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**THE IMPACT OF COLLECTIVISM ORIENTATION AND  
GENDER IDENTITY ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND  
LIFE SATISFACTION RELATIONSHIP: A UK – SPAIN  
COMPARISON**

EL IMPACTO DE LA ORIENTACIÓN AL COLECTIVISMO  
E IDENTIDAD DE GÉNERO EN LA RELACIÓN ENTRE  
CONCILIACIÓN DE LA VIDA LABORAL-PERSONAL Y  
SATISFACCIÓN CON LA VIDA EN REINO UNIDO Y  
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**ABSTRACT**

Difficulties in balancing work and non-work roles have a negative impact on an individual's life satisfaction. This study investigates the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction across the United Kingdom and Spain. It also explores the moderating effects of individual orientations of collectivism and gender identity. The used scales measured Work-life Balance (WLB), Life Satisfaction (LS), Collectivism vs. Individualism orientations, and Gender identity. Collectivism/Individualism was measured and analysed at individual-level rather than at cultural-level. Data was collected from 52 British and 69 Spanish full-time employed women through an online survey. Correlational analyses and hierarchical multiple regression were conducted. Findings indicated that work-life balance had positive effects on life satisfaction across two different cultures. Those effects were stronger for British than Spanish women. Moderating effects were not found. Although, work-life balance, collectivism individual-orientation, and feminine identity predicted life satisfaction in the UK and only work-life balance predicted life satisfaction in Spain. This study extends the literature on work-life balance and life satisfaction relationship and the influence of culture, whilst also contributing to the under-researched area of the influence of gender identity on that relationship. The results might contribute to developing better strategies for promoting work-life balance.

**KEYWORDS**

work-life balance, life satisfaction, influence of culture, gender identity, individual-level orientations of collectivism.

**RESUMEN**

Las dificultades para conciliar el rol laboral y no laboral tienen un impacto negativo en la satisfacción con la vida de un individuo. Este estudio examina la relación entre la conciliación de la vida laboral-personal y la satisfacción con la vida en el Reino Unido y España. Asimismo, explora los efectos moderadores de orientaciones individuales de colectivismo e identidad de género. Las escalas utilizadas midieron la Conciliación de la vida laboral-personal, la Satisfacción con la vida, orientaciones de Colectivismo vs. Individualismo, e Identidad de género. El colectivismo/individualismo se midió y analizó a nivel individual en lugar de a nivel cultural. Los datos se obtuvieron de 52 mujeres británicas y 69 mujeres españolas, empleadas a tiempo completo, a través de un cuestionario en línea. Se realizaron análisis correlacionales y regresión múltiple jerárquica. Los resultados indicaron que la conciliación de la vida laboral-personal tenía efectos positivos en la satisfacción con la vida en dos culturas diferentes. Esos efectos fueron mayores en las mujeres británicas que en las españolas. Efectos moderadores no fueron encontrados. Sin embargo, la conciliación de la vida laboral-personal, orientación individual de colectivismo e identidad femenina predijeron la satisfacción con la vida en el Reino Unido, y solo, conciliación de la vida laboral-personal predijo satisfacción con la vida en España. Este estudio amplía la literatura sobre la relación entre conciliación de la vida laboral-personal y satisfacción con la vida y la influencia de la cultura, además de contribuir al área, poco investigada, de la influencia de la identidad de género en esa relación. Los resultados podrían contribuir al desarrollo de mejores estrategias para promover la conciliación de la vida laboral-personal.

## **PALABRAS CLAVE**

conciliación de la vida laboral y personal, satisfacción con la vida, influencia de la cultura, identidad de género, orientaciones individuales de colectivismo.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Work-life balance research has increased over the last decades due to the increasing difficulty to combine work, family, and personal commitments (Brough & Kalliath, 2009). Difficulties in balancing those life's domains have negative effects on people's well-being (Lyness & Judiesch, 2014). However, there is little research on the positive individual outcomes of work-life balance (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Examining positive individual outcomes could be the next step towards developing better work-life balance policies that facilitated employees to cope better with conflicts between work and life domains. In addition, experiences of balance may be influenced by cultural values and norms (Aycan, 2008) and gender identity (Emslie & Hunt, 2009).

The popular usage of work-life balance has overcome its theoretical development (Valcour, 2007) and a reason could be that scholars struggle to establish a consensual definition (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). This concept is often used in public discourses and has become a core policy priority in the European Union (Lunau et al., 2014). With respect to those work-life balance policies, countries differ significantly. Related to our study, efforts to facilitate a balance between work and life domains in the Anglo-Saxon countries are higher than in the Southern countries but still low. Employees, particularly women, often have to find own solutions to achieve a balance and the dominant solution is to work part-time in the Anglo-Saxon countries (Scherer & Steiber, 2007). In the Southern European countries, public provision including public care facilities for children is minimal and part-time options are unavailable. As a result, employees, mainly women, normally have to decide to work full-time or to stay out of the labour market (McGinnity & Calvert, 2009). Interestingly, employees in Spain work fewer hours than in the UK (Roberts, 2007) as a long-hours culture is predominant in the UK's organisations.

