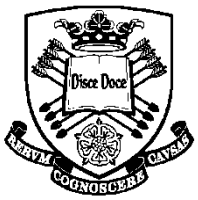

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CAN WORK-LIFE BALANCE POLICIES FOSTER HAPPINESS WITHIN THE FAMILY? A COMPARISON OF TRADITIONAL VERSUS NEW FAMILY ARRANGEMENTS

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Abstract

The family and work spheres are increasingly interconnected shaping some of the most fundamental social divides and inequalities in nowadays society. This paper investigates how the linkage between the family and the workplace affects wellbeing. Specifically, it focuses on the extent to which self-reported well-being, as measured by life satisfaction, for parents living in traditional (coupled mothers and fathers with dependent children) and new family arrangements (lone mothers and fathers) is affected by the use of work-life balance arrangements (formal and informal) as a coping strategy with the time pressures derived from their labour market responsibilities. Finally, the paper discusses the implications of the findings in the light of the existing work-life balance policies in a comparative European perspective.

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1. Introduction

This chapter investigates the extent to which self-reported well-being, as measured by life satisfaction, for parents living in traditional (coupled mothers and fathers with dependant children) and new family arrangements (lone mothers and fathers) is affected by the use of work-life balance arrangements (WLB, henceforth) (formal and informal) as a coping strategy with the time pressures derived from their labour market responsibilities.

This study offers a new contribution to the study of the determinants of life satisfaction at least for two different reasons. On the one hand, it examines how the household organization itself contributes to parents' well-being. On the other hand, and related with the former, it examines the importance of the availability and use of various types of WLB arrangements in mediating the impact of that family structure on life satisfaction. Previous research on life satisfaction had been traditionally focused on other individual factors overlooking the importance of family life, especially for parents with dependant children whose labour market decisions, influencing the quality of life of the family, may well be affected by whether childcare is at hand. In my view, work and family decisions are now much more intimately related for both men and women, even though this relationship may not be of the same importance for lone parents and couples.

It is in this context in which at the beginning of the 1990s the European Union (EU) launched its first package of legislation to encourage member states to develop national programs of WLB policies (Aybars 2007). The stated goal of such policies was to help workers (particularly women) make working compatible with family responsibilities (Houston 2005). However, the relevance of these policies goes beyond the simple reconciliation of work and family activities. As Hakim shows women's preferences have changed in the last decades with an increasing majority of women wishing to develop a professional career together with their role as mothers (1996, 2000). WLB policies help to make compatible these two goals (Esping-Andersen 2002).

For the present study the last wave of the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) carried out in 2011 is used. This survey covers a representative sample of adult individuals living in 34 European countries. Respondents are asked about a wide range of subjective indicators of quality of life as well their individual and family characteristics including (for those with dependant children aged 12 years old or less) the use of childcare arrangements. In

addition, the questionnaire also includes rich information on their labour market trajectories. Overall, the scope and richness of the data allows me to appropriately address the triangular relationship between life satisfaction, family structure, and WLB arrangements.

In the next section an overview of previous research on the relevant issues is presented. Section three presents the data and the methodology used. In section four the findings of the empirical analysis, both descriptive and multivariate are discussed. In order to facilitate the interpretation of the results, where appropriate, some predicted marginal effects were estimated. Finally, section five concludes and discusses the policy implications that can be drawn from this research.

2. Background

The fact that labour market and family decisions are closely connected in contemporary society has been well established across disciplines in a number of relevant studies. Overall, they show that decision-making within the family contributes to the different roles men and women still play in the two spheres (Becker 1991; Lundberg and Pollack 1993; England and Farkas 1986; Shelton and Daphne 1996). Yet currently the workplace has become a central arena in women's lives as much as it used to be for men during the decades in which the male breadwinner model was the rule in the organization of the family (Hochschild 1997). For this reason, it is not surprising that in the existing research on subjective wellbeing that has look into the role of the family much of this inquiry has focused on job satisfaction and not on life satisfaction overall. For instance, some contributions that do consider the effect of family characteristics on the level and variation of workers' job satisfaction are Dyer 1956; Benin and Nienstedt 1985; Hanson and Sloane 1992; Booth and Van Ours 2007. Yet, it is clear that job satisfaction is one of the key indicators, perhaps the most important, of subjective life satisfaction. It is for this reason that most of the findings in the literature on job satisfaction that has considered the role of the family living arrangements applies also to the research presented in this chapter.

The classical standpoint in this literature is that satisfaction with one's job is traditionally regarded as an economic variable related to productivity at the workplace (Freeman 1978). From this perspective, highly satisfied workers were also the most productive ones. There are exceptions to this pattern though. Some authors, for instance,

pointed out that job satisfaction is related with other dimensions of satisfaction such as life and family satisfaction (Stapel 1950; Benin and Nienstedt 1985; Booth and Van Ours 2007) or with overall values and orientations towards work (Kalleberg 1977). In this vein, a comprehensive definition of job satisfaction, as Kalleberg pointed out, should go beyond a single concern with productivity to include the personal values system of the worker as well as the quality of her life outside the work role (1977: 124).

Scholars interested in understanding what might explain the differences in job satisfaction amongst workers at a given point in time as well as on how one's own satisfaction varies over time have provided an array of individual and structural characteristics of the workplace which altogether would account for such variation. Among the former, sex, age, education, tenure, income, occupation, job position and hours worked have been the main dimensions analyzed. As for the latter firm size, industrial sector and gender or ethnic composition of the workplace are the variables traditionally considered. Although for some of these dimensions the findings are not conclusive, a significant part of the literature agrees that women are more satisfied than men (Kaiser 2005; Booth and Van Ours 2007), perhaps because they value more the fact that they are working (subjective evaluation) than the specific conditions of work (objective evaluation) (Weaver 1978; Varca *et al* 1983); older workers have higher levels of satisfaction than younger ones (Janson and Martin 1982; Kalleberg and Loscocco 1983); the relationship is also positive for education (Glenn and Weaver 1982; Gruenberg 1980) while negative for the hours worked. The findings are more complex for occupation and related also to the employment conditions, skills and employee values and orientations (Rose 2003). Finally, sociological explanations of job satisfaction have emphasized the effect of the structure and the social context in which the worker is embedded. Interesting examples focused on the ethnic and the gender composition of the workplace (the more heterogeneous it is the less satisfied the worker is) (Wharton *el al* 2000) and the effect of the social networks developed at work (Marks 1994).

Finally, the spillover model, which argued that satisfaction in one domain of life overflows onto other areas of life, has provided a theoretical framework for some authors to study the effects of the family structure on job satisfaction as well as the interconnection between job satisfaction, marital and life satisfaction (Dyer 1956; Holland and Cable 1985). Very relevant for the purpose of this study is the effect of having children on the job satisfaction of working mothers and fathers. Whilst results have tended to be inconclusive,

some authors reported a negative effect of having younger children on women's job satisfaction (Booth and Van Ours 2007) while others find no effect (Hanson and Sloane 1992).

