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Status Seeking and Work-Family Conflicts: How the Pursuit of Wealth and Success Threatens Family Peace in 26 Countries

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Abstract

This paper takes a cross-national perspective and examines the association between the individual disposition to pursue wealth and success (status seeking) and work–family conflicts. We use data from the 2010 European Social Survey on more than 15,000 individuals from 26 countries who were of working age and living in families with children. The sample selection followed a stratified random sampling strategy and data were collected via computer-assisted personal interviews and pen and pencil interviews administered by trained interview personnel. Employing pooled and comparative single-country regression analyses as well as correlational analyses at the macro-level of countries, our results show that status seeking is related to higher levels of work–family conflict but that the strength of association is vastly different across countries. This individual-level effect is mainly driven by job characteristics and less so by socio-demographics in most of the countries studied. At the country level, better conditions for work and family reconciliation provided by welfare states dampen the effect of ambitiousness on work–family conflict, but only marginally. Interestingly, national wealth (GDP) strengthens the association, while differences in income inequality (Gini coefficient) among countries are not relevant in this regard. Our results highlight the need for a cross-national perspective when determining the antecedents of work–family conflicts.

Keywords Work-family conflict · Status seeking · National wealth · Income inequality · Family policies · Working conditions

Introduction

In all human societies, family represents one of the central areas of a person's life. Research has documented a number of negative impacts on individual well-being and social cohesion when conflicts spill over from other life domains, such as the workplace, to the family environment (e.g., Reimann et al., 2022). From a sociological perspective, the family simultaneously represents a source of social conflicts and the provider of necessary resources to mitigate conflicts in other social fields (Reimann et al., 2022). Therefore, it seems surprising that the debate about social inequality and status anxiety in modern, capitalist societies (De Botton, 2004; Delhey & Dragolov, 2016; Delhey et al., 2017; Layte, 2011;

Layte & Whelan, 2014; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2010) has not yet been systematically extended to the sociology of family.

The spirit level theory by Wilkinson and Pickett (2010, 2018) in particular is representative of a current discussion in the social sciences that is highly critical of the pursuit of status and the associated competitive social structure and status concerns.¹ In contemporary social sciences, a perspective on status seeking prevails that focuses on status anxiety, assuming a mechanism that translates inequality on the macro level of society into social problems by increasing a competitive social climate. This causes people to feel pressured and stressed to compete and to keep up with others (Delhey et al., 2017; Paskov et al., 2017; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2010; Rözer et al., 2022). If this is the case, the assumed mechanism should put pressure on families as well. The family is traditionally one of the life spheres in which recreational

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¹ This is in striking contrast to classical functionalist theory, which assumes that individual achievement mentality and competitive incentives are central to generating individual advancement and social prosperity (see Davis & Moore, 1945).

processes take place, and consequently, it would have to compensate for stress generated in the professional world (Yerkes et al., 2020). In addition, increased status seeking would divert people's resources from the work of family care to capitalist wage labor, which could, in turn, increase family conflicts. Thus, while at the macro level of societies, the pursuit of status and success can have very positive effects on the prosperity of nations, individuals—and their families—are likely to pay a price (Rubenstein et al., 2022). On the individual level, social advancement has always come with hardship and hard work, and from the classic narrative of postwar modernity, it is plausible that families (and women, in particular) have to a large extent already paid this price (Lyonette & Crompton, 2015; for evidence from Germany, see Trappe et al., 2015). These hardships may also be among the main reasons for the fundamental change from materialist to postmaterialist values that have been observed in Western, affluent societies since the 1970s (see Inglehart, 1977) and, in particular, impact people's declining status orientation and increasing experience orientation (Delhey & Schneickert, 2022; Schneickert et al., 2024).

However, the sociological findings that demonstrate a relationship between status and success orientation and work-family conflicts have so far been very limited, and this applies particularly to cross-country comparisons. Examining this association would be particularly relevant because family forms, gender roles, work ethics, and notions of successful work-life balance have not only changed over time but can be expected to differ across societies. Although there are a number of findings from multilevel analyses on the determinants and outcomes of work–family conflict (see, for example, Masuda et al., 2019), the effect of status seeking on work–family conflict has—to the best of our knowledge—not yet been systematically investigated in a cross-country comparison.

To address this research gap, this study examines whether individual-level status seeking is associated with work-family conflicts across societies and, if so, to what extent. Since we assume that the mechanisms may be significantly different among countries, we examine these relationships in cross-country comparisons using data from the European Social Survey for over 15,000 individuals in 26 (mostly) European societies. Additionally, we explore the impact of macro-societal conditions (societal wealth, income inequality, and work–family policies) on the relationship between individual-level status seeking and work-family conflict.

Theory and State of Research

We define *status seeking* as the motivation of people to not only strive for higher status in the sense of higher rank, success, power, and resources but also for prestige, respect, esteem, and recognition (Delhey et al., 2022; Paskov et al.,

2017; Ridgeway, 2014).² Status seeking can be consciously pursued as a life goal, but it can also exist unconsciously as a state of latent readiness, which is why we speak of status seeking as a disposition (similarly see Delhey et al., 2022; Schneickert et al., 2024). Research shows that status seeking is particularly pronounced in males, migrants, and the higher educated and that it decreases with age (Delhey et al., 2022; Paskov et al., 2017; Rözer et al., 2022; Schneickert et al., 2024). In current social science research, status seeking is viewed rather critically as an orientation that focuses individuals too strongly on the selfish pursuit of money, power and success, which can have negative individual and social consequences (Wilkinson & Pickett 2010, 2018). The Spirit Level Theory established a link between income inequality and social problems that is thought to be mediated through stress and status anxiety, especially among the middle and lower classes. Empirical evidence on this relationship has, however, produced ambivalent results (Delhey et al., 2017; Paskov et al., 2017; Rözer et al., 2022). While some studies (Delhey et al., 2017) confirm that status stress has a social gradient and affects the lower classes more strongly, Paskov et al. (2017) show that high income inequality promotes “giving up” and dropping out of the status race (see also Rözer et al., 2022 on this question with regard to materialistic orientations). Notwithstanding these findings, it seems appropriate for this paper to assume that if people are very ambitious, they are likely to experience more stress, invest more time in their careers, and may experience more role conflicts between professional and family expectations. To our knowledge, this connection between status seeking and conflict at the family level has not yet been investigated in the framework of Spirit Level Theory. In family sociology, such conflicts between work and family are referred to as *work-to-family conflicts* (WFC).³ The literature commonly distinguishes between two dimensions of WFC: (a) time-based WFC, meaning that the reconciliation of work and family life does not succeed because job demands are too time consuming and prevent family demands from being fulfilled due to scarce time resources; and (b) strain-based WFC, that is, a conflict that occurs due to conflicting role expectations (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Steiber, 2009).

² This deviates somewhat from the classical understanding in the tradition of Weber (1978 [1918]), but it is in line with a general understanding and sociological description (see, for example, Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]; Lenski, 1966; Packard, 1959).

³ The counterpart—family-to-work conflicts (FWC)—is defined as a role conflict in which family life interferes with work. The study at hand focuses on WFC because the literature on status anxiety suggests exactly this direction of interference, and studies have repeatedly shown that in most cultures, WFC is more prevalent and has stronger effects on individuals' lives than FWC (Aycan, 2008; Drummond et al., 2016; Lidwall et al., 2009).