### **Current study**

This study's primary aim is to explore the effects of women's work-life balance on life satisfaction in the United Kingdom and Spain. To date, a few studies only have studied the impact of cultures on work-life balance and its individual outcomes relationships (Haar et al., 2014). Therefore, the second aim is to examine whether the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction differs across countries. Individualism/Collectivism orientation is the most studied cultural dimension in the work-life research (Gelfand, Erez & Aycan, 2007). Because of that, the third aim of this study is to extend research on cultural orientations by measuring and analysing collectivism vs. individualism at the individual-level rather than at cultural-level. In other words, it explores whether individual orientations of collectivism/individualism moderates

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the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction. In addition to collectivism/individualism, this study is one of the few studies that provide an examination of the moderating effects of gender identity on the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction. This study opted for female participants that completed an online questionnaire assessing perceived work-life balance and life satisfaction as well as individual orientations of collectivism and individualism, and gender identity.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Work-life balance**

Some definitions have been conceptualised to build work-life balance as a construct. First, it is relevant to notice that the terminology “work-life balance” and “work-family balance” is often used interchangeably (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). However, “family” focuses on caregiving and activities related to family while “life” also includes other types of personal activities, for example, community involvement, religious activities, and education. The term “work-life balance” reflects more truthfully the current personal life situations and role involvement decisions that characterize contemporary societies (Hall et al., 2013).

Greenhaus and Allen (2011) defined “work-family balance” as the degree to which an individual’s effectiveness and satisfaction assessment in work and non-work roles are well-matched with one’s values at a point in time. Similarly, Kalliath and Brough (2008, p. 326) established that work-life balance is “the individual’s perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual’s current life priorities”. Both definitions are based on a perception-centred approach. This refers to the individual’s subjective evaluation of a balance between employment and nonemployment domains. In addition, these authors do not mention that the time spent in work and non-work activities has to be similar in length. In agreement with Greenhaus and Allen’s perspective of balance (2011), equal high effectiveness or satisfaction in professional and personal roles is not needed to feel balanced unless the roles are of similar priority. For example, employees with children may feel more balanced when they have more time for caregiving, and young employees without children may prefer spending more time at work to promote professional growth or earn more money. The current study focuses on the term work-life balance as it is more recent and relies on the perception-centred perspective by investigating individual evaluations of perceived balance between work and life domains in British women and Spanish women.

### **Work-life balance and life satisfaction**

There have been some models developed to explain work-life balance antecedents and predict people outcomes. For this study, we focus on Carlson and Kacmar’s model (2000) because it determines life satisfaction as the last outcome of work-life balance. This model suggests that several antecedents (including role ambiguity, role conflict, time demands, and involvement in both the work and life domains) lead to conflict between both domains. When individuals experience high role ambiguity, role conflict and/or time demands in the work and/or non-work domains result in conflicts between both domains. In

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other words, conflicts between those domains occur when a role “interfere with” the requirements and achieving effectiveness in the other role (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Further, high involvement in a domain leads to satisfaction in that domain and conflict in the other domain.

The outcomes of the model are different types of satisfaction. Job and family satisfaction increase when levels of work-family conflict decrease. As a consequence, life satisfaction also increases. Such conflicts result in psychological and physical health problems (Greenhaus, Allen, & Spector, 2006) and reduced performance outcomes for individuals, families, and organisations (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Van Steenbergen and Ellemers (2009) provided empirical evidence to demonstrate that employees who experienced low conflict and high facilitation between work and family domains were healthier, less absent, and better performing. Also, Lunau et al. (2014) have provided evidence that work-life balance conflicts are associated with poor self-rated health and mental well-being. Recently, it has been suggested that health is one of the most relevant contributors to well-being and that perceived good health is related to subjective life satisfaction (Frey, 2018). Ollier-Malaterre’s review (2016) has shown studies where work-life conflict is negatively associated with specific life roles satisfaction (e.g. work or family satisfaction) and one’s overall life satisfaction. In this model, work antecedents also directly influence job satisfaction, and family antecedents directly influence family satisfaction. It is relevant to notice that role values, the moderating variable for the model, are based on what the individual believes to be a priority in life. Carlson and Kacmar (2000) stated that only when work and non-work domains were highly valued in people’s lives, job satisfaction was strongly related to satisfaction with one’s overall life. The indirect relationship between perceived balance and life satisfaction shows that individuals’ performance may differ depending on their own life role values.

### **Influence of culture**

It has been suggested that work-life balance experiences are influenced by national cultural values and norms (Aycan, 2008). Hofstede (2011, p.3) states that “culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”. In relation to life satisfaction, Noda (2019) provided empirical evidence on a positive relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction across cultures. Another cross-cultural study (Haar et al., 2014) also identified a significant relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction and explored the moderating effect of some cultural dimensions. To support these findings, we hypothesize:

H1: Work-life balance is positively related to life satisfaction both in the UK and Spain.