Academic research concerned with the promotion of gender equality distinguished two different scenarios: one that seeks to harmonize motherhood and careers by helping women to resolve the trade-offs inherent in the interplay of the two spheres. The other, instead, aims to make gender absolutely neutral in the allocation of women's opportunities. Although more ambitious, the latter is a much less precise objective, and therefore more difficult to accomplish. The first one is more specific and feasible. WLB policies belong to this objective. They are the tool through which harmonization is implemented (Esping-Andersen 2002: 69-70).

As stated in the previous section, the strong interdependence that nowadays exists between work and family requires attention to be paid to household as well as workplace characteristics. Very often this interdependence explains the negative spillover effects (particularly in terms of time pressures) from work to home found for working mothers (Hyman *et al* 2005). Gender, therefore, appears to be important in understanding time constraints. Van der Lippe, for instance, showed in a recent study analyzing time pressures using a sample of Dutch workers that "men are more influenced by their workplace characteristics, while women are more influenced by their household characteristics" (2004: 707).

Consensus around what constitutes a basic 'women-friendly' package includes generous maternity and paternity leave arrangements, affordable childcare facilities and significantly the availability of flexible working time. The importance given to each of these key elements varies across the European welfare states but altogether they are considered to facilitate reconciliation (Moss and Korintus 2008; Cousins and Tang 2004). Since the seminal work of Esping-Andersen (1990; 1999) the institutional framework is recognized to play a significant role in the design and implementation of public policies. This is also the case in recent works devoted to the analysis of WLB in a comparative perspective (OECD 2005; Aybars 2007).

In particular, the development of formal WLB policies varies considerably across countries in Europe. For instance, in the UK is characterized by a heavy reliance on agreements reached at the firm level. The New Labour government launched its agenda to promote 'women-friendly policies' as early as in 1997. After ten years of public action relevant authors depict the British model of WLB policies as one in which public intervention, following

the traditional approach of a liberal welfare regime, has been more oriented to exhort employers to adopt WLB policies in their establishments rather than to intervene through regulation or public spending (Crompton *et al* 2005). All in all, some improvements have been introduced concerning mainly leave arrangements (for both mothers and fathers in length and financial coverage) and flexibility in working time. However, there still remains a persistent low availability of childcare facilities at the workplace (Lewis and Campbell 2007). WLB policies are to a large extent unevenly distributed across industrial sectors. Whilst some show high rates of coverage (this is particularly the case in large organizations, in the public sector, and where unions are recognized and there is a human resources department), in others improvements are certainly needed (those in which there is no high commitment in managerial practices, no equal opportunities policies or the proportion of women among the workforce is low) (Healy 2004; Hoque and Noon 2004). Another strategy more commonly found among Southern European countries is to rely on informal childcare provision within the family context (for instance, grandparents looking after their grandchildren while the parents are out for work). This is a pervasive characteristic of the so-called Mediterranean welfare model (Ferrera 1996). Finally, the Nordic model of welfare provision relies more heavily on formal mechanisms which translate, in the case of childcare, for almost universal nurseries and kindergartens (Esping-Andersen 1999).

Among all the elements reviewed here, the one that seems to be more responsible for making it more difficult to better reconcile family and work spheres is a pervasive characteristic of the labour market across all advanced societies: the unequal distribution of hours of work between women and men. Men traditionally overwork (more than 40 hours a week) while women are concentrated among part-timers (Bonney 2005). Part-time work makes it difficult for women to be independent and provokes spillover effects in their role in the family which may affect their overall life satisfaction. The analysis below will investigate whether this is actually the case. Some would argue that this unequal share of work should be the first goal that a government aimed at promoting work-life balance of employees should address, especially if the labour market involvement is a key determinant of job and overall life satisfaction (Dex and Bond 2005). It is important though to do it in a combined strategy that takes into account both women and men. After all, when analyzing why and for whom WLB arrangements are needed we are dealing with workers that are mothers and fathers either in couples or as sole parents. As couples the joint consideration of their interests and

aspirations is a key element in helping them to be close to their children (Bonney 2007). Obviously, this joint consideration implies to add men in the equation of parenthood. Together with the well-established change in women's gender roles towards more equality in partnership and motherhood, there is a parallel switch in the men's side of the coin towards a greater involvement in rearing their children (Smeaton 2006; Gambles *et al* 2006). For lone mothers and fathers clearly work-life balance arrangements are even more important as their difficulties to reconcile work and family are more pressing as it is their need to go out to work in order to support their families. There is well-established evidence that lone parenthood, in particular lone motherhood, is one of the key factors associated with higher risks of poverty. It is for this reason that supporting the labour market involvement of lone parents is so important as a way to tackle poverty (Esping-Andersen 2002).

3. Data, methods, and variables

3.1 Data

The European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) is an established cross-country comparative tool for documenting and analysing quality of life in the EU. First carried out in 2003, the EQLS explores issues pertinent to the lives of European citizens, such as employment, income, education, housing, family, health, work–life balance, life satisfaction and perceived quality of society. The information gathered looks at the relationship between subjective and objective measures, between reported attitudes and preferences on one side, and resources and living conditions on the other. The third survey used in this chapter carried out in 2011 gives an authentic picture of living conditions and the social situation in the EU, enabling a comparison of experiences and conditions across Member States. The 2011 wave includes information on childcare arrangements which is a key explanatory variable in the analysis presented in the next section. Respondents are also asked about their labour market experiences and their living arrangements. Finally, and very importantly, information on their overall life satisfaction is also collected. Together with these key explanatory variables other relevant control variables used in the analysis are also included in the questionnaire. The analysis is carried out separately for the four living arrangements analysed: coupled mothers, coupled fathers, lone mothers, and lone fathers. In addition, taking advantage of

the multilevel technique used key results, using postestimation techniques, are shown for the 34 countries that comprise the sample of the 2011 EQLS.[1] Interestingly, as the analysis below will show these countries represent well the wide heterogeneity found in Europe with regards to family types, childcare arrangements and working patterns.

3.2 Methods

In order to investigate the relationship between family structure, childcare arrangements and life satisfaction I apply multilevel techniques to the data. Respondents to the survey are clustered within different European countries. This results in a hierarchical dataset that requires account for the impact of this multilevel structure for a proper estimation of standard errors. This is what a multilevel regression adds to a standard one-level regression which only includes a single residual term (Snijders and Bosker 2012).

Of all possible options of adding random elements to model variation between groups I use the simplest one: a logistic *random intercept model*, which only adds a single random parameter for each of the second-order units (countries) in which respondents are clustered. In a multilevel regression, the intercept is composed of an average value for the groups γ_{00} (countries) and a random one which reflects the variation across these groups U_{0j} (countries).