Because adult life is mainly determined by the two spheres of family and work, a broad body of literature has addressed the consequences of WFC. Reimann et al. (2022) synthesized that the family is both the source of conflict and the provider of resources to mitigate or resolve conflict in a systematic literature review. Accordingly, it is likely that conflicts affecting these central life domains are particularly central to the quality of a person's life and well-being. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that WFC has frequently been found to be a strong predictor of negative outcomes, particularly in the health domain: WFC is related to mental health problems (Brieger et al., 2023; Laaksonen et al., 2009; Visser et al., 2024), general health deterioration (Borgmann et al., 2019a, 2019b), increased sick leave from work in the Swedish adult population (Lidwall et al., 2009), insomnia (Yang et al., 2018), and even discourages people from making necessary visits to the doctor (Christiaens & Bracke, 2014).

Stress and pressure are major factors associated with the development and reinforcement of WFC that further negatively impact the family sphere. Recent research has shown negative consequences for overall family life and partnership (Fellows et al., 2015), fertility decisions (Begall & Mills, 2011) and overall quality of life (Hagqvist et al., 2016). WFC has been argued to be one of the main reasons better jobs do not make a more significant contribution to overall well-being (Boye, 2009). In a comparative study of European countries, Boye (2009) showed that WFC dampens the positive effect of paid working hours on well-being for parents, and especially for men; she concludes that individual factors are more relevant than institutional factors for the association between time-use and well-being.

Thus, following the theoretical link between status seeking and WFC as well as the empirical evidence, we suggest that individual-level *status seeking is related to higher levels of work-family conflict (H1)*.

Thus far, research has mainly focused on the negative consequences of WFC for individual and family well-being and less on the determinants of WFC itself. One of the key risk factors that has been identified is job characteristics: bad working conditions, high job demands and work pressure, low job autonomy, and job insecurity have repeatedly been shown to predict higher levels of WFC (Allen et al., 2020; Annink et al., 2016; Bainbridge et al., 2021; Boye, 2009; Finstad et al., 2024; Masuda et al., 2019; Steiber, 2009; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). On the one hand, working jobs that require especially high skill levels, working in low-skilled jobs, being self-employed, and working nonstandard or very high amounts of working hours were associated with higher levels of WFC all over Europe (Bozzon & Murgia, 2021; Steiber, 2009; Taiji & Mills, 2019; Tunlid, 2020; Wielers et al., 2013). On the other hand, better working conditions, such as more job

control and higher personal work commitment, are related to lower levels of WFC (Grönlund, 2007; Tunlid, 2020).

The association between working conditions and WFC differs by gender: while women tend to use their control over working hours to achieve a better work–life balance, men tend to use these arrangements to increase their work commitment, thereby enhancing their perceived conflict, especially when working conditions are unpredictable and irregular (Hofäcker & König, 2013). Not surprisingly, family demands, such as care responsibilities and higher hours of household chores, have been shown to serve as the second key driver of WFC (Boye, 2009; Masuda et al., 2019; Reimann et al., 2022). Although care responsibilities increase WFC in both men and women (Remery & Schippers, 2019), mothers and, especially, single mothers have been shown to suffer from overtime and nonstandard working hours, and they oftentimes try to mitigate WFC by working less, that is, part-time hours (Moilanen et al., 2019; Ollo-López & Goñi-Legaz, 2017). As care responsibilities are often a shared burden in partnerships, partners' jobs, education, and the number of children in the household can either attenuate or amplify WFC in couples (Notten et al., 2017). Along this line, research has shown that institutional childcare lowers WFC to some extent but only for less educated mothers, whereas it increases conflict for the highly educated (Tunlid, 2020).

Finally, the literature has identified a number of sociodemographic characteristics that are associated with WFC: being male, belonging to a higher social class, and having higher income serve as protective factors (Boye, 2009; Remery & Schippers, 2019), while being female, having a higher number of children, living with small children in the household, and being higher educated are associated with higher levels of WFC (Grönlund, 2007; Grönlund & Öun, 2010; Notten et al., 2017; Steiber, 2009; Tunlid, 2020) because these characteristics directly and indirectly determine the job type and the use of institutional care of individuals.

To our knowledge, these factors have not yet been studied in relation to personal dispositions, such as status seeking (but see for example Miller et al., 2022 on associations between personality traits and WFC and Brenning et al., 2024 on perfectionistic concerns). Since status seeking is expressed differently in different social groups, it could also affect WFC differently. Likewise, the disposition to be ambitious could lead to the choice of certain professions with specific (competitive) requirement profiles. Therefore, we consider various assumptions about the relationships to be plausible: *The effect of status seeking on WFC is stable and independent from sociodemographic and job characteristics (H2); the effect of status seeking on work-family conflict significantly diminishes when considering job characteristics (H3)*.

The body of literature on WFC consists mainly of single-country studies. Cross-country comparisons and the identification of relevant contextual factors that promote WFC are scarce but have gained increasing attention in recent years. However, country-specific mechanisms remain vastly underexplored and results are inconclusive. One prominent country-level factor that has been studied more extensively is family policies. The availability of childcare for small children (0–3) seems to overall decrease WFC (Notten et al., 2017; Steiber, 2009; Tunlid, 2020), but the strength of the effects is often weak or the findings are ambivalent (Remery & Schippers, 2019; Spector et al., 2007). Further, family labor policies seem to play an important role (Boye, 2009), though the findings here are inconclusive as well. Hagqvist et al. (2016) found that WFC is less pronounced in countries where there is more gender equality, gender equal norms, and more women are working (Bainbridge et al., 2021; Hagqvist et al., 2016; Remery & Schippers, 2019; Visser et al., 2024), but other studies have shown that men take on less caregiving in more equal societies (Bainbridge et al., 2021). Grönlund and Öun (2010) found that WFC is higher where dual-earner policies are prevalent as compared to countries where traditional, gendered, family policies are encouraged. Along this line, parental leave policies have been shown to decrease WFC (Borgmann et al., 2019a), in particular, for low-educated mothers (Tunlid, 2020). Following these findings, we hypothesize that country-level conditions that facilitate work and family reconciliation enable status seekers to be ambitious and pursue their careers while simultaneously have a balanced work-family life; thus, our fourth hypothesis reads as: *country-level conditions that facilitate work and family reconciliation dampen the effect of status seeking on work-family conflicts (H4)*.

Status seeking is not only viewed more negatively in contemporary sociology than in the past, but there is also empirical evidence that status seeking in fact tends to decline in socioeconomically well-developed societies. A cultural modernization process and a fundamental shift in values toward post-material values of self-actualization are considered to be responsible for this (Delhey et al., 2022; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Schneickert et al., 2024). Accordingly, we expect it to be less-and-less self-evident and also less socially appreciated in richer societies to put the family on hold in favor of the career. If people in these societies are nevertheless very ambitious, this could result in increased WFC (Allen et al., 2015). It can also be assumed that richer societies are more individualistic, and people live more mobile lives with less family involvement. This means that less support for informal childcare is available, for example, from grandparents. Moreover, gender roles are expected to be more progressive and more oriented toward equality in societies with higher socioeconomic development (Edlund, 2007). All of these expectations can potentially generate conflict if they encounter a

reality that does not meet these demands, that is, a job that requires priority and the fullest commitment. It can also be assumed that people in rich societies earn more on average. While this is positive in principle because it increases the available resources (which can, for example, be used for paid care work), more income can also lead to more conflicts (Rubenstein et al., 2022). Following these considerations, we assume that *status seeking is lower on average in rich countries, but the association between status seeking and work-family conflict is stronger (H5)*.

