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**Working Paper**

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*Suggested Citation:* Bhagat, Lakshita; Kriti, Shubhra; Goli, Srinivas (2026) : Gender Ideology and Work–Family Conflict: A Global Comparative Analysis, ZBW - Leibniz Information Centre for Economics, Kiel, Hamburg

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/336248>

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# **Gender Ideology and Work–Family Conflict: A Global Comparative Analysis**

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# Gender Ideology and Work–Family Conflict: A Global Comparative Analysis

## Abstract

Reconciliation of work and family roles has become a central issue for advancing women's empowerment, gender equality, and sustainable family systems worldwide. While the previous research has examined the 'work–family interface', multi-country evidence on the link between gender ideology (GI) and work–family conflict (WFC), remains inconclusive. As GI influences occupational choice and household division of labour, this study investigates a critical question: whether individuals with traditional gender beliefs experience higher WFC than those with egalitarian views. Using data from the ISSP 2012 module 'Family and Changing Gender Roles', we find a positive association between GI scores and WFC, indicating that respondents with traditional beliefs are more likely to report WFC than those with egalitarian ideology. While the findings remain robust across multiple robustness checks, yet the magnitude of the association is far from uniform, showing clear heterogeneity across individual factors such as sex and education, as well as community contexts, including place and region of residence.

**Keywords:** Gender, Gender Ideology, Work-Family-Conflict, Household division of Labour, World

**JEL Classification:** J16; J22; J12; Z13; D13

## Introduction

Women are now part of the formal labor force worldwide more than ever, though with variations across countries. Simultaneously, men are gradually taking up and are expected to take an active role in family and domestic work (Bianchi et al., 2000; Oinas, 2018; Haines et al., 2019). As the male breadwinner-female homemaker model of family is giving way to a dual-earner model, characterised by an emphasis on equal sharing of paid and unpaid work, balancing of work and family domain presents a formidable challenge for people. This is so because demands from work and family domains often compete and lead to conflict, given limited resources like time and energy (Ademuyiwa et al., 2022). When one domain encroaches on the other, given that there is limited time availability or increased strain due to the burden of multiple gender roles, especially for females, this can lead to work to family conflict (WFC) or vice versa. There is a growing realisation and research demonstrating the negative fallouts of WFC on people's satisfaction with work, family, health consequences, and general well-being (Mullen et al., 2008; Goldscheider et al., 2015; Chandler, 2021; Olson et al., 2025). This study examines how 'work and family reconciliation' is influenced, not just by structural factors like time and resources but also by subjective notions of gender ideology (GI) such as self-awareness and realisation of individual rights. Since, GI plays a critical role in shaping an individual's attitude and behaviour towards family and work, for instance, the household division of labour and it also might shape people's experience of WFC (Davis and Greenstein, 2009). Individuals with 'egalitarian ideology' may experience less conflict than people subscribing to 'traditional GI' in balancing work and family domains, as the former attaches importance to gender equity, while the latter is inclined towards traditional gender division of labour. WFC induces negative consequences on several aspects of human

wellbeing, especially on women and children wellbeing (Greenstein, 1996; Byron, 2005; Mullen et al., 2008; Minnotte et al., 2013; Adams & Golsch, 2022).

Despite a substantial body of scholarship on the ‘work-family interface’, the empirical evidence base remains geographically narrow, concentrated predominantly in Anglo-American and European contexts (Thornton, 1989; Eby et al., 2005; Bianchi & Maillie, 2010; Olson et al., 2025). This limitation is particularly evident in research on the interconnectedness of ‘gender roles and inequalities’ and ‘WFC’, which is not only confined to the Western settings (Fagan & Press, 2009; Davis, 2009, 2011; Begall et al., 2023), but has also rarely been examined from a cross-national perspective, especially linking GI and WFC (Öun, 2012; Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2019). Consequently, the existing theoretical models which often grounded in the specific gender-role expectations and institutional arrangements of Western societies, reflect limited cultural and institutional diversity. While decades of research have identified key antecedents of WFC (Byron, 2005), the applicability of these findings across different cultural and policy landscapes is uncertain. Therefore, there is a clear need to extend this research into understudied regions to develop more inclusive and globally relevant models.

In this above said context, this paper explores work–family conflict and GI in a global setting, in light of few multi-country comparisons available in the current literature. Employing aligned micro-data from 41 countries (ISSP 2012), it offers solid and comparable estimates that demonstrate traditional GI is positively associated with higher WFC and egalitarian beliefs attenuate it significantly. The empirical findings of this research further support a ‘gender-role expectations’ explanation of work-family conflict as shaped by subjective beliefs over and above the structural and institutional pressures of the relationship. In terms of methodology, multi-item indices of study reliability, extensive controls, and instrumental-variable estimates were carried out to assess the direction of effects. The data show that women experience higher WFC as a result of a pervasive burden of domestic work, but the extent of this conflict differs across contexts, remaining high and pervasive even under egalitarian conditions with no family support policies. The study expands theoretical learning and calls for evidence-based policy initiatives to address WFC, linking personal beliefs to systemic factors that influence work and family.

## **Background and Literature Review**

As its name implies, work-family conflict is described as the incongruity between work and family life and the conflict it creates. The WFC is based on the ‘inter-role conflict’, embedded in ‘scarcity theory’ (Goode, 1960), which posits that each person's time, energy, and resources are limited. Therefore, devoting more time, energy, or resources to one domain deprives the other and can lead to conflict between roles i.e. ‘role strain theory’. The most widely considered definition of WFC, given by Greenhaus and Beutell in 1985, is: “Work-Family Conflict, is a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). It endows multidimensional facets and encompasses a bi-directional dimension of work-family issues, i.e. “work interfering with family” and “family interfering with work” (Zhao et al. 2011; Michel et al. 2010).

The early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century evince burgeoning research on the work-family nexus, illustrating the transitional shifts, evolving dynamics, and diversities within or across families and workplaces (Bianchi and Milkie, 2010). With advancing time, the scope and coverage of this aspect of family research has expanded across multi-faceted aspects. The literature is

enriched with theoretical advancements, addressing gender and heterogeneous work-family linkages, especially mediating through the social, economic, and political determinants (Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel, 2020). The influx of women in the labour force has reshaped the structure and composition of the work interface, leading to a paradigm shift in work-family research towards the specialized gender-role perspectives as a locus in assessing the work and family domains (Michel et al. 2010; Konig and Kesinger 2015). This interim shift in the traditionally ascribed gender roles for men and women combined, besides social predicaments and workplace policies, has amplified the inter-role conflict, especially in concordance with the competing regimes of the work and the family and, in particular, the dual-earner families that are undergoing significant re-evaluation.

While a portion of the world has already transitioned and others are still transitioning from the first demographic transition to the second demographic transition, socio-economic and individualistic ideational transformations are also occurring parallelly, albeit not in consonance. In such a transitory period, any deviation from the traditionally defined gender roles and norms raises the probability of inter-role conflicts. This might be attributed to the significant improvement in women's education and employment in the past two decades, owing to which women are turning self-dependent, leading to a constant rise in their self-actualisation and individualism. Among the dual-earner families, inter-role conflicts are reported to be comparatively higher due to the increased time constraints and work burdens, with women facing a larger burden of the adversities. In this regard, a study by Stewart (2012) exhibits that reported work-family conflict is at least 5% higher among females compared to their male counterparts.

Although, families and work have been critical proponents in unfolding one's life course trajectories and thereby have influenced gender roles since the evolution of families, it grabbed the attention of research predominantly by the mid-20th century. Since then, several studies have investigated the multiple aspects of work-family conflict inevitably through a gendered perspective, ranging from traditional gender ideologies on marital quality or satisfaction or perceptions regarding gender roles or stereotypes (Wang et al. 2020, Townsend et al. 2024; Yoo 2021; Steiner et al. 2023).

#### *Understanding dynamics of GI and WFC*

On the face of it, determining the work-family conflict experienced by individuals should be straightforward. However, this is where the task gets difficult. To begin with, there is no universally applicable definition of WFC. On the one hand, the role of workplaces, organisational structures and policy frameworks largely determine the working life of individuals. For instance, what kind of work an individual must do, in what time and for how much money. On the other hand, individual orientations and cultural expectations might also play a part in how the clash between work and family is felt and processed. To illustrate, how open a society is to women working outside for pay before and after marriage and to what extent the individual internalises this expectation in experiencing WFC. If a woman believes that despite paid work, her primary duty is to look after her family and children, there is a possibility that work demands might feel like an interference in the family domain. Contrastingly, for an egalitarian man, taking on family responsibilities should not increase feelings of family coming in the way of his paid work (Yoo, 2021).

The shaping of individual attitudes and social orientation has been linked to various factors such as social structural development, institutional context, and country context. According

to Inglehart & Baker (2000), Modernization theory suggests that industrialisation leads to long-term social and cultural changes that might shift gender roles. Furthermore, the institutional setting can impact attitudes toward gender roles, and cultural norms can affect how work-family policies are developed, implemented and their effectiveness. Family policies likely shape attitudes toward gender roles by indicating what behaviours are deemed acceptable by influencing individuals' choices. In turn, work-family policies can impact gender roles and cultural expectations by setting norms. For example, family policy can affect the division of household labour, which happens to be an important element in reconciliation of work and family.

