

# Gender Role Attitudes and Striving for Achievement as Antecedents of Work-Family Conflict in Employed Spouses in Croatia

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*The aim of this research was to examine attitudes about gender roles in marriage (GRA) and striving for achievement (SFA) as antecedents within a model of work-family conflict on a sample of employed spouses in Croatia. Job (assessments of psychological requirements and social support at work) and family characteristics (quality of family functioning and social support in the family) were examined as mediators of the relationship between SFA and GRA with work-to-family (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC), along with studying the model invariance regarding spouse gender. The study was conducted on a total of 358 employed spouses in Croatia who have at least one child in the household, using the research method of self-assessments. The results show support for complete mediation of higher levels of favourable work and family assessments in the relationship of more egalitarian GRA and lower SFA of spouses with lower levels of WFC and FWC. Organizations should be aware of and support the differences in the strivings and attitudes of their employees as well as the diversity of their life roles.*

**Key words:** work-family conflict, gender, dual-earners, striving for achievement, gender role attitudes.

## INTRODUCTION

Work-family conflict is one of the most studied constructs in research on balancing multiple life roles, usually defined as the experience that the demands of an individual's work and family roles are mutually incompatible or that meeting the requirements of one role makes it more difficult or even disables meeting the requirements of the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985: 77). The literature is still giving role conflict theory a lot of atten-

tion, and it offers a thorough theoretical framework for the investigation of role conflict in the workplace and family. According to this hypothesis, going through conflict or uncertainty in a role will lead to an unpleasant state. The phrase "work (family) role conflict" refers to the conflicts, difficulties, and tensions people may experience in relation to their responsibilities, expectations, and behaviors in, out of, and between each role (work and family). As it becomes increasingly challenging to

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carry out each function effectively, having several responsibilities can produce personal conflicts due to competing demands (such as time constraints and incompatible behaviors) among other factors. Thus, studying antecedents of work-family conflict is important to try to decrease the detrimental effects of the experience. Most researchers distinguish conflict due to the disrupting interference of work-to-family life (work-to-family conflict; WFC) and conflict due to the disrupting interference of family-to-work life (family-to-work conflict; FWC) (e.g., Frone et al., 1992). This division has also been accepted in studies in Croatia (e.g., Dobrotić & Laklija, 2009; Šimunić et al., 2014).

Numerous theoretical models have been proposed and/or tested which include structural, social, and psychological demands and resources of multiple life roles (Frone et al., 1992; Michel et al., 2011; Mihelić & Tekavčić, 2014), along with personal coping mechanisms such as social support (Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Frone et al., 1997; Michel et al., 2010) as antecedents of work-family conflict. Characteristics directly related to the individual, such as personality traits (especially locus of control and positive/negative affect), are increasingly being studied as antecedents of work-family conflict (Michel et al., 2009; Priyadharshini & Wesley, 2014). In a comprehensive meta-analytic study by Michel et al. (2011) based on 1080 correlations from 178 samples, the results show that the following factors are work-to-family conflict (WFC) antecedents: work role stressors (job stressors, role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, time demands), work role involvement (job involvement, work interest/centrality), work social support (organizational support, supervisor support, co-worker support), work characteristics (task variety, job autonomy, family-friendly organization), and personality

(internal locus of control, negative affect/neuroticism). On the other hand, family role stressors (family stressors, role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, time demands, parental demands, number of children/dependents), family social support (family support, spousal support), family characteristics (family climate), and personality (internal locus of control, negative affect/neuroticism) were found to be antecedents of family-to-work conflict (FWC). Despite a significant body of research on the antecedents of WFC, little effort has been made to comprehend some crucial factors, such as the importance of life roles, values, gender, and the traits of a spouse (Chrisangika Perera & Kailasapathy, 2020; Šimunić, 2020), especially of those examining the interaction of personal and situational factors in the perception of work-family conflict (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Nonetheless, when the individual experiencing work-family conflict has an employed spouse, balancing work and family life is likely to be a joint concern. Thus, the characteristics of both spouses should be considered (Hammer et al., 1997). Factors such as the power of gender role transition and the importance individuals give to certain roles can determine cross-cultural variations of work-family conflict, and it is therefore necessary to give them special consideration, rather than to generalize the data from other, Western, more developed countries. Although Croatia follows a long tradition of women's participation in the labor market, it is evident that there are no major changes in family practices in the private sphere (Dobrotić, 2017). When comparing practices in EU countries, Croatians have one of the most prominent gender gaps in household and childcare affairs and it is more difficult for women to reach higher work positions. Such gender differences are far more pronounced in countries with

underdeveloped policies of work-family harmonization, and countries whose family policy models rely on long-term parenting, primarily targeted at mothers and accompanied by low fees and underdeveloped services for children and the elderly, also characterizing Croatia (Dobrotić, 2015). The need for change is emphasized both at the value level and at the level of everyday practice, but empirical data on the dynamics of values and everyday practice and their relations to work-family issues is lacking in Croatia, as well as in other transitional countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

In some previous studies on work-family conflict in marital partners in Croatia and southern Herzegovina gender role attitudes and striving for achievement (through power and competition) were found to be interesting variables when taking into account work-family conflict of both spouses (Kokorić et al., 2014; Gjurčić et al., 2014; Šimunić et al., 2011; Šimunić et al., 2017; Šimunić, 2020a). The results of such research have shown that a more traditional gender role attitude and a higher striving for achievement of spouses (especially of men) correlated with perceptions of higher levels of work-family conflicts, especially of family-to-work conflict. Also, higher levels of striving for achievement were shown to be significantly correlated with more traditional attitudes on gender roles, while both were correlated with lower perceived levels of social support, and lower quality of family functioning in both men and women. Traditional gender role attitudes encourage differences in the roles of men and women in the sense that women need to give greater importance to family commitments and men to work commitments, while egalitarians do not support gender segregation and promote equal expectations of men and women within work and family roles

(Lachman, 1991). When speaking of striving for achievement, the concept examined in the aforementioned and this research (originally Success, Power, and Competition) was first presented by O'Neil (1981) as one of the two main outcomes of the process of socialization of masculinity (the second outcome is restrictive emotionality). O'Neil (1981a; 1981b) concludes that men's socialization takes place through the interaction of environmental and biological factors that produce certain masculine values, and names the whole process a gender role conflict. Gender role conflict refers to the psychological state of socialized gender roles having negative consequences for the individual and other persons and it appears when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles result in personal restraints, degradation, self-harm, or harming others. The ultimate outcome of such a conflict is the restriction of personal potential or the potential of another person. In line with this, results of previous studies show that striving for achievement (through power and competition) is associated with several disadvantages: paranoia and negative attitudes towards seeking help and less willingness to seek help (Good & al., 1996), dominance and hostility (Mahalik, 1996), with stress and depression (Fragoso & Kashubeck, 2000), etc. Some authors look at the construct as one of the Type A personality features (Williams & Cooper, 1998), which are consistently associated with work-family conflict and higher levels of stress. The possibility that the untoward effects of what has been cast as gender role conflict in men are simply characteristics that also create difficulties for women led to studies, although scarce, validating the instrument on women (e.g., Nikolić et al., 2014; Zamarripa et al., 2003). It may be that factors such as restricted emotionality or conflict between work and family simply are

aspects of personhood that are associated with mental health. However, these characteristics may be particularly detrimental to men because of socialization and expectations placed on men by society.

It seems possible that traditional gender role ideology (including the related components of gender role conflict) is a type of inflexibility and rigidity that is unfavourable in today's society where gender equality is all the more encouraged, and especially in families where both spouses are employed, it might inhibit the individual and those he/she interacts with to adequately adapt to a given situation (Cohen, 2009). Cohen (2009) presumed that those who prefer conservative values that emphasize submissive self-restraint, the preservation of traditional patterns of behavior, and the protection of stability (security, conformism, and tradition), will be more passive in using coping strategies and will therefore experience higher levels of work-family conflicts (especially family-to-work conflict). However, in the same study, no association was observed between conservative values on the one hand and work-family conflicts and coping strategies on the other. This result is explained by the possibility that such values are not relevant in the population examined, i.e. among people involved in high technology, and that the research should be repeated in other cultures and environments. The results of research conducted by Cohen and Kirchmeyer (2005) showed that members of traditional cultures (e.g., Arabs) perceive the examined aspects of the work-family interface differently (work-family conflict, work-family facilitation, etc.) than less traditional cultures. The authors noted that conservative values can be expected to be associated with these variables in more traditional cultures. Therefore, it is considered that conservative values can be expected to

be associated with work-family interface variables in more traditional cultures such as Croatia.

