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THE ROLE OF WORK VALUES IN INDIVIDUAL'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Master thesis

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We have written this master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced. We have used Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools only to support idea generation, detect R code programming issues, and find relevant literature during the writing process.

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Abstract

This study investigates whether unemployed individuals differ in their work values from employed individuals. Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP), which consists of seven dimensions, was used to examine the employment differences in work values. A large survey of individuals in Estonia (n = 2359) conducted in February 2024 served as the data source, consisting of Estonian (n = 1866) and Russian (n = 493) respondents. An exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted on both of the linguistic groups to validate the MWEP factor structures in the local context. Then, binary logistic regression models were implemented to study the likelihood of employment based on the derived factor structures and control variables (age, gender, and education level).

The results of this study about work values did not provide statistical evidence of being distinguishable between the employed and unemployed. However, unemployed Russian-speaking respondents turned out to be more self-reliant than Russian-speaking employees. Among the control variables, education level was a significant predictor of employment status, with higher education obtainers having higher likelihood of employment. Additionally, it was discovered that Russians were significantly less likely to be employed than Estonians in the entire sample model. The study concludes by authors providing suggestions to implement in further research.

Introduction

A solid work ethic has an impact on both the individual and larger societal constructs. Ali and Falcone (1995) argue that work ethic contributes significantly to economic growth, productivity, and national competitiveness. Employees committed to their jobs often demonstrate higher efficiency and effectiveness, while organisations benefit from more excellent stability, improved performance, and long-term success. The personal advantages of a strong work ethic include higher job satisfaction and greater self-reliance, which are linked to career advancement and personal fulfilment.

Cherrington (1982) found that a strong work ethic increases economic productivity and societal stability. When people are dedicated to work, they show pride in their work and a moral responsibility to contribute positively to society, leading to job satisfaction and overall life fulfilment. Individuals who develop a strong work ethic early have a higher chance of experiencing success in their careers, reinforcing the importance of work ethics for personal and collective success. Work-related values, including ethics, also influence employees' openness to change and organisational learning, with ethical conduct playing a key role in maintaining a competitive advantage in businesses (Alas, 2008). There is also counterargument, that employability, including values, does not define whether someone finds work (Dunn, 2010). At the end, it is important for the society that humans value their work while being happy doing it.

This study approaches work ethic as a particular manifestation of the broader construct of work values, which include intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, attitudes toward autonomy, and perceptions of purpose at work. Work values - individual beliefs about what is important in or through work - encompass a range of attitudes including work ethic, personal responsibility, and the value of labour. Among these, work ethic is one of the most frequently discussed aspects. Studies suggest that such values influence career paths, job satisfaction, and economic mobility (Gabrowski et al., 2021). However, one question remains surprisingly unresolved for all its assumed importance: Do certain work values, including those reflecting work ethic, determine whether someone becomes or stays unemployed? This thesis seeks to address this gap by investigating how individual work values - including those related to work ethic - influence employment status, with particular attention to differences in work values among employed, unemployed, and non-working but formally employed individuals.

The thesis aims to unpack the role of an individual's work values - including dimensions like work ethic - in being unemployed. Why does this research matter? Long-term unemployment is linked to higher stress, depression, lower life satisfaction and can lead to social isolation and loss of self-esteem (Campos et al, 2025). Long-term unemployment (LTU) is defined as being unemployed for 12 months or longer (OECD, n.d.). Extended unemployment is associated with financial hardship, lower employment value, and reduced training flexibility, while financial hardship is linked to more substantial employment value and extrinsic work values (Van den Broeck et al., 2010).

For countries, 1% rise in LTU reduces GDP growth by 0,5-1% (OECD, 2022). Alternative view is that by Okun's Law each 1 pp uptick in unemployment corresponds to a 2 %

GDP gap (Okun, 1963). For Estonia, the LTU rate is estimated to be 1,4% at the end of the year 2024 (Estonia Long Term Unemployment Rate, 2024). This could mean around 0,07-0,30 billion loss ($0,7-2,8\% * 10,7$ billion), considering Estonian's GDP was 10,7 billion in 2024 (Statistikaamet, 2024).

If work ethic truly influences who gets—or keeps—a job, then programs like motivational training or skills development could make a real difference. Since the authors view work ethic and work values as a temporal, there could be trainings to be made to change them for better job involvement. Conversely, if the data shows no meaningful gap in work values between employed and unemployed individuals then, it forces us to confront an uncomfortable truth: maybe unemployment is not about laziness or poor attitude. Perhaps it is about flawed systems—lack of jobs, biased hiring, or economic cracks that no amount of personal grit can bridge. Another theory could be educational mismatch - a person in employment does not correspond to the level of education required to perform their job.

