

How Do Women and Men Perceive the Sacrifice of Leaving Work for Their Families? A Cost–Benefit Analysis

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Abstract

We aimed to analyze perceptions of the costs and benefits of family and work sacrifices. In Study 1, participants ($n = 222$) rated the associated benefits and costs of a sacrifice (work vs. family). In Study 2, participants ($n = 213$) rated the associated benefits and costs of a work sacrifice, their willingness to sacrifice, and their sense of authenticity. In Study 3, participants ($n = 186$) reported on commitment and relationship satisfaction, rated the associated benefits and costs of a work sacrifice, and their life satisfaction. Participants perceived that work sacrifices were costlier for men and more beneficial for women and that women felt more authentic for making them. For women, higher commitment or relationship satisfaction was associated with greater perception of benefits, which was associated with greater life satisfaction. These findings highlight the relevance of gender differences in work sacrifices and hence in women's professional advancement.

Keywords

romantic relationships, work, family, sacrifices, gender differences

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Consider a heterosexual couple's relationship that includes children and in which both partners work full time. Both want to keep their jobs, but their schedules are incompatible with their family responsibilities. Faced with this situation, one of the two has to sacrifice his or her personal goals to benefit his or her partner and the relationship. Who is more likely to make the sacrifice?

In recent years, female labor force participation has increased, but the increase has not automatically led to a balance in family responsibilities between women and men (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020). In fact, traditional gender stereotypes have not changed along with this transition (e.g., Moya & Moya-Garófano, 2021). Considering men have not increased their dedication to the private sphere (i.e., family responsibilities), many women have still had to leave or reduce their dedication to the public sphere (i.e., work), sacrificing their professional aspirations for the family's benefit. Compared with men, women are less likely to work full time and to advance in their careers, and they are more likely to be employed in lower-paying jobs (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2014; OECD, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2023), considering family responsibilities are one of the main causes of their part-time work (Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, 2020). According to the above data and social role theory (Eagly, 1987), women make greater work sacrifices,

that is, they sacrifice their career aspirations to a greater extent to attend to family responsibilities. Men make greater family sacrifices, that is, they more often sacrifice family to attend to work responsibilities (Dahm et al., 2019). How do men and women perceive these sacrifices? Studies have shown that individuals perceive more benefits and fewer costs in their daily sacrifices (e.g., visiting family or seeing friends) compared with those of their partner, regardless of gender (Visserman et al., 2020). No study to date has documented the perceived costs and benefits of major sacrifices, such as leaving a job to take care of one's family. It is relevant to analyze the costs and benefits of these sacrifices because when people make decisions, they assess the costs and benefits associated with them, leading them to decide on the option that involves lower costs and greater benefits (Bechara et al., 2000). Therefore, examining the perceived costs and benefits of sacrificing work will increase the understanding of why women make this decision, which seems to occur either because they perceive it to be the most

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appropriate decision or because their partners perceive it as such, in turn maintaining gender inequality in the private sphere.

Sacrifices and Gender Roles

When situations where one partner's goals and preferences conflict with those of the other person in a relationship, people often make sacrifices. A sacrifice occurs when a partner decides to give up his or her goal in favor of the other partner's interest or the relationship (Righetti et al., 2022). Visserman et al. (2020) showed that people perceived fewer costs and greater benefits when they sacrificed their self-interest to benefit their relationships, that is, people felt better when giving up their goals for the relationship than when their partner did so. Despite the nature of sacrifices, which require foregoing one's immediate self-interest to promote another person's well-being (i.e., taking a caregiver role), studies on perceptions of sacrifice have shown no gender-based differences. However, what happens if we account for gender roles in the sacrifices? Do gender differences exist in the perception of making work or family sacrifices reported by women and men?

Based on the social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2016), we suggest that gender differences would exist in the perception of work sacrifices (e.g., reducing working hours or refusing a promotion) and family sacrifices (e.g., spending less time with family or extending work hours). This theory explains that gender socialization has a differential influence on the behavior of women and men. According to the theory, the origin of gender differential behavior derives from the physical differences between women and men. These differences have caused the division of tasks by gender, associating reproductive activities with women (caregivers) and physical or strength activities with men (breadwinners). The division of tasks has resulted in observations of different behaviors between women and men: behaviors related to care and affection among women and behaviors related to decision-making and leadership among men. The behavioral differences have triggered people to infer that specific traits exist according to gender, resulting in what are known as gender roles. One of the predominant characteristics of gender roles is their ability to influence people's behavior: Women tend to engage in activities oriented toward caring for others (i.e., family), whereas men's activities are oriented toward pursuing their career ambitions (i.e., work). Gender norms establish what is acceptable or appropriate behavior for both men and women based on their gender role. When people behave in accordance with what is expected of them (i.e., gender role), they receive social approval. However, those who deviate from their gender role are socially sanctioned through discriminatory behaviors. Although both women and men receive negative evaluations if they deviate from their roles, women are perceived more negatively if they behave counterstereotypically (e.g.,

Sutherland et al., 2015), and more social pressure is placed on them. Consequently, due to social evaluations, both women and men are aware of the costs of deviating from their traditional gender roles, so their behavior is directed toward what is socially expected of them. To sum up, gender roles present a context that continues to exert a normative social influence or pressure on day-to-day decisions, and more specifically on those related to work and family life within romantic relationships: Women are expected to prioritize family responsibilities over work demands (work sacrifice), whereas men are expected to prioritize work demands over family responsibilities (family sacrifice; Ellemers, 2018). The fact that women and men choose to sacrifice work or family may not be an individualistic choice but a decision guided by gender socialization, which pushes people to sacrifice in one way or the other.

The well-documented literature on work and family decisions supports this theoretical perspective. Recently, Villanueva-Moya and Expósito (2022) documented that women's decisions are usually between work and family, prioritizing family, whereas men's decisions are based on work. Xue et al. (2020) showed that when family interfered with work, women usually became homemakers and men were less likely to leave their work. Likewise, in interviews, romantic partners have indicated that when one of them must decide to work full time or care for their families, women often choose the second option (Hochschild & Machung, 2012) because they perceive that choosing a professional future would entail greater costs for their family (Nsair & Piszczek, 2021; Villanueva-Moya & Expósito, 2021b). This may be because they feel guilt or because they feel they are not fulfilling their traditional role as caregivers. Indeed, women consider reducing their working hours to reserve more energy and time for their families (Aarntzen et al., 2019). According to Eagly and Wood (2016), this difference in behaviors reflects people's perception of men and women's gender roles in today's society. However, to our knowledge, no studies have analyzed the perceived costs and benefits of making work or family sacrifices. We expected that women and men would perceive that making a work sacrifice would be socially perceived as positive for women (high benefits and low costs) and negative for men (low benefits and high costs). Regarding family sacrifice, it would be perceived negatively for women (low benefits and high costs) and positively for men (high benefits and low costs).

Research Overview

From a gender perspective, we analyzed the differences between men and women in the way the costs and benefits of family- and work-related sacrifices are socially perceived. In Study 1, participants thought of the most recent family- versus work-related sacrifice they had made and rated the associated costs and benefits for themselves and for their partners (their

partner's perspective). We expected that women and men would perceive (a) greater benefit and lower cost for men who make family sacrifices, (b) lower benefit and greater cost for women who make family sacrifices, (c) greater benefit and lower cost for women who make work sacrifices, and (d) lower benefit and greater cost for men who make work sacrifices. Considering the results of Study 1, in Study 2, we focused on work sacrifices. After reading a work sacrifice scenario, participants rated the associated costs and benefits for the main characters (female and male), themselves, and their partners. We expected that women and men would perceive greater benefits and lower cost for women who make work sacrifices. We also examined participants' willingness to sacrifice and their sense of authenticity, which could reflect gender roles. Specifically, we expected that women and men would perceive that women would be more willing to make a work sacrifice and would feel more authentic if they made the work sacrifice rather than their partners. In Study 3, participants completed several relationship measures (relationship satisfaction and commitment) based on their most recent work sacrifices, rated the associated social costs and benefits to themselves, and evaluated their life satisfaction. We expected that relationship measures would associate with perceived costs and benefits independently, which would increase life satisfaction. Research has shown that feelings of closeness and relationship satisfaction relate to attitudes that are more positive toward making sacrifices (Ruppel & Curran, 2012; van Lange et al., 1997), which may affect their perception of costs and benefits. For this reason, we controlled for closeness and relationship satisfaction. Specifically, we included the other in the self (IOS; Aron et al., 1992) to address closeness as previous literature on sacrifices has done (e.g., Impett et al., 2014; Kogan et al., 2010; Park et al., 2019). Second, although several factors can influence work and family sacrifices, it seems that having children is one of the factors that most influences work sacrifices, especially for women (Herrarte et al., 2012), because of the difficulty of reconciling work and family. Both men and women increase their paid and unpaid work time, but women reduce their time in paid work to a greater extent (Rapoport et al., 2011) to accommodate childcare (Horne & Breitzkreuz, 2018). Therefore, we also controlled for having children in the cost–benefit analyses to ensure our results are not due to differences in having children. Codes and data are available at Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/mpc52/?view_only=ff3e6d2dc0f74f87bfa9d55d03e5e969). We report all manipulations, measures, and exclusions in these studies (see online supplementary material [OSM] for more information).