Regarding overall inequality, it could be assumed that capitalist societies that are increasingly competitively oriented toward status and success and plagued by status fears should put particular pressure on families. This could be a mechanism in the translation of inequality into social problems, as the Spirit Level Theory (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2010) assumes. This theoretical argument is supported by the studies on WFC, as this strand of research suggests that the balance between work and family reacts very sensitively to stress and strain. Accordingly, we expect that the relationship between status seeking and WFC is even more pronounced in unequal societies than it is in more egalitarian societies: *income inequality is positively related to status seeking and work-family conflicts (H6)*.

Methods

Data

We used data from wave 5 of the European Social Survey (ESS 2010). The ESS has biannually collected population-representative data for individuals aged 15 and older in more than 30 countries since 2002. The ESS employs random sampling strategies and collects data using computer assisted or pen and paper interviews that are administered by trained interviewers (for a detailed country-specific overview of sampling strategies and data collection methods see ESS, 2018).⁴

We restricted the ESS sample to respondents from the working age population (18–65 years) who are in paid work and have a partner or a partner and children. After excluding by listwise deletion 541 cases with missing values (3.5%), the final estimation sample comprised 15,009 individuals from 26 (mostly) European societies. The country samples ranged from 358 in Cyprus to 1014 in Germany (see Table 5 in the appendix). For all individual-level pooled analyses, we constructed an equivalency weight so that each of the 26 countries were included with the same sample size. We did

⁴ Comprehensive information on the development of the core and rotating module questionnaires can be found here: <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/methodology/ess-methodology/source-questionnaire/source-questionnaire-development>

not use other weighting strategies in the analyses because the sample was restricted to respondents at risk of experiencing work-family conflict and is, therefore, not representative of the population as a whole. The study sample consists of 47% women, 10% migrants, 31% with high education, and 65% parents (see Table 2).

Although the data are somewhat dated, the 2010 ESS is exceptionally suitable for our project because to our knowledge, it is the only available dataset that includes cross-country comparative information on work-family conflicts as well as items that allow us to construct individual-level dispositions like status seeking (see Table 5 in the Appendix).

Measures

Work-Family Conflict

Our central dependent variable was an index of work-family conflict (WFC, $\alpha=0.75$; for a comprehensive factor analysis see Table 7 in the Appendix) that was comprised of four items indicating: (1) how often respondents' jobs prevent them from spending time with their family; (2) how often respondents' partners and families are "fed up with the pressure" caused by respondents' jobs; (3) how often respondents worry about work when not working; and (4) how often respondents are too tired after work to enjoy things they like to do at home on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 "Never" to 5 "Always". Item 1 measures the time-based WFC dimension, whereas items 2–4 concern the strain-based WFC dimension. We constructed an unweighted mean index using Stata's row mean command, with higher values on the index indicating higher conflict between work and family.

Status Seeking

The status seeking index (SSI, $\alpha=0.73$; for a comprehensive factor analysis see Table 8 in the Appendix) was constructed using four items from the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVC; Schwartz 2012; for a similar construction, see Delhey et al., 2022; Paskov et al., 2017; Schneickert et al., 2024). Respondents were asked to rate how much they are similar to a hypothetical person based on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 "Not at all like me" to 6 "Very much like me". The exact wording of each statement can be found in Table 1. Again, we constructed a row mean score, with a higher score indicating higher status seeking.

Sociodemographic Variables

All analyses included sociodemographic characteristics that emerged relevant to either status seeking or work-family conflict in the literature: gender (binary), age in years, domicile (rural versus urban) and a dummy variable

Table 1 Operationalization of status seeking

1	It is important to her/him to be rich She/He wants to have a lot of money and expensive things
2	It's important to her/him to show her abilities She/He wants people to admire what she/he does
3	Being very successful is important to her/him She/He hopes people will recognize her/his achievements
4	It is important to her/him to get respect from others She/He wants people to do what she/he says

indicating whether respondents are first-generation migrants. For social position, we used a dummy variable indicating a high educational level (tertiary education, codes 6 and 7 on the international standard classification of education) a categorical variable with equivalized quartiles of household income (including a category for no income information) and household occupational class position based on Oesch's (2006a, 2006b) 5-category scheme (skilled worker, higher-grade service class, lower-grade service class, small business owner and unskilled worker).

Working Conditions

Working conditions included the number of working hours per week, and a dummy variable indicating whether respondents work nonstandard hours, including working evening and night shifts, on weekends, and regularly work overtime.

Family Characteristics

Family characteristics included the partners' working hours, number of children living in the household, and whether a child below the age of nine years lives in the household.

Macro-Level Indicators

The analyses included an index of conditions for work and family reconciliation on the national level, as suggested by Matysiak and Węziak-Białowolska (2016). This index was based on data from 2010 and captured three distinct dimensions of policies: family policies (childcare services, childcare leave), labor market structure (flexibility of working hours, barriers to labor market entry) and gender norms. It had a potential range from 0 (worst condition for work and family reconciliation) to 100 (best conditions for work and family reconciliation). For national wealth, we used the 2009 Gross Domestic Product per capita in purchasing power parity in international dollars from the World Bank (2022). Finally, we included income inequality in 2009 in the analyses, measured as the Gini coefficient. The Gini coefficient ranges from 0 (perfect income equality) to 1 (perfect income inequality);

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for the pooled sample (n = 15,009)

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Work-to-family conflict	2.69	0.78	1	5
Status seeking index	3.78	0.98	1	6
Working hours				
Part-time	0.20	0.40	0	1
Full-time	0.50	0.50	0	1
Overtime	0.25	0.43	0	1
No information	0.05	0.21	0	1
Working hours partner				
Not employed	0.22	0.42	0	1
Part-time	0.16	0.36	0	1
Full-time	0.41	0.49	0	1
Overtime	0.14	0.35	0	1
No information	0.07	0.25	0	1
Regularity of nonstandard working hours	2.62	1.23	1	5
Number of children in household				
No child	0.35	0.48	0	1
1 child	0.27	0.44	0	1
2 children	0.28	0.45	0	1
3 children and more	0.10	0.31	0	1
Young child living in the household (1 = yes)	0.33	0.47	0	1
Female	0.47	0.50	0	1
Educational level (1 = highly educated)	0.31	0.46	0	1
Migration background (1 = yes)	0.10	0.30	0	1
Class position				
Higher-grade service class	0.22	0.41	0	1
Lower-grade service class	0.20	0.40	0	1
Small business owner	0.13	0.33	0	1
Skilled worker	0.31	0.46	0	1
Unskilled worker	0.14	0.35	0	1
Age in years	44.13	10.78	18	86
Age in years ²	2064.05	967.08	324	7396
Place of residence (rural = 1)	0.36	0.48	0	1
Income quartiles				
First	0.22	0.41	0	1
Second	0.21	0.41	0	1
Third	0.22	0.41	0	1
Fourth	0.19	0.39	0	1
No information	0.17	0.37	0	1
GDP	30.87	11.63	8.56	55.36
Gini	29.22	3.70	24.2	37.4
Index of conditions for work and family reconciliation	45.92	12.40	26.8	72.4

for better readability, the coefficient was multiplied by 100. The descriptive information for all indicators of the pooled sample can be found in Table 2; a comprehensive, country-specific summary of the macro-level indicators can be found in Table 5 in the Appendix.

