the baby during your ML? (your interests or hobbies or activities?)*
 - *Do you think you suffer from Post-partum depression during your ML?*
 - *Are you able to concentrate on being a full-time housewife during your ML? was it an easy or hard transition? Do you like it or resent it?*
 - *What do you like most about being able to take a longer ML?*
 - *What stresses you most about being away from work during ML?*
- AFTER ML:
 - *How does it feel coming back to work after ML?*
 - *How does the organisation “welcome” you back?*
 - *How about your colleagues? The hand-over processes? Are they easy to adapt?*
 - *Do you feel discriminated at all?*
 - *Are you able to adapt to new schedule (especially with a new person to take care of) – in terms of your workload, your personal hobbies/activities?*
 - *Are there any changes in your previously work routines? For example, lunch break – what do you do? Free time in between – what do you do?*

- Are you able to perform your prayers without much distractions as compared to before giving birth?*
- *For breastfeeding mums – do you express at work? Or do you go home to direct feed your baby?*
 - *If at work – is there a proper place to do so? How long does it take? How many times a day?*
 - *If at home – how does it work? How long does it take?*
 - *How does the organisation respond to this? Any leniency given? Support? Breastfeeding room provided, for example?*
 - *How about your duty as a Muslim; do you pray at work? How does that making an impact (if any) towards yourself – spiritually? Physically? Mentally?*
- How does the MLP cater/help your WLB? What did you expect and what was the reality?
 - *Through ML, were you able to bond/spend more time with your newborn as well as the rest of the family?*
 - *What are the advantages/challenges that you face during this period in terms of juggling with everything else (being a wife, a mom, a daughter in law, in terms of cooking, cleaning, household chores – do you get any help?)*
 - *Through ML, were you able to adapt to your changing roles as a mum/an employee at work once you return back to work? Has it been easy or hard?*
 - *Was the three months ML suffice for you prepare yourself mentally, physically and spiritually to find a balance between your work and your life?*
 - If you were to share your experience with people in taking MLP, what would you say?
 - Do you feel you achieve your potential at work? Or has that changed once you become a mom (for a first-time mom)? If not, why not? How does this relate to MLP? How does this relate to your WLB?
 - *How does the organisation support you towards welcoming you back to work?*
 - *Does the organisation provide facilities needed, for example breastfeeding rooms, or leniencies/flexibilities towards working time (longer lunch breaks?)*
 - *Does the organisation expect your work demands to be the same or even more or even less now that you are a mom?*

4. Closure

- In-situ clarification and summary
- To summarise then, we've discussed your experience of MLP and WLB and it seems that...
- Are you willing to participate in a drawing activity?

APPENDIX 3: TOPIC GUIDE - VISUAL METHOD – DRAWINGS

RESEARCH TITLE: THE IMPACT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE ON PROFESSIONAL WOMEN’S LIVED WORK EXPERIENCE POST-MATERNITY LEAVE IN SELECTED ORGANISATIONS IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

RESEARCHER: HAJAH NUR ANNISA HAJI SARBINI

Drawings as a visual method

1. Continuation from the interview session
 - The participant will be asked for her permission if we can continue with a drawing exercise
 - Explain the aim and objectives of the drawing exercise as a method
 - Provide participant with a piece of blank A4 paper
 - Provide participant with coloured pens
2. Ask the participant the question – “What do you understand by the term / word “Work-Life Balance?”
3. Give participant the time and space to think, and gather thoughts about the question given.
4. There is no time limit to how long the participant can spend drawing.
5. Once participant is done with drawing, she will be asked to analyse and explain what her drawing means.

APPENDIX 4: LETTERS TO ORGANISATIONS

(VIA EMAIL)

Organisation A



From: Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini [mailto:nhs507@york.ac.uk]
Sent: 17 November 2016 19:27
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Request Permission to Conduct Research at [REDACTED]

Assalamualaikum Tuan,

Alhamdulillah, The Ethics Committee of the University of York has given me the permission for me to conduct and carry out my data collection. This is good news indeed which means I am able to recruit and identify potential participants prior to collecting the data next year.