The transformed gender role of women, capable of working outside the home and earning a living not just for their ends but also for their families, changed their place in society and the economy. Unlike their mothers and grandmothers, women who became part of the labour force post-1960s-70s, for the first time in history, had the possibility of combining work and family. In the words of Goldin (2021, p.15), "Each generation passed a baton from one to the next. The journey has taken us from the stark choice of having a family or a career to the possibility of having a career *and* a family" (original emphasis).

## Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Over the years, scholarship examining the work and family nexus has increased tremendously, with studies pointing towards multiple physical and psychological antecedents or sources of WFC. However, the association between GI and WFC remains under-researched. GI essentially relates to the assumptions around the division of paid and unpaid work responsibilities, marital quality, work satisfaction (Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Minnotte et al., 2013). Individuals with traditional GI believe that work and family are separate gender-based responsibilities, whereas those with egalitarian gender role attitudes do not mind blending the two spheres. Therefore, we hypothesize that people with traditional GI are more likely to report work-family conflict than those with egalitarian GI. Second, we expect women to report higher WFC than men across the countries despite varying national cultures due to women carrying disproportionate unpaid familial responsibilities.

**Hypothesis 1:** *Individuals with traditional GI experience higher WFC than individuals with a gender-egalitarian outlook.*

A good amount of research has found various antecedents of WFC. Voydanoff (2004; 2005) notes that work and family demands can be psychological or physical. Positive associations have been found between hours worked per week and WFC (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Crompton and Lyonette 2006). Similarly, having children and the age of children are also observed to be related to WFC. As the field has grown over the years, the concept of bi-directionality and the relative effect of WFC factors on work-interference-in-family (WIF) and family-interference-in-work (FIW) are also analysed. In her seminal article, Byron (2005) highlights that work factors are significantly associated with WIF, and some family or non-work factors are strongly associated with FIW. A working person can experience, WFC from either direction. Additionally, factors such as health (Gragnano et al. 2020; Mullen et al. 2008) and macro-level factors like country context have also been considered significant predictors.

Significant but lesser explored is the relationship between WFC and GI (Korabik et al., 2008). GI is understood as "the extent to which individuals espouse support for a division of paid

work and family responsibilities based on the notion of separate spheres” (Davis 2011 p, 366). Traditional GI are the people who believe that work and family are separate responsibilities rather than work and family being another part of one's life, but egalitarian GI believes in balancing work and family responsibilities by mixing or sharing them. In such cultures, which require that mothers care for the domestic sphere, women who have done paid work may find themselves engaged in inter-role conflict, or they believe that because of their paid work they cannot afford to make time for what they are ‘supposed’ to do. On the other hand, men might suffer from work-family conflicts if their scheduled responsibilities require more time spent doing household chores and less time away from paid work. GI has been associated with several family and work factors, including division of paid and unpaid work, childcare, relationship quality, earnings, and choice of occupation (Davis and Greenstein 2009). Therefore, it has been also suggested that GI as well is related with WFC (Davis 2011). As well as being insufficiently researched, the empirical studies that have confirmed the degree of association between WFC and GI are not clear (Nordenmark 2013). However, several of them point towards a correlation between traditional GI to show reporting higher WFC than egalitarian GI (Bornatici and Heers 2020; Fagan and Press 2008), with a few cross-country differences.

**Hypothesis 2:** *Women experience higher WFC than men across different countries due to skewed sharing of unpaid work and slow change in men’s roles. (gender-role hypothesis)*

Women’s paid work contributed to a new sense of identity and agency. While they filled expanded roles for women as they took on paid work outside of the home, expectations around their roles as carers and homemakers did not dissolve. As workers, in their new role, they were assigned to navigate the workplace norms established and abided by males. This should not have been a problem, had working women had stay-at-home partners and no responsibilities for biological and social reproduction (see Laslett & Brenner 1989). In the absence of institutional-level support, women’s dual roles as workers and housekeepers and the societal gender position of men limited women to unpaid domestic chores and care work, described as the ‘second shift’ (Hochschild and Machung, 1989). Women in the 1950s and 1960s were frustrated and desolated that despite leading their idealised lives as a housewife embodied in the phrase ‘problem without a name’ (Freidan 1963), today’s working women globally are contending with work and family conciliation. Work and family balance issues have been widely raked up in debate because of the participation of women in the workplace that has changed the face of work itself. Now women do not want to sacrifice it for the other. Now, at least, the reconciliation of work and family, the discourse about work division, care responsibility for children, male and female roles hit the fan like never before. In past decades, reforms have made it possible to balance work and family. From the implementation of paternal leaves to part-time work for parents, various measures have been introduced to lessen the friction between family and work responsibilities. However, the reforms have been partial or non-existent except for displaying success in some regions of the world. Goldscheider et al. (2015), Esping-Andersen (2009), and England (2010) offer a framework for understanding transformation of gender roles, family behaviour and demography, and explores the reasons why the revolution remains incomplete and uneven. Slow-paced changes in men’s gender roles emerges as a significant hindrance in the completion of gender revolution. For countries going through economic and demographic transition where traditional gender roles persist women are venturing into workforce sans change in their domestic work and care burden leading to higher levels of conflict (see Ramadoss and Rajadhyaksha, 2012). Moreover, according to Gutek et al. (1991) while the rational model implies that people who spend more time at work may experience heightened levels of work interference with family and vice

versa, according to the 'gender role expectation model', expectations created by gender roles will impact how WFC is perceived by women and men (either directly or as a moderator of time spent on each domain and the level of conflict experienced).

## **Methodology**

### **Data Source**

This study utilizes data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP, 2012). ISSP is a cross-national collaboration programme that conducts continuous nationally representative cross-sectional annual surveys on diverse topics, relevant to social sciences. Since its establishment in 1984, over a million respondents from 57 countries have participated in ISSP, including the United States, Germany, United Kingdom and Australia: the founding four. This survey programme comprises several distinct modules on a specific social domain including family and gender dynamics alongside others. As the focus of this study belies in understanding the work-family-interface from the outlook of idealistic perspective on gender roles, we have used the most recent ISSP survey module on *Family and Changing Gender Roles IV*, published in the year 2012. This survey module provides extensive information on family dynamics and changing gender roles with substantial information on respondents' perspective towards family, marriage, children and gender roles including their socio-economic and demographic profile for 41 participating countries. Moreover, these survey modules are designed for replication and are repeated at regular intervals, thereby allowing for both cross-national and cross-time comparisons; enabling us to provide cross-national scenarios of prevailing gender ideologies and work-family conflict. The sample size has been computed using probability sampling methods with different sampling procedures, (partly simple and partly multi-stage stratified random samples) across different countries.

The total sample size across 41 participating countries in this module corresponded to 61, 754 individuals, aged 18 years and above, except for Finland, Iceland, Japan, South Africa and Venezuela. However, restricting to the key interest of this study i.e., gender ideologies and work-family-conflict, information for this study have been sought only for those participants who ever experienced work-family conflict. The concerned information collected, pertain to their background characteristics including their gender ideologies, gendered division of household work as well as spousal, familial and individual characteristics. The filtered-out sample for our study thus attributes to 34, 702 employed individuals who had ever been in any form of legal union or ever experienced work-family conflict owing their working status.

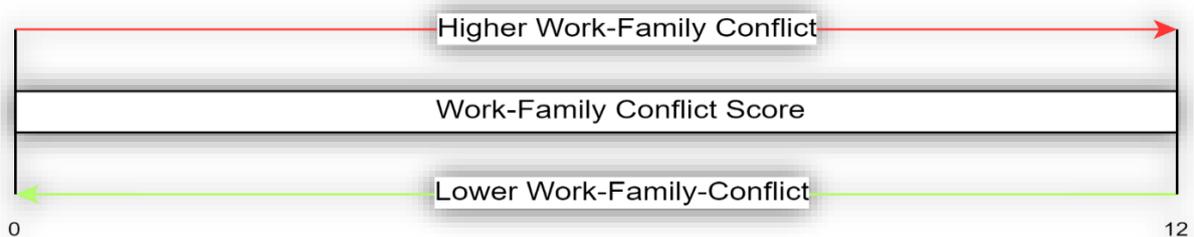
## **Measures**

### **Outcome Variable**

*Work Family Conflict Score:* Work-Family-Conflict has been measured based on a set of four questions examining the experiences of work and family interface with each other. These questions stem "How often has each of the following happened to you during the past three months:" following the given statements respectively: "I have come home from work too tired to do the chores which need to be done"; "It has been difficult for me to fulfill my family responsibilities because of the amount of time I spent on my job"; "I have arrived at work too tired to function well because of the household work I had done"; "I have found it difficult to concentrate at work because of my family responsibilities." The first two questions pertain to time-based WFC dimensions while the next two pertain to strain based WFC. Each of these

questions had a latent construct with responses reported as “Several times a week”; “Several times a month”; “Once or twice” and “Never” on a four-point scale.