The extent research of Hofstede has revealed that each country is characterised by different cultural dimensions. Interestingly, the United Kingdom and Spain represent different tendencies in one critical dimension of culture; individualism/collectivism. The United Kingdom is found to have an individualistic culture and Spain a collectivistic culture. In individualist cultures is expected that individuals only care for themselves and their immediate families. Instead, in collectivist cultures, individuals can expect their relatives or members

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of a specific in-group to care for them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. In line with this, Spector et al. (2007) identified that the relationships between employees' work-family conflict, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions are stronger in the Anglo countries than in Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. A reason can be that showing dissatisfaction and leaving jobs is culturally acceptable in individualistic cultures while employees' dissatisfaction is usually not considered as loyalty to employers, which is a strong cultural norm in collectivist societies (Brough & Kalliath, 2009). Another reason can be that the perception of work-life imbalance is considered an unavoidable cost of promoting family well-being in collectivistic cultures (Aryee et al., 1999). To support this, research has shown that work-life conflict is less detrimental in collectivistic than in individualistic cultures (Lu et al., 2010). Moreover, individualistic cultures benefit from perceiving higher WLB since these cultures are more based on individual achievements and personal interests (Haar et al., 2014). Drawing on these assumptions, we hypothesize:

H2: The relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction is stronger in the UK in comparison to Spain.

### **Gender identity**

Human beings individually perform according to their intentions and beliefs which are culturally shaped (McDowell, 1999). The belief in binary gender divisions (feminine identity vs. masculine identity) has remained a key feature of contemporary social practices. "Gender identity" is conceptualized as an individual's subjective sense of one's gender (Nadal, 2017). Gender roles and stereotypes are set during childhood by gender socialization processes and strengthened along adulthood by expectancy confirmation processes (Lippa, 2005). Traditionally, women have been expected to exhibit "feminine" traits (e.g., sensitivity to the needs of others) considered relevant in the family domain, while men have been expected to exhibit "masculine" traits (e.g., independence) considered relevant in the work domain (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010).

Currently, it is observable that the labour market is still a gendered structure with women clustered in low-paid, low-status jobs and men in high-paid, high-status jobs at the present (Kelan, 2009). Organizational practices are still based on gendered values supported by men's and women's gendered beliefs about traditionally work and family roles, perpetuating, for example, an unequal household division of labour (Gregory & Milner, 2009). Some studies support these assumptions showing that household chores and childcare responsibilities seem to remain women's primary domain while the workplace persists as the primary domain for men. Although, the number of studies supporting the growth of gender similarity has increased (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). The traditional male breadwinner/female caregiver ideology has implications for work-life balance practice (Mescher, Benschop & Doorewaard, 2010) and research (Emslie & Hunt, 2009). For example, women in dual-career partnerships spend more time on domestic work than their male partners, and this impacts negatively on their work-life balance (Stratton, 2003). In addition, studies comparing men's and women's work-life balance have found different results. A few studies have found that females report more work-life conflict than males and others have shown that males and females report the same

levels of conflict (Emslie & Hunt, 2009). In order to extend research on gender identity and its implications for work-life balance and life satisfaction relationship as well as to extend research on the moderating effects of collectivism orientations at individual-level rather than at cultural-level, we hypothesise:

H3: The relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction is moderated by individual-level orientations of (a) collectivism and (b) feminine identity, regardless of the national culture.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

Data were collected from two countries, the United Kingdom and Spain, in 2019 and included two samples. The first sample comprised 52 women from the United Kingdom and the second sample included 69 women from Spain. The combined sample consisted of 121 employed women. The total sample size was appropriate at a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. To be eligible for participation, respondents were required to be British or Spanish women, over 18 years old and full-time employed.

Demographics characteristics for the UK, Spain, and total sample are presented in Table 1. The British sample ranged from 20 to 64 years ( $M_{age} = 35.38$  years,  $SD = 11.84$ ). Most participants were graduated from university (Bachelor's degree = 40.4%) and were partnered (44.2%). Thirty-six per cent of women had children ( $M = 1.84$  children,  $SD = 0.76$ ). Women worked in different sectors (Public sector = 46.2%, Private sector = 48.1%) and had an average work experience of 58.08 months ( $SD = 87.27$ ). The Spanish sample ranged from 21 to 64 years ( $M_{age} = 39.06$  years,  $SD = 13.01$ ). The majority of women had studied for a bachelor's degree (49.3%) and were married (34.8%) and had children ( $M = 1.83$  children,  $SD = 0.90$ ). The same percentage of women (44.9%) worked in public and private sectors and had been working an average of 153.98 months ( $SD = 145.75$ ) in the current job.