For your information, my research title is "**The Impact of Maternity Leave Provision on Professional Women's Work-Life Balance: A Case of Brunei Darussalam**". In general, my research aims to investigate the impact of maternity leave provision on professional women's lived experience of work-life balance in selected public and private organisations in Brunei Darussalam. This will be examined through the following objectives:

1. To understand and investigate employees' perceptions and attitudes towards their maternity leave and work-life balance experiences.
2. To analyse how participants conceptualise the relationship between maternity leave provision and work-life balance.
3. To explore how maternity leave provision constrains or facilitates work-life balance at work.
4. To compare and contrast these experiences across the chosen public and private organisational and cultural settings.

The tentative period of data collection is from **30 January 2017 - 31 March 2017**. The study will utilise qualitative research methods which include semi-structured interviews to women employees in your organisation which will be arranged later depending on their availability and also the consent of your organisation. These interview sessions are planned to be conducted in the offices during working hours.

With this email, I enclose three documents in which are essential to be disseminated to all women employees in your organisation for them to read through and understand the scope of the study is. These documents are: **1. Invitation Letter; 2. Participant Information Sheet; and 3. Consent Form**. For your information, their decision to participate is totally voluntary and should they wish and decide to be a part of the study as participant, they can confirm it by contacting me individually via email or text message. There is also an inclusion criteria that categorise the participants who meet any of the following criteria to be eligible as a part of this study:

- Women who are currently pregnant
- Women who are currently undergoing maternity leave
- Women who have returned to work from maternity leave



With this email, I enclose three documents in which are essential to be disseminated to all women employees in your organisation for them to read through and understand the scope of the study is. These documents are: **1. Invitation Letter; 2. Participant Information Sheet; and 3. Consent Form**. For your information, their decision to participate is totally voluntary and should they wish and decide to be a part of the study as participant, they can confirm it by contacting me individually via email or text message. There is also an inclusion criteria that categorise the participants who meet any of the following criteria to be eligible as a part of this study:

- Women who are currently pregnant
- Women who are currently undergoing maternity leave
- Women who have returned to work from maternity leave
- Women who have older children who have experienced the pre-2011 Revised Maternity Leave Provision which only includes a 56-day maternity leave of 105 days when it was revised in January 2011.

If you have further queries or questions with regards to this study or anything related to it that needs clarification, please feel free to contact me. Your kind help in granting me the permission to collect data at your organisation would be very much appreciated and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Annisa Sarbini

Warm Regards,

Annisa Sarbini
[Hajah Nur Annisa binti Haji Sarbini]
(109049885)
Doctoral Researcher
The York Management School
University of York
United Kingdom

On 19 October 2016 at 01:05, [REDACTED] wrote:
Assalam Anisa,

Thank you for your email and your interest to conduct the research. May I at this point request for your work scope so that we will be able to focus specifically towards your requirements. Looking forward for your reply.

Organisation B



Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini <nhs507@york.ac.uk>
to Dk ▾

Thu, 17 Nov 2016, 19:36 ☆ ↶ ⋮

Assalamualaikum Puan,

I hope this email reaches you in the best of health and iman. My apologies for not updating or following up on our last conversation as I was also waiting for the University's Ethics Committee to approve my application to conduct this data collection in Brunei. I am also still waiting for the statistics of [redacted] that I have requested earlier for the purpose of my organisation's justification.

Nevertheless, Alhamdulillah, The Ethics Committee of the University of York has given me the permission for me to conduct and carry out my data collection. This is good news indeed which means I am able to recruit and identify potential participants prior to collecting the data next year.

For your information, my research title is "**The Impact of Maternity Leave Provision on Professional Women's Work-Life Balance: A Case of Brunei Darussalam**". In general, my research aims to investigate the impact of maternity leave provision on professional women's lived experience of work-life balance in selected public and private organisations in Brunei Darussalam. This will be examined through the following objectives:

1. To understand and investigate employees' perceptions and attitudes towards their maternity leave and work-life balance experiences.
2. To analyse how participants conceptualise the relationship between maternity leave provision and work-life balance.
3. To explore how maternity leave provision constrains or facilitates work-life balance at work.
4. To compare and contrast these experiences across the chosen public and private organisational and cultural settings.