Subsequently, in order to represent higher intensity of work-family conflict with higher values and vice versa, responses to each question were recorded by reversing the Likert scale with values ranging between 0 and 3. The values assigned represented the frequency of the event as: “0” if it never occurred, “1” if it occurred “once or twice”, “2” if it occurred “several times a month” and “3” if it occurred “several times a week”, respectively. Correspondingly, an additive index (WFC,  $\alpha=0.77$ ) was constructed by summing the respective values of all four questions with scores ranging between 0 and 12. The lower the score, lower would be the Work Family Conflict and vice-versa.



### Key Predictor

*GI Scale:* GI was measured using seven Likert-item questions inquiring individual’s attitude towards gender roles with responses recorded on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 indicating “Strongly agree” to 5 indicating “Strongly disagree”. These assessment questions can broadly be classified under two distinct sets where a first set of question examines traditional ideologies towards gender roles and the latter set of questions examines egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles. The first set comprises five questions stemming “To what extent, do you agree or disagree ..... ?” followed by statements as stated: a) “A ’an’s job is to earn money; a wo’an’s job is to look after the home and family” ; b) “A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works”; c) “All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job”; d) “A job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children.” and e) “Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay” respectively. Another set of questions comprises two questions stemming: “And to what extent do you agree or disagl...?” a) “A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work” and b) “Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income”. The response for each of these seven questions were recorded under “Strongly agree”, “Agree”, “Neither agree nor disagree”, “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree”.



To assess GI of an individual, a GI scale with values/scores ranging between 0 and 4, was constructed by reversing the order for second set of questions<sup>1</sup>, in order to maintain uniformity and consistency in gender ideologies. The higher scores on scale thereby exhibited higher levels of gender egalitarianism and vice versa. Moreover, the reliability of the items of this scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, a most widely used objective measure for assessing internal consistency. The items were found to be significantly correlated with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.74, indicating our scale to be reliable.

*Control variables:* Control variables for this study can be classified under three broad aspects for ease. The first aspect comprises of individual-level controls including age, gender, educational attainment, working status (employment as well as working hours per week), place of residence and self-reported health status. The second aspect of controls pertain to characteristics determining union status such as legal partnership status, relationship duration besides spousal age. The third aspect of control variables comprise of variables indicative of familial and household characteristics that might potentially influence work-family interface due to the attitude towards gender roles or individual's work commitments as well as familial responsibilities. These variables include spousal working status and their respective working hours, presence of children (number of toddlers and number of schools going children) within the household and involvement status of their respective partners in sharing workload for household chores. The respective categories of individual variables are as shown in Table 1.

## Empirical Strategy

### Main Empirical Model

This study employs step-wise linear regression analysis to empirically assess the association between work-family-conflict and gender ideologies in the following manner: 1) In the first model, unadjusted or crude association between WFC score and GI score was assessed, referred to as the base model or null model; 2) In the second model, the relationship between WFC and GI scores was assessed, accounting for the control for individual-level and familial characteristics, referred to as family model; 3) In the third model, the relationship was assessed additionally on accounting control for the spousal working hours and household division of labour referred to as "work-family interface model" 4) The last model, also referred as the full model, in addition to all the control variables, accounts for country-specific contexts, examining the influence of specific socio-cultural contexts on the relationship between the two, using country dummies. The general mathematical expression for our linear regression model, assessing the association between WFC and GI is mentioned below:

$$Y_{(WFC)} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{(GI\ score)} + \beta_{2, \dots, n} X_{(control\ variables)} + \varepsilon_i$$

where,

$Y_{(WFC\ score)}$	Work-Family-Conflict Score
$\beta_1$	the coefficient for GI
$\beta_{2, \dots, n}$	coefficients for respective control variables

<sup>1</sup> The responses were reversed for queries "To what extent, do you agree or disagree .....? "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work"" and "And to what extent do you agree or disagree... "Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income."

<sup>2</sup> Note: control variables in step-wise linear regression analysis varies with different models in our case.

$X_{(GI\ score)}$	denotes GI score
	individual controls (age, gender, educational attainment, working status, place of residence and self-reported health status) for models 2, 3 and 4.
$X_{(control\ variables)}$	Familial characteristic controls (union formation traits such as spousal age, legal partnership status, and relationship duration, number of children (toddlers or school going) and characteristics for models 2, 3 and 4.
	household controls (spousal working status, and partnership involvement status for sharing household chores) for models 3 and 4 and country-dummies for model 4.

## Robustness Checks

### IV Regression Analysis

Work-family-conflict is composite of several indicators influencing work-family interface as well as work and family individually. While, we have chosen an array of indicators, there still persist endogeneity concern arising out of omitted variable bias or measurement error which can present misleading or erroneous findings. Thereby in order to eliminate any unobserved heterogeneity or potential selection bias, we employ IV regression model to provide with a consistent and unbiased estimate. IV regression however, requires an “instrument variable” that: 1) must be strongly correlated with the endogenous explanatory variables and 2) must not be correlated with the error term<sup>3</sup> and thereby is exogenous to the outcome variable. As WFC is our dependent variable and GI (GI) is our key predictor variable; we have chosen religious attendance of an individual as an instrument variable for our assessment which does not directly affect WFC. Religious attendance can shape the GI and thereby influence WFC. Next, we have implemented two-stage least square (2SLS) estimates. In the first stage, the endogenous variable i.e., GI score is regressed on the instrument variable to estimate the part of its variation that is exogenous and in the second stage, the fitted values from the first stage are used in place of the endogenous variable i.e., GI score, in the main regression model, to estimate the effect on the dependent variable. The equation for the same is as below:

*IV regression Equations for the employed two stage least squares (2SLS) estimation procedure*

First stage: Regressing the endogenous variable on the instrument and other exogenous variables

$$GI\ score_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Religious\ Attendance_i + \beta_2 X_i + e$$

where,  $GI\ score_i$  = endogenous variable,  $Religious\ Attendance_i$  = instrumental variable,  $X_i$  = vector of exogenous variables comprising all control variables,  $e$  = error term and  $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2$  = coefficients to be estimated.

Second Stage: Regressing the dependent variable (Work-Family Conflict) on the predicted values of the endogenous variable (GI) and other exogenous variables

$$WFC\ score_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \widehat{GI\ score}_i + \beta_2 X_i + u_i$$

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<sup>3</sup> IV must affect the dependent variable through the impact on the endogenous independent variable and should not have independent effect the dependent variable.

Where  $\widehat{GI}score_i$  = predicted values of GI from the first-stage equation;  $WFC\ score_i$  = dependent variable (Work-Family Conflict);  $X_i$  = vector of exogenous socio-economic characteristics;  $u_i$  = error term, and  $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2$  = coefficients to be estimated.

Additionally, the presence for endogeneity in the baseline regression models were assessed using Durbin-Wu Hausman Test and Weak Instrument Test was employed to examine the validity of the chosen instrument variable in capturing the endogeneity bias.

## Results

### Description of Results

Table I presents the descriptive statistics of the variables studied in our study. As shown, the study sample predominantly comprised married working adults with a mean age of 46 years and slightly a higher share of male respondents than females. Amongst the chosen sample, just a quarter were found to be highly educated with an educational attainment of at least 15 years (25.4%). However interestingly, most of the individuals were currently employed in a paid work (87%), with an average working hours of 41.4 hours per week and self-reported themselves with a fair or good health status (57%). In addition, family characteristics of the study sample exhibited that nearly 60% of our participants were married with their spouses, slightly older to them and had an average relationship duration of 110 months. Additionally, three-fifth of the individuals were neither having a toddler nor a school-going child. Spousal status further shows that seven out of every ten respondents' spouses were currently employed in a paid work but just two-fifth of the total individuals reported to share household chores equally, indicating a skewed division of household labour and a strong premise for work-family conflict, especially among dual earning couples. In addition, 70% of the individuals belonged to urban areas (big city or its periphery as well as towns). Furthermore, the key interests of our study i.e. work family conflict and GI exhibited significant variations across the sample with values ranging from 0-12 and 0-5 respectively with an average score around 3.