**Table 1.** Demographics of the British sample, Spanish sample, and total sample.

	<i>British Sample</i>	<i>Spanish Sample</i>	<i>Total Sample</i>
Sample Size	52	69	121
<b>AGE (in years)</b>			
Minimum	20	21	20
Maximum	64	64	64
Mean	35.38	39.06	37.45
SD	11.84	13.01	12.60
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
Secondary Education	3.8%	-	1.7%
Vocational education or college	25.0%	15.9%	19.8%
Bachelor's Degree	40.4%	49.3%	45.5%
Master's Degree	21.2%	24.6%	23.1%
Doctorate Degree	-	-	-
Other	9.6%	2.9%	5.8%
<b>WORKING IN HOME COUNTRY</b>			
Yes	84.6%	89.9%	87.6%
No	15.4%	4.3%	9.1%

<b>INDUSTRY</b>			
Private	48.1%	44.9%	46.3%
Public	46.2%	44.9%	45.5%
Others	3.8%	1.4%	2.5%
<b>WORK EXPERIENCE (in months)</b>			
Minimum	1	1	1
Maximum	444	456	456
Mean	58.08	153.98	116
SD	87.27	145.75	111.82
<b>RELATIONSHIP STATUS</b>			
Single	25.0%	14.5%	19.0%
Partnered	44.2%	27.5%	34.7%
Married	25.0%	34.8%	30.6%
Separated/Divorced	3.8%	7.2%	5.8
Widow	-	1.4%	0.8%
Rather not say	-	2.9%	1.7%
<b>MARRIED TIME (in months)</b>			
Minimum	24	24	24
Maximum	492	480	492
Mean	159.43	253.24	222.70
SD	128.42	124.18	131.77
<b>HAVE CHILDREN</b>			
Yes	36.5%	53.6%	46.3%
No	63.5%	37.7%	48.8%
<b>NUMBER CHILDREN</b>			
Minimum	1	1	1
Maximum	3	6	6
Mean	1.84	1.83	1.83
SD	0.76	0.90	0.85

### Procedure

The ethics committee of the University of the West of England approved this research. Participants were recruited via e-mail contact, as well as advertising the study in English and Spanish on social networks (LinkedIn and Facebook). We also asked people to share the link with their contacts following basic principles of snowball sampling. This sampling strategy was selected to approach individuals from a broad range of professional backgrounds and ages. Due to the reached participants were unknown, the response rate was not possible to calculate. Data were collected through an online questionnaire using Qualtrics software. An English version of the questionnaire for British women and a Spanish version for Spanish women were used. Participants were required to read an information sheet and consent to participation in the study. We underlined that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time. To increase the accuracy of the responses, women were guaranteed anonymity. Participants were told that the study was designed to examine women's work-life balance and its impact on life satisfaction across two different countries, the United Kingdom and Spain. At the end of the questionnaire, some demographic questions were also completed by all respondents. The last page of the questionnaire was the debrief form. The questionnaire took no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

### Materials

Considering work-life balance as a holistic construct, unique for each individual depending on one's life values, priorities, and goals (Kossek, Valcour & Lirio, 2014), this study focused on women's perception. Data were collected



using a self-report questionnaire formed by four scales and demographics questions in the following order.

### **Work-life Balance Scale**

Work-life balance was measured using Brough et al. (2014) 4-item self-report scale. The questionnaire starts with the statement “When I reflect over my work and non-work activities (your regular activities outside of work such as family, friends, sports, study, etc.), over the past three months, I conclude that” followed by 4 items. Respondents were required to rate the degree to which the descriptors, concerning their state of balance, applied to them. A sample item is “I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities”. The measure used a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). One item was reversed. The Cronbach alpha estimate for this scale in the UK sample was .89 and in the Spain sample was .71. The reliability of the combined sample for this scale was .82.

The survey was translated into Spanish using the back translation for the Spanish sample. According to Bundgaard and Brøgger (2019), this process consists, firstly, translating the original instrument into another language by one or more translators (forward translation). This translation is then back-translated into the original version language by one or more translators (back-translation). Subsequently, a comparison between the original items and the back-translated items is conducted to identify and solve discrepancies of meaning. Lastly, the final version is prepared.

### **Satisfaction with Life Scale**

Life satisfaction was measured using the 5-item self-report scale designed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985). Using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*), participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with statements related to their perception of self-satisfaction with life. A sample item is “If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing”. The Spanish version used of this scale was translated by Atienza, Pons, Balaguer, and García-Merita (2000). The Cronbach alpha for this scale in the UK sample was 0.85 and in the Spain sample was 0.87. The combined sample had internal reliability of 0.86.

### **Culture Orientation Scale**

The culture orientation scale (Triandis & Gelfland, 1998) was used to measure two distinct cultural patterns, individualism and collectivism. The 16-item self-report scale is designed to measure two kinds of individualism and collectivism; horizontal and vertical individualism, and horizontal and vertical collectivism. This study focuses on the main constructs, individualism and collectivism. A sample of collectivist item is “I feel good when I cooperate with others” and an individualistic item is “Winning is everything”. Respondents were required to rate the degree to which the items applied to them using a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*). The Spanish version used was translated by Díaz Rivera, Díaz Loving, and González Rivera (2017). The reliability of this scale for the combined sample was 0.67. The coefficient alpha in the UK sample was 0.58 and in the Spain sample was 0.72.