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + U_{0j}$$

To this basic formulation, I add individual-level variables to explain variation in the composite intercept:[2]

[1] The countries are: Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (DE), Denmark (DK), Estonia (EE), Spain (ES), Finland (FI), France (FR), Greece (GR), Croatia (HR), Hungary (HU), Ireland (IE), Iceland (IS), Italy (IT), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Latvia (LV), Montenegro (ME), Macedonia (MK), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NL), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Serbia (RS), Sweden (SE), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Turkey (TR), United Kingdom (UK), Kosovo (XK).

[2] Multilevel analysis is especially suited to introduce country-level variables to investigate their impact on life satisfaction and also (through cross-level interactions) to analyse whether the impact of individual-level variables on life satisfaction varies across certain country-level characteristics. Yet, for this chapter I do not consider the role of country-level characteristics directly. Although, variations in self-reported childcare

$$\beta_{oj} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10} x_{1j} + \cdots + \gamma_q o x_{qj} + U_{0j}$$

Thus, the final model specification, including the individual-level variables, will be as follows:

$$y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_1 x_{1i} + R_{IJ} + U_{IJ}$$

where the random effects are R_{ij} (the unexplained individual-level residual) and U_{0j} (the country-level one). γ_i are the coefficients for the individual level variables. Accordingly, X_j are the vectors of individual-level variables that will be used to explain variations in life satisfaction of parents living in traditional and new family arrangements across the 34 countries included in the 2011 EQLS. Given that life satisfaction is asked in a 10-point Likert scale, the multivariate multilevel models presented below use a linear specification which also facilitates the use of the postestimation techniques to introduce the key results of the analysis.

3.3 Variables

The *dependent variable* measures the overall life satisfaction of the respondent in a 10-points Likert scale with 1 meaning being very dissatisfied and 10 very satisfied.

Childcare arrangements is a categorical variable adding up the information of two different variables: whether respondent receives help from someone in the household to look after the children and whether she has made used of formal childcare services in the last 12 months. With this information category 1 of the variable group those respondents who have not used any type of childcare arrangements, category 2 those who have used only formal services, category 3 groups those who rely on informal services, and category 4 for those parents who report using both.[3]

Working pattern is a categorical variable with three categories. Category 1 is for those respondents who do not work, category 2 is for part-timers (those who work less than 30

arrangements by respondents have surely to do with how accessible these arrangements are in each country through public policies.

[3] Unfortunately, given the reduced sample size for the multivariate analysis in the next section formal childcare arrangements have to be merged with informal childcare arrangements into a single category.

hours a week) and category 3 groups full-timers (those who work more than 30 hours a week).

As for the control variables, based on existing research, they have been selected to control for the total time committed into different activities as well as for key individual and household characteristics of the respondents or the area where they live:

Partner's working pattern: Although the EQLS is not a household-level dataset it includes a key information regarding the partners of the respondents: their weekly working time. I use this information to create a key control variable for the analysis of coupled mothers and fathers using the same specification as for the respondents' working pattern above.

Housework: a categorical variable asking the respondent her views on whether the share of housework they do is more than fair load, just a fair load or less than a fair load.

Education: a categorical variable coding the level of education of the respondent into primary or less, secondary and tertiary.

Age and *age squared:* a continuous variable and the quadratic transformation for the age of the respondent.

Volunteering: a categorical variable for the frequency that the respondent participates in volunteering activities from not volunteering, doing it occasionally or regularly.

Household size: a continuous variable for the number of persons in the household.

Household income (natural log): the logarithmic transformation of the household income expressed in parity purchasing power Euros.

Size of the area of residence: a dummy variable with value 0 for respondents living in the country side or a village and value 1 for those living in a city.

Finally, to carry out the analysis below across the family arrangements analysed, I have also created a variable to group respondents according to whether they live in traditional or new family arrangements with dependant children (aged 0 to 12 years old).[4] In this chapter traditional family arrangements are defined as coupled mothers and fathers with children under 12 years old whereas new family arrangements are lone mothers and fathers. This variable is used to select the sample for the multivariate analysis in the next section.

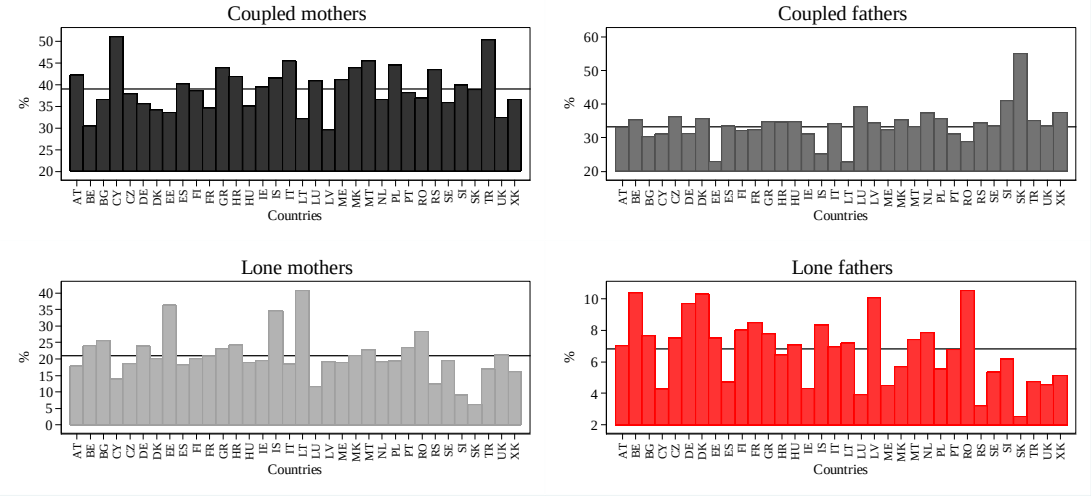
[4] Given the sample size it is not possible to distinguish further by the age of children. In any case, 0 to 12 years old is traditionally regarded, in research on childcare arrangements, as the age of dependant children.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Descriptive analysis

Figure 1 below shows the varying distribution of traditional and new family arrangements across the European countries included in the 2011 wave of the EQLS. In order to ease the interpretation each graph shows the corresponding cross-countries average as a straight line. Thus, starting by coupled mothers, the countries above the average of 39 per cent are: Austria, Cyprus, Spain, Greece, Croatia, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Macedonia, Malta, Poland, Serbia, and Turkey. On the other hand, those well below the average are: Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The remaining countries fall within the cross-countries average, A very similar distribution of countries above and below the cross-countries average of 33 per cent is found for coupled fathers. Instead the opposite distribution of countries applies for the distribution of lone motherhood and fatherhood. Clearly, lone parenthood is more common where the traditional nuclear family of two adults with dependant children is less widespread. Hence, lone motherhood above the average of 22 percent in Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Iceland, Lithuania and Romania. In the same vein, lone fathers are more commonly found (the average across countries is 7 per cent) in Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Latvia, Netherlands, and Romania. Overall, these results suggest that there is a clear divide in Europe with traditional family arrangements more common in Southern Europe and some few Central and Eastern European countries and new family arrangements more widespread among Nordic countries and Central and Eastern Europe. Altogether results also confirm that, although with significant variation across countries, the traditional nuclear family is still predominant in Europe and that lone parenthood is clearly a women's responsibility.