**Table I. Descriptive Statistics of Key Predictors and Outcome Variable of this study**

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<b>Work-Family Conflict Score</b>	34702	3.550	2.976	0.00	12.00
<b>GI Score</b>	34640	3.055	0.723	0.71	05.00
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	34670	0.517	0.500	0.00	1.00
Female	34670	0.483	0.500	0.00	1.00
<b>Respondent's Age</b>	34702	45.849	51.420	15.00	999
<b>Spousal Age</b>	34702	48.423	140.351	0.00	999
<b>Partnership Status</b>					
Married	34396	0.591	0.492	0.00	1.00
Civil Partnership	34396	0.028	0.164	0.00	1.00
Separated from Spouse Civil Partner	34396	0.021	0.143	0.00	1.00
Divorced from Spouse/Legally separated from partner	34396	0.074	0.261	0.00	1.00
Widowed/ Civil Partner Died	34396	0.032	0.177	0.00	1.00
Partnership Status: Ever Married/ Never in a Civil partnership	34396	0.254	0.435	0.00	1.00
<b>Number of Toddlers</b>				0.00	1.00
None	33630	0.786	0.410	0.00	1.00
One	33630	0.148	0.355	0.00	1.00
Two	33630	0.053	0.224	0.00	1.00
Three or more	33630	0.013	0.115	0.00	1.00
<b>Number of School Children</b>				0.00	1.00

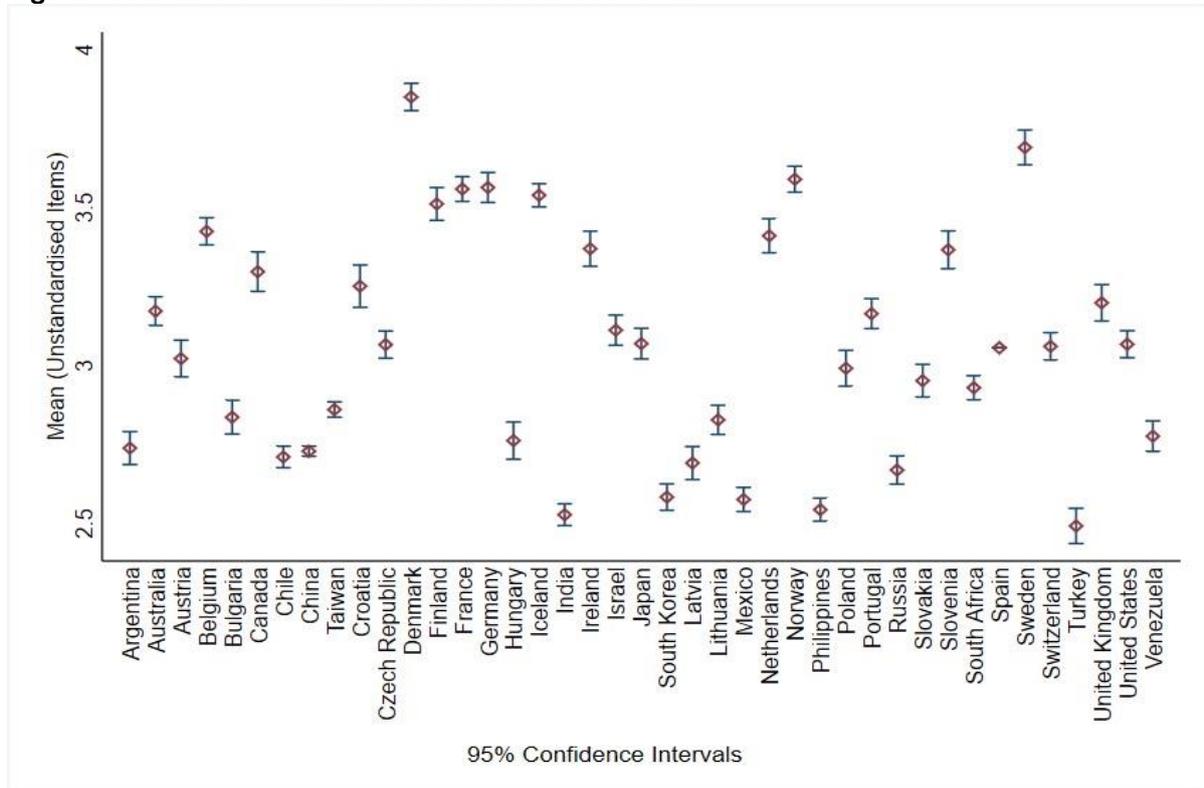
None	33654	0.651	0.477	0.00	1.00
One	33654	0.199	0.399	0.00	1.00
Two	33654	0.112	0.316	0.00	1.00
Three or More	33654	0.038	0.191	0.00	1.00
<b>Sharing of Household Work b/w Partners</b>					
Do more	23532	0.340	0.474	0.00	1.00
Same	23532	0.412	0.492	0.00	1.00
Do less	23532	0.249	0.432	0.00	1.00
<b>Status of Work</b>					
Currently in paid work	34503	0.875	0.331	0.00	1.00
Currently not in paid work	34503	0.090	0.287	0.00	1.00
Never had paid work	34503	0.035	0.183	0.00	1.00
<b>Working Status of Spouse</b>					
Currently in paid work	24847	0.705	0.456	0.00	1.00
Currently not in paid work	24847	0.188	0.391	0.00	1.00
Never had paid work	24847	0.107	0.309	0.00	1.00
<b>Hours Worked Weekly</b>					
Not Working Weekly	34702	0.157	0.364	0.00	1.00
Part-Time	34702	0.157	0.363	0.00	1.00
Full-Time	34702	0.329	0.470	0.00	1.00
Over-Time	34702	0.357	0.479	0.00	1.00
<b>Spouse, partner: Hours worked weekly</b>					
No Answer/Not Working	34702	0.526	0.499	0.00	1.00
Part-Time	34702	0.081	0.273	0.00	1.00
Full Time	34702	0.206	0.404	0.00	1.00
Over-Time	34702	0.187	0.390	0.00	1.00
<b>Health Status</b>					
Good	34702	0.431	0.495	0.00	1.00
Fair	34702	0.355	0.479	0.00	1.00
Poor	34702	0.208	0.406	0.00	1.00
<b>Years of Education</b>					
Years of Education Less than 10 years	34065	0.200	0.400	0.00	1.00
Years of Education: 10-15 years	34065	0.548	0.498	0.00	1.00
Years of Education: More than 15 years	34065	0.253	0.435	0.00	1.00
<b>Place of Residence</b>					
A Big City	34542	0.303	0.459	0.00	1.00
The Suburbs/ Outskirts of a Big City	34542	0.161	0.368	0.00	1.00
A Town or a Small City	34542	0.230	0.421	0.00	1.00
A Country Village	34542	0.264	0.441	0.00	1.00
A farm or home in the country	34542	0.042	0.201	0.00	1.00

### *Inter-country Variations in Mean Gender-Ideology Scores*

As this is a multi-country study, we at first offer insights on pertinent heterogeneities in gender ideologies and work-family conflict, exhibiting the extent to which countries vary in regards with progressive or traditional ideologies and work-family conflict levels. Figure 1 illustrates mean/average GI scores for various countries alongside their confidence intervals, elucidating the extent to which societies embrace egalitarian or traditional views on gender roles globally. The respective scores are found to vary significantly across the globe, ranging as low as 2.49 in Turkey and as high as 3.85 in Denmark. Country-wise score suggests that Nordic Countries, often referred as global front-runners of gender equality, alongside countries such as France and Germany posited strong adherence towards egalitarian gender values with GI scores above 3.5, on a scale of 5.00. Besides, several countries from Western Europe (for e.g. Belgium, United Kingdom & Australia) and North America (Canada and United States) also exhibited gender egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles with moderately high GI scores, ranging between 3.00 and 3.50.

However, in contrast, Turkey (2.49) from Middle East, India (2.53) and Philippines (2.54) from South Asia and Mexico (2.57) from North America exhibited more conservative or traditional gender ideologies with lowest GI scores. In addition, several other East/South-Asian countries (for e.g. South Korea (2.58), China (2.73) & Taiwan (2.86)); South Africa (2.93); and South American countries (Venezuela (2.78) & Argentina (2.74)) were found to reflect traditional gender ideologies with moderately-low to low GI scores, ranging between 2.50 and 3.00.

**Figure 1. Variations in Mean GI Score across Countries**



Macro-level patterns thereby present a heterogenous patterns across the countries with variations within or across the geographical region. For instance, Eastern parts of Europe, in contrast to their northern and western counterparts, align with traditional gender ideologies; suggesting higher gender inequality. However, Slovenia and Czech Republic stand out against their counterparts, with moderately high GI scores, ranging between 3.00 and 3.50. Similarly, Israel in the Middle-East and Japan from East Asia are also exceptions to their respective regions with moderately high GI scores.