Study 1

Method

Participants. Our initial sample included 297 Spanish participants. The inclusion criterion was being involved in a

heterosexual romantic relationship for a minimum of 3 months. We removed seven participants from the analyses because they were not involved in a romantic relationship, 10 participants because they did not have a heterosexual orientation, eight participants because they were not Spanish, two participants because they did not answer all measures, and 50 participants because they failed the attention check (i.e., “If you are reading this question, answer with ‘3’”). Regarding the main measure (sacrifices), we excluded 28 participants because they provided incoherent responses to an open-ended question. We conducted the analyses with the remaining 222 participants ($M_{age} = 49.19$; $SD = 7.70$; range = 31–67; 54.1% women and 45.9% men). Couples' romantic involvement ranged from 3 months to 47 years ($M_{months} = 264.70$; $SD = 132.63$). More than half of the participants were married (79.3%), 13.1% were cohabiting, and 7.7% were maintaining a dating relationship. Most participants (86.9%) had children. Finally, more than half of the participants (64.9%) worked full time, 13.5% worked part time, 6.8% were unemployed, 8.1% were homemakers, and 1.8% indicated another situation.¹ Sensitivity power analysis (G*Power; Faul et al., 2007) revealed that the sample size was sufficiently large enough to detect effects of at least a small size of $f = .08$.

Procedure and Measures. We recruited participants online (linked to Qualtrics Software) via advertisements on internet forums and social networks (e.g., Facebook). Through an intrasubject design, we asked participants to think of their most recent family- versus work-related sacrifice and to complete sacrifice measures regarding the situation they had recalled.² Participants first completed several relationship measures, including relationship satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998; van der Drift et al., 2014; five items; “I feel satisfied with our relationship”; $\alpha = .74$), on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), and the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) scale (Aron et al., 1992; Gómez et al., 2011) on a 7-point scale (1 = *totally independent* to 7 = *almost completely overlapping*). Next, we asked participants to write vividly about a recent family sacrifice they had made. We defined *sacrifice* for the participants based on Day and Impett (2018). Then, they answered several questions about their decision on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*). Specifically, participants indicated the benefits (three items; for example, “How beneficial was the sacrifice for you?”; $\alpha = .80$) and costs (three items; for example, “How costly was the sacrifice for you?”; $\alpha = .87$) of their sacrifices (Visserman et al., 2020). We also asked participants to imagine their partner having to make the sacrifice they had described and to rate the associated benefits (three items; for example, “How beneficial would the sacrifice be for your partner?”; $\alpha = .86$) and costs (three items; for example, “How costly would the sacrifice be for your partner?”; $\alpha = .88$). After they completed all measures, we asked participants to

Table 1. Perception of Costs and Benefits as a Function of Gender, Sacrificer Condition, and the Interaction Between Them in Study 1.

Variables	Sacrifice costs			Sacrifice benefits		
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Family sacrifices						
Gender ^a	1.08	.301	.01	0.10	.754	.00
Sacrificer (self vs. partner)	0.08	.782	.00	0.02	.888	.00
Gender \times Sacrificer	1.93	.166	.01	0.00	.948	.00
IOS ^b	0.21	.647	.00	6.37	.012	.03
Relationship satisfaction	0.90	.344	.00	1.24	.266	.01
Having children ^b	0.12	.733	.00	1.18	.279	.01
Work sacrifices						
Gender	0.07	.797	.00	4.90	.028	.02
Sacrificer (self vs. partner)	2.84	.094	.01	0.10	.748	.00
Gender \times Sacrificer	5.52	.020	.03	5.70	.018	.03
IOS ^c	0.04	.846	.00	6.19	.014	.03
Relationship satisfaction	9.08	.003	.04	0.19	.665	.00
Having children ^b	0.08	.777	.00	0.52	.473	.00

Note. IOS = inclusion of other in the self.

^a1 = male, 2 = female. ^bIOS = inclusion of other in the self. ^c1 = No, 2 = Yes.

recall the most recent work sacrifice they had made. Then, they rated the costs and benefits of the described sacrifice for themselves and their partners. We counterbalanced the work and family sacrifice conditions to avoid response bias. Participants completed the study by answering demographic questions. Participants did not receive monetary compensation.

Analysis Strategy

We conducted several repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to quantify the effects of the sacrificer condition (self vs. partner) and gender, as well as the interaction between the sacrificer condition and gender on the perception of costs and benefits, respectively, using SPSS (Version 24). When interactions emerged, we performed pairwise Bonferroni-corrected comparisons to interpret them. We first conducted the analyses with the family sacrifices condition and then with work sacrifices. We introduced IOS scores, relationship satisfaction, and having children as covariates. When covariates were statistically significant, we used the parameters SPSS estimated to their interpretation. These parameters represented whether the mean covariates differed significantly as a function of dependent variables.

Results

Family Sacrifices

Perception of Benefits. As shown in the upper left section of Table 1 (see Table 1 in OSM for mean scores), our results did not reveal significant main effects of the sacrificer condition, gender, or the interaction of the sacrificer condition and

gender on the perception of benefits. Having children and relationship satisfaction did not yield statistically significant results. IOS scores significantly affected the perception of benefits. Participants who scored higher on the IOS scale perceived greater benefits when their partners made the sacrifice than when they made it (see Table 2 in OSM for parameter estimates).

Perception of Costs. Similarly, the sacrificer condition, gender, and the interaction of the sacrificer condition and gender did not significantly influence the perception of costs. Covariates were not significant (see the upper right section of Table 1, and see Table 1 in OSM for mean scores).

Work Sacrifices

Perception of Benefits. As shown in the lower left section of Table 1, the sacrificer condition had no statistically significant effect on the perception of benefits. By contrast, gender, $F(1, 217) = 4.90, p = .028, \eta_p^2 = .02$, and the interaction of the sacrificer condition by gender significantly influenced the perception of benefits, $F(1, 217) = 5.70, p = .018, \eta_p^2 = .03$. Men perceived the work sacrifice as more beneficial than women did ($M_{men} = 5.08, SE = 0.12$; $M_{women} = 4.70, SE = 0.11$; see the lower left section of Table 2). As illustrated in Figure 1A, men and women perceived greater benefit when they made the work sacrifice than when their partner made it, $M_{men (self)} = 5.85, SD = 1.15$; $M_{men (partner)} = 4.41, SD = 1.81$, but the differences were lower among women, $M_{women (self)} = 5.04, SD = 1.65$; $M_{women (partner)} = 4.28, SD = 1.64$ (see the lower left section of Table 2). Relationship satisfaction and having children were not significant factors on the perception of benefits,

Table 2. Post Hoc Comparisons of Costs and Benefits Ratings Between Conditions in Study 1.

Variables	Sacrifice costs			Sacrifice benefits		
	Difference (SE)	95% CI	<i>p</i>	Difference (SE)	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Family sacrifices						
Men vs. Women	0.24 (0.24)	[-0.22, 0.71]	.301	0.07 (0.22)	[-0.36, 0.49]	.754
Self vs. partner	0.20 (0.11)	[-0.01, 0.41]	.057	0.24 (0.08)	[0.08, 0.40]	.004
Men: self vs. partner	0.05 (0.16)	[-0.26, 0.37]	.737	0.25 (0.12)	[0.00, 0.49]	.047
Women: self vs. partner	0.36 (0.15)	[0.07, 0.64]	.016	0.23 (0.11)	[0.01, 0.46]	.039
Work sacrifices						
Men vs. women	-0.06 (0.22)	[-0.50, 0.38]	.797	0.38 (0.17)	[0.04, 0.71]	.028
Self vs. partner	-0.12 (0.12)	[-0.35, 0.11]	.297	1.11 (0.13)	[0.85, 1.36]	<.001
Men: self vs. partner	0.16 (0.17)	[-0.19, 0.50]	.366	1.42 (0.19)	[1.04, 1.80]	<.001
Women: self vs. partner	-0.40 (0.16)	[0.09, 0.72]	.013	0.79 (0.18)	[0.45, 1.14]	<.001

Note. CI = confidence interval.

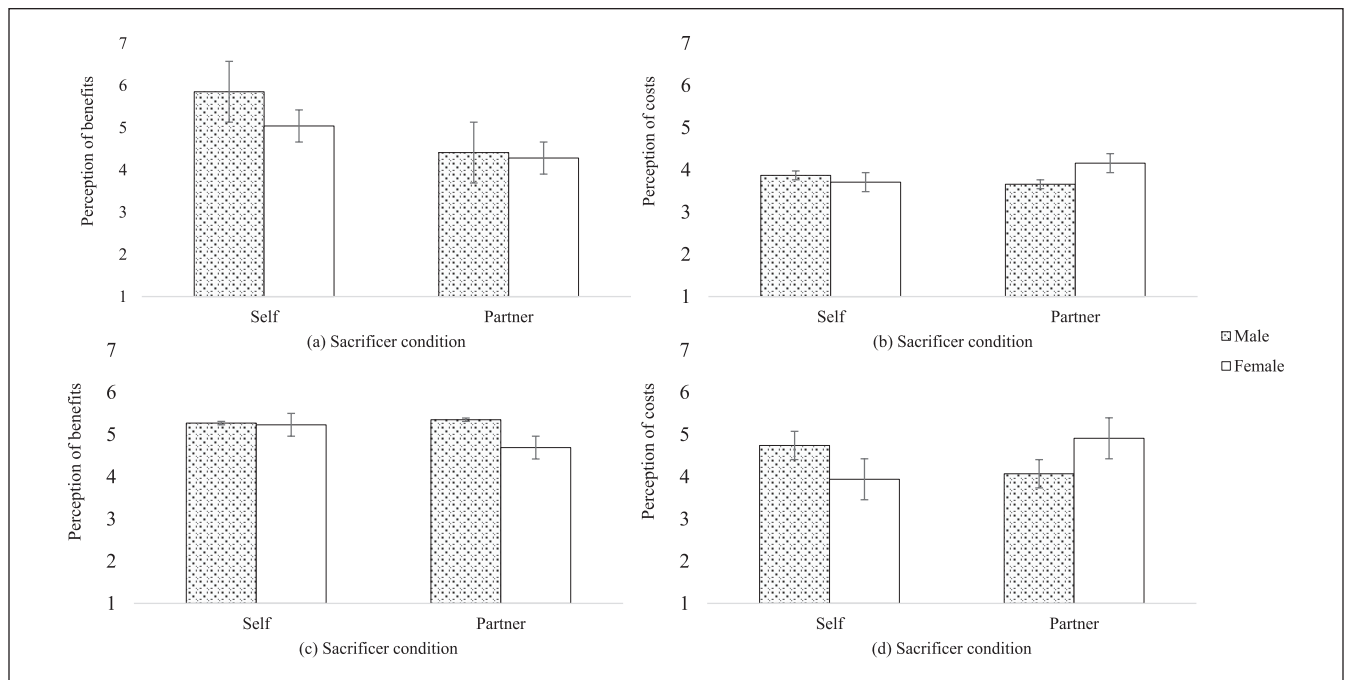


Figure 1. Interaction of the Romantic Relationship Sacrificer Condition and Gender on the Perception of Benefits/Costs of Work Sacrifices in Study 1 and 2.