In the attempt to further explain the relations of gender role attitudes and of striving for achievement with work-family conflicts, it seemed interesting and important to examine whether these personal characteristics, of both spouses are indirectly related to work-family conflict through certain work and family (situational) characteristics usually shown as predictors of both types of conflict. Therefore, the aim of this research was to examine the role of attitudes toward gender roles in marriage and striving for achievement of spouses as antecedents within a model of work-family conflict on a sample of employees in Croatia. More specifically, the aim was to test a model in which perceived quality of family life (favourable family assessments) and quality of work-life (favourable work assessments) mediate the relationship between subjects' and their spouses' striving for achievement (defined as a personality trait) and gender role attitudes with the experience of a work-to-family and family-to-work conflict. The mediators determining the quality of work-life were social support at work (from the supervisor and colleagues) and psychological demands of work (job control and difficulty/workload), while the mediators determining the quality of family life were social support in the family (from the spouse and other members of the family and close others) and the quality of family functioning (family competence and conflict). These work and family characteristics were taken into account due to their shown predictive power and relationships with striving for achievement and gender role attitudes in previous research on work-family conflict in Croatia (e.g., Šimunić, 2020a). The following hypotheses were derived in accordance with the

study aim, in two directions: first, considering the relative importance of work and family characteristics in explaining both directions of work and family conflict and, second, the proposed antecedent role of striving for achievement and gender role attitudes of both spouses in relation to the assessments of work and family characteristics and work-family conflict. A depiction of the assumed relationships associated with these hypotheses is shown in Figure 1.

*HYPOTHESIS I:* Based on the results of previous studies and various theoretical assumptions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Frone et al., 1997; Michel et al., 2011) it was assumed in this research that *favourable assessments of work and family characteristics (that is, assessments implying lower levels of work and family stress – greater social support at work and in the family, lower levels of work difficulty, higher levels of work control, greater levels of family competence, and lower levels of family conflict) should predict lower levels of work-family conflicts, but work characteristics should be more related to work-to-family conflict, while family characteristics should be more related to family-to-work conflict.*

In this context, it is necessary to explain the positioning of social support, mentioned earlier as a coping mechanism, in the models. The results of studies in which different roles of social support in the experience of work-family conflict were compared (as a moderator, mediator, or antecedent in the relationship between work/family stressors and conflict) have shown that social support can best be viewed as a protective factor (antecedent) preceding stressful job and family characteristics (e.g., Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Frone et al., 1997; Michel et al., 2010). However, some support was obtained for the role of social support as an anteced-

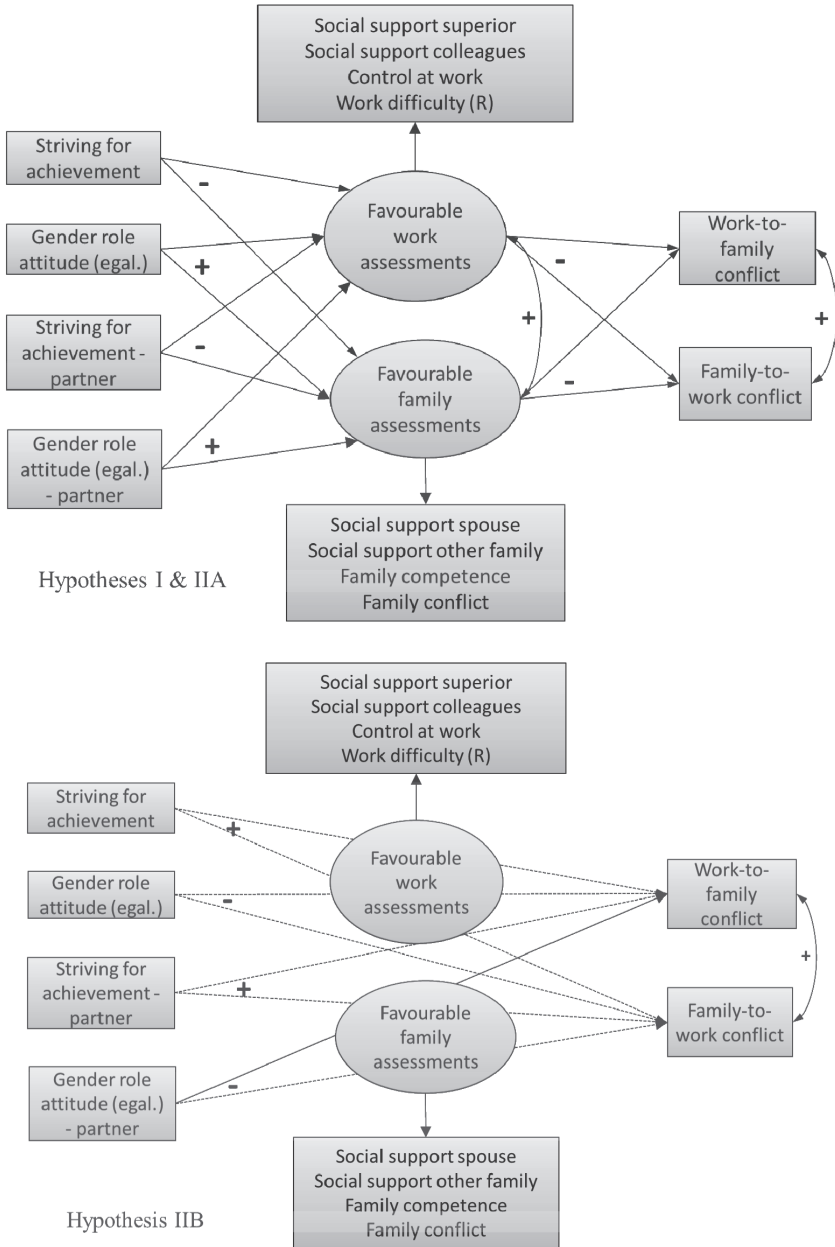
ent of work-family conflicts grouped with other domain characteristics such as role involvement and control (Michel et al., 2009). Thus, due to the preferred simplicity of the tested model in this study, it was put at the same level as the psychological demands of work and the quality of family functioning, as one of the (non)stressful characteristics of the domain.

*HYPOTHESIS II:* Frider and Ryan (2005) suggest three ways in which personal factors may influence the interface between work and family roles. Personality can affect the type and amount of work and family demands an individual has; can affect an individual's perception of work and family demands; it can affect the choice and effectiveness of strategies used to deal with conflict between work and family. As early as 1976, Graen states that assessments of role demands are significant sources of pressure within a domain and that an individual's expectations and values can shape his or her behavior in each role. The role theory (Kahn et al., 1964) also includes personal characteristics such as motives and values as important determinants of provoking or eliciting different role demands and differential reactions to role demands. Considering that individuals choose or regulate their work and family environment with regard to their own aspirations and attitudes and those of their significant others, such as their spouse, and that they evaluate the characteristics of the environment in accordance, another hypothesis of this study was that the individual's and his/her partner's striving for achievement and attitude on gender roles in marriage are personal characteristics which could determine (the assessment of) the work and family domain, which then determine the perceived levels of work-family conflict. In other words, *characteristics of the work and family domain are expected to mediate the relationship of*

*striving for achievement and gender role attitudes with both types of work-family conflict. More specifically, it was assumed that a more egalitarian attitude on gender roles and lower striving for achievement will predict more favourable assessments of work and family characteristics (a higher level of social support at work and in the family, lower psychological demands of work, and higher quality of family functioning) and thus, indirectly predict lower levels of work-family conflicts.* The assumed relationship of attitudes on gender roles in marriage and work characteristics may be less comprehensible, but it must be pointed out once again that it is viewed as a sign of inflexibility which might also reflect negatively on assessments of work characteristics. Although work and family conditions could also be viewed as predictors of attitudes (e.g., Zhou, 2017), and co-predictors with attitudes of other

outcomes (e.g., McHale & Crouter, 1992), the notion here was to consider the temporal aspect and view the examined personal characteristics as characteristics a person enters the work and family domain with, and which are less prone to durable change. Moreover, given that work-family conflict is a subjective assessment that also depends directly on the expectations and values of the individual and his/her spouse (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Poelmans, 2001), *it can be assumed that these personal characteristics may also, in addition to the characteristics of the work and family domains, directly determine the assessments of work-family conflict.* Therefore, a hypothesis of complete (*HYPOTHESIS IIA*) vs. partial mediation (*HYPOTHESIS IIB*) of the assessed work and family characteristics in the relationship between personal characteristics and work-family conflict was tested first.