The tentative period of data collection is from **30 January 2017 - 31 March 2017**. The study will utilise qualitative research methods which include semi-structured interviews to women employees in your organisation which will be arranged later depending on their availability and also the consent of your organisation. These interview sessions are planned to be conducted in the offices during working hours.

With this email, I enclose three documents in which are essential to be disseminated to all women employees in your organisation for them to read through and understand the scope of the study is. These documents are: **1. Invitation Letter; 2. Participant Information Sheet; and 3. Consent Form**. For your information, their decision to participate is totally voluntary and should they wish and decide to be a part of the study as participant, they can confirm it by contacting me individually via email or text message. There is also an inclusion criteria that categorise the participants who meet any of the following criteria to be eligible as a part of this study:

- Women who are currently pregnant
- Women who are currently undergoing maternity leave
- Women who have returned to work from maternity leave
- Women who have older children who have experienced the pre-2011 Revised Maternity Leave Provision which only includes a 56-day maternity leave of 105 days when it was revised in

Organisation C



Request for an interview for the purpose of current study External Inbox x



nhs507@york.ac.uk

Sun, 16 Apr 2017, 21:05 ☆ ↶ ⋮

to [redacted] bcc: me ▾

Assalamu'alaikum Puan [redacted].

My name is Hajah Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini. I am currently a third year PhD student at the University of York, United Kingdom under the government's In-Service Training Scholarship. I obtained your email from my former student who is currently working at [redacted].

The reason I requested to contact you is because I am currently doing my fieldwork for my PhD at the University of York, United Kingdom and I have been back in Brunei since Mid of January 2017 for the purpose of collecting data for my research. I am in my third year of study and at the end of my data collection period.

With the recent news on [redacted] decision to offer a 20-week Maternity Leave as well as a 2-week Paternity Leave for the male employees, I am beyond ecstatic to want to interview the head of HR to find out more on this decision, implication and implementation.

For your information, my study focuses on the experiences of female employees who have undergone Maternity Leave and how it affected their work-life balance, so when the news about [redacted] bold decision on ML, I felt that I have to find out more for the purpose of my study to add on my data collection. I have interviewed various women from 3 different organisations so an interview with you (representing [redacted] would definitely add a more richer data.

I would love to arrange a meeting with you soon, by soon, I mean any day next week before Thursday, 20th April because time is really at essence since we are returning back to London on 20th April.

I hope I get the chance to meet you and discuss and interview you with regards to this matter. Please feel free to contact me at +6738876987 if you need further information from me.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Warm regards,
Annisa Sarbini

Sent from my iPhone
Annisa HS



Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini <nhs507@york.ac.uk>

Tue, 14 Aug 2018, 12:08 ☆ ↶ ⋮

to [redacted]

Dear [redacted]

thank you for your support! I'm so delighted to be able to get back on track. Here are the details that you can disseminate to your female colleagues.

Assalamualaikum,

My name is Hajah Nur Annisa binti Haji Sarbini, and I am currently a PhD student at the University of York, UK. I have actually collected sample last year but had to put my research on hold for medical reasons and now that I am slowly back on track with my research and resuming my study soon, I feel that I need to add on more sample (interviewees) and I have time before flying back to the UK in a few weeks.

For your information, should you (and your potential colleagues) are interested to participate in my research, the title is "**The Impact of Maternity Leave Provision on Professional Women's Work-Life Balance: A Case of Brunei Darussalam**". In general, my research aims to investigate the impact of maternity leave provision on professional women's lived experience of work-life balance in selected public and private organisations in Brunei Darussalam. This will be examined through the following objectives:

1. To understand and investigate employees' perceptions and attitudes towards their maternity leave and work-life balance experiences.
2. To analyse how participants conceptualise the relationship between maternity leave provision and work-life balance.
3. To explore how maternity leave provision constrains or facilitates work-life balance at work.
4. To compare and contrast these experiences across the chosen public and private organisational and cultural settings.

I am currently available to be contacted and to set up interview sessions until mid of September. The study will utilise qualitative research methods which include semi-structured interviews to women employees in your organisation which will be arranged depending on their availability and also the consent of your organisation. These interview sessions are planned to be conducted in the offices during working hours.