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### **Bem Sex-Role Inventory**

Masculinity and femininity were measured using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). This instrument was developed to measure the degree to which respondents identify with stereotyped gender-roles traits, characteristics qualified as masculine or feminine. It consists of 60-items divided into 2 subscales (masculine traits -20 items- and feminine traits -20 items-) and 20 neutral items. A sample of a masculine item is "Ambitious" and a feminine item is "Warm". Respondents were asked to rate themselves on each item using a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*). The Spanish version used was translated by Bosques, Álvarez, and Escoto (2015). The internal reliability of this scale for the combined sample was 0.77. The Cronbach alpha for this scale in the UK sample was 0.70 and in the Spanish sample was 0.91.

### **Demographics questions**

In order to know the individuals that took part in this research, some demographics characteristics were asked at the end of the questionnaire. Participants were asked for their age, highest level of education completed, whether the job was located in their home countries or not, job industry, work experience (in years and months), relationship status, married time (in years), children and number of children.

## **RESULTS**

The findings of the study are reported in this section. Prior to analysis, data sets from the British sample and the Spanish sample were separately prepared. After identifying and excluding 17 British and 32 Spanish participants with incomplete data (<90%), data was screened for violations of normality. Missing data was found in the British sample (0.22 %) and the Spanish sample (0.68 %). To run the analyses, data sets from both samples were combined into a single data set and nationality was coded as 0 = *British* and 1 = *Spanish*. Data was analysed using the SPSS. Firstly, descriptive analysis was used to summarise the characteristics of the participants that took part in this research. Further, independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine whether the scores of the British sample and Spanish sample for the study variables were significantly different. Secondly, a correlational analysis and a hierarchical multiple regression were run to test hypotheses. The correlational analysis helped us to identify relationships among the study variables and the multiple regression mainly to examine the moderating effects of predictors on the criterion variable. Thirdly, some exploratory analysis was conducted and significant findings were found when running a correlational analysis examining differences between women with children and women without children.

### **Descriptive analysis**

Descriptive and independent samples t – test statistics for the variables of interest for the British and Spanish samples are provided in Table 2. British women reported significantly higher work-life balance ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) than Spanish women ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD = .88$ ),  $t(93.45) = 2.64$ ,  $p = .01$ . This result may suggest that Spanish women experience more work-life conflicts. There was not significant difference in life satisfaction scores between the Spanish

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sample ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) and the British sample ( $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = .88$ ),  $t(119) = .36$ ,  $p = .71$ . Both samples indicated higher collectivism orientation scores than individualism scores;  $M_{collectivism} = 3.95$ ,  $SD = .40$  vs  $M_{individualism} = 3.29$ ,  $SD = .45$  for the British sample and  $M_{collectivism} = 4.29$ ,  $SD = .38$  vs  $M_{individualism} = 3.31$ ,  $SD = .52$  for the Spanish sample. Spanish women were significantly more collectivistic than British women, ( $t(119) = 4.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Women reported higher feminine identity scores than masculine identity in both samples;  $M_{feminine} = 3.57$ ,  $SD = .34$  vs  $M_{masculine} = 3.34$ ,  $SD = .39$  for British women and  $M_{feminine} = 3.72$ ,  $SD = .35$  vs  $M_{masculine} = 3.27$ ,  $SD = .44$  for Spanish women. These results can be explained by the extended gender binary division where males are assigned to a masculine identity and females to a feminine identity. Spanish women rated significantly higher in feminine identity than did British women,  $t(119) = 2.33$ ,  $p = .02$ .

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples T-Tests for the study variables for the British sample and Spanish sample.

	British ( $n = 52$ )		Spanish ( $n = 69$ )		$t$	$df$
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$		
Work-life balance	3.08	1.09	2.59	.88	2.64*	93.45
Life satisfaction	3.38	.88	3.44	.79	.36	119
Individualism	3.29	.45	3.31	.52	.29	119
Collectivism	3.95	.40	4.29	.38	4.61**	119
Feminine Identity	3.57	.34	3.72	.35	2.33*	119
Masculine Identity	3.34	.39	3.27	.44	.83	119

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ , \*\* =  $p \leq .001$

### Hypothesis Testing

Correlational analyses were used to examine the relationships among the study variables and test our first and second hypotheses. We hypothesized that work-life balance was positively related to life satisfaction in both countries and that this relationship was stronger in the UK than in Spain. As expected in our first hypothesis, work-life balance and life satisfaction were moderately positively correlated across the two countries. British women (see Table 3) reported a stronger correlation between work-life balance and life satisfaction ( $r(52) = .42$ ,  $p < .01$ ) in comparison to Spanish women (see Table 4),  $r(69) = .34$ ,  $p < .01$ . In other words, the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction was stronger in the UK than in Spain supporting our second hypothesis. Further, masculine identity was significantly correlated with individualism in the British sample ( $r(52) = .59$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and in the Spanish sample ( $r(69) = .55$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In addition, feminine identity and collectivism were significantly correlated with each other in both samples. A stronger correlation is reported between those variables in the Spanish sample ( $r(69) = .46$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than in the British sample ( $r(52) = .29$ ,  $p = .03$ ). Moreover, there was a significantly negative correlation between masculine and feminine identity in the Spanish sample ( $r(69) = -.25$ ,  $p = .04$ ), but not in the British sample.