Note. The figures above belong to Study 1, while the figures below belong to Study 2. The figures in Study 2 belong to the romantic relationship sacrificer condition.

but IOS scores did (see Table 1, lower left section). Participants with higher IOS scores significantly perceived greater benefits when their partner made the sacrifice (see Table 2 in OSM for parameter estimates).

Perception of Costs. As shown in the lower right section of Table 1, we did not find significant main effects for the sacrificer condition or gender on the perception of costs. By contrast, the interaction of the sacrificer condition by gender significantly influenced the perception of costs, $F(1, 217) = 5.52, p = .020, \eta_p^2 = .03$. Women perceived greater costs

when their partner made the work sacrifice than when they made it. Although the differences were not statistically significant, men’s scores indicated a tendency to perceive their work sacrifice as more costly than when their partners made the sacrifice, $M_{women (self)} = 3.71, SD = 1.84; M_{women (partner)} = 4.16, SD = 1.96; M_{men (self)} = 3.87, SD = 1.79; M_{men (partner)} = 3.66, SD = 1.94$ (see the lower right section of Table 2). Figure 1B depicts this interaction. IOS scores and having children did not significantly affect the perception of costs, but relationship satisfaction did (see Table 1, lower right section). Participants with greater relationship satisfaction

perceived lower costs when their partner made the sacrifice than when they did (see Table 1 in OSM).

Brief Discussion

We found no significant effects of gender on the perception of costs or benefits of making family sacrifices. The means showed that both men and women perceived more benefits of making family sacrifices. Perhaps social pressure may influence this perception because it is expected that one must have a good job as an indicator of responsibility to have a family, and this may be desirable for men and women alike. Consequently, women are increasingly forced to make family sacrifices to advance in the workplace, whereas for men, these sacrifices constitute part of their traditional role. By contrast, both genders perceived greater costs in making these sacrifices for themselves, which may reflect the traditional female gender role, but also men's increasing involvement in the family domain. The fact that gender differences exist in work sacrifices and not in family sacrifices seems to show that gender inequality is still present in the domain that is important for men's identity (i.e., work). Men and women may make similar sacrifices in the private sphere (family), diminishing gender differences in this domain. Perhaps in this private sphere, couples have more room for negotiation to achieve a balance that can be optimal or acceptable for the couple, ensuring the good functioning of the family. However, these differences increase when it comes to the public sphere (work), relegating women to a subordinate position and thus perpetuating gender inequality in the professional field.

Considering work sacrifices, contrary to what we expected, men and women perceived greater benefits when they made work sacrifices themselves than when their partners made them. This finding aligns with that of Visserman et al. (2020), who showed that people perceived greater benefits when they sacrificed their self-interest to benefit a relationship. In addition, as expected, women perceived greater costs when their partners made the work sacrifice than when they had to make it. Although the differences were not significant, men's scores indicated a tendency to perceive their work sacrifices as more costly than their partners' sacrifices. In sum, our findings provide preliminary evidence that women perceived that for their partners, sacrificing some aspects of their work life to attend to family needs would be more costly than when they did it. This result did not emerge among men. Finally, it is worth noting that participants who scored higher on the IOS scale perceived greater benefits when their partners made the sacrifices (family and work) than when they made them. This measure of closeness is associated with think of one's partner as part of one's own description or sense of self (Aron et al., 1992; Kogan et al., 2010). Specifically, closeness is associated with positive feelings about partner, love, and greater relationship maintenance (Aron & Fraley, 1999; Berscheid et al., 1989; Reis et al., 2000). Therefore, the feeling of closeness may act as a buffer in sacrifices, perceiving more benefits from the

decision taken by the partner, regardless of whether it affects the person or not. However, these results are preliminary, and more research is needed to clarify the effects of IOS on the perception of benefits.

Study 2

With Study 2, we aimed to analyze work sacrifices more exhaustively. In this sense, we were curious about what happens when a person is faced with a specific work sacrifice that may be costly, such as having to leave a full-time position or reduce one's job position to attend to family responsibilities. Participants read a scenario in which a female or male character made a work sacrifice. Then, they rated the associated costs and benefits for the characters. Likewise, to extrapolate the results of the hypothetical situation, they were asked about their romantic relationship: They imagined themselves and their partners in the scenario and rated the associated costs and benefits for both. Moreover, we assessed the characters, participants, and participant partners' willingness to make the work sacrifice. We expected that women and men would both perceive women as more willing to make work sacrifices. Finally, we evaluated the participants' sense of authenticity (i.e., staying true to themselves). We believed women and men would believe that women would feel more authentic when they sacrificed work than when their partners did so because caring for others (i.e., work sacrifice) is a socially preestablished behavior for women. We based on Study 1, and further assessed willingness to sacrifice and sense of authenticity, which could reflect the effect of gender roles in sacrifice behavior.

Method

Participants

The sample in Study 2 included 213 Spanish participants (53.1% women). The participants' mean age was 47 years ($SD = 8.07$, range = 35–69). Originally, 232 participants involved in heterosexual romantic relationships for a minimum of 3 months participated in the study, but we excluded five participants from data analysis because they were not Spanish and 12 others because they failed the attention check or because they did not pass a control item (i.e., "If you are not in paid work, is the reason you are a housemaker or unemployed because you have left your job to attend to family needs?" yes or no). Participants reported being involved in their relationships for 20 years ($SD_{\text{months}} = 129.91$). Most participants were married (81.2%), 11.3% were cohabiting, and 7.5% were maintaining dating relationships. More than half of the participants had children (77%). More than half of the participants (53.1%) worked full time, 16.9% worked part time, 8.9% were unemployed, 12.2% were homemakers, and 10% indicated another situation. A sensitivity power analysis (G*Power; Faul et al., 2007) revealed that the

sample size was sufficiently large enough to detect effects of at least a small size of $f = .07$.

Procedure and Measures

Participants were recruited using the same procedure as in Study 1. However, in this study, we asked participants to imagine a work sacrifice scenario instead of thinking of a recent sacrifice. First, individuals rated their relationship satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998; van der Drift et al., 2014; $\alpha = .78$) and completed the IOS scale (Aron et al., 1992; Gómez et al., 2011). They then imagined a scenario in which a couple (Juan and María) had to decide whether to reduce their working hours or change jobs to take care of their children. Research on work and family decisions inspired this scenario (Villanueva-Moya & Expósito, 2022). To determine whether the scenario could happen in a romantic relationship, we asked the participants about the extent to which they thought the situation described could happen in a romantic relationship ($M = 5.94$, $SD = 1.20$). Most situations experienced in romantic relationships involved mutual dependence, which led to more cooperative behaviors in interactions between couples (Columbus et al., 2021). Therefore, we evaluated the perception of mutual dependence in the scenario using the mutual dependence subscale of the short version of the Situational Interdependence Scale (Gerpott et al., 2018; two items; for example, “What each of us does in this situation affects the other”; $r = .56$; $\rho = .59$) on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*; $M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.69$).

After they read the scenario, through an intrasubject design, we asked participants to imagine that Juan (male) versus María (female) was the one who had decided to sacrifice his or her job. We counterbalanced the hypothetical sacrificer condition (Juan vs. María) to avoid response bias. Participants evaluated the extent to which the sacrifice would be beneficial ($\alpha_{\text{Juan}} = .84$, $\alpha_{\text{María}} = .78$) or costly ($\alpha_{\text{Juan}} = .88$, $\alpha_{\text{María}} = .87$) to both of them (Visserman et al., 2020). Participants also rated the benefits ($\alpha_{\text{self}} = .83$, $\alpha_{\text{partner}} = .83$) and costs ($\alpha_{\text{self}} = .93$, $\alpha_{\text{partner}} = .92$) of the scenario's work sacrifice for themselves and for their partners. In addition, participants indicated the extent to which they thought that Juan and María, respectively, would be willing to sacrifice work. They also indicated the extent to which they thought that they and their partners would be willing to do so (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *totally*; adapted from Day & Impett, 2018; van Lange et al., 1997). Finally, individuals reported the extent to which they and their partners would feel authentic (true to themselves) after making this sacrifice (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*; based on Impett et al., 2013). Then, they answered demographic questions.

Analysis Strategy

For Study 2, we conducted the same set of analyses as in Study 1. First, we analyzed the effects of the hypothetical

sacrificer condition (Juan vs. María) on the perception of costs and benefits and the willingness to sacrifice. We also analyzed the effect of the romantic relationship sacrificer condition (self vs. partner) on the same variables, adding authenticity in this case.