Analytical Strategy

Our analyses were conducted in three consecutive steps. We first employed step-wise, individual-level, country-pooled OLS regression analysis of: (1) work-family conflict on status seeking, referred to as the base model; (2) work-family conflict on status seeking under the control of relevant sociodemographic characteristics, referred to as the

socio-demography model; (3) work-family conflict on status seeking under the control of relevant work characteristics, referred to as the job model; and (4) work-family conflict on status seeking under the control of relevant family and work characteristics, referred to as the full model. Second, we estimated the same models in single-country regressions and compared the b-coefficients of the base and the full model by countries to comprehensively test the impact of status seeking on work-family conflicts (H1–H3). In the third step, we provided country-level correlation analysis to investigate the association between the effect of status seeking on work-family conflicts on the individual level—that is, the b-coefficient obtained from the country-level full models—and societal conditions in terms of conditions for work and family reconciliation (H4), societal wealth (H5), and income inequality (H6).

Findings

First, we analyzed the relationship between status seeking and work-family conflict with country-pooled regression analyses (Table 3). According to the base model (M1), higher status seeking is associated with higher WFC and explains about 4% of the variance in WFC.

The relationship between SSI and WFC remains significant and almost unchanged in its effect size when controlling the effect for sociodemographic characteristics (M2). Independently, a higher number of children is associated with more conflict; likewise, women experience less work-family conflict than men, whereas higher education dampens WFC in the country-pooled sample. Interestingly, in the sociodemographics model, we initially found only weak and directionally indistinct effects of income.

When controlling for job characteristics (M3)—own and partner's working hours, own nonstandard working hours, and the household's occupational class—the explanatory power of the model strongly increased to 19%. The effect of SSI on WFC is halved in the job model but remains statistically significant. This suggests that part of the effect of status seeking is due to the fact that status seekers are more likely to choose jobs with a more demanding profile and less standardized working conditions.

Finally, the full model explains only slightly more variance than the working conditions model, about 20% in total. Compared to the base model, the effect of SSI on WFC remains about halved, but it is statistically significant, meaning that the individual status seeking disposition is associated with higher WFC even when a large number of other factors are considered.

Two changes in the full model (M4) compared to the sociodemographics model (M2) and the working conditions model (M3) are worth mentioning. First, the effect of gender

(female) is reversed such that females experience more WFC in the full model. Additional analyses (not reported) show that this reversal is mainly due to the effects of women's lower working hours and women more regularly working nonstandard hours. For income, we find an interesting suppressor effect: the effects of income become stronger when working conditions are held constant—all higher income quartiles show less WFC compared to the lowest one in the full model. Additional descriptive analyses (not reported) show that this is because nonstandard working hours are more prevalent with higher income groups, while at the same time, the share of unemployed partners is highest in the lowest income quartile, and unemployed partners are, in fact, associated with higher WFC. Thus, higher household income may help to mitigate WFC, but as it seems to be associated with more stressful jobs, this masks its effect: occupational class, nonstandard working hours, and partners' working hours conceal that income in itself helps to attenuate WFC.

Up to this point, the analysis has been of the pooled sample of all Europeans across all countries included in the ESS 2010. In order to examine the between-country differences in detail, we now change perspective and turn our attention to cross-country comparisons. Figure 1 compares the effects (unstandardized b-coefficients) of SSI on WFC in the base model and in the full model by single-country regressions (for full regression tables see Table 6 in the Appendix).

Overall, we find significant relations between SSI and WFC in the base model (filled bubbles in dark blue) in 15 of the 26 countries that were included in the analysis. Though the country pattern is not clear-cut, it seems that status seeking impacts WFC especially in richer (Northern and Western European) countries and tends to be unrelated in less wealthy Southern and Eastern European countries. Status seeking is related to higher levels of work-family conflict in the majority of countries; we only found a clearly negative effect of SSI on WFC for Poland (and in Croatia and Slovenia, but effects were not significant), which suggests that being very ambitious in Poland is actually associated with fewer problems in the family.

When controlling for sociodemographic characteristics and job characteristics in the full model, the effect of SSI remains significant in seven countries (filled bubbles in light blue): Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, Russia, Germany, and Poland (France only becomes significant in the full model). In the first six countries, SSI and WFC are robustly and positively associated—the higher respondents scored on the status seeking index, the more WFC they experienced; the negative effect of SSI on WFC in Poland persists. In Denmark and Czechia, the SSI-coefficient change is particularly substantial. While the effect of SSI on WFC is strong and significant in the base model, it is very small and insignificant in the full model. Additional analyses show that the relationship between

Table 3 Stepwise country-pooled regression of work-family conflict on status seeking index

	Base	Socio-Demography	Job	Full
DV: Work-family conflicts (WFC)	M1	M2	M3	M4
Status seeking index (SSI)	0.065***	0.055***	0.033***	0.036***
Number of children in household				
No child (ref.)				
1 child		0.030		0.016
2 children		0.091***		0.062***
3 children and more		0.080**		0.033
Young child living in the household (1 = yes)		0.023		0.044**
Female		− 0.057***		0.119***
Educational level (1 = highly educated)		0.109***		0.017
Migration background (1 = yes)		0.022		0.036
Age in years		0.024***		0.022***
Age in years ²		− 0.000***		− 0.000***
Place of residence (rural = 1)		− 0.015		− 0.033**
Income quartiles				
First (ref.)				
Second		− 0.038*		− 0.064***
Third		− 0.021		− 0.071***
Fourth		0.033		− 0.049*
No information		0.002		− 0.071***
Working hours				
Part-time			− 0.130***	− 0.165***
Full-time (ref.)				
Overtime			0.139***	0.155***
No information			0.015	0.021
Working hours partner				
Not employed			0.041**	0.070***
Part-time			− 0.002	0.028
Overtime			0.012	− 0.018
Full-time (ref.)				
No information			0.083**	0.075**
Regularity of nonstandard working hours			0.198***	0.201***
Class position (Oesch 5)				
Higher-grade service class			0.198***	0.193***
Lower-grade service class			0.166***	0.151***
Small business owner			0.118***	0.129***
Skilled worker (ref.)				
Unskilled worker			− 0.061***	− 0.068***
Country	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constant	2.454***	1.931***	1.956***	1.413***
N	15,009	15,009	15,009	15,009
Adj. R-squared	0.041	0.053	0.194	0.204

*p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

SSI and WFC only holds in the base model and immediately subsides under the control of job or sociodemographic characteristics in both countries (and in Cyprus). This suggests that SSI is especially prevalent in certain sociodemographic groups in these countries and that SSI might be mediated by certain working conditions—that, again, might be dependent on particular

sociodemographics. In Sweden, Slovakia, Norway, and Estonia, SSI is significantly associated with WFC when controlling for sociodemographic characteristics but not when controlling for working conditions. Overall, the results from the full model are in line with the base model: the effect prevails and is strongest in richer, Northern European countries, while the group of