**Table 3.** Scale Reliability Scores and Pearson Correlations for all continuous study variables for the British sample.

<i>Measure</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
1. Work-life balance	52	.89					
2. Life satisfaction	52	.85	.425**				
3. Individualism	52	.64	-.053	.126			
4. Collectivism	52	.62	.094	.186	-.018		
5. Feminine Identity	52	.79	.170	-.152	-.197	.294*	
6. Masculine Identity	52	.82	.044	.220	.595**	.076	-.085

\*\* Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

\*Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

**Table 4.** Scale Reliability Scores and Pearson Correlations for all continuous study variables for the Spanish sample.

<i>Measure</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
1. Work-life balance	69	.71					
2. Life satisfaction	69	.87	.344**				
3. Individualism	69	.69	.034	.121			
4. Collectivism	69	.63	-.092	.052	.222		
5. Feminine Identity	69	.77	.028	-.050	-.060	.463**	
6. Masculine Identity	69	.84	-.035	.070	.549**	.056	-.248*

\*\* Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

\*Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

In our third hypothesis, we stated that the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction was moderated by individual-level orientations of collectivism and feminine identity regardless of the culture. To test this hypothesis, a four-step hierarchical multiple regression was performed to examine whether variations in work-life balance, collectivism orientation, and feminine identity significantly predicted variations in the criterion variable, Life Satisfaction, in both samples. This analysis is appropriate for this study because it permits to build models by adding variables at each step and determine which model explains a more significant variance in the criterion variable. A sample size of 121 was considered appropriate given three independent variables to be included in the regression analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Regression statistics are reported in Table 5 for the British Sample and in Table 6 for the Spanish Sample. To perform the regression, interaction terms (Work-life Balance x Collectivism Orientation and Work-life Balance x Feminine Identity) were created to test the moderating effects on the criterion variable. Step 1 of the regression (Model 1) involved examining the relationship between Work-life Balance and Life Satisfaction. Step 2 (Model 2) involved adding Collectivism Orientation to the previous model. Step 3 (Model 3) involved including Feminine Identity. Step 4 (Model 4) involved adding both interaction terms to test the moderation hypothesis.

The hierarchical multiple regression for the British sample revealed that the best fitting model for predicting life satisfaction is model 3. The results indicated that after controlling for work-life balance, collectivism orientation and feminine identity explained a significant variance in the criterion variable ( $R^2 = .29$ ,  $F(3, 47) = 6.39$ ,  $p = .001$ ). ANOVA results displayed that work-life balance ( $\beta = .45$ ,  $p = .001$ ), collectivism orientation ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p = .04$ ) and feminine identity ( $\beta = -.28$ ,  $p = .03$ ) significantly predicted life satisfaction. As illustrated, work-life balance is

the best predictor of life satisfaction, and feminine identity negatively predicted life satisfaction. In other words, work-life balance had the largest impact on participants' life satisfaction. Collectivism orientation and feminine identity had also effects on satisfaction with life, acting as predictors of the criterion variable, but not as moderators in the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction.

In comparison with the British sample, the Spanish sample experienced less amount of variation in all the models. The best-fitting model for predicting the criterion variable is also model 3. The results revealed that the predictors work-life balance, collectivism orientation and feminine identity explained 14% of the variation in life satisfaction ( $R^2 = .14$ ,  $F(3, 65) = 3.47$ ,  $p = .02$ ). ANOVA results shown that in this model only work-life balance significantly predicted satisfaction with life ( $\beta = .36$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Collectivism orientation ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $p = .27$ ) and feminine identity ( $\beta = -.12$ ,  $p = .33$ ) did not significantly predict the criterion variable. This means that collectivism orientations and feminine identity had no significant effects on life satisfaction among Spanish women.

Overall, the results suggest that work-life balance is not only related positively to life satisfaction, but variations in perceived work-life balance predict changes in life satisfaction. These variations in work-life balance have larger effects on life satisfaction in the British sample in comparison with the Spanish sample. Further, collectivism orientations and feminine identity predict satisfaction with life among British women, but not among Spanish women. This difference means that country-level contexts moderate the relationship of work-life balance, collectivism orientations, and feminine identity with life satisfaction. Moderating effects of collectivism orientations and feminine identity were not found regretting our third hypothesis.

**Table 5.** Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for variables predicting Life Satisfaction for the British Sample.