Participants will be provided with three documents in which are essential to be read through to understand the scope of the study. These documents are: **1. Invitation Letter; 2. Participant Information Sheet; and 3. Consent Form**. I will provide them prior to agreed interview sessions. For your information, the decision to participate is totally voluntary and should you wish and decide to be a part of the study as participant, you can confirm it by contacting me individually via email or text message. There is also an inclusion criteria that categorise the participants who meet any of the following criteria to be eligible as a part of this study:

Organisation D



Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini <nhs507@york.ac.uk>

Request to conduct research at [redacted] - an initial introduction

Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini <nhs507@york.ac.uk>

17 November 2016 at 19:32

To: [redacted]

Assalamualaikum [redacted]

I hope this email reaches you in great health and iman.

My apologies for haven't been following up on your last email, but I do thank you for the statistics provided as requested. I was waiting for the University's Ethics Committee to grant me the permission to conduct the research in Brunei and Alhamdulillah, the permission has been granted for me to conduct and carry out my data collection. This is good news indeed which means I am able to recruit and identify potential participants prior to collecting the data next year.

For your information, my research title is "**The Impact of Maternity Leave Provision on Professional Women's Work-Life Balance: A Case of Brunei Darussalam**". In general, my research aims to investigate the impact of maternity leave provision on professional women's lived experience of work-life balance in selected public and private organisations in Brunei Darussalam. This will be examined through the following objectives:

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- Women who have returned to work from maternity leave
- Women who have older children who have experienced the pre-2011 Revised Maternity Leave Provision which only includes a 56-day maternity leave of 105 days when it was revised in January 2011.

If you have further queries or questions with regards to this study or anything related to it that needs clarification, please feel free to contact me. Your kind help in granting me the permission to collect data at your organisation would be very much appreciated and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Annisa Sarbini

Warm Regards,

Assalamualaikum [redacted]

I hope this email reaches you in great health and iman.

My apologies for haven't been following up on your last email, but I do thank you for the statistics provided as requested. I was waiting for the University's Ethics Committee to grant me the permission to conduct the research in Brunei and Alhamdulillah, the permission has been granted for me to conduct and carry out my data collection. This is good news indeed which means I am able to recruit and identify potential participants prior to collecting the data next year.

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1. To understand and investigate employees' perceptions and attitudes towards their maternity leave and work-life balance experiences.
2. To analyse how participants conceptualise the relationship between maternity leave provision and work-life balance.
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4. To compare and contrast these experiences across the chosen public and private organisational and cultural settings.

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With this email, I enclose three documents in which are essential to be disseminated to all women employees in your organisation for them to read through and understand the scope of the study is. These documents are: **1. Invitation Letter; 2. Participant Information Sheet; and 3. Consent Form**. For your information, their decision to participate is totally voluntary and should they wish and decide to be a part of the study as participant, they can confirm it by contacting me individually via email or text message. There is also an inclusion criteria that categorise the participants who meet any of the following criteria to be eligible as a part of this study:

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If you have further queries or questions with regards to this study or anything related to it that needs clarification, please feel free to contact me. Your kind help in granting me the permission to collect data at your organisation would be very much appreciated and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Annisa Sarbini

Warm Regards,

Annisa Sarbini
[Hajjah Nur Annisa binti Haji Sarbini]
(109049885)
Doctoral Researcher
The York Management School
University of York
United Kingdom

APPENDIX 5: PARTICIPANT'S INFORMATION SHEET



The York Management School

A Study on the Impact of Maternity Leave Provision on Professional Women's Work-Life Balance: A Case of Brunei Darussalam

PARTICIPANT'S INFORMATION SHEET

You are invited to take part in a research study looking at the impact of Maternity Leave Provision on Professional Women's Work-Life Balance in selected public and private organisations in Brunei Darussalam. Before you decide to take part or not in this study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Research Aims and Objectives.

The overall aim of the study is to investigate the impact of maternity leave provision on professional women's lived experience of work-life balance in selected public and private organisations in Brunei Darussalam. This will be examined through the following objectives:

1. To understand and investigate employees' perceptions and attitudes towards their maternity leave and work-life balance experiences.
2. To analyse how participants conceptualise the relationship between maternity leave provision and work-life balance.
3. To explore how maternity leave provision constrains or facilitates work-life balance at work.
4. To compare and contrast these experiences across the chosen public and private organisational and cultural settings.