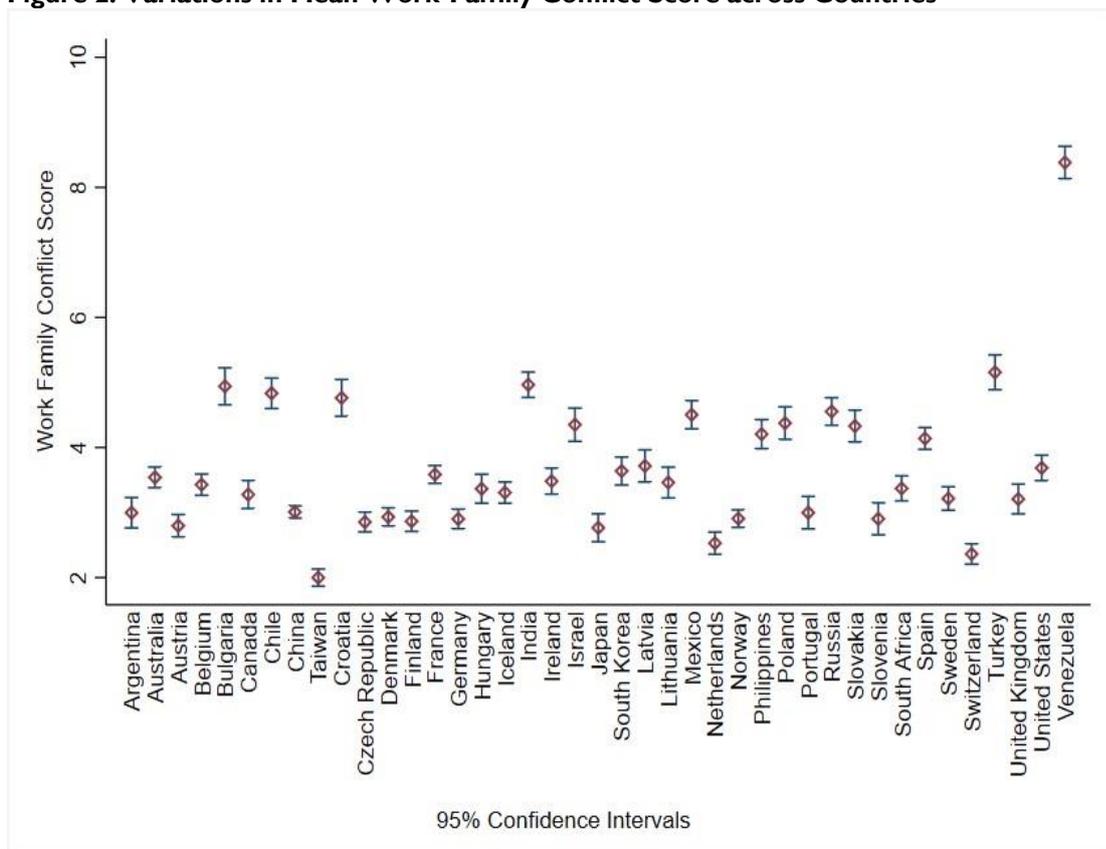
In general, it can be inferred that, on a whole, Northern and Western regions of Europe demonstrate higher gender egalitarian ideologies across the globe while Eastern parts of Europe alongside Eastern and Southern parts of Asia, demonstrate conservative or traditional gender, highlighting the profound role of specific socio-cultural and regional parameters in determining gender ideologies.

*Inter-country Variations in Mean Work-Family-Conflict Scores*

Akin to Figure 1, Figure 2 illustrates country-wise WFC scores demonstrating the variations in work-family conflict an individual experience while managing work and family, globally. As observed, WFC scores vary significantly across the countries with values as low as 2.00 in Taiwan and as high as 8.38 in Venezuela. Country-wise Taiwan (2.0), Switzerland (2.36),

Netherlands (2.53), Japan (2.77) and Austria (2.80) alongside Nordic countries and East-European countries like Czech Republic and Slovenia demonstrated lower intensity of work-family-conflict with low WFC scores below 3.00 on a scale of 12.00. Several other Western countries (United Kingdom and Belgium) and Northern European countries (Sweden and Iceland) alongside China from East Asia and South Africa also exhibit lower WFC. Conversely Venezuela from South America, Turkey from Middle East, India from South Asia and Philippines from Southeast Asia exhibited high WFC with scores above 4.00. Moreover, North American countries such as the United States (3.69) and Canada (3.28), also exhibited moderately high WFC, ranging between 3.50 and 4.00, suggesting that individuals even in developed economies struggle to manage work-family strain.

**Figure 2. Variations in Mean Work-Family Conflict Score across Countries**



General patterns thereby suggest that Northern European countries and East Asian countries, experiences low to moderate levels of WFC scores ranging between 2.00 and 4.00; while on the other hand, Western Europe exhibits a mixed pattern with significant variations within themselves.

### Multivariate Results

Table 2 presents the linear regression estimates obtained on assessing the linkages between GI scores and WFC scores respectively. Across all models, the relationship between them is found to be negative and statistically significant, suggesting gender egalitarian norms is likely to reduce likelihood of experiencing WFC. Statistically, the unadjusted base model reveals that with every one unit increase in GI score, WFC scores is likely to reduce by 0.44 units. Interestingly, this association becomes slightly stronger (0.46,  $p < 0.001$ ), in the adjacent model, on controlling for individual and familial characteristics. This is in line with previous evidences

that highlights the role of individual, socio-cultural or familial characteristics in guiding WFC or exacerbating it (Michell et al., 2011; Kelley et al., 2014). The magnitude of its effect size, however, decreases slightly with the inclusion of additional number of factors in successive models<sup>4</sup>, but the significant negative relationship still holds.

In the full model which also accounts for country-specific characteristics, the odds for an individual to experience WFC is likely to reduce by 0.41 units with every one unit rise in GI score ( $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting the robust relationship between GI and WFC, cross-nationally and contributing role of country-specific characteristics (Bornatici, & Heers, 2020) and the persistence of. The estimates obtained, further reflect that the background characteristics such as individual, spousal or familial characteristics contribute significantly in determining the odds of WFC among individuals, globally.

Moreover, women consistently reported higher WFC than males across all models (Table 2). In the full model, women were 4.45 times more likely to experience work-family conflict than males (0.44,  $p < 0.001$ ). The higher work family conflict observed among women against their male counterparts are largely due to disproportionate burden of household division of labour among them, in terms of household chores and caregiving (Michelle et al., 2011). Furthermore, even in egalitarian societies, women experience higher share of skewed division of household labour.

Education, employment, and health significantly influence WFC. Highly educated individuals (15+ years) are 3.6 times more likely to experience WFC, often due to demanding careers. Paid employment and longer working hours also increase WFC, while an equitable division of household chores significantly reduces it. Interestingly, having a spouse who works full-time is associated with lower WFC, likely due to shared financial pressure. Furthermore, being separated, in a civil partnership, or having more children increases WFC. Poor health status drastically raises the likelihood of WFC (84 times). Finally, residents of rural areas report lower WFC than city dwellers, suggesting contextual and cultural influences. Familial and individual characteristics are key determinants.

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<sup>4</sup> *Note:* Irrespective of the exclusion of variables with least samples (i.e., “spousal job status” and “division of household chores share”) in Model 2 and its respective inclusion in Model 3, the association between GI scores and WFC scores remain significantly consistent, indicating that our estimates are reliable and not affected by any potential selection bias arising out of decrease in sample size.

**Table 2. Linear Regression Estimates showing association between Work-Family Conflict and GI**

Work-Family Conflict Score	Model I (Unadjusted)	Model II (Adjusted for key control variables)	Model III (Adjusted for all control variables)	Model IV (Adjusted for all controls, including country dummies)
<b>GI Score</b>	-0.443***	-0.455***	-0.425***	-0.415***
	-0.022	-0.0241	-0.0287	-0.0286
<b>Sex of the Individual</b>				
Male®		-	-	-
Female		0.551***	0.448***	0.445***
		-0.0346	-0.0484	-0.0482
<b>Age of the Respondent</b>		-0.00191***	-0.00186***	-0.00192***
		-0.000465	-0.000545	-0.000544
<b>Age of the Spouse</b>		0.000535***	0.000429***	0.000497***
		-0.000127	-0.000165	-0.000164
<b>Partnership Status</b>				
Married®		-	-	-
Civil Partnership		0.289***	0.273***	0.303***
		-0.0979	-0.098	-0.0977
Separated from Spouse/ Civil partner		1.080***	0.565**	0.545*
		-0.114	-0.283	-0.282
Divorced from spouse legally separated from civil partner		0.344***	0.303**	0.331**
		-0.0659	-0.151	-0.15
Widowed/ Civil partner Died		-0.0484	0.237	0.224
		-0.0956	-0.403	-0.402
Ever married/ Never in a Civil partnership/ Single		0.396***	0.433***	0.388***
		-0.0428	-0.067	-0.0669
<b>Number of Toddlers</b>				
No Toddlers®		-	-	-
One toddler		0.642***	0.613***	0.593***
		-0.0461	-0.0508	-0.0506
Two toddlers		0.852***	0.728***	0.681***
		-0.0718	-0.0778	-0.0777
Three or above toddlers		1.282***	1.176***	1.063***
		-0.141	-0.161	-0.161
<b>Number of School Going Children</b>				
No School-going Children®		-	-	-
One School-going Child		0.413***	0.319***	0.321***
		-0.0416	-0.0479	-0.0477
Two School-going Children		0.527***	0.432***	0.428***

Three or above School-going Children	-0.0523 0.626*** -0.0854	-0.0574 0.527*** -0.0935	-0.0572 0.524*** -0.0932
<b>Share of Household work among Partners</b>			
Partner Did More® Did Same amount of Work		-	-
		-0.517*** -0.0476	-0.530*** -0.0475
Partner Did Less		-0.243*** -0.0591	-0.221*** -0.0589
<b>Work Status</b>			
Currently in paid Work® Ever in paid Work	-	-	-
	-0.204** -0.0889	-0.244** -0.116	-0.292** -0.115
Never had paid work	-0.534*** -0.119	-0.872*** -0.157	-0.751*** -0.157
<b>Spouse Working Status</b>			
Currently in Paid Work® Formerly in Paid Work		-	-
		-0.314*** -0.0881	-0.300*** -0.0878
Never had Paid Work		0.137 -0.107	0.159 -0.107
<b>Working Hours per Week</b>			
Not Working/No Answer® Part-time	-	-	-
	-0.065 -0.0876	-0.128 -0.113	-0.166 -0.112
Full-time	0.233*** -0.0837	0.231** -0.108	0.194* -0.107
Over-time	0.626*** -0.0829	0.660*** -0.107	0.623*** -0.106
<b>Spouse Working Hours per week</b>			
Not Working/No Answer® Part-time	-	-	-
	-0.0182 -0.0631	-0.245** -0.0968	-0.225** -0.0965
Full-Time	-0.0362 -0.0462	-0.249*** -0.0853	-0.227*** -0.085
Over-Time	-0.145***	-0.347***	-0.310***
<b>Health Status</b>			
Good® Satisfactory	-	-	-
	0.487*** -0.0362	0.471*** -0.0431	0.453*** -0.043
Poor	0.812*** -0.0438	0.829*** -0.0525	0.840*** -0.0524