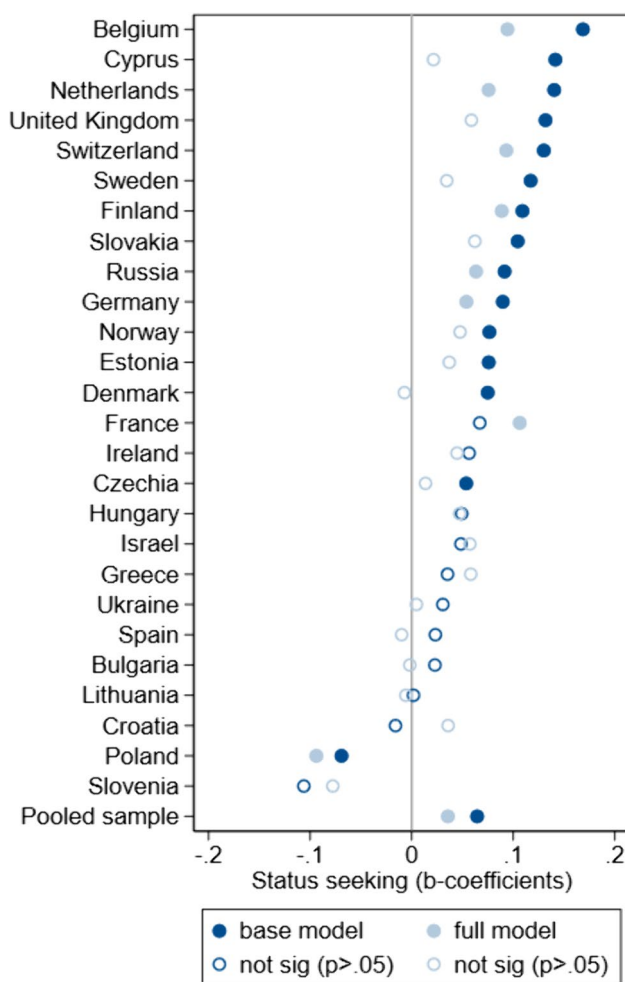


Fig. 1 Effects of status seeking on work family conflict

countries where SSI becomes insignificant (unfilled bubbles) is made up of a mixture of Northern, Eastern, and Southern European countries.

Finally, we examine the extent to which the relation between status seeking and work-family conflict is related to country characteristics. Table 4 shows correlations between the index of conditions for work and family reconciliation, national wealth (GDP), coefficient of income inequality (Gini), work-family conflict (WFC), status seeking (SSI), and the unstandardized b-coefficients (association between SSI and WFC) from the full models (with all control variables).

Table 4 shows that, in countries where the conditions for work and family reconciliation are overall better, status seeking is lower, and the association between SSI and WFC (b-coefficients) is slightly weaker ($r = -0.153$) but statistically nonsignificant. Interestingly, national wealth (GDP) is negatively associated with both work-family conflict (WFC) and status seeking (SSI) but positively with the b-coefficients. Thus, being a status seeker has particularly detrimental effects on families in wealthier countries where status seeking and work-family conflicts are overall lower. In contrast, in more unequal societies (Gini coefficient of income), both WFC (but nonsignificant) and SSI (significant) are higher, but income inequality is not associated with the strength of association between SSI and WFC.

Discussion

This paper was motivated by the lack of research concerning a prominent transmission mechanism of social inequality into individuals' family lives: status seeking and work-family conflicts. Departing from theoretical arguments proposed in Spirit Level Theory (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010, 2018), we hypothesized that status seeking, that is, the individual disposition to strive for wealth, prestige, and success, is associated with the prevalence of work-family conflicts and that this association differs between countries due to differences in policies for work-family reconciliation, national wealth, and income inequality. The current body of literature suggests that work-family conflicts are a wide-spread problem in adults' lives, but much of the recent research has focused on outcomes that follow WFC as well as working conditions that cause WFC (for an overview, see Reimann et al., 2022). However, individual-level dispositions, such as status seeking, have not been considered as determinants of WFC so far, especially not in cross-country comparisons. To fill this gap, we employed data from the fifth round of the European Social Survey that covered more than 15,000 individuals from 26 European societies at working ages who live in partnerships or partnerships with children to (a) unveil the impact of status seeking on WFC and (b) explore whether the association differs between countries.

Table 4 Correlation between WFC, SSI, b-coefficients and macro societal factors

	WFC	SSI	Full Model
Conditions for work and family reconciliation	− 0.066	− 0.424*	− 0.153
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	− 0.608**	− 0.544**	0.425*
Coefficient of income inequality (Gini)	0.173	0.392*	0.008

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Information for Family Policy Index only available for 22 of the 26 countries

In general, our analyses show that status seeking is related to higher levels of WFC. When controlling for job characteristics, the effect of SSI on WFC is remarkably smaller but remains statistically significant, suggesting that part of the effect of status seeking is due to the fact that status seekers are more likely to choose jobs with a more demanding profile and less standardized working conditions. In other words, individuals' working conditions might be a potential mediating mechanism within this association: status seeking is associated with time-consuming and stressful jobs that, in turn, cause WFC. These findings are in line with a number of studies that show working conditions to be the most crucial determinants of WFC (e.g., Allen et al., 2020; Annink et al., 2016; Masuda et al., 2019; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020) but adds evidence that some of the differences in the effect of working conditions on WFC may result from individual dispositional differences in status seeking.

Moreover, we find that the effect of status seeking on WFC differs vastly between countries. In wealthier, Northern European countries, the effect is particularly robust whereas the effect is less robust in a number of Eastern, and Southern European countries. It seems counterintuitive that status seeking has a particularly negative effect on WFC in rich countries where the reconciliation of family and work is on average at a more advanced stage (see Edlund, 2007 on the role of national wealth and the role of family regimes for WFC), and where WFC and status seeking are overall low. This may support findings on the individual level, that show that higher incomes increase—and not decrease—WFC (see Rubenstein et al., 2022). The correlational country-level analyses also showed that national wealth (GDP) but not income inequality (Gini) impact the relationship between SSI and WFC. The dominant role of national wealth over income inequality is, however, a recurrent finding in Spirit Level Theory research (see Delhey et al., 2017; Delhey & Steckermeier, 2020).

Yet, it is surprising that the generally better developed family support policies in richer countries do not weaken the link between status seeking and WFC. We hypothesized that the negative effects of status seeking on WFC should be mitigated in richer and more equal societies with pronounced family policy programs (e.g., Bainbridge et al., 2021; Hagqvist et al., 2016; Visser et al., 2024). Our findings suggest, however, that family policies are *not* related to the association between status seeking and WFC, hinting that the policies that were in place (data from 2010) did not sufficiently relieve the care work burden of highly ambitious individuals. This result supplements findings from earlier studies that showed rather weak and ambiguous effects of family policies on WFC (e.g., Bainbridge et al., 2021; Borgmann et al., 2019a; Boye, 2009; Grönlund & Öun, 2010; Remery & Schippers, 2019).