	Coefficients			Model Statistics				
	B	SE B	$\beta$	N	R <sup>2</sup>	F	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Model 1				52	.18	10.81**		
Constant	2.35	.34						
Work-life balance	.34	.10	.42**					
Model 2				52	.22	6.65**	.04	4.16
Constant	.76	1.12						
Work-life balance	.32	.10	.40**					
Collectivism	.41	.27	.19					
Model 3				52	.29	6.39***	.07	.26
Constant	2.59	1.36						
Work-life balance	.36	.10	.45***					
Collectivism	.57	.28	.27*					
Feminine Identity	-.72	.33	-.28*					
Model 4				52	.31	4.04**	.02	2.35
Constant	4.03	3.68						
Work-life balance	-.17	1.11	-.22					
Collectivism	.94	.70	.43					
Feminine Identity	-1.56	.84	-.61					
Work-life Balance x Collectivism	-.14	.21	-.79					
Work-life Balance x Feminine Identity	.32	.29	1.51					

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ , \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$



**Table 6.** Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables predicting Life Satisfaction for the Spanish Sample.

	Coefficients			Model Statistics				
	B	SE B	$\beta$	N	R <sup>2</sup>	F	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Model 1				69	.12	8.99**		
Constant	2.63	.28						
Work-life balance	.31	.10	.34**					
Model 2				69	.13	4.73**	.01	4.26
Constant	1.87	1.07						
Work-life balance	.31	.10	.35**					
Collectivism	.17	.23	.08					
Model 3				69	.14	3.47*	.01	1.26
Constant	2.40	1.20						
Work-life balance	.32	.10	.36**					
Collectivism	.29	.26	.14					
Feminine Identity	-.28	.29	-.12					
Model 4				69	.14	2.11	.00	1.36
Constant	3.13	3.60						
Work-life balance	.00	1.33	.01					
Collectivism	.59	.83	.29					
Feminine Identity	-.82	.91	-.36					
Work-life Balance x Collectivism	-.12	.31	-.60					
Work-life Balance x Feminine Identity	.22	.36	.99					

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ , \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

### Exploratory analysis

To examine differences between women with and without children, analyses were performed. There were not enough women with children in each sample to run analyses comparing countries. Due to that, we only divided women with children and women without children. Descriptive analysis shown that perceived work-life balance on women with children ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) and women without children ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) was not significantly different,  $t(112) = 1.22$ ,  $p = .22$ . A correlational analysis shown that women with children reported a significantly moderate correlation between work-life balance and life satisfaction ( $r(55) = .44$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and women with no children a small correlation ( $r(59) = .29$ ,  $p = .02$ ). This suggests that women with children can benefit more from work-life balance, being more satisfied with life when perceived work-life balance is higher. In addition, individualism orientation and masculine identity were significantly correlated with each other in both conditions; women with children ( $r(55) = .60$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and women without children ( $r(59) = .46$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Collectivism orientation was negatively related to masculine identity ( $r(55) = -.28$ ,  $p = .03$ ) and positively related to feminine identity ( $r(55) = .60$ ,  $p < .001$ ) among women with children. Women with no children reported a significantly positive relationship between collectivism orientation and masculine identity ( $r(59) = .37$ ,  $p = .004$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The current study investigated the impact of work-life balance on life satisfaction and the moderating effects of collectivism individual-orientation and feminine identity on the relationship in two different cultures. An interesting finding is that British women experienced a higher degree of work-life balance in comparison to Spanish women. In Spain, women were at higher risk of experiencing conflicts between work and life domains. Concerning cultural orientation differences, Spanish women identified themselves as more collectivist, compared with British women. Although, British women reported a higher collectivism orientation than individualism orientation, in contrast to Hofstede's research (1973) that considers the United Kingdom as a more individualistic society in comparison to Spain. Spanish women also identified themselves as more feminine than British women. Further, masculine identity and individualism were closely associated in both countries. Similarly, feminine identity was related to collectivism in both cultures, albeit this relationship was stronger in Spain. A reason can be that masculine identity and individualism share characteristics associated with oneself goals and independence, and feminine identity and collectivism share characteristics associated with cooperation and caring for the weak. In addition, it was also found a negative relationship between masculine and feminine identity for Spanish women. This may suggest that the belief in binary gender division (masculine identity vs feminine identity) is stronger in Spain than in the UK. To support this finding, a study suggested that family roles remain as traditionally in Spain, being women who still do almost all the housework in dual-earner partnerships (Álvarez & Miles, 2003).