Figure 1  
 The Assumed Model of Relationships of Personal Characteristics of Spouses, Job and Family Characteristics, and Work-family Conflicts



Note. Correlations between the variables on the first level were also assumed: positive between individual and partner striving for achievement/gender role attitudes, negative between striving for achievement and gender role attitude variables.

The second aim of the study was to test the model invariance regarding spouse genders. The same models were tested separately for men and women participants and were compared using multi-group analysis. This is the first study comparing the relationships of the regarding variables among heterosexual spouses. The following hypotheses were derived in accordance, the third hypothesis being related to gender as a moderator of the predictive values of work and family characteristics in explaining work-family conflict, and the fourth to gender as a moderator of the predictive values of personal and spouse striving for achievement and gender role attitudes.

**HYPOTHESIS III:** The same indirect and direct relationships (stated above and shown in Figure 1) were assumed to be significant and in the same direction for both men and women. However, some specificities in the models concerning gender and the importance of the predictors (value of path coefficients) were expected. According to Pleck's (1977) asymmetrical boundary hypothesis, the world of 'work' and 'family' have different social meanings for women and men. As such, the correlates of work-family conflict will differ by gender and direction of conflict, because it is "acceptable" that work responsibilities will include interference with family more frequently for men than women. In contrast, family responsibilities will interfere with work more often for women than men. Therefore, *the path coefficients of the relations between work-family conflicts and work assessments are assumed to be higher in men in comparison to women, while the path coefficients of the relations between work-family conflicts and family assessments are assumed to be higher in women in comparison to men.*

**HYPOTHESIS IV:** Differences in the relations between men's and women's

assessments of the characteristics of their partners are also assumed, as well as obtained in previous studies (Miller & Borgida, 2016; Šimunić et al., 2017; Westman, 2006). In other words, *the path coefficients of the relations of partner values with work-family conflicts and work and family assessments are assumed to be higher in women in comparison to men.* This is considered a result of gender-specific socialization experiences in a patriarchal society. The female, i.e. feminine gender role allows and encourages the expression of dependence on others, while the masculine gender role places emphasis on strength and individuality (Obradović & Čudina-Obradović, 2001).

## METHODS

### Participants and Procedure

The research was conducted on a convenience sample of 358 employed spouses, that is, 358 men and 358 women legally married to each other, between 24 and 63 years of age ( $M=41$ ;  $SD=8$ ), from different urban and suburban parts of Croatia, but mostly from the Zadar County. All were heterosexual couples (formal marriage is only allowed between heterosexual partners in Croatia). Specifically, the research aimed to include men and women employees with at least six months of work experience at the same workplace (which is supposed to include the existence of a superior at work), an employed spouse with the same type of work experience and who would participate in the research and at least one child in the household. Regarding the specific research questions in this paper, the inclusion of spouses ensured the equivalence of the samples of men and women at least in their family situations. Permission for conducting research through the arrival and distribution of



questionnaires in various work organizations where it was possible to find a larger number of employees of both genders and different qualifications (e.g., banks, insurance companies, hospitals, various major industries - textile, engineering, etc.) was requested by phone, electronically, or in person. Looking for participants in larger organizations was a hopefully more convenient way to find a larger number of employed couples. Meetings were organized within the organizations to explain the aims of the study and the instructions. Two sets of paper-pencil questionnaires were distributed to the employees and were to be completed by the employees and their spouses. The contacted employee/spouse was asked about the work conditions of their spouse before being given the set of questionnaires. Respondents were warned that they must fill out the questionnaires independently, without insight into their partner's answers. Furthermore, they were asked to return the questionnaires in sealed envelopes directly to the researcher or collaborator. Participants were given about a week to complete and return the questionnaires. Due to an insufficient portion of organizations willing to participate, part of the sample was recruited using the snowball technique. In sum, a total of about 800 pairs of questionnaires were distributed and 358 pairs of questionnaires were returned, giving a 44.8% response rate. However, due to the omission of a set of questionnaires by several couples and of unreliable patterns of responses in at least one of the spouses, the total number of couples included in the final data analysis was 285 marital couples (285 women and 285 men).

The sample was very heterogeneous according to the workplaces of participants, including almost all categories of employees: retailers, hairdressers, warehouse workers, machinists, car mechanics,

plumbers, electricians, drivers, caterers, educators, police officers, firefighters, lower-class teachers, electrical engineers, economists, professors and teachers of various professions, nurses, doctors, pedagogues, psychologists, lawyers, etc. Most participants were of middle and higher-level education, with a significantly greater number of women (52.7%) with higher-level education than men (35.2%), and a greater number of men (55.6%) with middle-level education than women (38.5%) ( $\chi^2=24.8$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). However, men had more years of total work experience ( $M_m=17.3$ ;  $SD_m=8.11$ ;  $M_f=14.2$ ;  $SD_f=8.14$ ;  $F(1/718)=24.99$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and of average hours of overtime at work ( $M_m=6$ ;  $SD_m=7.6$ ;  $M_f=3$ ;  $SD_f=4.8$ ;  $F(1/697)=41.37$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) than women. The largest percentage of households had a total monthly income of 8 001 to 10 000 HRK, an average of 4 members, of which 2 children (in average), with the average age of the youngest child being 8-9 years and the average age of the oldest child being 11-12 years. Only about 30 couples had day-to-day responsibility for an elderly person, and less than half of them had additional help, which was paid for by about 20 couples.

### Measuring instruments

**A set of questions on sociodemographic data** where participants were to specify their gender, age, educational level, work experience and work hours, household income, the number and age of children, and formal/informal care for an elder or disabled was put at the beginning of the questionnaire.

Before presenting the metric characteristics of the following measures (factor structures and item/internal reliability analysis), it should be noted that the analyses were performed first separately on men and women, and no differences in

structures were shown regarding individual items being interpreted by a particular factor or being part of a particular scale or subscale. Therefore, the results of the analyses performed on the entire sample of participants are presented here.

**Striving for Achievement Scale** (Nikolić et al., 2014) is an 11-item translation and adaptation of a subscale of the Gender Role Conflict Scale (O'Neil et al., 1986; Success, Power, Competition) validated on men and women who were married to each other, living and working in Croatia. The content of these items includes three components: success (constant concern about personal achievement, well-being, competence, failure, and career progress), power (orientation towards maintaining authority, dominance, and influence over others), and competitiveness (competition with others to get something or comparing ourselves with others to establish our superiority in a particular situation). Example items are: 'It is important that I'm smarter or/and stronger than other men (version of the scale for men)/women (version of the scale for women)', 'I tend to be more successful than others' and 'Victory is the measure of my own value and importance'. Respondents gave their answers on a 5-point scale (1-'strongly disagree'; 5-'strongly agree'). Exploratory factor analysis (extraction method: principal factors with communalities estimation as  $R^2$  and the Kaiser-Guttman factor extraction criterion) resulted in one factor with an Eigenvalue higher than 1, which explained 38.5% of the total variance. The reliability of the scale (Cronbach alpha coefficient) on this sample was 0.86. The composite score was calculated by summing the individual item responses, where a higher score on the scale reflects a higher level of striving for achievement (through power and competition).

**Scale of attitudes about the egalitarianism of gender roles (in marriage)**

(Šimunić, 2020b) is a 15-item scale formed by a combination of selected items from some previous scales: The Jacobson Marital Roles Scale (Jacobson, 1952); The Ideal Partner Role and Ideal Parental Role Scales (Jugović, 2004). The content of the items in this scale includes attitudes on the characteristics and behaviors of men and women in marriage, that is, who should and to what extent take on which responsibility, who makes which decisions, and how much should which spouse be devoted to the family and the job. An egalitarian attitude in this context reflects the belief that men and women should be equal in their involvement in work and family roles and joint decision-making, while a traditional or less egalitarian attitude reflects the belief that men should be more involved with earning money and deciding what to do with it and women should care more for the household and children with less power in joint decision-making. Respondents expressed their agreement with each item on a 6-point scale (1-'strongly disagree'; 6-'strongly agree'). Exploratory factor analysis (extraction method: Communalities estimated as  $R^2$  and the Kaiser-Guttman factor extraction criterion) resulted in one factor with an Eigenvalue higher than 1, accounting for 28.7% of the variance. The reliability of this scale (Cronbach alpha coefficient) was 0.84. Item examples are: 'The husband should decide on how to spend extra money', 'Fathers and mothers should have an equal responsibility to play with the children in their spare time', and 'It is important that fathers take care of school obligations of children as much as mothers do'. The composite score was calculated by summing the individual item responses. A higher score on this scale reflects a more positive attitude on the egalitarianism of gender roles in marriage or lower level of traditionalism.