Limitations & Future Research

It goes without saying that our study is not without limitations: First, our data were collected in 2010. Since then, a number of relevant changes in family policies and cultural frameworks of work and family attitudes as well as crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic may have influenced the relation between SSI and WFC. More current data could provide valuable insights and might enable policymakers to implement policies that relieve family burdens. Second, the effect sizes in the models are rather weak. Though small effect sizes are common in WFC research (see Fellows et al., 2015; Lidwall et al., 2009), it would be interesting to explicitly test the mediation mechanisms via working conditions that are suggested by our comparative findings to determine whether status seekers indeed self-select themselves into WFC by their job choices. Along this line, it remains an open empirical question how the dispositional structure of the partner factors in. It could be assumed that having a partner who is also status-oriented could either lead to even stronger conflicts or possibly even result in less WFC due to greater agreement on the importance of work and career. Finally, it would produce valuable insights for researchers and policymakers to explicitly test the moderation effect of societal circumstances that we suspect exists based on our correlational analyses with a more—and especially more diverse—set of countries. Because the context factors considered in this study were only partially explaining differences in the relationship between SSI and WFC, it will be necessary to explore how other country-level characteristics, such as societal values in terms of familism, collectivism, marital role expectations, or traditional gender roles, impact and potentially mediate how individual dispositions are perceived and evaluated within the family—and thus the extent to which they generate conflict or not.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study for the first time showed the negative effects of status seeking on work-family conflicts in 26 countries. These findings have important implications for policy makers. In terms of economic policy, our findings are relevant because they could be a piece of the puzzle explaining the decreasing orientation toward performance and success in Western affluent societies (Schneickert et al., 2024). The fact that the pursuit of status has such a bad reputation today, both publicly and in the social sciences, is due to the fact that overly ambitious behavior can be an expression of excessive competitive orientation in capitalist societies (James, 2008). However, it should not be forgotten that very ambitious people also significantly contribute to the prosperity of

societies. Therefore, societies have an interest in ensuring that ambitious behavior is not too disadvantaged, for example, by starting a family. Why invest in career success and thus jeopardize family harmony if status seeking is valued less and less in society? If such an attitude were to actually prevail, it would systematically undermine the prosperity of the countries in which this cultural modernization process is actually based, but it could also lead to happier families. Our results suggest that societies greatly vary in their success in reconciling status seeking and a peaceful family life. Thus, social conditions should be created that prevent status-oriented and ambitious people from being exposed to unmanageable WFC and, thus, concluding that it is not worth the effort, particularly in Northern and Western European countries where status seeking contributes particularly strongly to having WFC.

Last but not least, research like our study can also contribute to people's better self-assessment, ideally even before starting a family or choosing a job. For example, our findings suggest that individuals who are ambitious and clearly strive for status should give more thought to the compatibility of family and career and, in the event of starting a family, should look early on into options for childcare, household help, and family support—especially in rich and individualistic societies with a poorly developed childcare infrastructure and traditional role models.

Appendix

See Tables 5, 6, 7, 8.

Table 5 Descriptive statistics by country

	n	Status Seeking Index	SD	Work-Family Conflict	SD	GDP	Gini	Index of conditions for work and family reconciliation
Belgium	600	3.6	0.8	2.7	0.8	37.7	26.6	54.5
Bulgaria	619	4.4	0.8	2.8	0.7	14.2	33.6	47.5
Croatia	361	4.0	0.9	2.8	0.7	20.0	28.8	NA
Cyprus	358	4.2	1.0	2.6	0.9	33.4	29.8	33.2
Czechia	711	3.9	1.0	2.9	0.7	27.9	25.3	31.2
Denmark	645	3.5	0.9	2.5	0.8	40.3	24.6	66.0
Estonia	559	3.4	0.9	2.8	0.7	20.5	31.6	51.6
Finland	581	3.2	0.9	2.8	0.6	38.0	25.2	62.0
France	532	3.0	0.9	2.8	0.8	34.7	30.2	51.2
Germany	1014	3.6	0.9	2.8	0.7	36.8	28.6	38.4
Great Britain	702	3.7	0.9	2.7	0.9	35.2	32.9	45.5
Greece	599	4.4	0.9	3.0	0.9	27.9	32.6	26.8
Hungary	456	4.1	1.0	2.6	0.8	20.7	27.1	43.1
Ireland	512	3.8	1.0	2.3	0.9	43.2	30.4	44.4
Israel	675	4.3	0.9	2.6	0.9	28.8	37.4	NA
Lithuania	347	3.8	1.0	2.8	0.8	20.1	33.6	38.4
Netherlands	624	3.6	0.8	2.5	0.7	44.6	25.8	46.8
Norway	672	3.2	0.8	2.5	0.6	55.4	24.5	64.5
Poland	594	4.0	0.9	2.7	0.8	19.2	31.1	33.6
Russia	782	4.3	0.9	2.8	0.8	19.4	34.5	NA
Slovakia	504	4.1	0.9	2.9	0.7	23.1	25.4	32.0
Slovenia	389	4.2	0.8	2.6	0.8	27.5	24.2	49.9
Spain	606	3.4	0.9	2.6	0.7	31.7	33.3	43.4
Sweden	587	3.1	0.9	2.7	0.7	40.3	25.6	72.4
Switzerland	578	3.8	0.9	2.5	0.7	53.4	29.8	33.8
Ukraine	402	3.9	1.1	2.8	0.8	8.6	27.3	NA
Total	15,009	3.8	1.0	2.7	0.8			

Weighted with sample size equalizing weight

Table 6 Single country regressions of work-to-family-conflict on status seeking index

	Belgium		Bulgaria		Switzerland		Cyprus		Czechia		Germany	
	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full
Status seeking index	0.169***	0.095***	0.023	– 0.002	0.130***	0.093***	0.141**	0.022	0.054*	0.013	0.090***	0.054*
Working hours (ref.: full-time)												
Part-time		– 0.186*		– 0.421***		– 0.214*		– 0.184		– 0.024		– 0.260***
Overtime		0.245**		0.195*		0.023		0.451**		0.044		0.166**
No information		– 0.052		0.188		0.118		0.225		0.066		0.093
Working hours partner (ref.: full-time)												
Not employed		– 0.087		0.079		0.212*		0.147		– 0.076		0.07
Part-time		– 0.044		– 0.038		0.089		0.174		– 0.09		– 0.190**
Overtime		– 0.109		– 0.086		– 0.011		0.028		– 0.215**		– 0.031
No information		0.414*		0.029		0.044		0.294		– 0.137		– 0.277
Regularity of nonstandard working hours		0.156***		0.112***		0.116***		0.161***		0.250***		0.170***
Number of children in household (ref.: no child)												
1 child		0.006		– 0.027		– 0.082		– 0.003		0.13		0.093
2 children		0.075		0.047		– 0.023		0.084		0.145*		– 0.023
3 children and more		0.231*		– 0.258		– 0.132		0.315		0.300*		0.12
Young child living in the household (1 = yes)		0.001		0.117		0.022		– 0.236		– 0.068		– 0.002
Female		0.186**		0.075		0.009		0.271**		0.111*		0.053
Educational level (1 = highly educated)		0.028		0.018		0.096		– 0.212		0.101		– 0.034
Migration background (1 = yes)		0.072		– 0.471		0.056		– 0.079		0.027		0.059
Class position (ref.: skilled worker)												
Higher-grade service class		0.255**		0.240*		0.172		0.201		0.086		0.072
Lower-grade service class		0.004		0.237*		0.183*		0.032		0.121		0.101
Small business owner		– 0.06		0.396***		0.029		– 0.04		0.172*		– 0.102
Unskilled worker		– 0.15		0.114		– 0.281*		– 0.448**		– 0.055		– 0.078
Age in years		– 0.004		0.069**		0.036		0.066		– 0.002		0.036*
Age in years ²				– 0.001**		– 0.000*		– 0.001*		– 0.000*		– 0.000*
Place of residence (rural = 1)		– 0.03		– 0.129		– 0.188**		– 0.176		– 0.01		0.066
Income quartiles (ref.: first)												
Second		– 0.117		0.118		0.129		– 0.164		– 0.129		– 0.148*
Third		– 0.061		0.017		0.041		– 0.323*		– 0.131		– 0.166*
Fourth		– 0.038		– 0.001		0.031		– 0.147		– 0.137		– 0.182*
No information		– 0.013		– 0.086		0.068		– 0.007		0.032		– 0.175*