A key finding of this study is that work-life balance had a positive impact on women's life satisfaction in both countries, and that impact was greater in the United Kingdom in comparison to Spain. A possible explanation is related to the importance of work-life balance for individuals in individualist societies as it is considered the United Kingdom (Spector et al., 2007). Those individuals have a perceived responsibility for achieving a balance and when this balance is achieved, work-life balance may lead to greater feelings of life satisfaction (Haar et al., 2014). Conversely, in collectivistic societies as in Spain, work can be viewed as self-sacrifice for the family reducing perceptions of conflict between work and life domains (Galovan et al., 2010). It was hypothesised that the impact of work-life balance on life satisfaction would be moderated by individual orientations of collectivism as well as feminine identity. Moderating effects were not found. However, work-life balance, collectivism, and feminine identity were found to predict life satisfaction in the UK while only work-life balance was found to predict life satisfaction in Spain. Countries' overall contexts thus appeared to act as a moderator. Country-level contexts influence individuals' experiences (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013). A potential explanation is that the UK and Spain represent slightly different tendencies in terms of efforts to facilitate work-life balance and public provisions, cultural dimensions or economic conditions. Nevertheless, our results can not be determined whether they are related to culture, norms or economic conditions. Some exploratory analysis showed that significant differences in work-life balance were not found between women with and without children, regardless of culture. Albeit, women with children may

benefit more from higher perceived work-life balance, compared with women without children.

### **Implications and future research**

This study contributes to work-life balance theory in different ways. Firstly, we support prior work and, particularly, Carlson and Kacmar's model (2000) on the individual outcomes of work-life balance in life satisfaction. Second, this study supports research on the perception-centered approach characterising work-life balance by measuring and analysing perceived WLB. Third, it extends research on the association between work-life balance and life satisfaction across cultures. This is relevant given that we compare countries that present a different tendency regarding their cultural dimensions in terms of individualism/collectivism (Haar et al., 2014). Fourth, this study is one of the few studies that extend research by examining the outcomes of work-life balance on life satisfaction considering the influence of gender identity. Overall, our work enriches comparative research in this field at the individual level and contributes to the gap between country-level contexts and individual-level orientations (Ollier-Malaterre, 2016). Regarding practical implications, this research can contribute to developing better ways of promoting WLB by implementing work-life policies, such as flexible working hours, and a supportive work culture (Hammer et al., 2011).

Our findings showing that an individual-level orientation of collectivism and feminine identity predict life satisfaction highlights the need for further research to test new individual orientations. Future research is required to test different cultural dimensions as individualism/collectivism is the most studied cultural dimension in the work-life research (Gelfand, Erez & Aycan, 2007). Drawing from our findings and previous research, future research might be thus addressed to test and include individual orientations and cultural dimensions on Carlson and Kacmar's model (2000). The development of new studies with life span approaches will help the next generation of work-life research (Allen & Martin, 2017). Research is needed to refine scales, particularly, Spanish versions because they have some limitations and the Spanish version of the work-life balance scale were not found.

### **Limitations and strengths**

There are several limitations to our study. Firstly, this research is cross-sectional and data self-reported. Although this approach is common in other cross-cultural studies in this field (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Due to its cross-sectional design, the causal relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction is unclear, as life dissatisfaction could be a cause of experiencing difficulties in balancing work and life. Furthermore, a self-report approach is required to precisely explore the perception of work-life balance (Haar et al., 2013). Secondly, we acknowledge that the British and Spanish samples sizes are small, although the combined sample size is appropriate to run multiple regression. Regression can be biased depending on the sample size (Martens et al., 2006). Thirdly, data was collected from a snowball sampling method limiting its generalizability (Lamm & Meeks, 2009). Also, Spanish versions of the scales have some limitations. The back-translation in the work-life balance scale has some limitations (Ozolins, 2009). It works better when the languages and cultures involved are closer. The same meaning usually needs to be

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expressed using different words that in contrast, back-translation may not reflect. Words in one language may not have equivalents in other. Regarding the satisfaction with life scale, the Spanish version may have some limitations as Atienza et al. (2000) translated the scale into Spanish for a sample of adolescents. Also, Bosques, Álvarez, and Escoto (2015) translated the Bem Sex-Role Inventory for Mexicans, not for individuals from Spain.

Some study strengths merit comment including the relevance of its implications. Firstly, this study provides evidence that strongly supports and extends previous work-life research. It provides empirical evidence supporting Carlson and Kacmar's model (2000) on the individual outcomes of work-life balance in life satisfaction. Secondly, it also presents strong empirical evidence reporting differences in the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction across two different countries and the influence of culture in the relationship. Thirdly, the study also provides evidence on cultural orientations of collectivism/individualism measured and analyzed at individual level rather than at cultural level. Lastly, the performed analysis was appropriate for the aim of this study, particularly, multiple regression to examine the moderating effects of collectivism orientations and feminine identity.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, our findings indicate that high work-life balance is associated with high life satisfaction across the United Kingdom and Spain and that positive association is stronger in the UK, compared with Spain. Work-life balance also positively predicts life satisfaction. Moreover, the results show that individual orientations of collectivism and feminine identity predict life satisfaction on British women, instead of moderating the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction as we expected. However, only work-life balance predicts life satisfaction among Spanish women. Therefore, the relations of work-life balance, collectivism orientations, and feminine identity with life satisfaction vary depending on women's country-contexts.

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