Figure 1. Distribution of traditional and new family arrangements across Europ

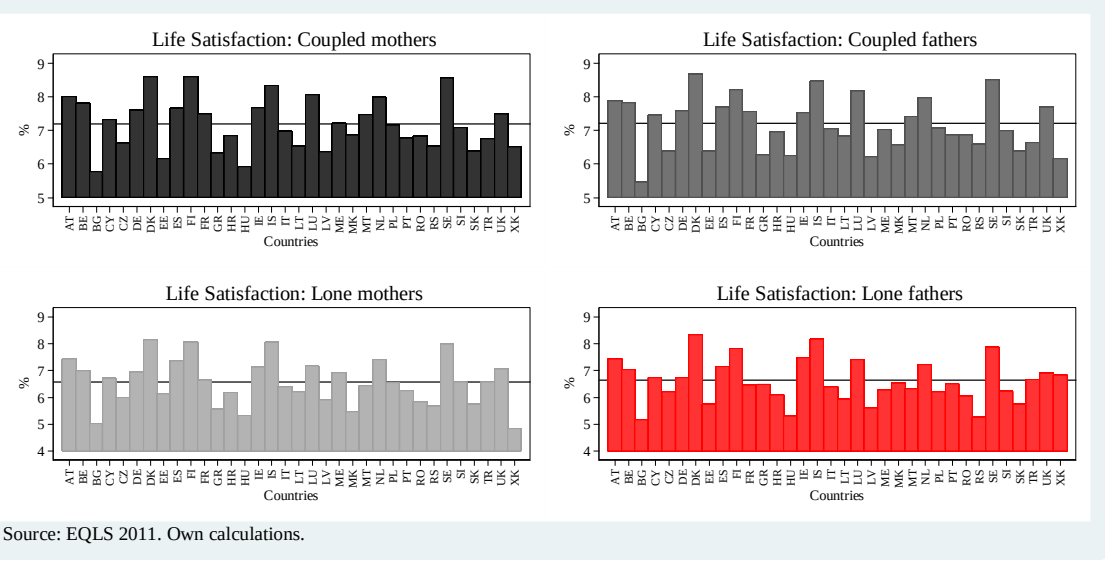


Source: EQLS 2011. Own calculations.

Figure 2 below reports the average life satisfaction by traditional and new family arrangements of the respondents living in the 34 European countries analysed. As before the cross-countries average life satisfaction is also provided to better interpret the results. In this case, the cross-countries average indicate that there is a clear divide in life satisfaction between traditional and new family arrangements and not so much within them. Thus, the average life satisfaction of coupled mothers and fathers is very much alike (7.19 and 7.20, respectively) as it is that of lone mothers and fathers (6.58 and 6.65, respectively). That is lone parents are less satisfied with their life overall than those living in couples. Interestingly, keeping in mind these varying levels of life satisfaction it seems that there is no so much variation by family type in the countries that fall above or below the overall cross-country average. Thus, above the average, irrespectively of the family arrangements, are always Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Ireland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Conversely, independently of the family type, countries below the overall average are: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey and Kosovo. Therefore, overall this descriptive analysis suggests two somehow contradicting findings. On one hand, family structure does seem to affect the overall life satisfaction of mothers and fathers, and, on the other hand, there seem to be some 'country effects' that rank consistently the mothers and fathers living in

those countries as more or less satisfied than the average across Europe for each of the four family arrangements considered.

Figure 2. Average life satisfaction for respondents in traditional and new family arrangements across Europe

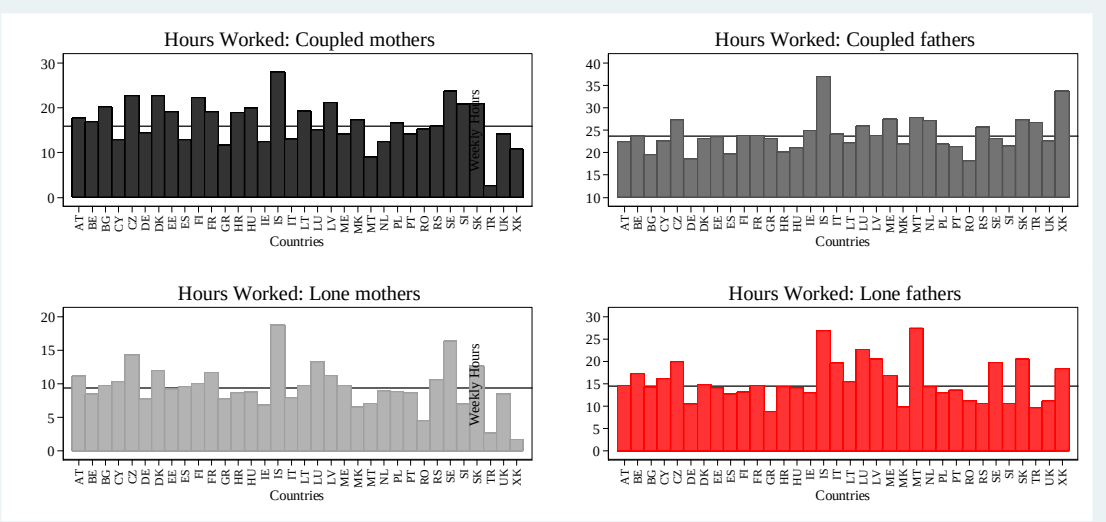


Source: EQLS 2011. Own calculations.

Figure 3 reports the average distribution of weekly hours worked for respondents living in traditional and new family arrangements across the 34 countries analysed.[5] As it was the case for the analysis on life satisfaction reported in Figure 2 here also a double pattern emerges but in this case also cross-cut by the gender of the respondent. On one hand, overall parents in couples worked longer hours than lone parents (coupled mothers worked an average of 16 hours a week, coupled fathers 24 hours, lone mothers 9 hoours and lone fathers 14 hours). Yet, as the numbers show men, irrespectively of their family type, consistently work more hours than their women counterparts. In addition, as it also was the case for the analysis on life satisfaction here again there seem to be some 'country effects' that within the average difference found for each family type make always respondents living in those countries either work above or below the overall European average. Interestingly, this fairly corresponds with the above and below country classifications found for life satisfaction which suggest that number of hours worked has a direct bearing on life satisfaction. Specifically, the more hours mothers and fathers work the more satisfied they are with their lives overall.