Results

Perception of Benefits

Hypothetical Sacrifice (Juan vs. María). As shown in the upper left section of Table 3, neither the hypothetical sacrificer condition nor the interaction between hypothetical sacrificer condition by gender significantly influenced the perception of benefits. Nonetheless, our results demonstrated a significant gender effect on the perception, $F(1, 208) = 4.22$, $p = .041$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$: Men perceived the work sacrifice as more beneficial than women did ($M_{\text{men}} = 5.00$, $SE = 0.13$; $M_{\text{women}} = 4.63$, $SE = 0.12$; see the upper left section of Table 4). Neither relationship satisfaction nor IOS scores were significant factors on the perception of benefits, but having children did (see Table 3, upper left section). Participants with children perceived greater benefits of making the work sacrifice when María (female) made the sacrifice than when Juan (male) made it (see Table 4 in OSM for parameter estimates).

Romantic Relationship Sacrifice (Self vs. Partner). The results did not show significant effects of the sacrificer condition or gender on the perception of benefits. By contrast, the interaction of the sacrificer condition by gender significantly affected the perception, $F(1, 208) = 12.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$ (see lower left section of Table 3). Women perceived greater benefits if they made the work sacrifice than if their partners made it. Although the differences were not statistically significant, men tended to perceive greater benefits when their partners made the work sacrifice than when they made it, $M_{\text{women (self)}} = 5.23$, $SD = 1.43$; $M_{\text{women (partner)}} = 4.69$, $SD = 1.58$; $M_{\text{men (self)}} = 5.27$, $SD = 1.40$; $M_{\text{men (partner)}} = 5.35$, $SD = 1.36$ (see the lower left section of Table 4). Figure 1C depicts this interaction. IOS scores did not significantly affect this outcome. By contrast, relationship satisfaction and having children significantly affected it (see Table 3, lower left section). Participants with greater relationship satisfaction perceived greater benefits if their partner made the work sacrifice than if they made it. Similarly, participants with children perceived work sacrifice as more beneficial if they made the sacrifice than if their partners sacrificed (see Table 4 in OSM for parameter estimates).

Perception of Costs

Hypothetical Sacrifice (Juan vs. María). As shown in the upper middle section of Table 3, the hypothetical sacrificer condition, gender, and the interaction between hypothetical sacrificer condition by gender did not significantly affect the perception of costs. IOS scores did not significantly influence

Table 3. Perception of Costs/Benefits, Willingness to Sacrifice, and Authenticity as a Function of Gender, Sacrificer Conditions, and Interactions in Study 2.

Variables	Sacrifice costs			Sacrifice benefits			Willingness to sacrifice			Authenticity		
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Hypothetic sacrifice (Juan vs. María)												
Gender ^a	0.33	.567	.00	4.22	4.22	4.22	1.16	.283	.01	—	—	—
Sacrificer (Juan vs. María)	1.51	.221	.01	0.03	0.03	0.03	8.23	.005	.04	—	—	—
Gender × Sacrificer	2.35	.127	.01	0.29	0.29	0.29	19.55	<.001	.09	—	—	—
IOS ^b	0.33	.566	.00	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.72	.397	.00	—	—	—
Relationship satisfaction	5.63	.019	.03	3.18	3.18	3.18	3.30	.071	.02	—	—	—
Having children ^c	7.01	.009	.03	4.62	4.62	4.62	1.58	.210	.01	—	—	—
Romantic relationship sacrifice (self vs. partner)												
Gender	0.32	.574	.00	1.87	1.87	1.87	0.30	.584	.00	2.09	.150	.01
Sacrificer (self vs. partner)	1.14	.287	.01	0.33	0.33	0.33	2.26	.134	.01	1.26	.26	.01
Gender × Sacrificer	42.52	<.001	.17	12.60	12.60	12.60	24.64	<.001	.11	25.26	<.001	.11
IOS ^a	0.41	.525	.00	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.12	.732	.00	0.26	.609	.00
Relationship satisfaction	11.58	.001	.05	9.74	9.74	9.74	15.98	<.001	.07	22.45	<.001	.10
Having children ^b	13.74	<.001	.06	8.28	8.28	8.28	18.44	<.001	.08	11.28	.001	.05

Note. IOS = inclusion of other in the self.

^a1 = female, 2 = male; ^bIOS = inclusion of other in the self; ^c1 = No, 2 = Yes.

the perception, but relationship satisfaction and children did. Participants with greater relationship satisfaction and participants with children perceived the work sacrifice as less costly when María (female) made the sacrifice compared with when Juan (male) did (see Table 4 in OSM for parameter estimates).

Romantic Relationship Sacrifice (Self vs. Partner). The results revealed no significant effects of the sacrificer condition or gender on the perception of costs. However, the interaction of the sacrificer condition by gender was significant on the perception, $F(1, 208) = 42.52, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$ (see Table 3, lower middle section). Women perceived greater costs when their partners made the work sacrifice compared with when they did. By contrast, men perceived more costs when they made the work sacrifice than when their partners did, $M_{women (self)} = 3.94, SD = 1.89; M_{women (partner)} = 4.91, SD = 1.57; M_{men (self)} = 4.74, SD = 1.71; M_{men (partner)} = 4.07, SD = 1.78$ (see the lower middle section of Table 4). Figure 1D depicts this interaction. IOS scores did not have a significant effect on the perception of costs, although relationship satisfaction and having children were significant (see Table 3, lower middle section). Participants with greater relationship satisfaction perceived the work sacrifice as less costly when their partner made the work sacrifice than when they made it. Participants with children perceived the work sacrifice as less costly when they made the sacrifice than when their partners did (see Table 4 in OSM for parameter estimates).

Willingness to Sacrifice

Hypothetical Sacrifice (Juan vs. María). As shown in the upper right section of Table 3, the results revealed no significant effects of gender on the willingness to sacrifice.

However, the hypothetical sacrificer condition significantly affected it, $F(1, 208) = 8.23, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .04$. Likewise, the interaction of the hypothetical sacrificer condition by gender was significant on the willingness to sacrifice, $F(1, 208) = 19.55, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$. Participants perceived María as more willing to make the work sacrifice than Juan would be ($M_{María} = 5.78, SE = 0.09; M_{Juan} = 4.59, SE = 0.11$; see the upper right section of Table 4). As illustrated in Figure 2A, women and men perceived that María was more willing to make the work sacrifice than Juan was, $M_{women (María)} = 5.92, SD = 1.10; M_{women (Juan)} = 4.22, SD = 1.57; M_{men (María)} = 5.64, SD = 1.40; M_{men (Juan)} = 4.97, SD = 1.59$ (see the upper right section of Table 4). Covariates were not significant.

Romantic Relationship Sacrifice (Self vs. Partners). As shown in the lower middle section of Table 3, neither the effect of the sacrifice nor gender significantly affected the willingness to sacrifice. By contrast, the interaction of the sacrificer condition by gender was significant on the willingness to sacrifice, $F(1, 208) = 24.64, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .11$. Women perceived themselves as more willing to make the work sacrifice than their partners were. Although the differences were not significant, men tended to perceive that their partners would be more willing to make a work sacrifice than they would be, $M_{women (self)} = 5.92, SD = 1.43; M_{women (partner)} = 4.97, SD = 1.74; M_{men (self)} = 5.49, SD = 1.32; M_{men (partner)} = 5.82, SD = 1.38$ (see the lower middle section of Table 4). Figure 2B depicts this interaction. IOS scores did not significantly affect the willingness to sacrifice. However, relationship satisfaction and children significantly influenced it. Participants with greater relationship satisfaction believed their partners

Table 4. Post Hoc Comparisons of Costs/Benefits, Willingness to Sacrifice, and Authenticity Ratings Among Conditions in Study 2.

Variables	Sacrifice costs			Sacrifice benefits			Willingness to sacrifice			Authenticity		
	Difference (SE)	95% CI	p	Difference (SE)	95% CI	p	Difference (SE)	95% CI	p	Difference (SE)	95% CI	p
Hypothetic sacrifice												
Women vs. men	0.10 (0.17)	[-0.24, 0.44]	.567	-0.36 (0.18)	[-0.71, -0.02]	.041	-0.17 (0.16)	[-0.49, 0.14]	.283	—	—	—
María vs. Juan	-0.52 (0.12)	[-0.76, -0.28]	<.001	0.40 (0.08)	[0.24, 0.55]	<.001	1.19 (0.11)	[0.97, -1.41]	<.001	—	—	—
Women: María vs. Juan	-0.71 (0.17)	[-1.04, -0.38]	<.001	0.44 (0.11)	[0.23, 0.65]	<.001	1.69 (0.15)	[1.38, 1.99]	<.001	—	—	—
Men: María vs. Juan	-0.33 (0.18)	[-0.68, 0.03]	.068	0.35 (0.11)	[0.13, 0.58]	.002	0.69 (0.16)	[0.36, 1.01]	<.001	—	—	—
Romantic relationship sacrifice												
Women vs. men	-0.11 (0.20)	[-0.50, 0.28]	.574	-0.24 (0.17)	[-0.58, 0.11]	.173	-0.08 (0.15)	[-0.39, 0.22]	.584	-0.27 (0.19)	[-0.64, 0.10]	.150
Self vs. partner	-0.15 (0.12)	[-0.39, 0.09]	.224	0.23 (0.09)	[0.06, 0.40]	.009	0.32 (0.12)	[0.08, 0.56]	.010	0.11 (0.13)	[-0.15, 0.38]	.397
Women: self vs. partner	-0.96 (0.17)	[-1.29, -0.62]	<.001	0.54 (0.12)	[0.30, 0.77]	<.001	0.93 (0.17)	[0.60, 1.27]	<.001	0.79 (0.18)	[0.43, 1.16]	<.001
Men: self vs. partner	0.66 (0.18)	[-1.01, -0.30]	<.001	-0.08 (0.13)	[-0.17, 0.33]	.510	-0.29 (0.18)	[-0.65, 0.06]	.102	-0.57 (0.20)	[-0.95, -0.18]	.004

Note. CI = confidence interval.