Table 6 (continued)

	Belgium		Bulgaria		Switzerland		Cyprus		Czechia		Germany	
	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full
Constant	2.075***	2.025***	2.676***	0.54	2.034***	1.167*	1.996***	0.928	2.650***	2.156***	2.446***	1.416***
N	600	600	619	619	578	578	358	358	711	711	1014	1014
Adj. R-squared	0.032	0.204	−0.001	0.149	0.023	0.161	0.021	0.218	0.004	0.2	0.01	0.162
Denmark												
Estonia												
Finland												
France												
Great Britain												
Status seeking index	0.075*	−0.007	0.076*	0.036	0.023	−0.008	0.109***	0.089**	0.067	0.109**	0.132***	0.059
Working hours (ref.: full-time)												
Part-time		−0.199**		−0.138		−0.251***		−0.214**		−0.264***		−0.228**
Overtime		0.298***		0.163*		0.144		0.059		0.259*		0.268***
No information		0.143		−0.136		−0.236		0.272		−0.433		−0.005
Working hours partner (ref.: full-time)												
Not employed		−0.015		0.043		0.008		0.125		0.081		0.087
Part-time		0.089		−0.004		0.092		−0.047		−0.007		0.208**
Overtime		0.161		−0.017		−0.028		−0.071		0.043		−0.106
No information		0.136		0.316		0.017		0.076		−0.303		0.167
Regularity of nonstandard working hours		0.211***		0.201***		0.209***		0.185***		0.187***		0.197***
Number of children in household (ref.: no child)												
1 child		−0.13		0.09		0.128		−0.004		0.113		−0.084
2 children		−0.097		0.065		0.157		−0.048		0.246*		−0.136
3 children and more		−0.135		−0.017		0.127		−0.098		0.26		−0.012
Young child living in the household (1 = yes)		0.192*		0.051		−0.077		0.087		−0.145		0.108
Female		0.248***		−0.043		0.111		0.114*		0.202**		0.069
Educational level (1 = highly educated)		0.085		0.05		−0.058		0.05		0.009		−0.081
Migration background (1 = yes)		−0.013		0.118		−0.034		−0.178		−0.034		0.073
Class position (ref.: skilled worker)												
Higher-grade service class		0.220*		0.245**		0.340***		0.151		0.266*		0.415***
Lower-grade service class		0.107		0.039		0.208*		0.074		0.16		0.578***
Small business owner		−0.126		0.05		0.198*		0.04		0.142		0.118
Unskilled worker		−0.163		−0.155*		0.052		0.079		−0.152		−0.055
Age in years		0.077***		0.003		−0.005		0.041*		0		0.036*
Age in years ²		−0.001**				−0.000*		−0.000*				−0.000*
Place of residence (rural = 1)		−0.039		−0.009		0.007		0.053		0.077		−0.094

Table 6 (continued)

	Denmark		Estonia		Spain		Finland		France		Great Britain	
	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full
b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b
Income quartiles (ref.: first)												
Second		− 0.151		− 0.088		0.006		0.032		− 0.011		− 0.193*
Third		− 0.035		− 0.156*		− 0.183*		− 0.041		− 0.057		− 0.14
Fourth		− 0.271**		− 0.177		− 0.062		− 0.16		0.044		− 0.259*
No information		− 0.098		− 0.228*		− 0.039		0.016		0.035		− 0.099
Constant	2.281***	0.12	2.583***	2.064***	2.567***	2.159***	2.434***	0.999*	2.596***	1.734***	2.223***	1.102**
N	645	645	559	559	606	606	581	581	532	532	702	702
Adj. R-squared	0.006	0.257	0.009	0.208	− 0.001	0.231	0.022	0.177	0.004	0.215	0.02	0.277
Lithuania												
Greece			Croatia									
Base			Base		Base		Base		Base		Base	
b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b
0.035	0.058	− 0.016	0.031	0.049	0.047	0.057	0.045	0.049	0.053	0.002	− 0.006	
Status seeking index												
Working hours (ref.: full-time)												
Part-time		− 0.266**	0.205		− 0.191		− 0.067		− 0.290**		0.023	
Overtime	0.051		0.128		0.119		0.355***		0.094		0.168	
No information	− 0.096		− 0.004		0.256		− 0.097		− 0.513**		0.004	
Working hours partner (ref.: full-time)												
Not employed		− 0.083	0.165		0.103		0.152		0.002		0.025	
Part-time		− 0.08	− 0.328		0.019		0.227*		0.041		0.258	
Overtime		− 0.187	− 0.078		0.124		0.223		0.111		− 0.081	
No information		− 0.474	0.212		0.177		0.353		0.231		0.001	
Regularity of nonstandard working hours	0.235***		0.193***		0.258***		0.209***		0.160***		0.167***	
Number of children in household (ref.: no child)												
1 child	0.136		0.041		− 0.01		− 0.107		− 0.086		0.008	
2 children	0.012		0.199		0.144		0.042		0.113		− 0.047	
3 children and more	0.286*		0.052		0.112		− 0.236		− 0.085		− 0.027	
Young child living in the household (1 = yes)	0.004		0.093		0.021		0.151		0.085		0	
Female	0.072		0.132		0.282***		0.282***		0.137		0.108	
Educational level (1 = highly educated)	0.043		0.103		− 0.196		0.098		0.221**		− 0.141	
Migration background (1 = yes)	0.038		− 0.174		0.111		0		0.053		0.331	
Class position (ref.: skilled worker)												
Higher-grade service class	− 0.041		0.041		0.2		0.272*		0.203		0.542***	

Table 6 (continued)