Selection and involvement of the participants.

You are invited to take part in this study because you either have experienced directly by taking the maternity leave provision or you are indirectly affected by the maternity leave provision in your workplace. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without any detriment to yourself or your organisation.

The process involved.

If you agree to participate, you will be involved in one-to-one semi-structured interview session and each session will take approximately one hour to finish. The researcher will visit your office or other public places to conduct an interview at a date and time that would best suit you. Prior to the session, you will be given a brief on the consent form. You will also be given an opportunity to ask questions and then, if you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign the written consent form. The researcher will ask your permission to record the

interview session. If you do not want to be recorded, the researcher will take detailed notes during the interview session.

Possible benefits.

By taking part in the research, you will have an opportunity to share your views on the current maternity leave provision that has been implemented and might also personally affect you. It is expected that the findings will be of great value to the respective organisations as well as the Government of Brunei Darussalam in managing the Maternity Leave Provision of the employees both in public and private sectors.

Confidentiality and anonymity.

There are likely no risks attached to the study because your information is confidential and available only to the researcher and her research panel. The Research Panel Committee consists of two supervisors and the other panel member from the university. What is more, the participants' anonymity is assured in this research. There will be no part of your name or any other information that could identify yourself that is included in any written reports or publications as the results of this study. All data will be treated anonymously. In addition to anonymity, please be rest assured that all data will be treated confidentially. Data will be stored in a laptop and a personal file store in the University of York secure server, both can be accessed only by the researcher using password that is known only to the researcher. All the information will be destroyed after being stored for 10 years. The confidential handling, processing, storage and disposal of data will comply with the 1998 Data Protection Act.

The next step.

If you agree to take part, please reply by email to the researcher (contact details are in the bottom of the page). The researcher will contact you after receiving your reply email to arrange the date and time of the interview, if these have not been arranged individually by your respective organisations. A consent form can be signed on the day of the interview. The consent form will not be used to identify you. It will be filed separately from all the other information. However, you may keep this sheet for reference.

Further information.

This project has been ethically approved by the University's Economics, Law, Management, Politics and Sociology (ELMPS) Ethics Committee and should you have any queries about this research, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Hajah Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini at the address below. You may also contact the ELMPS Ethics Committee at elmps-ethics-group@york.ac.uk for queries regarding ethical issues. For any further concerns, you can contact her supervisor, Dr Jane Suter at jane.suter@york.ac.uk . **Thank you for your time.**

Hajah Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini

Doctoral Researcher

Freboys Lane

University of York

Heslington, York, YO10 5GD

United Kingdom

Email: nhs507@york.ac.uk

Thank you for participating in my research project.

APPENDIX 6: CONSENT FORM



The York Management School

A Study on the Impact of Maternity Leave Provision on Professional Women’s Work-Life Balance: A Case of Brunei Darussalam

PARTICIPANT’S CONSENT FORM

This form is for you to state whether or not you agree to take part in the study. Please read and answer every question. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
I agree to take part in the study.		
I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. In addition, I have the right to request the sessions to be stopped and withdraw from the research at any time and have the information withdrawn as well, without giving any reason and without any detriment to myself and my organisation.		
I confirm that I have read and understand clearly the information sheet for this research and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.		
I agree that the interview will be audio-taped. I can request a copy of the recording or the transcript of the interview (you may take part in the study without agreeing to this part).		
I understand that the information collected is only accessible to the researcher and via translation to her research supervisors.		
I am aware that the information collected in this study will be used to write up a PhD thesis, publications, or presented in academic conferences.		
I understand that the information I provide will be held in confidence and will be treated anonymously by the researcher.		
I am aware that I have a right to be informed of the outcome of the research via a report summary, and/or be informed of any future publications.		

Participant:

Date:

Signature:

Researcher:

Date:

Signature:

Hajah Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini

APPENDIX 7: INVITATION LETTER



The York Management School

INVITATION LETTER

Date: 13 August 2018

Reference Number: Org-2/2018

Dear Madam,

My name is Hajah Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini, a PhD student at the York Management School, and I am currently conducting research on the Impact of Maternity Leave Provision on Professional Women's Work-Life Balance in Brunei Darussalam. My research aims to investigate if the maternity leave provision does make an impact on the professional women's lived experience of work-life balance in selected public and private organisations in Brunei Darussalam.