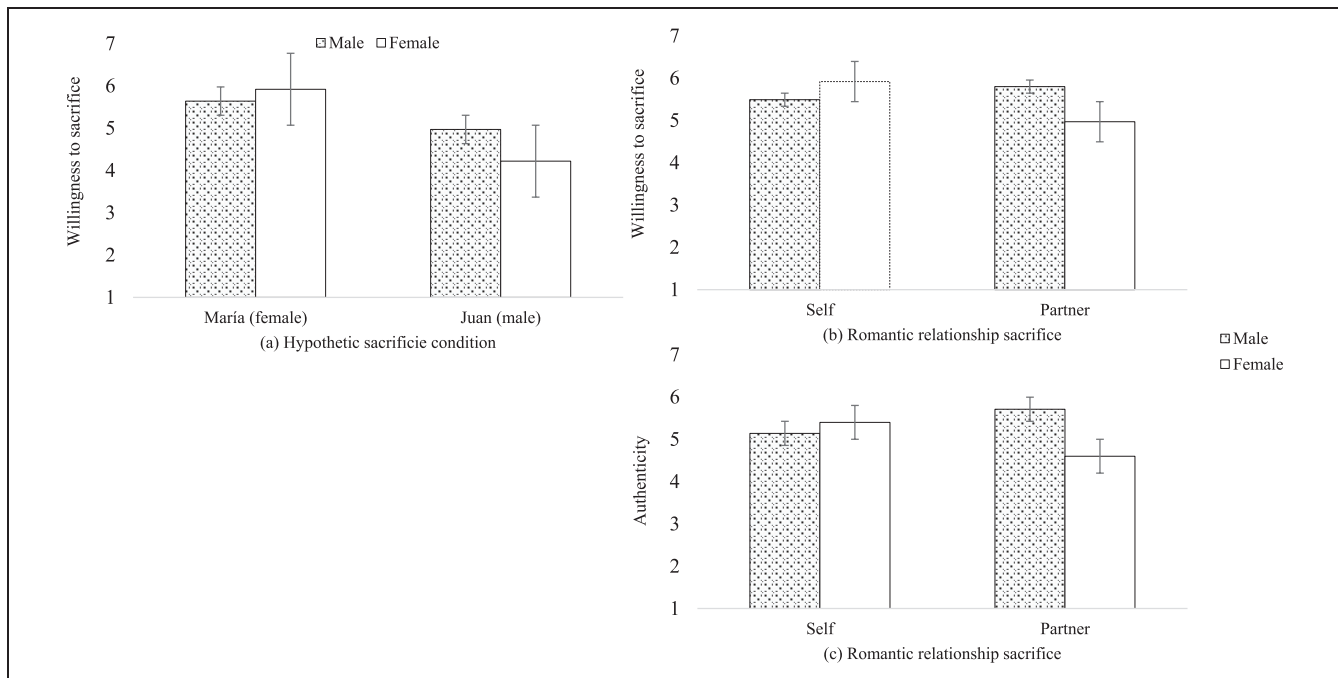


Figure 2. Interaction of the Condition and Gender on the Willingness to Sacrifice/Authenticity to Make Work Sacrifices in Study 2. Note. The figure on the left (A) shows the hypothetical condition, while those on the right (B and C) show the romantic relationship sacrifice condition.

would be more willing to sacrifice. Participants with children perceived themselves as more willing to make a work sacrifice (see Table 3 in OSM for parameter estimates).

Authenticity. As shown in the lower right section of Table 3, neither the romantic relationship sacrificer condition nor gender affected participants' sense of authenticity, but the interaction of romantic relationship sacrifice by gender significantly did, $F(1, 208) = 25.26, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .11$. Women felt more authentic when they had to make a work sacrifice than when their partners did. By contrast, men perceived that their partners felt more authentic when they made the work sacrifice than when the men had to make it, $M_{women (self)} = 5.40, SD = 1.81; M_{women (partner)} = 4.60, SD = 1.88; M_{men (self)} = 5.14, SD = 1.87; M_{men (partner)} = 5.71, SD = 1.45$ (see the lower right section of Table 4). Figure 2C shows this interaction. Concerning covariates, IOS scores once again did not have a significant effect on authenticity, but relationship satisfaction and children affected it. Participants with greater relationship satisfaction perceived their partners felt more authentic than they did. By contrast, participants with children felt more authentic than their partners did (see Table 4 in OSM for parameter estimates).

Brief Discussion

The results of Study 2 showed that both women and men perceived work sacrifices as more costly for men. Supporting this result, women (but not men) perceived their work

sacrifice as more beneficial than their partners making one. Women also perceived themselves as willing to make work sacrifices to a greater extent than men were. Consistently, both women and men perceived that women would feel more authentic if they made a work sacrifice, positively reinforcing gender roles. These results support our Study 1 findings and demonstrate that work sacrifices implicitly reflect gender roles.

Study 3

The Study 2 findings showed that relationship satisfaction predicted costs and benefits. This was in line with previous literature, which has shown that relationship satisfaction is associated with willingness to sacrifice (van Lange et al., 1997) and with having less difficulty in making sacrifices (Ruppel & Curran, 2012). Specifically, the findings indicated that participants with greater relationship satisfaction perceived the work sacrifice as less costly when a woman made the sacrifice compared with when a man did. It could be understood as an implicit confirmation of a gender role (what women have to do to maintain relationships). On this basis, in Study 3, we expected that for women (but not men), higher levels of relationship satisfaction would associate with a greater perception of benefits (or lower perceived costs, independently). Along the same line, we aimed to support and expand the literature suggesting an association between commitment and willingness to sacrifice in romantic relationships (Powell & van Vugt, 2003; van Lange et al., 1997).

Similar to relationship satisfaction, we expected that for women (but not men), higher levels of commitment would associate with greater perceived benefits or lower perceived costs, independently. Women with greater relationship satisfaction or commitment may consider it more important to benefit others than themselves (work sacrifices), perceiving it as more beneficial. In addition, we wanted to go a step further and examine how this affected their well-being; that is, the way they evaluate their lives. The literature has shown that women have lower well-being than men have (e.g., Villanueva-Moya & Expósito, 2022), but what happens when they are satisfied and committed to their relationship? Could these variables improve their well-being through the perception of costs and benefits? For these women, regardless of the costs to them of the work sacrifice, if the sacrifice benefits others, they are likely to feel more satisfied with their lives because they have invested in their relationships (satisfaction and commitment) according to what is socially expected of them. Thus, we expected that for women (but not men), higher levels of relationship satisfaction and commitment would associate with a greater perception of benefits (or lower perceived costs, independently), which in turn would associate with greater life satisfaction.

Method

Participants

We recruited 237 participants for Study 3, but we removed eight who were not Spanish, three who did not have a heterosexual orientation, two who were not in romantic relationships, eight who failed the attention check, and 29 who gave incoherent responses to an open-ended question about work sacrifice. The inclusion criteria were involvement in a heterosexual romantic relationship for a minimum of 3 months and having children (because in our previous results it strongly predicted work sacrifices). The final sample comprised 186 Spanish participants (53.2% women). Participants' ages ranged from 33 to 74 years ($M = 48.53$, $SD = 6.70$). The length of couples' romantic involvement was 20 years on average ($SD_{\text{months}} = 104.60$). Almost all participants were married (95.2%), 3.2% were cohabiting, and 1.6% were maintaining a dating relationship. More than half of the participants (61.8%) worked full time, 16.1% worked part time, 5.9% were unemployed, 11.3% were homemakers, and 4.8% indicated another situation. A sensitivity power analysis (G*Power; Faul et al., 2007) revealed that our sample size was sufficiently large enough to detect effects of at least a small size of $f = .07$.

Procedure and Measures

Participants were recruited using the same procedure as in Study 1. They first completed several relationship measures, including commitment (seven items: "I am committed to

maintaining my relationship with my partner"; $\alpha = .85$; Rusbult et al., 1998; van der Drift et al., 2014), relationship satisfaction (five items; $\alpha = .87$; Rusbult et al., 1998; van der Drift et al., 2014), and the IOS scale (Aron et al., 1992; Gómez et al., 2011). We asked participants to think of their most recent work sacrifices and then they completed sacrifice measures related to the situation they had recalled. As in Studies 1 and 2, participants rated their sacrifices' benefits ($\alpha = .80$) and costs ($\alpha = .88$; Visserman et al., 2020). Furthermore, participants gave global judgments made about life satisfaction (five items: "In most ways, my life is close to my ideal"; $\alpha = .87$; Cabañero-Martínez et al., 2004; Diener et al., 1985) on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) and answered sociodemographic questions.

Analysis Strategy

We included a moderated parallel mediation model (PROCESS, Version 3.4.1, Model 59; Hayes, 2018) to explore the moderating effects of gender in the direct and indirect relationships between commitment (or relationship satisfaction, independently) and life satisfaction based on perceived costs and benefits. We controlled for IOS scores. We used the conditional effects of PROCESS to interpret the relations between crucial variables for women and men separately.

Results

Effects of Commitment and Relationship Satisfaction on Life Satisfaction Based on Cost–Benefit Perceptions

Commitment. As shown in Table 5, commitment exerted a significant main effect on life satisfaction, and gender moderated this effect. The effect of commitment on benefit perception was significant, and gender moderated this effect. As can be observed in Figure 3A, for women, higher levels of commitment were associated with greater perception of benefits compared with those with lower commitment ($\beta = 0.77$, $SE = 0.16$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [0.46, 1.08]). It was not significant among men ($\beta = 0.07$, $SE = 0.22$, $p = .755$, 95% CI = [−0.36, 0.50]). Second, the effect of the perception of benefits on life satisfaction was significant, and gender moderated this effect. As depicted in Figure 3C, for women, a greater perception of benefits was associated with greater life satisfaction compared with a lower perception of benefits ($\beta = 0.32$, $SE = 0.08$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [0.16, 0.48]). It was not significant among men ($\beta = 0.03$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .729$, 95% CI = [−0.14, 0.20]). Bias-corrected bootstrap analyses indicated that gender moderated the indirect path. For women, the indirect effect of commitment on life satisfaction via the perception of benefits was significant ($\beta = 0.24$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI = [0.12, 0.42]), but not for men ($\beta = 0.00$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI = [−0.07, 0.16]). This

Table 5. Testing the Moderated Mediation Effect of Commitment on Life Satisfaction Based on Costs and Benefits in Study 3.