[5] For the sake of simplicity to present the results in this descriptive section, given the large number of countries analysed, here I use the self-reported hours of work in its continuous format instead of the categorical variable used in the multivariate analysis in the next section.

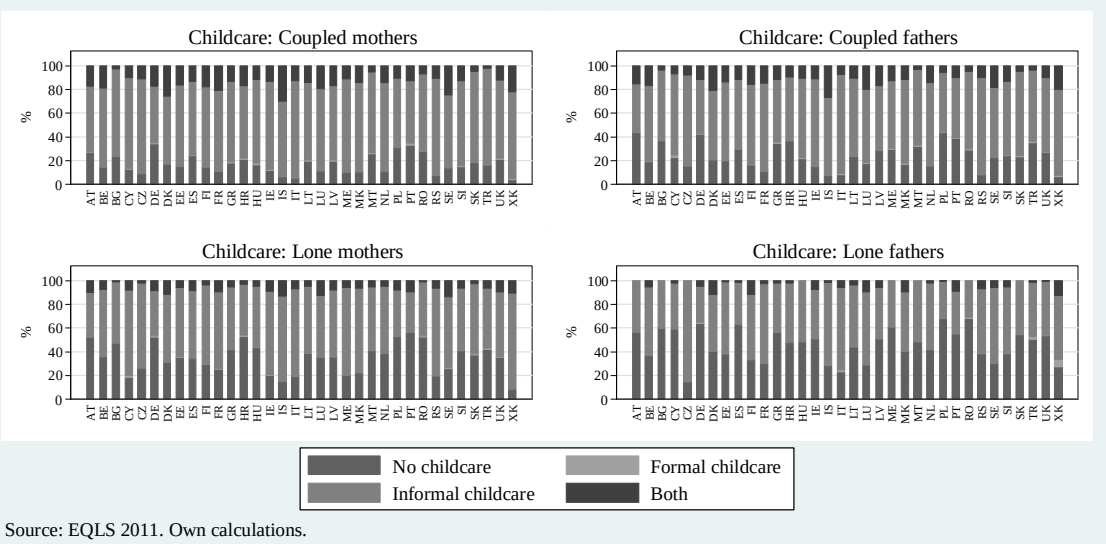
Figure 3. Average hours worked for respondents in traditional and new family arrangements across Europe



Source: EQLS 2011. Own calculations.

Finally, Figure 4 reports the distribution of childcare arrangements across the 34 European countries preset in the 2011 wave of the EQLS. Although the four graphs indicate that there are remarkable differences in the distribution of childcare arrangements by family type. Overall, informal childcare arrangements are the most common, followed by no childcare and a combination of both informal and formal childcare arrangements. Finally, formal childcare arrangements are almost of none use by parents as the single childcare arrangement to look after their dependant children.

Figure 4. Distribution of childcare arrangements for respondents in traditional and new family arrangements across Europe



Source: EQLS 2011. Own calculations.

4.2 Multivariate analysis

Table 1 below reports the results of the multilevel analysis to predict life satisfaction for parents living in traditional and new family arrangements. I first begin with an empty model which allows predicting the variation in life satisfaction that is due to country-level differences. The constant in these models represent the overall cross-countries average in life satisfaction. These overall means confirm the results found in the descriptive analysis above with coupled parents more satisfied than lone parents. Whereas the random disturbance around this constant represent the variation around the cross-country average that is due to country-specific effects. This information is used in Figures 5 and 6 to predict the ranking of life satisfaction for traditional and new family arrangements families living in the 34 European countries analysed. Finally the intra-class correlations (ICC) provided indicate how much of the differences in life satisfaction are due to differences across countries (the remaining being how much of the variance in life satisfaction are due to individual differences). Thus, the ICC class correlation in the empty models indicates that around 10 to 13 percent of the variance in life satisfaction is attributable to differences across countries. As expected this percentage falls considerably after the individual level predictors are introduced in the full models. For this latter case, the variance in life satisfaction due to country differences ranges between 3 to 5 percent.

As for the full models, results will also be presented using postestimation techniques in Figures 5 and 6. Therefore, for the sake of space limitation, I will only focus here on the results for childcare arrangements and the respondent's working pattern. For coupled mothers having access to informal childcare arrangements has a positive association on their life satisfaction. For coupled fathers the same result is found, but in this case also combining both informal and formal childcare arrangements is positively associated with life satisfaction. Instead for lone mothers and fathers none of the childcare arrangements is associated with their life satisfaction. Finally, the respondent's working pattern, as discussed in the descriptive analysis, is positively associated with life satisfaction, at least for coupled mothers and fathers and for lone mothers. The non-significant results found for lone fathers may be due to the reduced sample size.

Table 1. Linear multilevel regression for life satisfaction of parents in traditional and new family arrangements.

	Coupled mothers		Coupled fathers		Lone mothers		Lone fathers	
	M1 Empty	M2 Full	M3 Empty	M4 Full	M5 Empty	M6 Full	M7 Empty	M8 Full
Childcare (No childcare)								
Informal		0.24***		0.27***		0.07		-0.16
		(0.06)		(0.06)		(0.16)		(0.26)
Both		0.04		0.21**		-0.07		-0.07
		(0.09)		(0.09)		(0.29)		(0.75)
Working pattern (No working)								
Part-time		0.27***		0.49***		0.82***		-0.48
		(0.08)		(0.13)		(0.30)		(0.59)
Full-time		0.19***		0.44***		0.48***		0.26
		(0.06)		(0.06)		(0.18)		(0.31)
Partner's working pattern (No working)								
Part-time		0.02		0.17**				
		(0.13)		(0.08)				
Full-time		0.20***		0.01				
		(0.06)		(0.06)				
Housework load (More than a fair load)								
Just a fair load		0.35***		0.36***		0.30*		0.79***
		(0.05)		(0.09)		(0.15)		(0.31)
Less than fair load		0.02		0.26***		-0.15		0.24
		(0.10)		(0.09)		(0.25)		(0.41)
Education (Primary or less)								
Secondary		0.05		0.17**		0.19		0.08
		(0.07)		(0.08)		(0.19)		(0.40)
Tertiary		0.27***		0.32***		0.34		0.11
		(0.09)		(0.09)		(0.25)		(0.50)
Age		- 0.10***		- 0.08***		-0.06**		-0.12**
		(0.01)		(0.01)		(0.03)		(0.05)