<b>Years of Education</b>				
Less than 10 years®		-	-	-
10 to 15 years		0.156***	0.149***	0.107**
		-0.0456	-0.0547	-0.0546
More than 15 years		0.328***	0.402***	0.358***
		-0.0535	-0.064	-0.0639
<b>Place of Residence</b>				
A big city®		-	-	-
The suburbs or outskirts of a big city		-0.215***	-0.223***	-0.219***
		-0.049	-0.0594	-0.0592
A town or a Small City		-0.120***	-0.0867	-0.118**
		-0.0442	-0.0539	-0.0538
A country Village		-0.232***	-0.164***	-0.211***
		-0.0437	-0.0521	-0.0521
A farm or Home in the country		-0.367***	-0.297***	-0.359***
		-0.083	-0.0963	-0.0961
<b>Country</b>				
				0.000965***
				-7.93E-05
_Constant	4.904***	3.622***	4.056***	3.745***
	-0.069	-0.116	-0.16	-0.161
Observations	34,640	32,362	21,623	21,623
R-squared	0.012	0.063	0.070	0.076

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## Robustness Checks

### Endogeneity Check for the association between WFC and GI

WFC corresponds to an exhaustive list of factors that can influence it through the interaction with the work-family interface, especially, in regards to gender norms and ideals. Although the preliminary and main findings suggest a strong significant negative association between GI and WFC, these findings could turn out to be erroneous if there persist any potential endogeneity concerns. In order to account for the same and provide a reliable empirical estimate, we further employed IV regression analyses to assess the relationship. The regression estimates shown in Table 3 clearly illustrate a significant negative relationship between GI score, and WFC scores. This aligns with our main findings obtained through linear regression in Table 2. While the relationship remains consistent and significant just like Table 2, the influence of gender ideologies increases by almost four folds after the inclusion of instrument variable i.e., *religious attendance of an individual*.

**Table 3. IV Regression Estimates showing the association between Work Family Conflict and GI**

	Model I	Model II
Work Family Conflict Score	Adjusted with key control Variables	Adjusted with all control Variables including Country-dummies
GI Score	-2.790***(-0.258)	-2.223***(-0.327)
Female	0.936***(-0.058)	0.773***(-0.773)
_Constant	9.458***(-0.656)	8.378*** (-0.858)
Observations	31673	21257
<i>Test of endogeneity-H<sub>0</sub>: Variables are exogenous</i>		
Durbin (Score)Chi2 (1)	108.179***	36.8034***
Wu-Hausman F Test	108.436***	36.8013***
<i>Weak-Instrument Test-H<sub>0</sub>: Instruments are weak</i>		
First Stage F-statistic (1, 31, 641)	364.477***	191.854***

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Note: Dependent Variable: Work-Family Conflict  
 Instrumented: GI  
 Instruments: Religious Attendance of an individual

Other Control Variables: individual, spousal, and family characteristics. Please see Appendix Table A.1 for full table

It can be observed that with every one unit increase in GI score, WFC tends to reduce nearly by three folds (-2.79,  $p < 0.001$ ) in Model I and near around two folds (-2.22,  $p < 0.001$ ) in the full model, after controlling additionally for spousal job characteristics and country context. The odds for female reporting higher WFC than males also became more pronounced after the introduction of instrumented variables, as compared to the baseline findings, shown in Table 2. Likewise, for other control variables as well, while the relationship remains consistent and significant just like the baseline estimates, the association became more pronounced after instrumentation. The higher odds observed in Table 3 for all predictors, suggests the underestimation of the estimates in our base-line model due to the presence of endogeneity plausibly because of omitted variable bias or measurement error.

Post-estimation checks such as Durbin-Hu Hausman Test (Durbin Score Chi 2 and Wu-Hausman Test) further confirm the presence of endogeneity in our base model, confirming the need for IV regression analyses. Additionally, Weak Instrument Test (Robust F statistics) showed that the chosen instrument i.e., religious attendance was not a weak instrument to assess the endogeneity bias, ensuring the reliability and validity of our IV regression models.

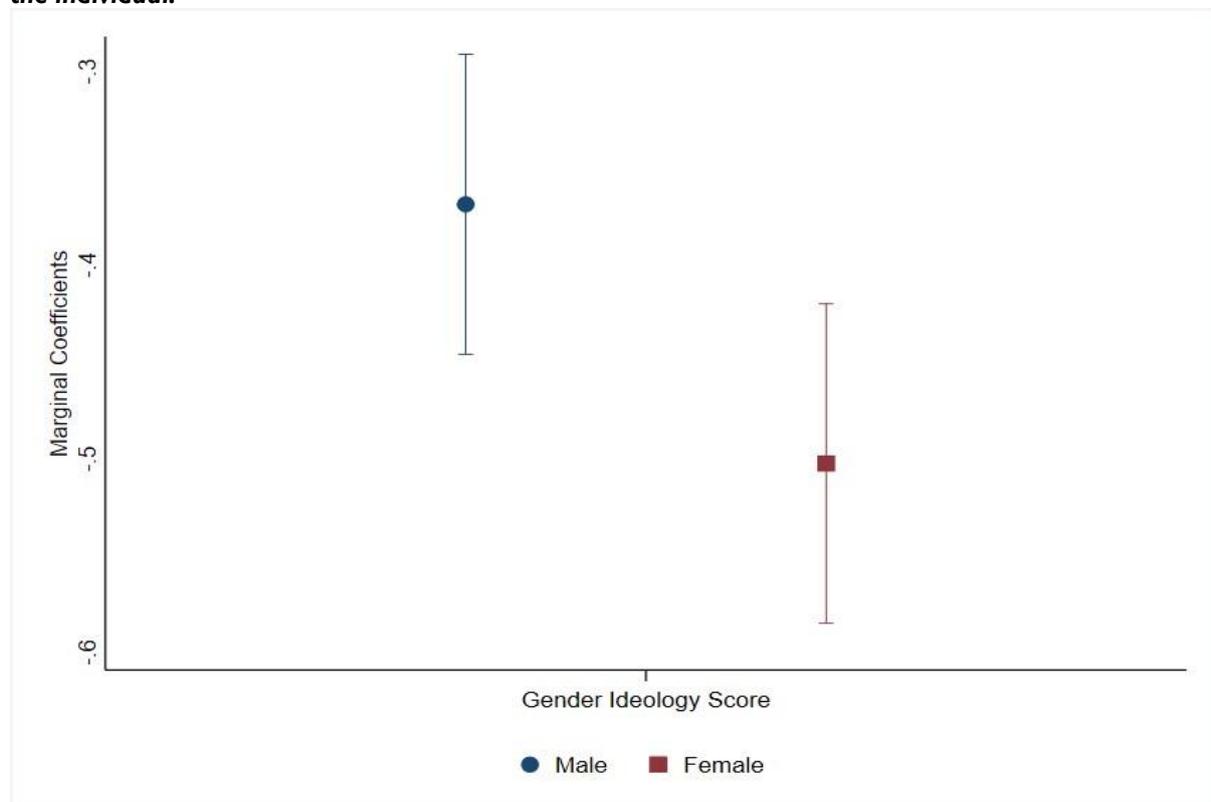
## Sub-Sample Heterogeneity Analyses

The consistency and robustness of our empirical findings has further been examined by carrying out separate sub-sample regression analysis, accounting for key control variables across major categories such as sex of an individual, level of education, place of residence as well as region which are highly among themselves, pertaining to variation in several individual or social factors including socio-cultural context or gender-specific norms. Being guided largely by gender ideologies and country-specific socio-cultural contexts, these categories possess a high probability to influence WFC differently. The generalizability of our main findings was thereby assessed by performing separate linear regression analyses across these subsets using regression coefficients with confidence intervals<sup>5</sup> illustrated through coefficient plots.

### *By the Sex of an Individual*

Figure 3 presents the linear regression coefficient plots, obtained from separate linear regression analyses for males and females respectively, adjusted to their individual and familial characteristics. The regression coefficients demonstrate a significant negative association between GI and WFC scores, confirming our main findings remain consistent and holds true, irrespective of the sex of an individual. In addition, it also demonstrates that with every additional increase in GI score, females (-0.50,  $p < 0.001$ ) tend to report lesser WFC score than males (-0.37,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating higher significance of gender egalitarianism on females than their male counterparts, in regards to mitigating WFC.