**The Work-family Conflict Scale** (Šimunić et al., 2014) is a translated and

adapted scale originally developed by Netemeyer and colleagues (1996). It is composed of 12 items, or two sets of 6 items, which measure the disrupting influence of work on family life (work-to-family conflict) and the disrupting influence of family on work (family-to-work conflict) taking into account time demands and stress/fatigue as sources of conflict. Respondents expressed their (dis)agreement with each item on a 7 point scale (1-‘strongly disagree’, 7-‘strongly agree’). In this study, exploratory factor analysis (extraction method: Communalities estimated as  $R^2$  and the Kaiser-Guttman factor extraction criterion; rotation: Varimax normalized) resulted in the same factors as the original measure, as in the adaptation of the scale. The factor interpreted as work-to-family conflict explained 20.6% of the total variance, while the factor interpreted as family-to-work conflict explained 28.6% of the variance. The reliability of the Work-to-family conflict subscale (Cronbach alpha) was 0.78 and 0.88 for the Family-to-work subscale. The items: ‘Because of the time required for my job I do not have enough time to participate in family activities’ and ‘I cannot manage to do activities that I would like to do at home, because of my work requirements’ are examples of items measuring work-to-family conflict. Accordingly, examples of items measuring family-to-work conflict are: ‘Because of the time required for family activities I often have to delay and modify work activities’ and ‘I do not manage to do what I would like to get done at work, because of the requirements of my family or spouse’. The composite scores were calculated by summing the individual item responses, where a higher score on the subscales reflected a perceived higher level of disruption of one role (domain) by the other.

**The scale of the psychological demands and control at work** (Gregov et

al., 2012) was constructed based on the Karasek concepts of levels of work demands and control. The scale contains 12 items. The content of 6 items almost completely identifies with the content of items from the Control and Psychological Demands subscale of the Job Content Questionnaire (Karasek et al., 1998), and 6 new items were added, primarily to adapt the measure for research on work-family conflict at the time. The content of the items includes autonomy/control at work, role conflict, role ambiguity, and work overload. Respondents expressed their agreement with each item on a 7-point scale (1-‘strongly disagree’, 7-‘strongly agree’). Based on the results of exploratory factor analyses conducted in this study (extraction method: Communalities estimated as  $R^2$  and the Kaiser-Guttman factor extraction criterion; rotation: Varimax normalized), a somewhat different and clearer division of items per factor than the division by Gregov et al. (2012) was used. The first factor, explaining 18.3% of the total variance, Control at work (Psychological demands), includes 8 items, with a 0.85 Cronbach alpha. Examples of items are: ‘I know exactly what tasks and responsibilities my job includes’ and ‘I have enough materials and the necessary instruments (tools) to correctly perform my job’. The second factor, explaining 16.6% of the total variance, Work difficulty or Workload, includes 4 items (Cronbach alpha 0.75), for example, ‘Frequent unpredictable situations make my job difficult’ and ‘The degree of responsibility my job involves is too large’. The composite scores were calculated by summing the individual item responses, where a higher score on the scales reflects a lower level of control at work and higher workload.

**The quality of family functioning scale** (Šimunić et al., 2010) was used to examine the perception of the quality of in-

teractions between family members. This questionnaire was translated and adapted with minor modifications from Beavers and Hampson (1990; Self-Report Family Inventory-II). The scale contains 35 items that measure the perception of family functioning in 5 domains: family health/competencies, conflict, cohesion, leadership, and emotional expressiveness. Responses on the (dis)agreement with each item were given on a 7-point scale (1-‘strongly disagree’; 7-‘strongly agree’). Two items were excluded due to low factor saturations ( $<0.35$ ) (extraction method: Communalities estimated as  $R^2$ ; Kaiser-Guttman criterion; no rotation). After the exclusion of these items, two factors were obtained, interpreted as Family Competence (25 items; 28.5% of total variance explained; 0.95 Cronbach alpha coefficient) and Family Conflict (8 items; 18.6% of total variance explained; 0.86 Cronbach alpha coefficient). Examples of items measuring Competence are: ‘My family usually functions well when we are together’ and ‘As a family, we are good and efficient in solving problems’. Examples of items measuring Conflict are: ‘In my family, when things go wrong, we blame each other’ and ‘My spouse and I often compete with each other and fight’. The composite scores were calculated by summing the individual item responses, where a higher score on the subscales reflects a greater degree of perceived family competence and lower degree of conflict in the family.

**Scales of social support at work and in the family** (Šimunić et al., 2016) are four nine-item scales, including instrumental and emotional social support for the job and for family life, which differ only in the source of social support: (1) superior, (2) colleagues, (3) spouse, and (4) other family member and close people. Examples of items are: ‘My superior/colleagues/spouse/family members and

other close people recognize(s) when I do a good job’ and ‘My superior/colleagues/spouse/family members and other close people do(es) everything to make it easier for me to correctly finish tasks’. Respondents expressed their (dis)agreement with each statement on a 7-point scale (1-‘strongly disagree’, 7-‘strongly agree’). The reliability of these scales was satisfactory, from 0.85 to 0.87 (Cronbach alphas). The composite scores were calculated by summing the individual item responses, where higher scores on these scales reflect a greater degree of perceived social support from the given sources.

## RESULTS

Before performing the planned analyses, the distributions of the collected data for each variable when taking into account men and women independently were inspected. If we consider the criteria by which values of skewness and kurtosis in the range of -2 to +2 indicate a distribution not seriously deviating from a normal distribution (Kline, 2011), it can be said that these values are within the acceptable limits to use parametric statistical methods on the data. Considering a somewhat higher value of kurtosis than +2 (but below 3), additional caution should be taken with the results on the scale of family competence for women (indicating a high level of competence assessed by most women) and on the scale of family-to-work conflict for both samples (indicating a very low level of this conflict in most participants).

Some descriptive parameters, as well as the results of t-tests to examine differences between the individual assessments of men and women, are shown in Table 1. These analyses were conducted to get a better insight into the possible specificities of each group of participants. The results show that men are less egalitarian in their

attitudes on gender roles in marriage, have a higher level of striving for achievement, higher perceived levels of social support by their spouse (wife), and assess their

jobs as more difficult than women. The basic descriptive and correlation analyses were performed in the program Statistica 14 (TIBCO Software Inc., 2020).

Table 1  
 Descriptive Parameters and Results of t-tests to Examine Differences between Male and Female Spouses in the Measured Variables (N=285)

Variable	M	SD	t (df=284)	p	Conf. -95%	Conf. +95%
Control at work MEN	40.76	7.91				
Control at work WOMEN	41.41	7.96	-1.05	0.297	-1.871	0.573
Work difficulty (R) MEN	<b>12.78</b>	<b>5.39</b>				
Work difficulty (R) WOMEN	<b>13.87</b>	<b>5.32</b>	<b>-2.81</b>	<b>0.005</b>	<b>-1.854</b>	<b>-0.328</b>
Work-to-family conflict MEN	20.20	7.47				
Work-to-family conflict WOMEN	19.70	6.89	0.94	0.346	-0.545	1.548
Family-to-work conflict MEN	11.48	6.03				
Family-to-work conflict WOMEN	11.67	6.13	-0.47	0.635	-1.012	0.619
Social support by superior MEN	45.10	10.40				
Social support by superior WOMEN	44.81	11.43	0.37	0.711	-1.254	1.837
Social support by colleagues MEN	47.70	8.86				
Social support by colleagues WOMEN	48.31	8.77	-0.95	0.344	-1.889	0.661
Social support by spouse MEN	<b>53.23</b>	<b>8.26</b>				
Social support by spouse WOMEN	<b>51.88</b>	<b>9.57</b>	<b>2.52</b>	<b>0.012</b>	<b>0.294</b>	<b>2.401</b>
Social support by other family members and close people MEN	48.43	9.54				
Social support by other family members and close people WOMEN	48.70	9.81	-0.47	0.641	-1.393	0.859
Family competence MEN	147.47	21.83				
Family competence WOMEN	146.81	21.83	0.63	0.527	-1.381	2.694
Family conflict (R) MEN	45.41	9.01				
Family conflict (R) WOMEN	45.25	8.80	0.34	0.735	-0.759	1.075
Striving for achievement MEN	<b>29.93</b>	<b>8.20</b>				
Striving for achievement WOMEN	<b>28.21</b>	<b>8.01</b>	<b>3.48</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>0.748</b>	<b>2.697</b>
Attitudes on gender roles (egal.) MEN	<b>66.78</b>	<b>11.39</b>				
Attitudes on gender roles (egal.) WOMEN	<b>73.26</b>	<b>9.33</b>	<b>-10.25</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-7.725</b>	<b>-5.236</b>

Note: Bolded correlations are significant at a p<0.05 level.