Age (squared)		0.00***		0.00***		0.00***		0.00***
		(0.00)		(0.00)		(0.00)		(0.00)
Volunteering (No volunteering)								
Occasionally		0.20***		0.11**		-0.03		1.02***
		(0.06)		(0.06)		(0.19)		(0.32)
Regularly		0.23***		0.22***		0.39		1.11***
		(0.08)		(0.07)		(0.27)		(0.43)
Household size (2 persons)								
3 persons		-0.26***		-0.37***		-0.00		0.42
		(0.06)		(0.07)		(0.16)		(0.29)
4 persons or more		-0.31***		-0.41***		-0.04		-0.39
		(0.06)		(0.06)		(0.18)		(0.35)
Household income (log)		0.48***		0.44***		0.67***		0.51***
		(0.03)		(0.03)		(0.08)		(0.13)
Urban area		-0.17***		-0.17***		-0.22		-0.17
		(0.04)		(0.05)		(0.13)		(0.25)
Constant	7.18***	5.50***	7.16***	4.94***	6.55***	2.34**	6.60***	4.26**
	(0.13)	(0.34)	(0.13)	(0.38)	(0.14)	(0.92)	(0.14)	(1.67)
Random disturbance (constant)	0.56***	0.21***	0.58***	0.21***	0.68***	0.18**	0.54***	0.19
	(0.14)	(0.05)	(0.14)	(0.06)	(0.17)	(0.08)	(0.15)	(0.18)
ICC (%)	12	5	13	5	12	3	10	4
Observations	12,378	8,616	10,544	7,560	6,649	1,227	2,165	291
Countries	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
χ^2		593.89		512.92		133.32		69.41
Prob>χ^2		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00

*Significant at * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.
Standard errors between parentheses.

Source: EQLS 2011. Own calculations.

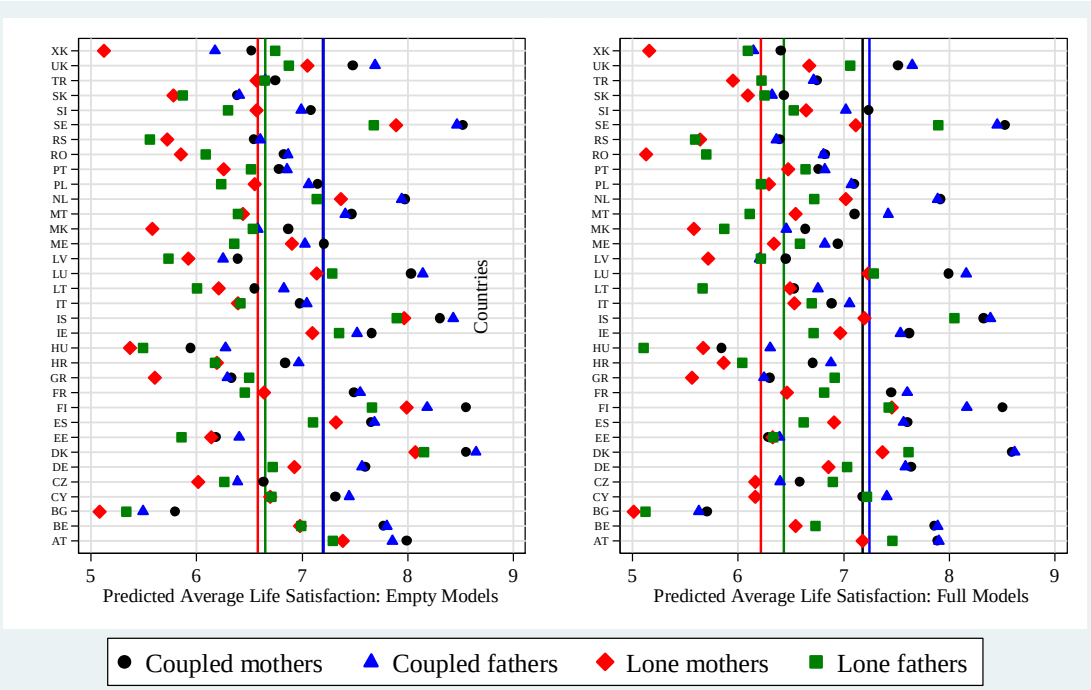
Figure 5 presents, using postestimation techniques suited for multilevel analysis (Cebolla 2013), the ranking of life satisfaction across European countries for the empty and full models shown in Table 1 above. The overall predicted life satisfaction average across the

34 European countries for each of the family types (coupled mothers, coupled fathers, lone mothers, and lone fathers) is marked by four vertical lines with the same color as the markers corresponding to each family type (the lines for coupled mothers and fathers are overlapped as the overall averages are 7.19 and 7.20, respectively). The left graph in Figure 5 is based on the empty models above. Results for the empty models match those of Figure 2 above but here we are able to compare differences in satisfaction by family type in each country as well as how they compare with the overall average and with the other countries as well (ordered alphabetically). Thus, for instance, focusing on representative extreme cases, in Bulgarian parents are estimated to have the lowest level of life satisfaction with all family types consistently below the cross-country European averages. However, within this overall trend coupled mothers appear to be the most satisfied with their lives, followed by coupled fathers, whereas lone fathers and mothers are predicted to be the least satisfied with their lives. Other countries with predicted very low levels of life satisfaction, consistently below the European averages, for all family types, are Estonia, Greece, Hungary, and Latvia. Yet, for instance, the specific ordered by the level of life satisfaction highlighted for Bulgaria, does not necessarily apply for the other countries as well which suggest that country-level factors, different from one another, play a great deal to account for the specific country rankings in life satisfaction by family type. For instance, in Hungary and Estonia coupled fathers are estimated to have higher levels of life satisfaction than coupled mothers (whereas in Bulgaria it was the opposite). On the other extreme, parents in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden are estimated to have life satisfaction higher than the European average for all family types. Again, there are though, some variations in the specific ordering by family type for each country confirming the importance of country-level determinants that may help or hinder work and family reconciliation for parents facing different pressures in this regard.

The right graph in Figure 1 reports the predicted levels in life satisfaction by family structure for the full models of Table 1. Most of the previous comments applied also here. However, some important differences are also apparent once the key independent and control variables are introduced. Thus, across Europe coupled mothers and lone mothers are reportedly less satisfied than their male counterparts as compared with the empty models (this is shown by the wider gaps between the corresponding vertical lines). This suggests that mothers across Europe (either in couples or singles) are the ones carrying the

bulk of the burden to reconcile work and family responsibilities. In the same vein, the predicted changes observed for the levels of life satisfaction at the country level for each family type appear to confirm this: there is a worsening in the predicted levels of life satisfaction across the 34 countries as compared to their male counterparts although the extent of this suggests there are country-specific factors which seem to matter, most likely in relation to the existence and availability of work life balance policies.

Figure 5. Predicted life satisfaction by family structure across Europe: empty and full models



Source: EQLS 2011. Own calculations.