**Figure 3. Co-efficient plots showing the association between GI and Work-Family Conflict by the Sex of the individual.**

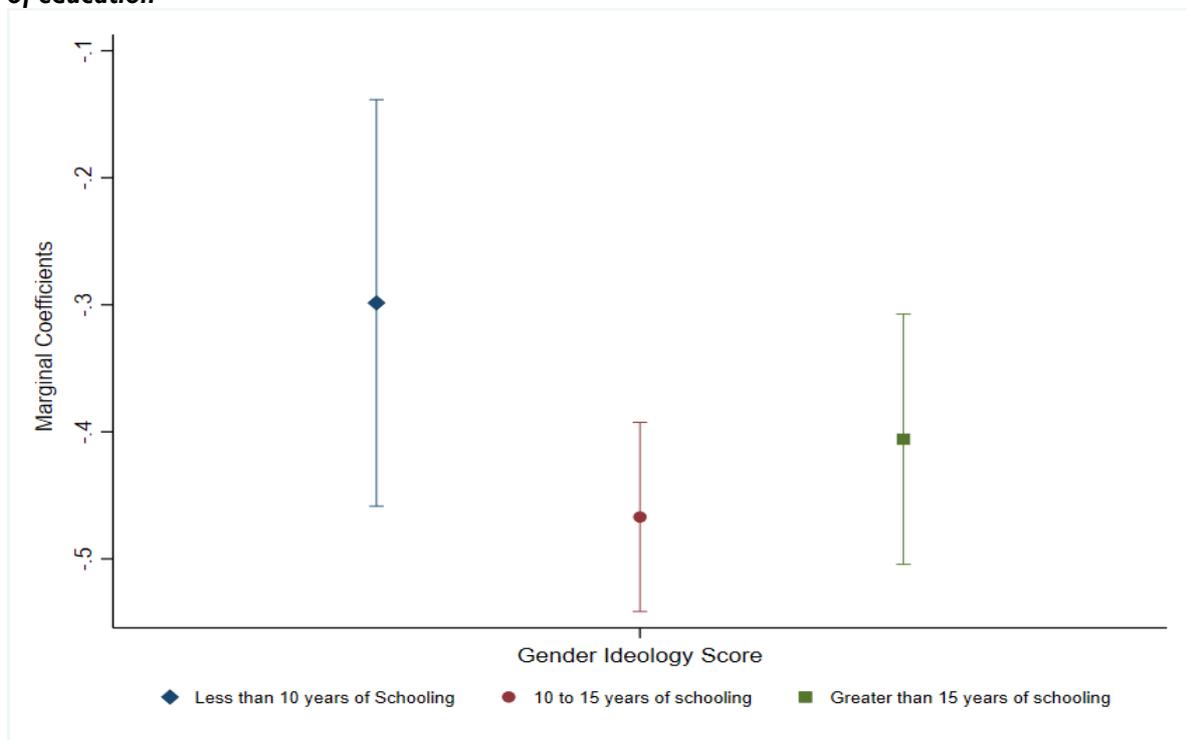


<sup>5</sup> The broader confidence intervals for our regression estimates indicating lesser precision due to high variability may plausibly be due to smaller sample size in their respective categories.

### By Educational status of an Individual

The significant negative relationship between GI and WFC, is further upheld across different levels of education (Figure 4); confirming the consistency and reliability of our main empirical findings. The regression coefficients further consort to a U-shaped curve, indicating that a unit change in GI score will bring lesser change in WFC reduction among individuals with less than 10 years of education as well as among those who are highly educated with at least 15 years of mean schooling, though higher among the latter compared to those lying in between. Higher change in WFC reduction amongst the latter can be attributed to their higher adherence towards gender egalitarian views, among more educated individuals (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). This can further be understood from a perspective of economic modernization in shifts of family and gender roles which occurs more swiftly among highly educated individuals (Thornton, 1989).

**Figure 4. Coefficient plots showing the associations between GI and Work-Family Conflict by the levels of education**

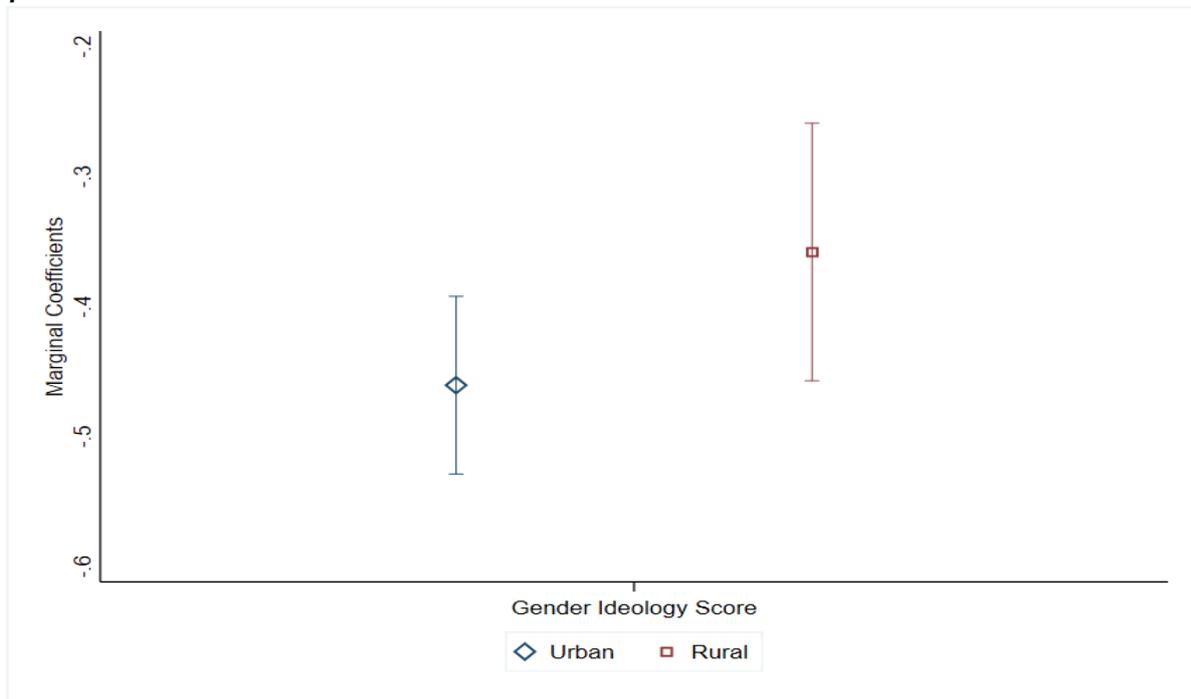


### By Residence and Region

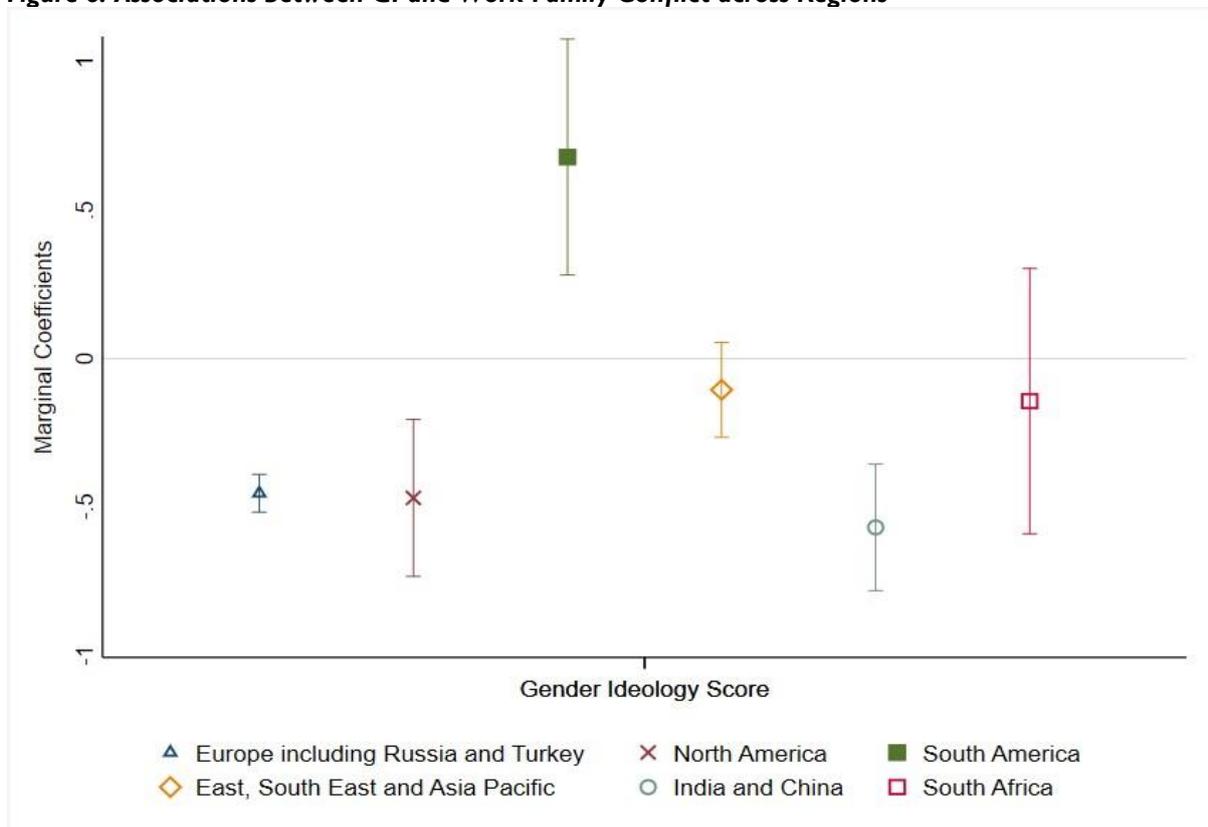
Residence-wise regression analysis also holds the consistency of our main finding, on positing a significant negative association between GI and WFC, but with a slight variation across rural and urban areas. In particular, residence-wise regression coefficients illustrate that urban areas tend to fare better than rural areas, in response to rising levels of gender egalitarianism, highlighting the profound role of community-based socio-cultural contexts. Similarly, region-wise as well, except for South-America; our first hypothesis holds true across all region with European countries faring better than others in mitigating WFC, in response to gender egalitarianism. The estimates however are found to be insignificant for East, South-East, Asian Pacific and South Africa. Positive correlation of WFC against gender egalitarianism in South America may be because of the dual pressure of meeting with societal expectations and workplace commitments simultaneously in the absence of structural or institutional support