To analyse whether employed and unemployed have similar work values, the authors have used Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP), a theoretical framework comprising seven dimensions: the centrality of work, self-reliance, hard work, leisure, morality/ethic, delay of gratification, and wasted time. Using survey data collected in Estonia, the research employs both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to validate the MWEP in the local context. It then examines how these work ethic dimensions differ across employment statuses.

Main research question to guide the investigation:

- Do unemployed people differ in their work values from employed people?

This thesis argues that an individual's employment status may reflect how well their personal work values align with the characteristics of jobs available to them. Someone who values autonomy and meaningful work may avoid specific employment options, even at the cost of short-term income. Others may prioritise stability or leisure. By examining these preferences through the lens of work values, the thesis explores whether unemployment or job dissatisfaction can be partially explained by internal, value-based decisions, rather than external barriers alone.

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Keywords: work values, work ethic (profiles), employment status, logistic regression, Estonia

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1. Literature review

1.1. Theoretical foundations of work values with a focus on work ethic

Values are understood as desirable conditions, objects, objectives, or behaviours that extend beyond specific situations and serve as normative criteria for evaluating and selecting among various behavioural options (Schwartz, 1992). Work values manifest as work goals in the workplace, reflecting broader fundamental values within a professional context. These fundamental values give rise to four primary categories of work values: intrinsic, extrinsic, social, and prestige. (Ros et al., 1999) In the following subchapter, the authors introduce the theory behind work values and work ethic. Additionally, the authors will explain how the work ethic profiles have been previously compiled.

Work values, like fundamental values, represent beliefs about desirable outcomes (e.g., earning a high salary) or behaviours (e.g., collaborating with others) and help shape decisions about work environments and career choices (Ros et al., 1999). They define goals within a professional setting and reflect the overall significance of work in a person's life, known as employment commitment, or its relative importance compared to other life priorities (Gallie, 2019). While work values are more specific than general personal values, they remain broad, emphasising overall work aspirations rather than job-related outcomes. They also encompass the rewards individuals seek from work, whether intrinsic, such as autonomy, skill development, and personal growth, or extrinsic, including salary and working hours, which support goals beyond work. Additionally, work values capture individuals' importance in their roles within a specific organisation or profession and serve as verbal expressions of individual, group, and social interaction needs. (Ros et al, 1999 & Gallie, 2019) Work values represent the broader construct encompassing what individuals seek, prioritize, or deem important in a work context. Within this framework, work ethic can be seen as a specific dimension reflecting moral and behavioural expectations related to diligence, responsibility, and time use. As such, this thesis uses the Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP) to explore work values more broadly, interpreting its components as expressions of underlying work values rather than solely moral prescriptions. (Hill & Fouts, 2005; Woehr et al., 2024).

Researchers studying work values have assumed that a limited set of broad orientations toward work underpins individuals' occupational priorities. As a result, efforts have been made to identify general categories of work values. The notion that the work values represent specific manifestations of fundamental personal values suggests that they align with the four overarching types of individual values. These work values are also expected to align with the two principal value dimensions: self-enhancement versus self-transcendence and openness to change versus conservation. (Schwartz, 1992)

Despite the variation in terminology, most scholars recognise two or three primary types of work values: (1) intrinsic or self-actualisation values, (2) extrinsic or material and security values, and (3) social or relational values (Pryor, 1987; Ross, 1999). Elizur (1984) proposed a related tripartite classification based on the nature of work-related outcomes: instrumental (e.g., work conditions and benefits), cognitive (e.g., interest and achievement), and affective (e.g.,

interpersonal relationships). This categorisation largely overlaps with extrinsic, intrinsic, and social work values. These three work value types correspond to three overarching human values: intrinsic work values align with openness to change, emphasising autonomy, personal growth, and creativity in work. Extrinsic work values correspond to conservation values, prioritising job security and financial stability to maintain order and security in life.

Empirical research frequently includes these values, although they are often classified as either extrinsic (Herzberg et al., 1959; as cited in Bassett-Jones & Lloyd, 2005) or intrinsic (Elizur, 1984). However, concerns about the validity of this distinction (Dyer & Parker, 1975) have led researchers to explore alternative classification methods. Elizur (1984; Elizur et al., 1991) proposed two key dimensions for categorising work values: value modality (i.e., cognitive, affective, or material) and system-performance contingency (i.e., whether rewards depend on task performance or organisational membership). Nevertheless, classifications developed for values in one domain—life or work—have rarely been applied to the other (Ros et al., 1999).