Finally, the last analysis addresses a key aspect discussed in the theoretical section: whether there exist conditional effects of the type of childcare arrangements used on parents' life satisfaction according to their working commitments and whether, as suggested above, there are country-specific effects of how parents manage to reconcile work with family commitments. In order to explore this relationship in Table 2 below I run two interaction models for coupled mothers and fathers (the ones for which both key explanatory variables were significant) between the respondent's working pattern and the childcare arrangements used. Results indicate that there are some conditional effects for both coupled mothers and fathers. For the former, although the interaction term is only marginally significant ($p<0.15$), it suggest that coupled mothers' life satisfaction working full-time and relying on informal childcare arrangements is lower than that of non-working mothers who care for their dependant children themselves (no childcare arrangements used). Yet, the total net effect of the interaction (taking into account all its constitutive elements) indicates that coupled mothers working full-time and relying on informal childcare arrangements have higher levels of life satisfaction than non-working mothers caring for their children while their partners, most likely, go out to work. For fathers, the existence of conditional effects are slightly stronger than those found for coupled mothers

but in this case for coupled fathers working full-time who rely both on informal and formal childcare arrangements. For them their life satisfaction appears to be higher than that of non-working fathers who are the main carers of their dependant children. Finally, the increase in the χ^2 of the interaction models as compared to the full specification in Table 1 is also indicative that the interaction actually improves the overall fit of the models to predict parents' life satisfaction. That is, it suggests the existence of conditional effects between self-reported childcare arrangements and parents' working pattern on life satisfaction.

Table 2. Linear multilevel regression for life satisfaction of parents in traditional and new family arrangements.

	Coupled mothers M9 Interaction	Coupled fathers M10 Interaction
Childcare (No childcare)		
Informal	0.31***	0.25***
	(0.07)	(0.07)
Both	-0.03	-0.11
	(0.12)	(0.16)
Working pattern (No working)		
Part-time	0.43**	0.45
	(0.20)	(0.37)
Full-time	0.32**	0.35***
	(0.13)	(0.11)
*Interaction: childcare*working pattern*		
Informal* Part-time	-0.22	-0.03
	(0.21)	(0.40)
Informal*Full-time	-0.20ǂ	0.07
	(0.14)	(0.11)
Both*Part-time	-0.01	0.59
	(0.25)	(0.50)
Both*Full-time	0.06	0.44**
	(0.18)	(0.19)
Constant	5.16***	4.51***
	(0.34)	(0.37)
Random disturbance (constant)	0.20***	0.21***
	(0.05)	(0.06)
ICC (%)	5	5
Observations	8,616	7,560
Countries	34	34
χ^2	600.34	520.20

Prob>χ^2	0.00	0.00

*Significant at ǂ p< 0.15; * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.
Standard errors between parentheses.

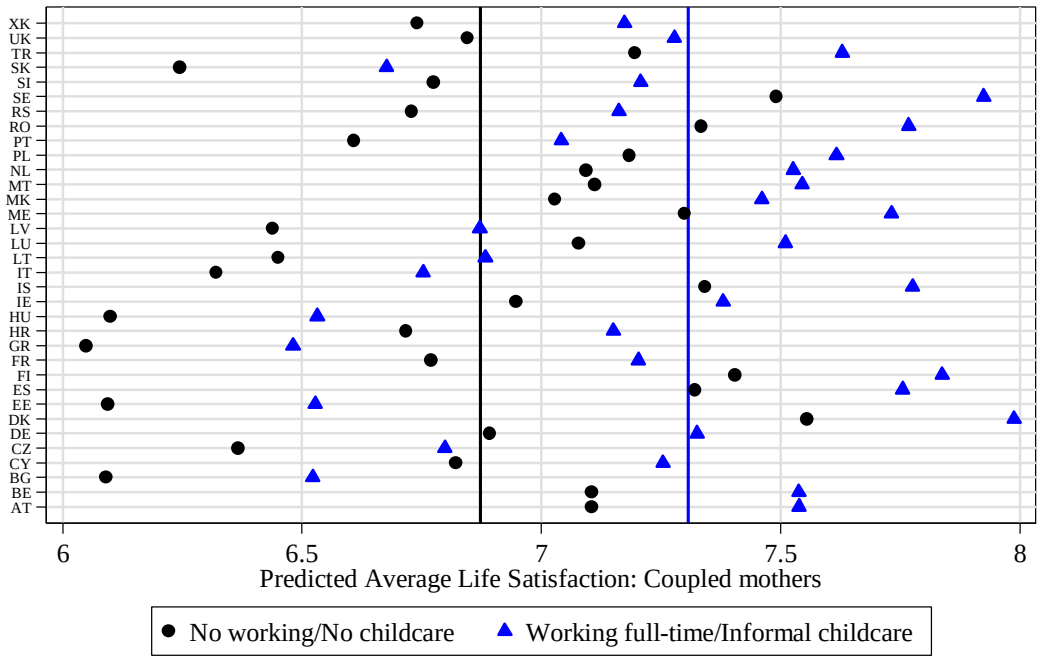
Estimation of the models is based on the full specification including all control variables. However, for the sake of simplicity only coefficients for the constitutive elements of the interactions are shown.

Source: EQLS 2011. Own calculations.

Using the same postestimation method as for the empty and full models above, in Figure 6 and 7 below I show the variations in life satisfaction for coupled mothers and fathers across Europe for those significant effects found in the two interaction models (in relation to the reference category in both cases). Thus, for coupled mothers' life satisfaction Figure 6 shows two overall trends across the 34 European countries analysed. Firstly, full-timers relying on informal childcare arrangements are more satisfied than their counterparts who do not work and care for their children. This suggests that even if the trade-offs faced to balance work and family are significant, working-full time has a remarkable positive impact for women. Secondly, this overall positive gap in the life satisfaction of working mothers translates into each of the 34 countries analysed where coupled mothers working full-time and using informal childcare arrangements are always more satisfied than their non-working counterparts. Yet remarkable differences are still found in the life satisfaction of couple mothers among countries which points out that country differences in how easy for mothers is to reconcile work and family tasks are still large. Three main groups of countries can be observed in the figure: 1. Those in which the predicted life satisfaction of coupled mothers (who work and do not work and who use informal childcare arrangements or are the carers of their children) is below the overall low satisfaction for the non-working mothers (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italia, Latvia. Lithuania, and Slovakia). In general these are Eastern and Southern European countries with very familialistic welfare states in which the family receives little support and all caring duties have to be dealt with within the family putting a considerable pressure when parents (especially mothers) decide or need to work for the wellbeing of the family; 2. A second group is made up by those countries in which both working and non-working mothers are estimated to have a life satisfaction above the average threshold for

working mothers using informal childcare arrangements (Denmark, Spain, Finland, Iceland, Romania, Montenegro, and Sweden). In this case (with the exceptions of Spain, Romania, and Montenegro), it is clear that the Nordic model is behind the high levels of life satisfaction of coupled mothers. 3. Finally, a third group of countries is made up of an heterogeneous group (most of them belonging to the conservative and liberal welfare models plus some Eastern and Southern countries) of countries where support for work life balance is provided but not up to the level that would be required to solve the trade-offs faced by working mothers (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, France, Croatia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Macedonia. Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey, United Kingdom, and Kosovo). Conservative welfare regimes still place the bulk of the burden associated to work and family reconciliation on women making it difficult for mothers to pursue a full-time professional career; also tax systems still penalized double full-time earner couples. Alternatively, liberal welfare regimes with their heavy reliance in the market to solve the trade-offs associated with work and family reconciliation increase the opportunity costs of the family if labour income does not guarantee buying out the childcare required for women to work full-time.