To justify the performance of structural equation modeling, the absence of extreme multivariate combinations of results on the model variables was determined by calculating Mahalanobis's distances for

each participant, and the linearity of the relationship between variables was determined by inspecting scatterplots. Correlations between the manifest variables of the model are shown in Table 2.

Table 2  
Pearson Coefficients of Correlation between Model Variables Assessed by Men (N=285; above the Diagonal) and Women (N=285; below the Diagonal)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Striving for achievement	-	<b>-0.24</b>	<b>0.47</b>	-0.11	-0.06	-0.03	<b>-0.13</b>	<b>-0.21</b>	-0.04	<b>-0.24</b>	<b>-0.24</b>	<b>-0.25</b>	<b>0.16</b>	<b>0.20</b>
2. Egalitarianism of attitudes on marital gender roles	-0.10	-	<b>-0.19</b>	<b>0.48</b>	0.11	-0.06	<b>0.24</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>0.35</b>	<b>0.49</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>-0.17</b>	<b>-0.18</b>
3. Partner-Striving for achievement	<b>0.47</b>	-0.11	-	<b>-0.10</b>	-0.03	-0.03	-0.05	-0.07	-0.03	<b>-0.12</b>	-0.02	-0.11	0.11	0.07
4. Partner-Egalitarianism of attitudes on marital gender roles	<b>-0.19</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>-0.24</b>	-	0.01	-0.01	0.06	<b>0.23</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>0.18</b>	<b>0.19</b>	0.09	-0.03	<b>-0.12</b>
5. Control at work	<b>-0.12</b>	0.02	<b>-0.15</b>	0.10	-	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>0.26</b>	<b>-0.43</b>	<b>-0.34</b>
6. Work difficulty	-0.03	0.07	0.02	-0.03	<b>0.26</b>	-	<b>0.16</b>	-0.07	0.04	-0.01	-0.11	-0.07	<b>-0.39</b>	<b>-0.13</b>
7. Social support by superior	<b>-0.16</b>	<b>0.20</b>	<b>-0.18</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.16</b>	-	<b>0.30</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>-0.34</b>	<b>-0.25</b>
8. Social support by spouse	<b>-0.19</b>	<b>0.15</b>	<b>-0.18</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>0.31</b>	0.00	<b>0.34</b>	-	<b>0.36</b>	<b>0.55</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>-0.22</b>	<b>-0.27</b>
9. Social support by colleagues	<b>-0.12</b>	0.10	-0.09	0.14	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.24</b>	-	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>0.26</b>	<b>-0.24</b>	<b>-0.49</b>
10. Social support by other family members and close people	<b>-0.30</b>	<b>0.15</b>	<b>-0.24</b>	<b>0.31</b>	<b>0.33</b>	-0.02	<b>0.39</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.38</b>	-	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>-0.16</b>	<b>-0.37</b>
11. Family competence	<b>-0.17</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>-0.21</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>0.24</b>	-0.07	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>0.44</b>	-	<b>0.75</b>	<b>-0.20</b>	<b>-0.38</b>
12. Family conflict	<b>-0.21</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>-0.21</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.24</b>	-0.06	<b>0.24</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>0.75</b>	-	<b>-0.31</b>	<b>-0.44</b>
13. Work-to-family conflict	<b>0.16</b>	-0.07	<b>0.14</b>	<b>-0.18</b>	<b>-0.45</b>	<b>-0.28</b>	<b>-0.42</b>	<b>-0.27</b>	<b>-0.30</b>	<b>-0.23</b>	<b>-0.21</b>	<b>-0.19</b>	-	<b>0.30</b>
14. Family-to-work conflict	<b>0.18</b>	<b>-0.15</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>-0.27</b>	<b>-0.28</b>	-0.04	<b>-0.22</b>	<b>-0.19</b>	<b>-0.42</b>	<b>-0.30</b>	<b>-0.34</b>	<b>-0.33</b>	<b>0.34</b>	-

Note: Bolded correlations are significant at a p<0.05 level.

The suggested models of work-family conflict antecedents including striving for achievement and egalitarianism of gender roles in marriage were estimated by performing multi-group structural equation modelling using the program Mplus 6.12 (Muthen & Muthen, 1998-2010) with the Maximum likelihood method of parameter estimation. The default model specifications offered by the program Mplus 6.12 were left intact. This includes the setting of equivalence of the metric part of the men and women models. All other parameters were estimated freely between groups. When speaking of the metric part of the model, social support by the supervisor and colleagues, and job control and difficulty (higher result, less difficulty) were set as indicators of favourable work characteristics, while social support by spouse and other family members and close people, and family competence and conflict (higher result, less conflict) were set as indicators of favourable family characteristics. It was decided to use the adjective ‘favourable’ since these are characteristics related to each domain that could be assumed to be positive predictors of lower work-to-family and family-to-work conflict, which is also in accordance with the obtained correla-

tions (Table 2). Additionally, to quantitatively justify the positioning of social support and other work/family characteristics at the same level of the model, as indicators of favourable work/family assessments, it should be mentioned that a principle component analysis was conducted on the research variables in this study, showing that the social support variables could be either categorized together (from each domain) or with domain-specific assessments as was done in this study. Correlations between the residuals (error variance) of all the indicators were allowed, more specifically, those suggested by modification indices (it was justifiable to assume these correlations since the assessments were given by the same person). A preview of Table 5 gives insight into the indicator residual correlations specified and a preview of Figure 1 an insight into other specified paths (the lower representation shows the direct links added in the ‘partial mediation’ model). Besides this, correlations between specific parts (measurement error) of the variance of variables at the same level of the model were assumed, which is also shown and noted in Figure 1. There was no missing data in the final data file used for the analysis (285 men and 285 women, spouses).

Table 3  
Fit Indices of the Estimated Models

	Absolute Fit Indices		Parsimonious Fit Indices	Comparative Indices	
	$\chi^2 / df / p$	SRMR	RMSEA (90% conf. interval)	CFI	TLI
Full mediation model (final solution, base model)	224.949 / 118 / 0.000 ( $\chi^2 / df = 1.91$ ) M-130.787 W-94.162	0.057 ( <b>&lt; 0.08</b> )	0.056 (0.045 - 0.068) ( <b>&lt; 0.06</b> )	0.950 ( <b>=0.95</b> )	0.928 ( <b>&gt;0.90</b> )
Partial mediation model	206.544 / 102 / 0.000 ( $\chi^2 / df = 2.02$ ) M-117.907 W-88.637	0.056 ( <b>&lt; 0.08</b> )	0.060 (0.048-0.072) ( <b>=0.06</b> )	0.951 ( <b>&gt;0.95</b> )	0.919 ( <b>&gt;0.90</b> )
Full mediation plus modifications	187.231 / 115 / 0.000 ( $\chi^2 / df = 1.63$ ) M-101.093 W-86.138	0.050 ( <b>&lt; 0.08</b> )	0.047 (0.034-0.059) ( <b>&lt;0.06</b> )	0.966 ( <b>&gt;0.95</b> )	0.950 ( <b>=0.95</b> )

The assumed alternative models (complete vs. partial mediation or HYPOTHESIS IIA vs. HYPOTHESIS IIB) were compared with the chi-square difference test (Satorra & Bentler, 2010). The results of chi-square testing for the model assuming complete mediation (with no direct path from the individual characteristics to work-family conflicts) and the model assuming partial mediation (direct paths from all four individual characteristic variables to work-family conflict variables included) are shown in Table 3. The results of the chi-square difference test ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 18.41$ ;  $\Delta df = 16$ ;  $p = 0.301$ ) showed that the models did not differ significantly, that is, that the addition of a direct path between the spouses' personal characteristics and work-to-family and family-to-work conflict does not lead to a significant improvement of the model fit to the data. Taking this and the principle of model parsimony into account, the 'full mediation' model was accepted. All estimated indices of model fit are shown in Table 3. Model-fit testing is related to the calculation of indices of the suitability of the assumptions made by the model and the obtained data, or of fit indices (goodness of fit). The following indices of model fit were used: chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) and *SRMR* (standardized root mean square residual) as indices of absolute fit, *RMSEA* (root mean square error of