	Greece		Croatia		Hungary		Ireland		Israel		Lithuania		
	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	Base	Full	
	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	
Lower-grade service class		0.417**		0.101		0.146		0.354***		0.203*		0.229	
Small business owner		0.377***		0.585***		0.153		0.187		0.350**			
Unskilled worker		0.146		0.087		− 0.122		− 0.068		0.105		0.196	
Age in years		0.006		0.005		0.006		0.073***		− 0.003		− 0.006	
Age in years ²								− 0.001***					
Place of residence (rural = 1)		− 0.158*		− 0.004		− 0.031		− 0.149*		− 0.043		0.154	
Income quartiles (ref.: first)													
Second		− 0.192		− 0.091		− 0.198		− 0.415***		0.133		− 0.147	
Third		− 0.087		− 0.16		− 0.132		− 0.382**		0.022		− 0.098	
Fourth		− 0.01		− 0.042		− 0.153		− 0.168		0.06		− 0.11	
No information		− 0.017		− 0.053		− 0.257*		− 0.291**		− 0.082		− 0.234	
Constant	2.809***	1.730***	2.880***	1.652***	2.341***	1.352***	2.093***	− 0.103	2.384***	1.785***	2.754***	2.469***	
N	599	599	361	361	456	456	512	512	675	675	347	347	
Adj. R-squared	0	0.24	− 0.002	0.157	0.002	0.193	0.002	0.248	0.001	0.139	− 0.003	0.104	
Netherlands			Norway			Poland			Russia			Sweden	
Base			Full			Base			Full			Base	
b			b			b			b			b	
Full			Full			Full			Full			Full	
b			b			b			b			b	
Status seeking index	0.140***	0.076*	0.077*	0.047	− 0.069*	− 0.093**	0.091**	0.063*	0.117***	0.034	− 0.106	− 0.075	
Working hours (ref.: full-time)													
Part-time		− 0.083		− 0.195**		− 0.108		− 0.127		− 0.143*		0.121	
Overtime		0.234**		0.222**		0.044		0.067		0.309***		0.127	
No information		0.132		− 0.651		0.114		0.009		1.493*		0.16	
Working hours partner (ref.: full-time)													
Not employed		0.174		0.133		− 0.012		0.047		− 0.159		0.056	
Part-time		0.036		0.107		0.091		− 0.063		− 0.12		0.084	
Overtime		0.141		0.102		− 0.031		− 0.012		− 0.192*		− 0.041	
No information		0.356		0.57		0.184		0.067		− 0.066		0.081	
Regularity of nonstandard working hours		0.145***		0.217***		0.237***		0.243***		0.188***		0.213***	
Number of children in household (ref.: no child)													
1 child		− 0.11		− 0.007		0.089		0.012		− 0.018		0.115	
2 children		− 0.015		− 0.025		0.157		0.107		0.118		0.213	

Table 6 (continued)

	Netherlands			Norway			Poland			Russia			Sweden			Slovakia		
	Base		Full	Base		Full	Base		Full	Base		Full	Base		Full	Base		Full
	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b
3 children and more			– 0.148			0.063			0.003			– 0.172			0.136			0.32
Young child living in the household (1 = yes)			0.077			0.106			0.062			0.198**			– 0.02			0.077
Female			0.053			0.118*			– 0.025			0.058			0.143*			0.195*
Educational level (1 = highly educated)			– 0.04			0.102			– 0.06			0.08			– 0.098			– 0.019
Migration background (1 = yes)			0.026			0.120			0.069			0.082			– 0.036			0.04
Class position (ref.: skilled worker)																		
Higher-grade service class			0.238**			0.001			0.195*			0.149			0.206*			0.312*
Lower-grade service class			0.209**			– 0.016			0.264**			0.096			0.191*			0.225*
Small business owner			0.067			– 0.113			0.325***			0.059			– 0.014			0.206
Unskilled worker			– 0.096			– 0.039			0.099			– 0.048			– 0.083			– 0.310*
Age in years			0.038			0.002			0.005			0.008**			– 0.004			– 0.003
Age in years ²			– 0.000*															
Place of residence (rural = 1)			– 0.013			– 0.023			– 0.118			0.001			– 0.031			0.158
Income quartiles (ref.: first)																		
Second			– 0.160*			0.124			– 0.137			– 0.07			– 0.07			0.186
Third			– 0.147			0.024			– 0.034			– 0.049			– 0.068			0.262*
Fourth			– 0.207*			0.038			– 0.089			– 0.066			– 0.116			0.434**
No information			– 0.195*			– 0.059			– 0.08			– 0.089			0.361			– 0.005
Constant	1.959***	1.080*		2.256***	1.449***	3.009***	2.120***	2.411***	1.360***	2.301***	2.189***	3.027***	1.782***					
N	624	624		672	672	594	594	782	782	587	587	389	389					
Adj. R-squared	0.024	0.171		0.008	0.224	0.005	0.226	0.01	0.177	0.018	0.235	0.007	0.218					

Table 6 (continued)

	Slovakia		Ukraine	
	Base	Full	Base	Full
	b	b	b	b
Status seeking index	0.104**	0.064	0.031	0.004
Working hours (ref.: full-time)				
Part-time		– 0.118		0.083
Overtime		0.238***		– 0.092
No information		0.161		– 0.297*
Working hours partner (ref.: full-time)				
Not employed		0.182		0.041
Part-time				0.154
Overtime		– 0.132		0.066
No information		0.081		0.074
Regularity of nonstandard working hours		0.218***		0.254***
Number of children in household (ref.: no child)				
1 child		0.001		0.029
2 children		0.089		– 0.083
3 children and more		0.049		– 0.181
Young child living in the household (1 = yes)		0.014		0.115
Female		0.043		0.097
Educational level (1 = highly educated)		– 0.005		– 0.031
Migration background (1 = yes)		0.091		– 0.064
Class position (ref.: skilled worker)				
Higher-grade service class		0.186		0.195
Lower-grade service class		0.064		– 0.045
Small business owner		0.1		0.111
Unskilled worker		– 0.163*		– 0.139
Age in years		0.002		0.003
Age in years ²				
Place of residence (rural = 1)		– 0.121*		0.154
Income quartiles (ref.: first)				
Second		– 0.240*		– 0.03

Table 6 (continued)

	Slovakia		Ukraine	
	Base b	Full b	Base b	Full b
Third		– 0.124		– 0.012
Fourth		– 0.055		0.005
No information		– 0.205*		– 0.046
Constant	2.445***	1.854***	2.715***	1.886***
N	504	504	402	402
Adj. R-squared	0.015	0.244	– 0.001	0.169

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 7 Factor analysis for work-family conflict index

	Reliability	EFA ^a	CFA	Pearson correlations			
		Factor loadings	Factor loadings	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) jobs prevent spending time with family	$\alpha = 0.75$ Raykov = 0.73	0.83	0.81	1			
(2) partners and families are annoyed by stress caused by jobs		0.76	0.65	0.542***	1		
(3) worry about work when not working		0.66	0.49	0.358***	0.352***	1	
(4) too tired after work to enjoy things		0.78	0.68	0.555***	0.396***	0.378***	1

^aprincipal component analysis, varimax rotated

Table 8 Factor analysis for status seeking index

	Reliability	EFA ^a	CFA	Pearson correlations			
		Factor loadings	Factor loadings	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) important to be rich/have money	$\alpha = 0.73$ Raykov = 0.74	0.68	0.53	1			
(2) important to show abilities / be admired		0.78	0.70	0.365***	1		
(3) important to be successful / be recognized		0.81	0.76	0.403***	0.532***	1	
(4) important to get respected / other people follow		0.72	0.58	0.314***	0.408***	0.432***	1

^aprincipal component analysis, varimax rotated

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Ethics Approval Information on research ethics can be found under <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/about/research-ethics>.

Consent to Participate ESS data is anonymized survey data (non-identifiable data). For more information on participant consent see <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/about/privacy-and-data-protection>.

Consent for Publication ESS data are available without restrictions for not-for-profit purposes (see data access under <https://ess.sikt.no/en/study/fd0dc7b6-3d5a-42d4-ad46-7a78e44e3963>).

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