Antecedents	Costs			Benefits			Life satisfaction		
	Coeff.	SE	Symmetric BCI	Coeff.	SE	Symmetric BCI	Coeff.	SE	Symmetric BCI
Constant	5.99	3.38	[-0.67, 12.65]	-4.93*	2.44	[-9.74, -0.13]	-4.58*	2.06	[-8.64, -0.51]
IOS	-0.06	0.11	[-0.27, 0.15]	0.10	0.08	[-0.05, 0.25]	0.07*	0.06	[0.05, 0.30]
Commitment	-0.29	0.52	[-1.32, 0.73]	1.47***	0.37	[0.73, 2.21]	0.81*	0.32	[0.18, 1.45]
Costs							-0.04	0.13	[-0.31, 0.23]
Benefits							0.61***	0.19	[0.24, 0.98]
Gender ^a	-1.27	2.44	[-6.10, 3.55]	4.80**	1.76	[1.32, 8.28]	4.81**	1.51	[1.83, 7.78]
Commitment × Gender	0.20	0.37	[-0.52, 0.92]	-0.70**	0.26	[-1.22, -0.18]	-0.46*	0.22	[-0.89, -0.03]
Costs × Gender							0.01	0.09	[-0.16, 0.19]
Benefits × Gender							-0.29*	0.12	[-0.53, -0.05]
	$R^2 = .00$			$R^2 = .16$			$R^2 = .29$		
	$F(4, 181) = 0.21, p = .931$			$F(4, 181) = 8.95, p < .001$			$F(8, 177) = 14.90, p < .001$		
Indirect effect:	Relationship satisfaction → Costs → Life satisfaction: $b = -0.00, SE = 0.04, 95\% CI [-0.09, 0.10]$								
	Relationship satisfaction → Benefits → Life satisfaction: $b = -0.24, SE = 0.09, 95\% CI [-0.43, -0.07]$								

Note. IOS = inclusion of other in the self; BCI = Symmetric Bootstrapping Confidence Interval.

^a1 = women, 2 = men.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

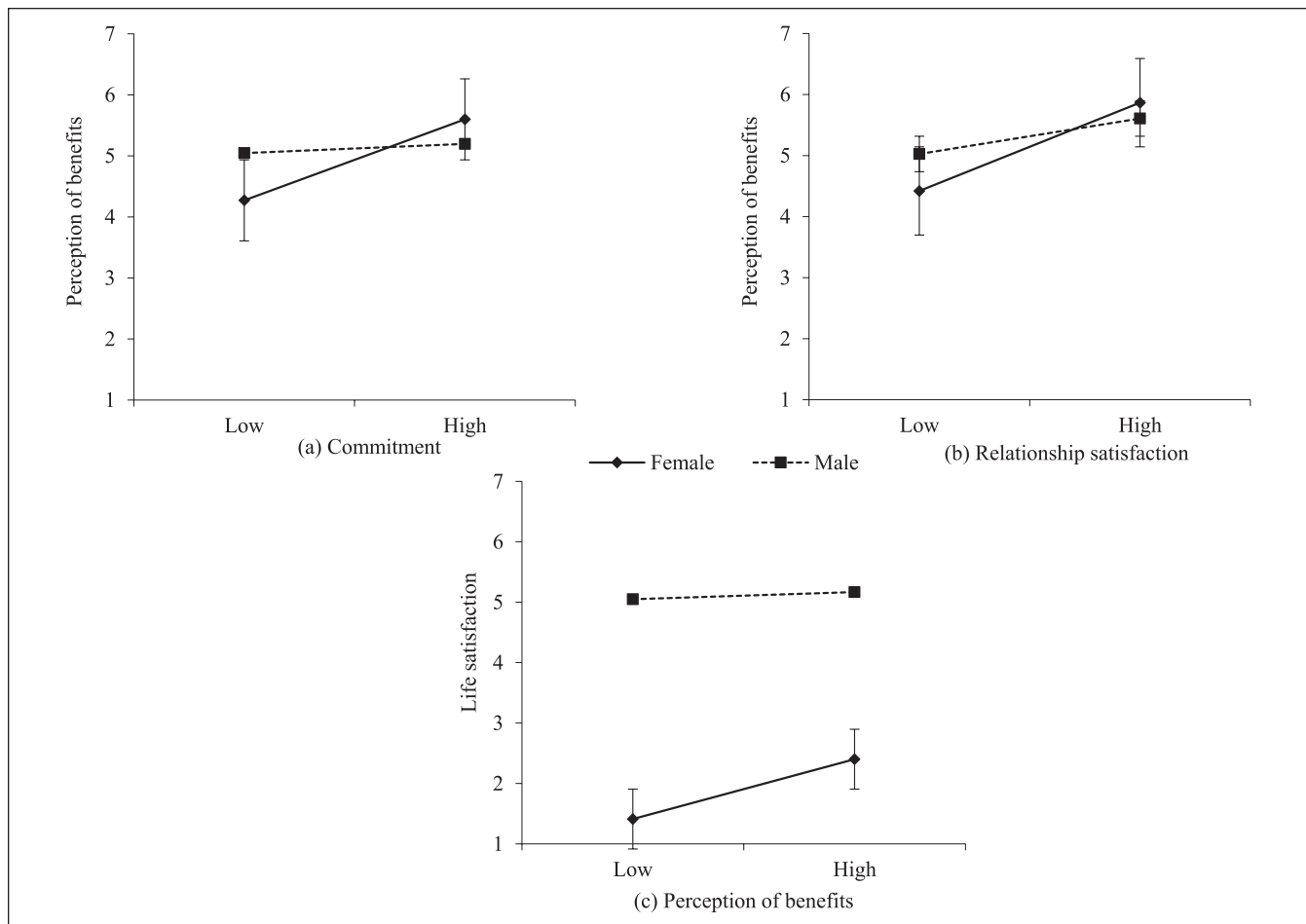


Figure 3. Moderating Effects of Gender in the Direct Relationships of Study 3: (A) commitment, (B) relationship satisfaction, and (C) perception of benefits

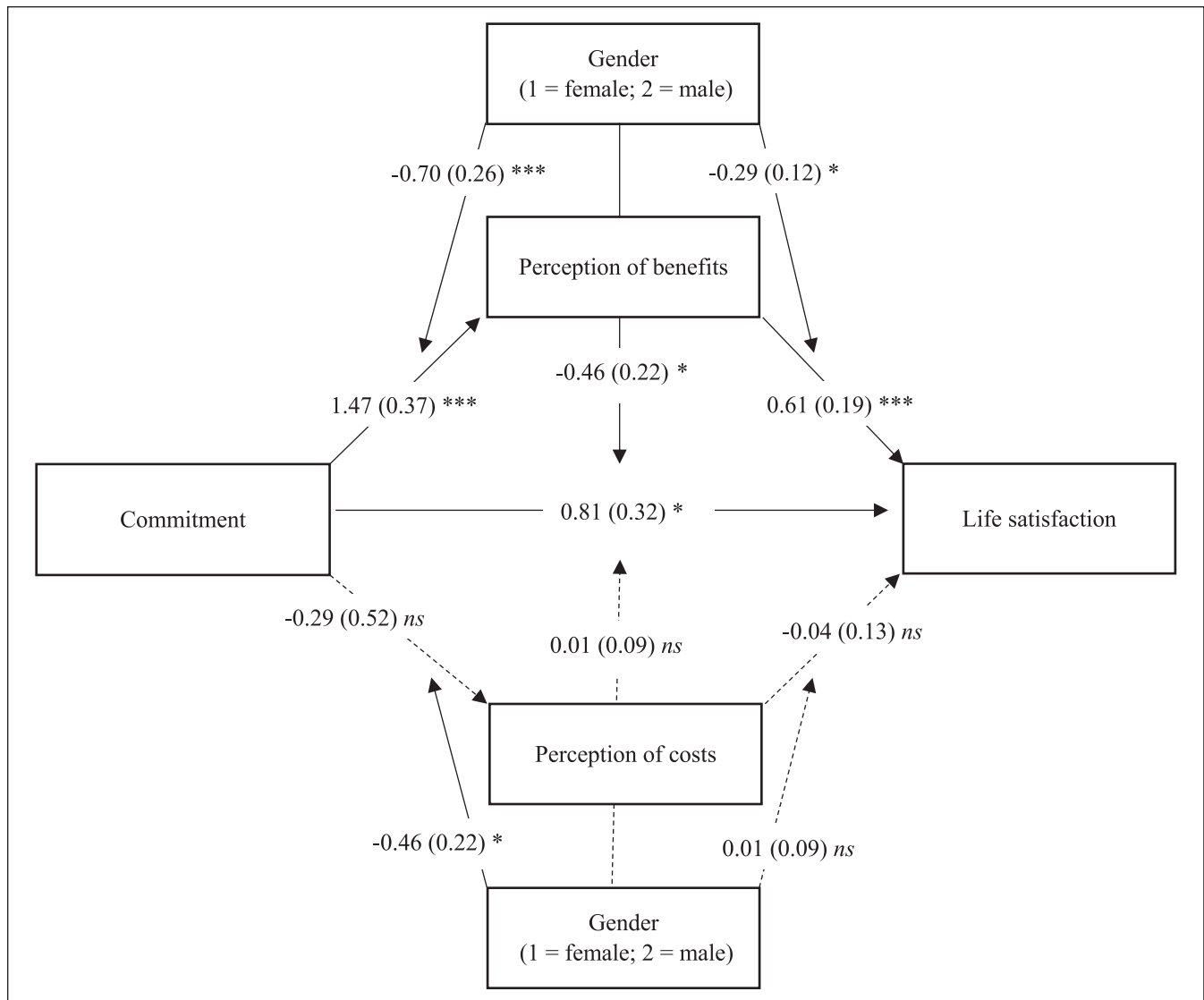


Figure 4. Graphic Representation of the Moderated Mediation Model With Commitment as Predictor in Study 3.