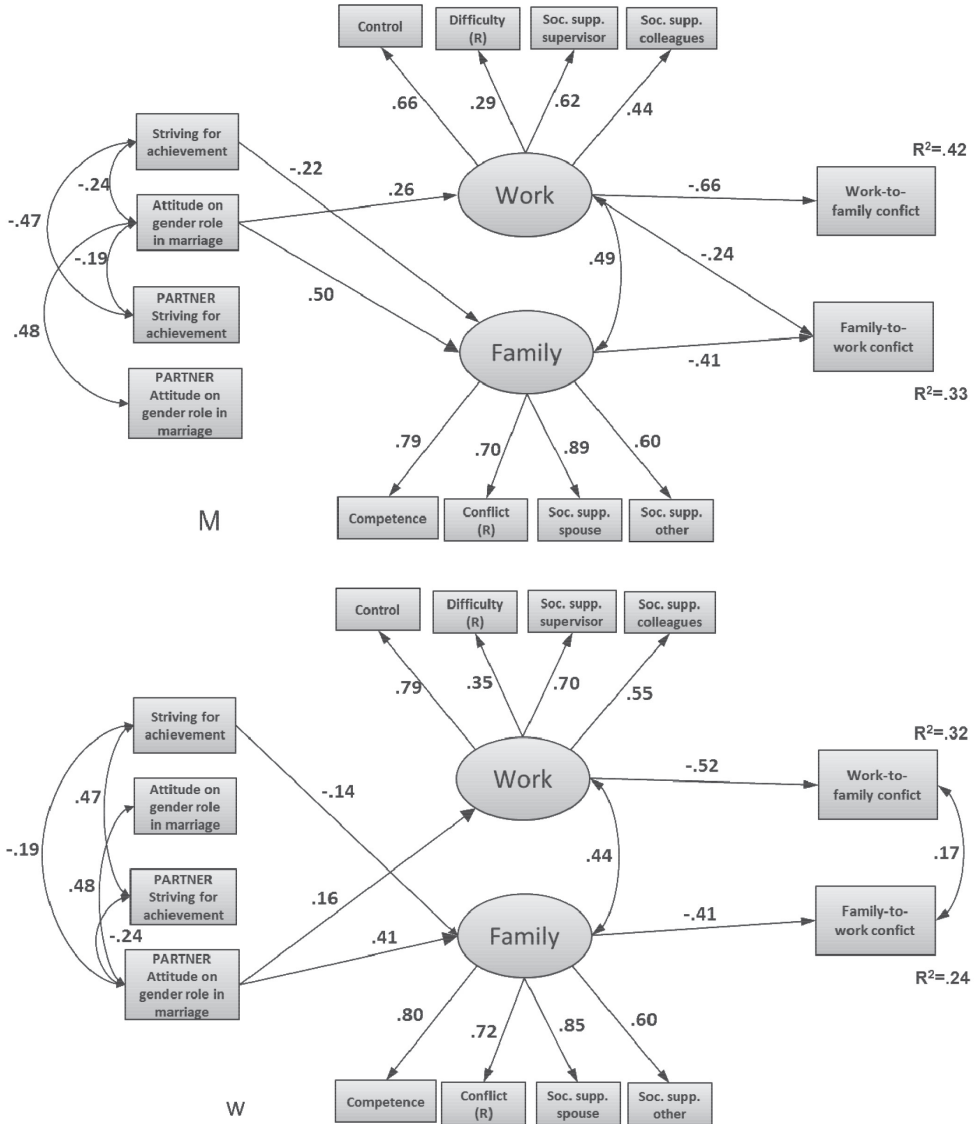
approximation) as an index of parsimony, and *TLI* (Tucker Lewis Index) and *CFI* (Comparative Fit Index) as comparative indices. All indicate an adequate fit of the final model to the data, considering the criteria proposed by various authors. For example, the criteria for acceptable model fit proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999) are:  $\chi^2/df \leq 3$ ;  $RMSEA \leq 0.06$ ;  $SRMR \leq 0.08$ ;  $CFI \geq 0.95$ ;  $TLI \geq 0.95$ . All indices suggest a good fit of the model to the data. However, there is room for improvement, indicated especially by the *TLI* index. The last model-fit indices shown in Table 3 are the 'full mediation' model when residual correlations between work difficulty and work-to-family conflict and between striving for achievement and the social support from the spouse are added (modification indices implied on adding these relations for men).

The final solution of the model is displayed in Figure 2 (the residual correlations and non-significant paths also specified in the model were not displayed for clarity). The parameters obtained when testing for the significance of indirect paths that could be tested that is the indirect relationship of personal characteristics of spouses with work-family conflicts through work and family characteristics, are shown in Table 4.



Figure 2

Model with Standardized Estimates of Parameters (significant at  $p < 0.05$ ) of the Relationships Between Personal Characteristics of Spouses, Job and Family Characteristics, and Work-to-Family and Family-to-Work Conflict in Men (above;  $N=285$ ) and Women (below;  $N=285$ )



Note: Attitude on gender role in marriage – higher result, higher level of egalitarian attitudes.

Table 4  
Standardized Estimates (STDYX) and the Significance of Parameters of Indirect Effects in the Selected Model for Men and Women

Indirect paths	Standardized estimate	Standard error	E./S.E.	p
<b>Men</b>				
Str.f.Ach.→Family→F-W Conflict	0.009	0.030	3.042	0.002
Att.Gend.Roles→Work→W-F Conflict	-0.168	0.060	-2.804	0.005
Att.Gend.Roles→Family→F-W Conflict	-0.203	0.042	-4.845	0.000
Att.Gend.Roles→Work→F-W Conflict	-0.063	0.028	-2.259	0.024
<b>Women</b>				
Str.f.Ach.→Family→F-W Conflict	0.058	0.028	2.033	0.042
Partner Att.Gend.Roles→Work→W-F Conflict	-0.081	0.040	-2.018	0.044
Partner Att.Gend.Roles→Family→F-W Conflict	-0.168	0.038	-4.410	0.000

The model explained 42% of the variance of work-to-family conflict in men and 32% of work-to-family conflict in women. For both men and women, it was shown that work characteristics such as greater social support at work and lower psychological work demands (but with a greater contribution of support from supervisor and work control) are the main, that is, relatively more important predictors of lower work-to-family conflict when comparing the standardized path coefficients of the predictors. In men, their more egalitarian attitude toward gender roles in marriage indirectly predicts a lower level of work-to-family conflict through more favourable work assessments. In women, their spouses' more egalitarian attitude toward gender roles in marriage is related to more favourable work assessments and indirectly, in this manner, to the experience of lower work-to-family conflict (Figure 2; Table 4).

When it comes to family-to-work conflict, the model explains 33% of the variance in men and 24% of the variance in women. Favourable family characteristics (greater social support in the family and higher quality of family functioning) are the main, that is, a relatively more important predictor of lower family-to-work conflict in both men and women when comparing the standardized coefficients of the

predictors. In men, lower family-to-work conflict is also predicted by work assessments and indirectly by their more egalitarian gender role attitudes through the same assessments and by their more egalitarian gender role attitudes and lower striving for achievement through assessments of more favourable family characteristics. In addition, in women, a lower level of family-to-work conflict is indirectly predicted by a lower level of their own striving for achievement and their partner's more egalitarian gender role attitude through more favourable family characteristics.