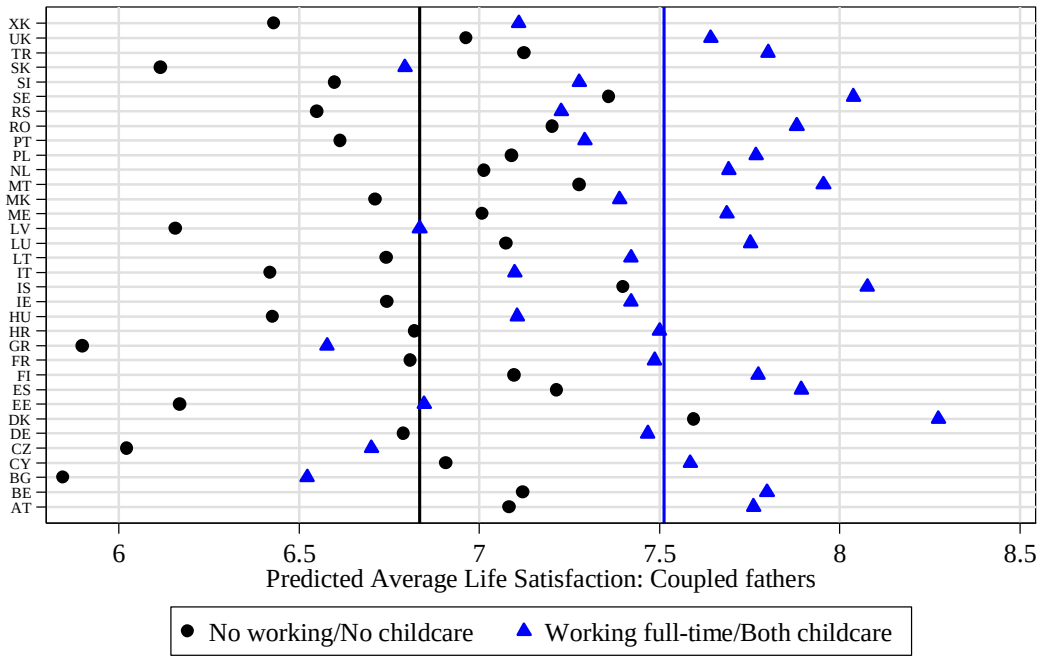
Figure 6. Predicted life satisfaction for coupled mothers across Europe: interaction model



Source: EQLS 2011. Own calculations.

Finally, for coupled fathers the postestimation results presented in Figure 7 confirm that overall across European countries full-timers relying on informal and formal childcare arrangements are more satisfied than their non-working counterparts who care for their children. Also the same positive gaps hold across countries. Yet, results at the country-level highlight a remarkable difference with regards to coupled mothers: non-working fathers are significantly less satisfied than their female counterparts. Thus, in this case only Danish non-working parents appear to be even more satisfied than the life satisfaction European average for working fathers. This suggest that social expectations associated with the gender roles of men as the main family providers are very pervasive to be changed through policy interventions. On the other hand, similar country groupings by the levels of satisfactions of fathers (working full-time or not) are also found for fathers with Nordic countries ranking first, followed by countries representing the continental and liberal welfare regimes, whereas Southern and, especially, Eastern European countries ranking the last in the life satisfaction continuum of coupled fathers' life satisfaction confirm that, despite the importance of the expectation associated to gender, variations in how policy interventions deal with the trade-offs of work and family responsibilities also matter to men.

Figure 7. Predicted life satisfaction for coupled fathers across Europe: interaction model



Source: EQLS 2011. Own calculations.

5. Conclusions

This chapter has investigated the impact of childcare arrangements, and whether this is conditional on the working pattern they choose, on mothers' and fathers' life satisfaction comparing traditional (the nuclear family) with new (lone parenthood) family types. The analysis is based on the 2011wave of the European Quality of Life Survey interviewing a sample of representative adult individuals in 34 European countries. For the analysis both descriptive and multivariate techniques are used.

The analysis has shown remarkable differences across European countries in the extent that the traditional nuclear family is still predominant across Europe as lone parenthood has become more widespread across some Central, Eastern, and, above all, Nordic countries. In addition, the family structure itself appears to have an impact on the self-reported life satisfaction of mothers and fathers underscoring the time pressures that lone parents face to reconcile work with family responsibilities. Thus, lone parents across Europe report lower levels of life satisfaction than those living in traditional families. With regards to the availability of childcare arrangements, the descriptive analysis for the sample of 34 countries has highlighted that there is a wide variation in the extent of informal and formal childcare arrangements across Europe and that this variation is most likely not independent of the family type with lone mothers and fathers, for instance, having to rely more on informal childcare arrangements given their income constraints. But also that public policy surely plays an important role in the specific mix of childcare arrangements found across countries in Europe. Likewise, the variation found in the working pattern parents choose may well be the result of personal constraints (by family type, for instance) and of the public policies regulating the labour markets across the 34 European countries analysed.

Finally, results of the multilevel analysis have highlighted some interesting findings. There appears to be some country-specific effects leading to persisting differences in life satisfaction that are independent of family structure with Eastern and Southern European countries consistently ranking low in the life satisfaction of coupled and lone parents and Nordic countries reporting the highest level of life satisfaction of parents with dependant children. Results of the interaction models have provided evidence that a good deal of this persistent country-specific effects on life satisfaction for parents with dependant children can be accounted for by childcare arrangements and the working pattern parents choose. More importantly, results of these models have also shown that the existence of conditional

effects (at least for coupled mothers and fathers) between childcare arrangements and parents' working pattern is likely to be a key factor behind the persistent country rankings found. Yet social expectations associated to gender, especially for fathers, are still very important to explain the low levels of life satisfaction for non-working fathers. All in all, these results suggest the key role played by public policies supporting working parents both with regards to the availability and quality of childcare and the possibility to reconcile work and family responsibilities through flexible working arrangements, especially in a context of increasing participation of women in the labour market and the extension of lone parent families who face more important constraints to look after their dependant children. Also that these policies should seek to especially target neutralising socially constructed gender roles in order to bring about a true swift towards greater gender equality.

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