for managing work-family life balance. This further highlights the need for more in- depth investigation for country-specific or region-specific trait which guides WFC among individuals.

**Figure 5. Coefficient plots showing the associations between GI and Work-Family Conflict by the place of residence**



**Figure 6. Associations between GI and Work-Family Conflict across Regions**



## Discussions and Conclusion

Work and family are the central tenets around which the lives of majority of the individuals usually revolve. Over decades, work-family nexus has transformed unprecedentedly, in response to the shifting family structures, gender roles and labour-market participation. The evolving work-family nexus is highlighted by the global phenomenon of dual-earner households, where WFC is emerging as a critical research area. While WFC is recognised as a gendered phenomenon, the empirical evidence remains geographically narrow, concentrated predominantly in developed Western societies, and theoretically inconclusive regarding the role of gender ideology (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Bornatici & Heers, 2020; Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020). A combination of single-country studies combined with mixed outcomes has provided ambiguity and created a substantial gap to determine how subjective gender attitudes influence WFC across a range of diverse national contexts (Ollo-López & Goñi-Legaz, 2015; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010; Shockley et al., 2017). This study, thereby, examined the relationship between gender ideology and work-family conflict from a cross-national perspective, accounting for diverse community beliefs and practices, and highlights that WFC is not only guided by structural determinants, but, also by subjective notions such as gender ideologies, that are largely guided by the country-specific community characteristics besides individual characteristics.

Using ISSP 2012 data from 41 countries, the study finds that Nordic and Western European countries such as Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland—backed by progressive welfare systems and family-friendly policies (Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2019; Oun, 2012)—show low WFC. In contrast, South Asian and Middle-Eastern countries like India, Turkey, and the Philippines exhibit high WFC due to patriarchal norms and limited institutional support (Shockley et al., 2017). However, exceptions such as the United States, Australia, and Israel display high WFC despite egalitarian beliefs, largely owing to long working hours, weak family policies, and heightened career pressures (Goldin, 2021). The study found a strong negative relationship between gender-egalitarian ideology and WFC. Individuals holding egalitarian beliefs experience significantly less WFC, while those with traditional gender norms report higher conflict. Women consistently show greater WFC than men, largely due to unequal household labour and caregiving burdens. The association remains robust after adjusting for individual, spousal, household, and country-specific factors. Instrumental-variable estimates using religious attendance confirm the direction of effect—egalitarian ideology reduces WFC by roughly two to three points on the 12-point scale. Cross-national comparisons reveal that Nordic and Western European countries with egalitarian norms and supportive family policies display the lowest WFC, whereas South Asian, Middle-Eastern, and Latin-American societies with traditional ideologies show the highest. Even in egalitarian settings, high job demands and limited family-friendly policies sustain conflict. These findings align with previous findings from country-specific studies (Mortazavi et al. 2009; Bernettici & Heers, 2020; Yucel and Chung, 2021). Gender-egalitarian individuals are more adaptable to role expansion and are more likely to contribute equally in the household division of labour—a critical determinant of WFC. In contrast, traditional individuals face higher WFC due to role conflict and disproportionate burdens, a dynamic supported by findings that traditionally fathers spend more time at work (Glauber & Gozjolko, 2011).

Complementing Bernettici & Heers' (2020) study, this study expands the existing literature, by providing robust empirical support for the fact that while a negative association exists between gender egalitarianism and WFC, the extent to which progressive ideologies reduce conflict is contingent on a supportive work-family environment and cohesive community-

building practices. As observed in our study; despite exhibiting gender-egalitarian attitudes, high levels of work-family conflict are observed in developed nations such as United States and Australia. This paradox, clearly reflects a weak welfare-state structure (as exemplified by lack of family policies and poor social welfare) and high labour-intensive market demanding occupations which [Goldin \(2021\)](#) termed as "greedy jobs". WFC, particularly in such settings for women tends to heighten due to ongoing gender discrimination at the workplace. By the same token, countries with traditional ideologies exhibit varying degrees of WFC, owing to their tendency to adhere to diverse structural functionalism that insists on distinct between the public and private ([Aycan, 2008](#)).

The trend of higher WFC within traditional settings seems to align with an "unstable equilibrium" in which the change of gender roles occurs unevenly, in a way that is parallel to two-phase theories in a gender revolution where women's entry into the public sphere and men's entry into the private sphere is not in constant continuity ([Goldscheider et al., 2015](#)). Nordic countries, as the early pioneers in measures of gender equality, show that family-oriented measures (e.g., paid parental leave and subsidized childcare) plus relatively pro-social norms lead to lower WFC. This underscores the fact that policies can ease conflicts and speed gender equality, lightening the gendered "second shift" burden; carried by women ([Hochschild & Machung, 2012](#)). This evidence supports our second hypothesis that women's WFC is higher than men's, which is due in part to the unequal division of household workload. Women also provide part-time or flexible work in exchange for lower wages, which increases their vulnerability to unpaid work in WFC, worldwide as the difference is due to unequal unpaid labor and social norms ([Ollo-Lopez & Goñi-Legaz 2015](#); [Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel 2020](#)). Alongside GI-WFC linkage, our study is also in consensus with earlier studies, that observed upon the socio-economic, cultural, and demographic determinants of WFC (e.g., [Byron, 2005](#), education and high-status jobs ([Grzywacz and Mark, 2000](#)), health status as a mediator ([Gragano et al. 2020](#); [Mullen et al. 2008](#))). Subjective notions of GI, further channelise self-awareness and acknowledgement to individual rights, that shape reported WFCs beyond structural/socio-economic pressures.

By offering a cross-national perspective on gender ideologies and their influence on work-family conflict, we advance the broader literature on the gendered work-family interface. We argue that contextual factors at both the macro level (e.g., policies, labour markets, welfare regimes) and the micro level (e.g., household norms, community expectations) shape the interpretive lens through which gender relations are formed and negotiated ([Begall, Grunow & Buchler, 2023](#); [Esping-Anderson & Billari, 2015](#); [Knight & Brinton, 2017](#)). We, thereby, argue that advancing gender equality and work-life balance requires work-family policies that are not only well-designed, but also tailored to the cultural and institutional contexts of each country. A new, interdisciplinary model, designed not in isolation, is required to assess the problems experienced by double-earning families, with a particular emphasis on women. A comprehensive, yet, context-specific approach is essential, as work-family conflict has well-documented negative consequences for physical, social, and psychological well-being, marital stability, and cognitive functioning—effects that are often more pronounced for women and children ([Greenstein, 1996](#); [Byron, 2005](#); [Mullen et al., 2008](#); [Minnotte et al., 2013](#); [Adams & Golsch, 2022](#)). Our study, however, primarily suffers from two major limitations. First, the cross-sectional nature prohibits causal inference and second, the work-family conflict measure is unidirectional (i.e., unbalanced) based on conventionally widely-considered items, which may not fully reflect the bi-directional nature of the work-family conflict measure and current findings. Nevertheless, the research successfully delivers a global comparative understanding of gender ideologies and work-family conflict, which was its principal aim.

In conclusion, we argue that work-family conflict cannot merely be addressed through a focus on temporal and temporal-resource demands, but can rather be mediated through one's subjective attitudes towards gender ideology. The findings suggest that, conversely, individuals with a more traditional gender ideology have a greater sensitivity towards work/home responsibilities overlap compared with those with an egalitarian gender outlook. This increased sensitivity contributes to significantly higher WFC in view of any deviations from socially assigned gender-specific models of male breadwinner and female homemaker. In light of heterogeneous pathways and stages of gender revolution in the world, the study thus argues for country-specific deliberations on policy to effectively address these issues. Building on cross-cultural learnings and global best practices, these deliberations should seek to advance WFC mitigation strategies and policies that are culturally and context specific to each country and population.

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