It was already mentioned that the same models were tested on both men and women using multi-group analyses. This enables analysing specificities in the tested relations with regard to gender (testing HYPOTHESES III and IV). In other words, if the model fit shows to be significantly worse when a specific parameter is set equal in both samples, the samples differ in the given parameter. The results of the chi-square difference testing between the selected, base model and the models under such conditions are shown in Table 5. The tests showed that the path coefficients between the partner's attitude on gender roles in marriage and the work and family domain were statistically different when comparing the male and female models, show-

ing that it is higher in women. In addition, the path coefficient of individual attitude on gender roles in marriage and family assessments are higher in men in comparison to women. There was also a significant difference in the path coefficients between work assessments and work-to-family conflict, showing it is higher in men than in women. There was no significant difference in the contribution of striving for achievement to work and family assessments and of the contribution of family assessments to both work-family conflicts nor of work and fam-

ily assessments to family-to-work conflict according to gender. A part of HYPOTHESIS IV stating there could be differences in the paths from personal characteristics to work-family conflicts could not be tested. Also, the differences between nonsignificant paths were not interpreted. The results in Table 5 also show some specificities according to gender in the residual correlations of indicators. However, these results go beyond the scope of this paper and could be considered in future research studies.

Table 5  
Standardized Estimates (STDYX) of Men and Women Model Parameters and Results of Chi-square Group Difference Tests (Base Model:  $\chi^2 = 224.949$ ;  $df = 118$ )

Specifications	Standardized estimate Men	Standardized estimate Women	$\Delta\chi^2$ ( $\Delta df = 1$ )	p
<b>Regression paths</b>				
Str.f.Ach.→Work	-0.133	-0.066	0.072	0.788
Att.Gend.Roles (egal)→Work	0.257**	0.030	2.528	0.112
Partner Str.f.Ach.→Work	0.019	-0.100	1.436	0.231
Partner Att.Gend.Roles (egal)→Work	-0.075	0.157*	<b>4.639</b>	<b>0.031</b>
Str.f.Ach.→Family	-0.221**	-0.140*	0.542	0.462
Att.Gend.Roles (egal)→Family	0.498**	0.002	<b>21.549</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Partner Str.f.Ach.→Family	0.111	-0.090	<b>4.991</b>	<b>0.026</b>
Partner Att.Gend.R. (egal)→Family	-0.023	0.407**	<b>19.32</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Work→W-F Conflict	-0.656**	-0.517**	<b>4.743</b>	<b>0.029</b>
Family→W-F Conflict	0.020	-0.081	0.732	0.392
Work→F-W Conflict	-0.244**	-0.128	1.811	0.178
Family→F-W Conflict	-0.408**	-0.413**	0.013	0.909
<b>Residual correlations</b>				
W-F Conflict WITH F-W Conflict	0.014	0.173**	2.806	0.094
Work WITH Family	0.489**	0.444**	0.625	0.429
Str.f.Ach.WITH Att.Gend.Roles	-0.242**	-0.103	<b>4.345</b>	<b>0.037</b>
Str.f.Ach.WITH Partner Att.Gend.R.	-0.112	-0.192**	1.602	0.206
F. Competence WITH F. Conflict	0.390**	0.445**	0.388	0.533
W.Difficulty(R) WITH F.Conflict	-0.244**	-0.143*	0.965	0.326
W.Difficulty(R) WITH F. Competence	-0.338**	-0.203**	1.332	0.248
W.Difficulty(R) WITH Soc.S.Spouse	-0.327**	-0.127	1.272	0.259
W.Control WITH Soc.Supp.Others	0.129	0.225*	0.389	0.533
W.Control WITH Soc.S.Colleagues	-0.015	-0.344*	<b>5.768</b>	<b>0.016</b>
Soc.S.Superior WITH Soc.S.Others	0.263**	0.283**	0.059	0.808
Soc.S.Colleagues WITH Soc.S.Others	0.223**	0.282**	0.230	0.632
Soc.S.Spouse WITH Soc.S.Colleagues	0.179*	-0.074	<b>4.230</b>	<b>0.039</b>
Soc.S.Superior WITH Soc.S.Colleague	0.261**	-0.072	<b>8.456</b>	<b>0.004</b>

## DISCUSSION

The results of previous studies clearly point to stressors at work and in the family as antecedents of conflict between work and family roles, but less consistent results, and an inadequate number of research studies related to the impact of personality on the conflict itself, especially when considering gender and the family, social, organizational, and general culture and environment of respondents. Therefore, the aim of this research was to examine the role of attitudes toward gender roles in marriage and of striving for achievement of spouses as antecedents within a model of work-family conflict on a sample of employees in Croatia. The model included perceived indicators of the quality of family life and work life as mediators of the relationship of subjects' and their spouses' striving for achievement and gender role attitudes with the experience of a work-to-family and family-to-work conflict. Another aim was to compare the models regarding the marital partner's gender. The literature on gender roles and work-family conflict lacks independently collected data from heterosexual spouses, so this empirical study has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the field. Relevant measures collected by questionnaires and scales also contribute to the value of the study.

Before commenting on the results related to the hypotheses of this study, it should be noted that the obtained differences in individual assessments given by the male and female spouses should be and are considered in the interpretation of the results. The results show that the male participants of this study are less egalitarian in their attitudes on gender roles in marriage, have a higher level of striving for achievement, higher perceived levels of social support by their spouse (wife), and assess their jobs as more difficult than the women do.

This is to some extent a reflection of the traditional gender roles still being supported in our society, that is, men's preoccupation with the work domain and women's preoccupation with the family, which was also shown in other recent studies in Croatia (Bartolac et al., 2011; Knežević et al., 2016). The absence of differences between men and women in their assessments of family competence and conflict is not surprising since they were assessing the same family environment. The equivalence of the family domains of the male and female participants was also a prerequisite of the study. The absence of differences in the perceived levels of work-family conflicts may also be indirectly related to the aforementioned and/or the different ways of dealing with work-family conflict according to gender or the different ways relevant factors influence the conflict of work and family roles in men and women and are in line with the results of a number of previous studies (Byron, 2005; Šimunić et al., 2017; Šimunić, 2020).

HYPOTHESIS I, that is, the assumption that, for both men and women, favourable assessments of work and family characteristics (greater social support at work and in the family, less psychological demands of work, higher quality of family functioning) are predictors of less disruptive effects of work on the family and less disruptive effects of family life on work was partly confirmed by the results of this research. For both men and women, it was shown that more favourable assessments of the examined work characteristics were the main predictors of lower work-to-family conflict, while favourable family characteristics were the main predictor of lower family-to-work conflict. This is in line with the results of previous studies and other assumptions of this research (e.g., Michel et al., 2011; Mihelić & Tekavčić, 2014).

Furthermore, HYPOTHESIS IIA, the assumption on indirect prediction of work-family conflict by personal characteristics, that is, that the individual's and his/her partner's striving for achievement and attitude toward gender roles in marriage determine (the assessment of) the work and family domain, therefore indirectly determining work-family conflicts, was partly confirmed. Along with this, the results were in favour of a full mediation in comparison to a partial mediation of perceived work and family characteristics in the relationship between the examined personal characteristics and perceived work-family conflict. Therefore, HYPOTHESIS IIB was not confirmed.

Also, the results showed some expected specificities with respect to gender (HYPOTHESES III & IV). When it comes to HYPOTHESIS III, the path coefficient of the relation between work-to-family conflict and work assessments was higher in men than in women, which is in line with Pleck's (1977) asymmetrical boundary hypothesis. However, the path coefficients of the relations between work-family conflicts and family assessments were not higher in women in comparison to men. This could be a reflection of a higher level of egalitarianism of gender roles in the aspect of shared responsibilities and taking care of the family both instrumentally and emotionally in both spouses, combined with a still higher pressure on men to be the main providers, to uptake more work hours and higher work positions (Dobrotić, 2017; Heilman et al., 2017). When it comes to the contribution of different partner characteristics to work and family characteristics, HYPOTHESIS IV could be confirmed when it comes to gender role attitudes. The relationship between women's partners' gender role attitude with their work and family assessments was higher than the other way around for

men. Also, the individual gender role attitudes of men had a greater contribution to his work and family assessments than the individual gender role attitudes of women did on their assessments. More about this will be said and explained in the further discussion about the main results of the study.

When it comes to striving for achievement, lower individual striving for achievement was indirectly related to lower family-to-work conflict through more favourable assessments of family characteristics for both men and women. In other words, individuals with more striving for achievement may have negative feelings about family life, which is related to an increased experience of family-to-work conflict. When it comes to gender role attitudes, in men, a more egalitarian individual gender role attitude was related indirectly to lower work-to-family conflict through more favourable assessments of work characteristics, while the same was related indirectly to lower family-to-work conflict through favourable assessments of family characteristics. There were no significant indirect relations of individual gender role attitudes to work-to-family and family-to-work conflict in women. However, more egalitarian (less traditional) gender role attitudes of the male spouse had an indirect relationship with lower work-to-family and family-to-work conflict of women the same way the individual gender role attitudes of men had for their perceived levels of work-to-family and family-to-work conflict. In other words, the assessments of work-family conflict in women were indirectly predicted by their partners' gender role attitude, but not their own, which is considered a result of gender-specific socialization experiences in a patriarchal society stated in HYPOTHESIS IV. This was also obtained in some previous studies when examining

the interactive relationship of both spouses' gender role attitudes and work-family conflict (Alby et al., 2014; Šimunić et al., 2017). However, the correlations between the examined personal characteristics of and between spouses should be taken into account, meaning that it is possible that other variables could have shown greater relative predictiveness in another set of less correlated predictors.