Note. All reported values are unstandardized estimates, with their SE reported between parentheses. ns = not significant.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

model accounted for 29.53% of the variance in life satisfaction (see Figure 4). As expected, for women only, higher levels of commitment were associated with greater perceived benefits, which in turn was associated with higher levels of life satisfaction. Regarding the perception of costs, our results showed that the moderated mediation model was not statistically significant (see Table 5).

Relationship Satisfaction. As shown in Table 6, we found that relationship satisfaction's effect on life satisfaction was not significant. Gender did not moderate this effect either. Relationship satisfaction had a significant main effect on the perception of benefits, an effect that gender moderated. As depicted in Figure 3B, for women, higher levels of relationship satisfaction were associated with greater perception

of benefits compared with those with lower relationship satisfaction ($\beta = 0.61$, $SE = 0.11$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [0.38, 0.83]). This effect was not statistically significant among men ($\beta = 0.24$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = .122$, 95% CI = [-0.06, 0.54]). Second, the effect of perceived benefits on life satisfaction was significant, and gender moderated this effect. As shown in Figure 3C, for women, greater perception of benefits was associated with greater life satisfaction compared with lower perception of benefits ($\beta = 0.25$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .001$, 95% CI = [0.10, 0.41]). For men, it was not significant ($\beta = -0.04$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .660$, 95% CI = [-0.20, 0.13]). Bias-corrected bootstrap analyses indicated that gender moderated the indirect path. For women, the indirect effect of relationship satisfaction on life satisfaction via the perception of benefits was significant ($\beta = 0.15$, $SE = 0.06$, 95%

Table 6. Testing the Moderated Mediation Effect of Relationship Satisfaction on Life Satisfaction Based on Benefits and Costs in Study 3

Antecedents	Costs			Benefits			Life satisfaction		
	Coeff.	SE	Symmetric BCI	Coeff.	SE	Symmetric BCI	Coeff.	SE	Symmetric BCI
Constant	3.71	2.03	[-0.30, 7.73]	-0.32	1.45	[-3.18, 2.54]	-0.42	1.30	[-2.99, 2.16]
IOS	-0.06	0.11	[-0.27, 0.16]	0.06	0.08	[-0.09, 0.21]	0.07	0.06	[-0.04, 0.19]
Relationship satisfaction	0.05	0.37	[-0.67, 0.78]	0.97***	0.26	[0.46, 1.49]	0.42 ^a	0.22	[-0.01, 0.84]
Costs							-0.07	0.12	[-0.32, 0.17]
Benefits							0.54**	0.17	[0.20, 0.89]
Gender ^b	0.47	1.43	[-2.34, 3.28]	2.18*	1.02	[0.17, 4.18]	1.45	0.93	[-0.39, 3.28]
Relationship satisfaction × Gender	-0.07	0.26	[-0.58, 0.43]	-0.37*	0.18	[-0.73, -0.01]	0.05	0.14	[-0.24, 0.33]
Costs × Gender							0.03	0.08	[-0.13, 0.19]
Benefits × Gender							-0.29*	0.11	[-0.51, -0.07]
	$R^2 = .00$			$R^2 = .19$			$R^2 = .40$		
	$F(4, 181) = 18.31, p = .947$			$F(4, 181) = 10.31, p < .001$			$F(8, 177) = 14.90, p < .001$		
Indirect effects	Relationship satisfaction → Costs → Life satisfaction: $b = 0.00, SE = 0.02, 95\% CI [-0.04, 0.04]$								
	Relationship satisfaction → Benefits → Life satisfaction: $b = -0.16, SE = 0.06, 95\% CI [-0.29, -0.03]$								

Note. IOS = inclusion of other in the self; BCI = Symmetric Bootstrapping Confidence Interval.

^aMarginally significant. ^b 1 = women, 2 = men.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

CI = [0.05, 0.27]). This did not hold true for men ($\beta = -0.01, SE = 0.03, 95\% CI = [-0.07, 0.06]$). The moderated mediation model was not statistically significant with the perception of costs as mediator (see Table 6). This model accounted for 40.25% of the variance in life satisfaction (see Figure 5). As expected, for women (but not men), higher levels of relationship satisfaction were associated with perceiving greater benefits, which in turn was associated with higher levels of life satisfaction.

Brief Discussion

Study 3 revealed that women intended to persist in their romantic relationships, that is, they perceived that making work sacrifices would be more beneficial and positive for themselves and their relationships when they were highly committed or had high relationship satisfaction. In turn, this led them to be more satisfied with their lives because they felt that they were doing what they had to do. In contrast, this did not occur in men. We noted no significant effects of commitment and relationship satisfaction on perceived costs of making work sacrifices. This could be because costs are often underestimated when people focus on what is gained rather than lost in relationship or family contexts (Villanueva-Moya & Expósito, 2021b; Visserman et al., 2020).

General Discussion

The present research provided knowledge about gender differences in the perception of work–family sacrifices. Study 1 revealed that both men and women perceived a greater benefit when they made a work sacrifice than when their partners

did. Both Study 1 and 2's findings indicated consistently that sacrificing work was perceived as costlier for men, whereas women perceived more benefits of sacrificing work in Study 2 (situation: leaving work for family). Study 2 also demonstrated that women perceived themselves as more willing to sacrifice work for the family, which did not occur in men. In addition, women and men in Study 2 perceived that women would feel more authentic if they made the work sacrifice. Study 3 revealed that women (but not men) with higher levels of commitment (or relationship satisfaction, independently) perceived work sacrifice as beneficial, which seemed to increase their life satisfaction.

Broader Considerations and Implications

When we asked participants to evaluate a work-related sacrifice they had made, we found that both women and men perceived these sacrifices as more beneficial. This result may signal some progress in gender equality because men might be leaving their traditional role to support family responsibilities. In this way, the responsibility would not fall on the woman. However, when the participants faced the sacrifice of having to leave a job for their family, they perceived that compared with men, women would be more beneficial and less costly, would be more willing to do so, and would feel more authentic in making work sacrifices. The findings seem to indicate that gender inequality appears when it comes to labor sacrifices, being the sacrifice that more profoundly affects career advancement. These results reflect the illusion of equality to which we are exposed today. That is, men and women perceive that it is beneficial for both to make work sacrifices, but when it is a greater sacrifice, such as leaving work to benefit the family, they

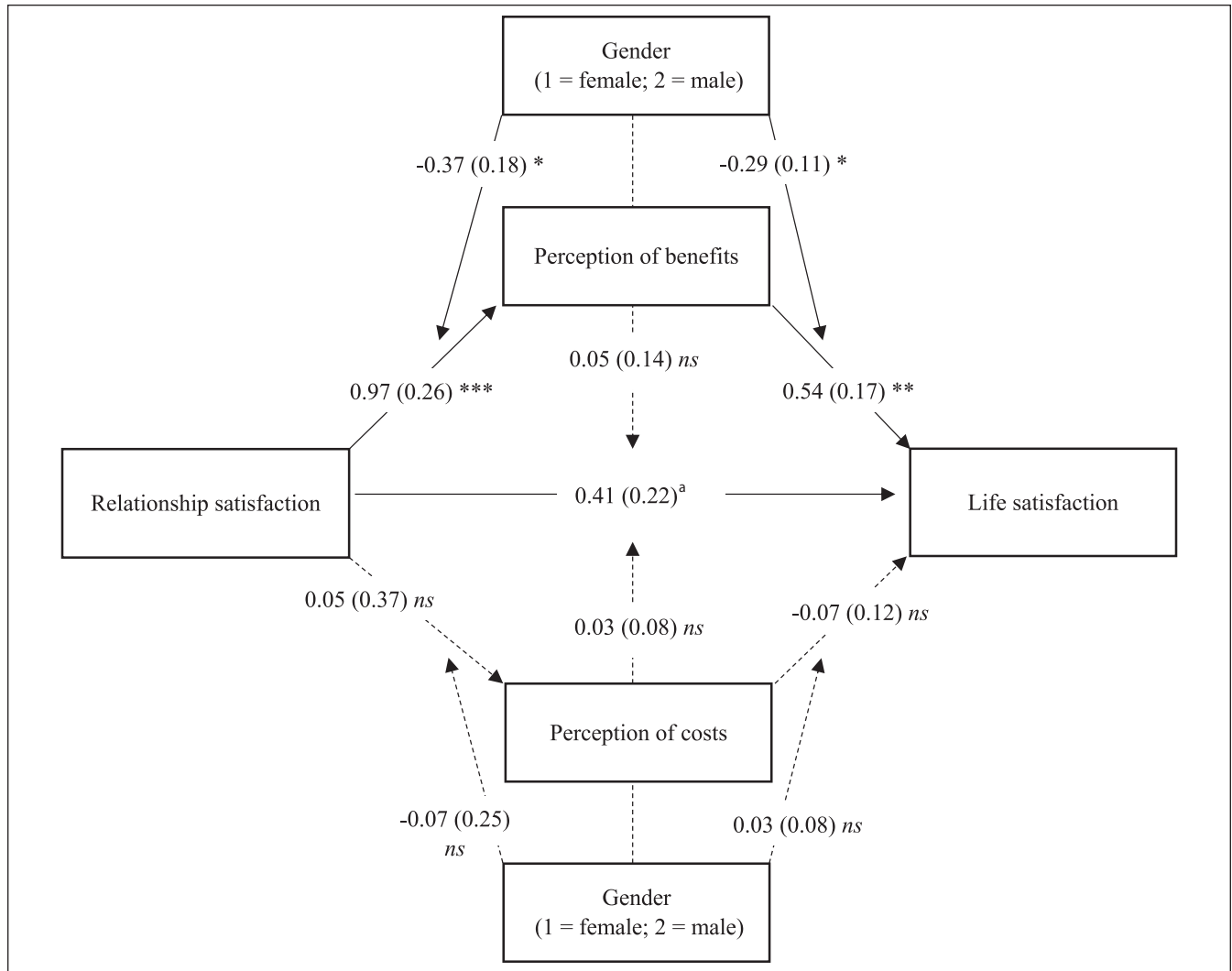


Figure 5. Graphic Representation of the Moderated Mediation Model With Relationship Satisfaction as Predictor in Study 3.