For this purpose, I would like to invite you to participate in the study. I kindly invite you to partake in an interview session. Before you decide to take part, it is important to understand the research objectives and processes involved in it, so please take time to carefully read the information enclosed to this invitation letter.

The decision to take part is entirely voluntary. However, it is very valuable and greatly appreciated if you can participate in this study. If you choose to do so, please reply your indication to take part to me either by email or SMS as written below.

Your kind assistance by participating in this research is highly appreciated. I believe that your views can give valuable perspectives on this important topic. Should you have any queries, please feel free to contact me. I will be more than happy to provide you with a summary of the research findings, if you request. If you have any other concerns that you want to raise, please feel free to contact my supervisor Dr Jane Suter at jane.suter@york.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Hajah Nur Annisa Haji Sarbini

Doctoral Researcher

Human Resource Management (HRM)

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APPENDIX 8: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

INTERVIEW:

ORGANISATION A				
No.	Interviewee No.	Name	Position	Date
1	I-1	Arianna	Contracts Engineer	09/02/2017
2	I-2	Aisyah	Lead Buyer	09/02/2017
ORGANISATION B				
3	I-3	Batrisya	Research Officer / Assistant Registrar	20/02/2017
4	I-4	Bella	Senior Lab Technician	27/02/2017
5	1-13	Badriyah	Program Leader / Lecturer	23/03/2017
6	I-14	Balqis	Lecturer	21/08/2018
7	I-15	Belinda	Director / Lecturer	21/08/2018
ORGANISATION C				
8	1-16	Casey	Human Resource Officer	28/08/2018
9	I-17	Cecilia	IT Officer	28/08/2018
10	I-18	Catherina	Senior Manager	28/082018
ORGANISATION D				
11	I-5	Dahlia	Assistant Executive Director	08/03/2017

12	I-6	Daisy	Manager	08/03/2017
13	I-7	Dana	Manager	08/03/2017
14	I-8	Daniella	Manager	09/03/2017
15	I-9	Diana	Senior Manager	09/03/2017
16	I-10	Dalila	Assistant Officer	09/03/2017
17	I-11	Damia	Manager	10/03/2017
18	I-12	Dafiyah	Assistant Officer	10/03/2017

DRAWING:

ORGANISATION B				
No.	Interviewee No.	Name	Position	Date
1	I-4	Bella	Senior Lab Technician	27/02/2017
2	1-13	Badriyah	Program Leader / Lecturer	23/03/2017
3	I-14	Balqis	Lecturer	21/08/2018
4	I-15	Belinda	Director / Lecturer	21/08/2018
ORGANISATION D				
5	I-5	Dahlia	Assistant Executive Director	08/03/2017
6	I-6	Daisy	Manager	08/03/2017

7	I-7	Dana	Manager	08/03/2017
8	I-8	Daniella	Manager	09/03/2017
9	I-9	Diana	Senior Manager	09/03/2017
10	I-10	Dalila	Assistant Officer	09/03/2017
11	I-11	Damia	Manager	10/03/2017
12	I-12	Dafiyah	Assistant Officer	10/03/2017

List of Abbreviations

BFHI	: Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative
DEPD	: Department of Economic Planning and Development
EAMFF	: East Asian Ministerial Meeting on Families
EU	: European Union
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
HDI	: Human Development Index
HRM	: Human Resource Management
IPA	: <i>Institut Perkhidmatan Awam</i> (Civil Service Institute)
JAPEM	: <i>Jabatan Pembangunan Masyarakat</i> (Community Development Department)
MIB	: <i>Melayu Islam Beraja</i> (Malay Islamic Monarchy)
MOH	: Ministry of Health
MYCS	: Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports
NDP	: National Development Plan
NHNSS	: National Health and Nutrition Survey Status
The UK	: The United Kingdom
The US	: The United States
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programs
UNICEF	: United Nations Children's Fund
WABA	: World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action
WBW	: World Breastfeeding Week
WHA	: World Health Assembly
WHO	: World Health Organisation
WLB	: Work-Life Balance

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