It is evident in the research results, especially in the bivariate correlations, that the examined relationships of personal characteristics and work/family assessments and work-family conflict could be mostly viewed through the relationship with social support variables. It is likely that a husband with a more traditional approach to gender roles, led by those attitudes, will be less involved in family responsibilities and activities, considering them to be primarily his wife's obligation, while at the same time providing less support to his wife for her job. The lack of such support could be related to an intensified experience of work-to-family conflict. This is in line with the intensification of adverse effects of work on family life in women when their spouses direct too much attention to their own jobs (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982). Although they strive for egalitarian gender roles, women still take on more of the burden of family life and, in practice, are as unprepared as men to reject the traditional conceptualization of marital roles (Miller & Borgida, 2016). Accordingly, research results show that women perceive less social support from partners in caring for children and do more housework (Dhanabhakym & Malarvizhi, 2014), which is shown by the results of this research. However, the wife's higher striving for achievement predicts her perception of a higher level of family stress, which can be explained by the possibility of arising conflict due to her

dissatisfaction in trying to maintain both roles successfully. The same could be said for men, but a more probable explanation would be that a higher striving for power and success through competition in men is a feature not suitable for maintaining high-quality interpersonal (family) relationships followed by an increased dedication to work, which could contribute to the increased sense of the family disrupting his work life.

The results obtained are in line with the hypothesis of an adverse impact of the more rigid approach of traditionalism in situations where spouses must arrange family obligations in a way that does not hinder their work. It should be noted that an egalitarian attitude to gender roles does not refer to the belief that the obligations of spouses should be fully matched, but to the attitude that the division of roles does not necessarily have to be determined by the partners' gender (Korabik et al., 2008). Since women are on average more egalitarian and have a lower level of striving for achievement than the men in this sample, adverse impacts are likely to relate mainly to the couples where women, due to their employment and the need to minimize the level their jobs are being disrupted by their family life, seek higher levels of support from their husband. The more traditional the husbands are, the lower the support they give to their wives and their satisfaction with their employment is also lower. This is related to increased levels of disagreement and family conflict and lower levels of support from the wife due to less harmonious interpersonal relationships that ultimately contribute to the experience of increased disruption of the workforce by family issues. Negative affect is likely transferred and that the levels of fatigue and psychological preoccupation with the family increase, making him/her less able to successfully perform

their job. Of course, it is plausible that the suggested relationships could go the other way around, that is, that the relationships could be reciprocal over time.

To sum up, work and family characteristics seem to be important factors in the relationship between striving for achievement and gender role attitudes with work-family conflicts. However, gender differences in work-family conflicting relations for working people are also important, or it could be said that gender moderates the relationships. For working husbands, the roles of women partners are not important to work-family conflicts, while, for working wives, the support from husbands is critical to career development and the perception of conflicting work and family roles.

The research models explain a relatively low level of variance of work-to-family and family-to-work conflict, especially of family-to-work conflict. There is a wide spectrum of work, family and individual characteristics examined as predictors of work-family conflict that are not included in this research. For example, the time demands of work and family labour (Eckart, 2015), work-family guilt (Borelli et al., 2017), etc. Also, people's sense of themselves as gendered, and identification with/feelings about gendered expectations, might be more closely aligned with their work-family experience than their abstract notions on gender roles. Additionally, an important limitation is the correlational, cross-sectional nature of the methodology, i.e., the research method included a one-time application of self-assessment measures, resulting in a possible problem of non-objective replication or susceptibility to response distortion, and the inability to reach a reliable conclusion on the causal-consequential relationships among the examined variables that could be otherwise inferred by experimental and

longitudinal research design. Thus, the relationships in the tested models could be put the other way around. For example, it could be assumed that the experience of work-family conflict could be detrimental to or determine the experienced quality of work and family characteristics. Different models of the relationship between the same variables, different positioning and grouping of the variables could be suggested and tested in future research. Furthermore, in this research, self-assessment measures and measures of the spouses' individual characteristics and the common family domain were included, but the same should be performed with the other assessments. In general, there is a need for additional measures of work-family conflict that would be more objective (Early, 2013). However, it is important to bear in mind that the phenomenon of work-family conflict is primarily a subjective individual experience and therefore requires subjective measures. It should also be kept in mind that there was no possibility to control whether the spouses actually completed the instruments independently, which should be controlled in further research, for example, by having them both complete instruments in front of a researcher.

This study was conducted on a relatively small and non-representative sample of couples, thus generalizing the results obtained is currently limited. However, the results obtained in this research regarding the gender mean differences and levels of assessments are mainly in line with the results of other related studies on employed spouses in Croatia (e.g., Dobrotić, 2015; Gjurčić et al., 2014) and imply representativeness in this aspect. In any case, the conclusions that could be derived from the analyses performed would be more reliable on a larger sample of respondents from different regions of Croatia. The recruitment techniques varied, which is also a drawback of

the study. It should also be considered that mainly non-pathological families (family life quality assessments are high) and couples who had time to complete about ten pages of the questionnaire (voluntarily) participated in the research. It would be interesting to include targeted dysfunctional families and couples with greater amounts of conflict between work and family roles to look for causes of conflict within the family and between different roles in future research. On the other hand, in couples with low levels of work-family conflict, one should look at the strategies used and the conditions suitable for experiencing a balance of the different roles.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that attitudes toward gender roles in marriage and striving for achievement of spouses are significant variables in the context of work-family conflict, with greater support for an indirect relationship through social support at work and in the family, the psychological demands of work, and the quality of family functioning in the relationship of these individual characteristics with perceptions of work-to-family and family-to-work conflict. However, these traits are more related to family characteristics. The results also show that women's work and family assessments are more related to their partner's attitude about gender roles in marriage and that work assessments contribute to the experience of work-to-family conflict more in men than in women. Employed spouses should work on considering and supporting each other's values and aspirations and try being flexible and adaptable in different situations to achieve a healthy work-family balance. On the other hand, organizations and society should be aware of and support the diversity of employees' life roles regardless

of their gender. Combatting gender norms and stereotypes is one of the key prerequisites for a more equitable distribution of private sector spheres and more equal status of men and women in the labor market and other spheres of public life.

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### Sažetak

## STAVOVI O RODNIM ULOGAMA I TEŽNJA ZA POSTIGNUĆEM KAO PREDIKTORI SUKOBA RADNE I OBITELJSKE ULOGE KOD ZAPOSLENIH SUPRUŽNIKA U HRVATSKOJ

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Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je ispitati stavove o rodnim ulogama u braku (GRA) i težnje za postignućem (SFA) kao prediktore u okviru modela sukoba radne i obiteljske uloge na uzorku zaposlenih supružnika u Hrvatskoj. Posao (procjena psiholoških zahtjeva i socijalne podrške na poslu) i obiteljske karakteristike (kvaliteta obiteljskog funkcioniranja i socijalna podrška u obitelji) ispitivani su kao medijatori između SFA i GRA s aspekta poslovno-obiteljskog (WFC) i obiteljsko-poslovnog sukoba (FWC), zajedno s proučavanjem modela invarijantnosti u odnosu na spol supružnika. Istraživanje je provedeno na uzorku od ukupno 358 zaposlenih supružnika u Hrvatskoj koji imaju barem jedno dijete u kućanstvu, metodom istraživanja samoprocjena. Rezultati pokazuju potporu potpunoj medijaciji viših razina povoljnih radnih i obiteljskih procjena u odnosu egalitarnijeg GRA i nižeg SFA supružnika s nižim razinama WFC i FWC. Organizacije bi trebale biti svjesne i podržavati razlike u težnjama i stavovima svojih zaposlenika kao i različitosti njihovih životnih uloga.

**Ključne riječi:** sukob radne i obiteljske uloge, rod, dva primatelja dohotka, težnja za postignućem, stavovi o rodnim ulogama.