Note. All reported values are unstandardized estimates, with their SE reported between parentheses. ns = not significant.

^aMarginally significant.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

consider that it is the woman who has to make the sacrifice (Xue et al., 2020). Thus, although society has accepted women’s presence in the public sphere, it is socially acceptable for them to sacrifice the public sphere to return to the private sphere. These results support the social role theory (Eagly, 1987) by demonstrating that women are still considered the ones responsible for the care of others, following their role as caregivers. Gender socialization is so deep-rooted that not only do their partners believe that they should be responsible for these tasks, but women believe it as well. As theory indicates (Eagly & Wood, 2016), gender roles influence people’s behavior through gender identity and by social reinforcement that arises through social discrimination and approval. In our findings, we can observe that women feel true to themselves in making these sacrifices, and their partners support these behaviors. Although in our

study we did not assess social pressures, studies have shown that unlike men, women guide their decisions because of the fear of being judged by others (Villanueva-Moya & Expósito, 2020, 2021a, 2022). Consequently, women’s behaviors often orient around ideals compared with men’s behaviors (Johnston & Diekmann, 2015).

The fact that women are perceived as making these sacrifices to a greater extent could be one of the reasons why women account for the highest percentage of part-time work (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2014). Even though women may be more qualified than men, they do not feel as free to choose their jobs or do not have the same opportunities as men (OECD, 2020), so much so that unlike men, when women face the possibility of receiving a promotion or obtaining a position with greater responsibility, they anticipate greater negative outcomes (e.g., conflicts and sacrifices;

Gino et al., 2015). Consequently, although women have increased their position in the workplace, they are not promoted as often and experience more precarious conditions, making their professional progress difficult and therefore increasing gender inequality (Pew Research Center, 2023). Nevertheless, women seem to have internalized their role as caregivers to the degree that they feel satisfied with their lives after making these sacrifices. That is, if the work sacrifice benefits others, then they are likely to feel satisfied with their lives. It seems that even though they know the repercussions that their work sacrifices will have for them, they continue to make such sacrifices to benefit others (Horne & Breikreuz, 2018).

We would also like to point out that the results have shown that people with children perceive that they would be more willing to make labor sacrifices. Because most of the participants had children, we could not establish homogeneous groups to analyze whether gender differences exist. However, the transition to motherhood has been shown to be a strong predictor of task division in the family, with women spending more time on family responsibilities (Adelson, 2020). Future research could analyze the differences in perception between women with and without children, and it is expected that women with children will perceive these sacrifices as more beneficial in enhancing their role as caregivers. Regarding satisfaction with the relationship, the results indicate that people with higher satisfaction perceive not only lower costs for their partner to make the work sacrifice, but that their partner would be more willing to make the sacrifice. These results are inconsistent with the literature, where it is noted that people with higher satisfaction have less difficulty making a sacrifice and are more willing to make sacrifices (Ruppel & Curran, 2012; van Lange et al., 1997). These results may be due to other variables such as the gender ideology of the partner, given that couples with egalitarian ideology perceive greater support from their partner when work–family conflicts arise (Kulik et al., 2016). People with high relationship satisfaction and with an egalitarian partner might perceive that their partner would be more willing to sacrifice work because they would have more support from their partner. However, future research should analyze this effect in depth, as well as analyze how ideology would affect the perception of costs and benefits.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although we have contributed to the literature on gender roles and sacrifices, our research has several limitations. We used one of the most common sampling methods in the social sciences to recruit participants (Zhao, 2021), but we could not generalize the data because the sample was unrepresentative of the total Spanish population. Our studies involved cross-sectional data, which limit strong causal conclusions. Although experimental laboratory studies regarding sacrifice have rarely been conducted (Righetti et al., 2022), future research could

reinforce our findings by using experimental procedures to examine causal effects. For example, following the procedure of Powell and van Vugt (2003), it would be possible to establish high- versus low-cost and high- versus low-benefit sacrifice conditions and analyze the differences in both the individual and the partner's willingness to sacrifice. In addition, we considered men and women's general perceptions of their partners, but we did not measure each individual's perception of his or her specific partner, thus future studies could test the perceptions of both partners as a dyad (e.g., Visserman et al., 2020). Notably, another limitation is that we did not ask the participants how difficult or real it was for them to imagine the situation of sacrifice. The ability to imagine this type of situation may vary among participants. We recommend that future studies consider this limitation and ask the participants whether it is easy to imagine these situations (see Visserman et al., 2020). We conducted all the studies with heterosexual couples; therefore, it was not possible to analyze whether the effects differed in same-sex couples. Literature has shown that same-sex couples have a discourse of equality based on the absence of differentiated gender norms, and therefore, their division is egalitarian and equitable (Álvarez et al., 2018; Bauer, 2016). In this sense, future studies could examine whether differences arise in the cost–benefit analysis depending on the couple's sex.

This study presents preliminary results, so we are aware that many variables could help to explain these results. At the contextual level, replicating these results across other societies would not only also increase confidence in the generalizability of our findings, but also allow us to compare differences between cultures with greater or lesser gender inequality. As a function of the gender gap, greater or lesser effects could be found in these results (see the Global Gender Gap Index in World Economic Forum, 2022). At the individual level, the participants of the study were on average in their mid- to late 40s, and the study did not include a comparison of age groups. The age factor may influence individuals' perceptions of making work sacrifices, given that age has been shown to play an important role in career-related decisions (Baú et al., 2017), influencing the prioritization of career over family (Kim, 2022) or time spent with family (Mandal, 2020). Second, the homemakers indicated that they left their jobs to attend to family needs, but we did not ask them about this sacrifice. It would be interesting to analyze how they perceive this sacrifice in the long term; would they do it again or do they regret it? Third, future researchers could consider organizational variables in the cost–benefit analysis to determine that women and men are perceived to make sacrifices according to their gender and not motivated by working conditions. Despite the increase of women in the public sphere, they have worse working conditions than men have, given that the gender gap is still maintained (e.g., women have lower incomes and a higher likelihood of working part time; OECD, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2023). Therefore, it would be interesting to consider

the individual's job characteristics, which seem to affect their work–family sacrifices. For example, Wachter and Holz-Rau (2022) showed that high income was an incentive for choosing a job, especially among women. Likewise, Herrarte et al. (2012) found that male partners' incomes or working conditions influenced women's work sacrifices to a greater extent than the women's job conditions did. The fact that men have better working conditions may influence the perceived lower costs of sacrificing work for women. Furthermore, it seems that perceiving family sacrifice climate increases work–family conflict in women to a greater extent than it does in men (Nsair & Piszczek, 2021). That is, when women perceive they are employed in a family sacrifice work climate, they must decide between investing in their work or in their family. This does not occur in men because society expects them to prioritize their work role over their family role, which is in line with the demands of a family sacrifice climate. Men do not have to battle the societal expectation that women do at home. Considering this evidence, it might be interesting to consider sacrifice climate as a variable to control for in future studies, given that it seems to determine whether people choose to sacrifice the demands of one role over another. Finally, Righetti and Impett (2017) pointed out that other variables may affect the dynamics of making sacrifices in romantic relationships, such as power. Power could explain the gender differences in the perception of work sacrifices, because according to gender roles, men are the powerful group while women are the subordinate group. Therefore, it is a variable that is worth more inquiry in the field of work sacrifices.

Conclusion

Across these studies, we found that gender differences exist in work sacrifices. Specifically, it seems that men and women's perceptions of making work sacrifices is still guided by what is socially expected of them, perceiving that women are the ones who have to sacrifice their work. According to the social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2016), these gender differences in perception may be one of the reasons for differences in people's behavior, and in this case, in the decision whether to sacrifice work. Our research shows that although society has accepted women's presence in the public sphere, it is socially acceptable for them to sacrifice the public sphere to return to the private sphere. These findings highlight the relevance of gender norms in work sacrifices, with consequences for women's professional progression. They reveal that present-day society still perpetuates gender inequality and that much is still to be done.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material is available online with this article.

Notes

1. In all of the studies, unemployed people and homemakers were included in the analyses, given that in their work sacrifices, they indicated they had given up their jobs to take care of their families or had moved to another city due to their partner's job.
2. The following are examples of sacrifices. Family sacrifices: men (e.g., My wife told me to go to the grocery store but I couldn't because I had to work); women (e.g., Not attending a family meal because I had to go to work). Work sacrifices: men (e.g., I did not go to work to accompany my son to attend an exam); women (e.g., Reducing my work hours to care for my children).

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