Ros et al.'s (1999) model expands the traditional classification by adding a fourth dimension, representing self-achievement values: recognition and career advancement. Their research points to an important gap in categorising work motivations. Just as people are motivated by community-oriented values, they are equally driven by self-enhancement - those ambitions for personal success, recognition and advancement that shape workplace behaviour. Work values are foundational to motivation - especially intrinsic motivation. When jobs and environments align with these values, motivation is higher, more sustainable, and leads to greater performance, engagement, and retention. (Mesri et al, 2024; Knardahl & Christensen, 2024; Wagner et al., 2024)

Since work values and work ethics are sometimes used interchangeably, the authors would like to clarify the meaning of work ethics. Max Weber's theory of the protestant ethic (1905) emphasised that the modern work ethic (called "spirit of capitalism" by himself) has grown out of the Protestant ethic of Puritan churches and sects where believers work. Material success was paramount (even family and leisure time did not matter as much). Many known expressions, such as "working out" or "working on", are reflections of the centrality of work, and many people define themselves through their job titles (Zhang & Chen, 2020). "Protestant work ethic - a multi-faceted concept /.../, usually said to contain the following beliefs or values: hard work, self-reliance and independence, deferred gratification, asceticism, authority, thrift, individual striving for success, and the view that the distribution of economic rewards in society is essentially fair." (Dunn, 2014, p. xii)

Based on the protestant work ethic theory, Miller and contributors (2002) derived a multi-faceted definition of work ethic, arguing that work ethic is not a single unitary construct but "a constellation of attitudes and beliefs about work behaviour" (Miller et al., 2002, p. 455). They posited that work ethic has the following characteristics: "(a) is multidimensional; (b) pertains to work and work-related activity in general, not specific to any particular job (yet may generalise to domains other than work—school, hobbies, etc.); (c) is learned; (d) refers to attitudes and

beliefs (not necessarily behaviour); (e) is a motivational construct reflected in behaviour; and (f) is secular, not necessarily tied to any one set of religious beliefs" (Miller et al., 2002, p. 455).

A strong work ethic is deemed important. For example, it helps students obtain responsibility and self-discipline, which are important for academic success and managing future professional challenges (Young, 1986). These qualities help students meet deadlines and prepare them for the demands of the workforce by advancing their perseverance and dedication, which are important for career growth.

From a psychological perspective, work ethic could also be profoundly connected to self-determined motivation, as Grabowski et al. (2021) noted. When individuals internalise the value of hard work, they are more motivated by personal fulfilment than external rewards, leading to higher job performance and greater wellbeing.

Miller et al. (2002) identified seven components of work ethic based on the literature and original empirical research. They developed the Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile scale (MWEP) based on the components. The components are the following (Miller et al., 2002):

- centrality of work - the belief that work holds a significant role as a primary activity in a person's life;
- self-reliance – the individual's drive towards achieving independence and self-sufficiency;
- hard work - the belief that sustained effort is the most effective way to achieve a sense of accomplishment;
- leisure - beliefs and attitudes about the importance of activities outside of work;
- morality-ethic – the belief in living a life guided by justice and moral principles;
- delay of gratification – the ability to postpone immediate rewards for long-term gain;
- wasted time - the recognition of the value and significance of time.

The authors argue that the statements used to measure these components are mostly related to work values (what an individual wants or prioritizes in/through work) rather than to work ethic (a moral or normative guideline for how one ought to behave at work). Appendix A includes the statements used in the questionnaire. The authors of the current study find that the only ones out of the 28 related to work ethic are Q3.3 (One should always take responsibility for one's actions.), Q3.13 (One should not pass judgment until one has heard all of the facts.), Q3.23 (It is important to treat others as you would like to be treated.) and Q3.27 (People should be fair in their dealings with others.). Those statements happen to make up a Miller et al.'s (2002) morality-ethic component.

Miller's (2002) work ethic profile components are compared to the work value categorizations in Table 1.

Table 1. Dimensions of Miller's (2002) work ethic vs different work value categorizations.

Miller et al. (2002)	Work value categorization				
	Rokeach (1973)	Schwartz (1992)	Schwartz (1992): Higher-order Dimension	Inglehart (1977, 1990)	Ros et al. (1999)
Centrality of work	Instrumental	Achievement	Self-enhancement	Materialist	Intrinsic
Self-reliance	Instrumental	Self-direction	Openness to change	Materialist	Intrinsic
Hard work	Instrumental	Achievement	Self-enhancement	Materialist	Intrinsic
Leisure	Terminal	Hedonism	Openness to change	Postmaterialist	Extrinsic
Morality-ethic	Instrumental	Conformity / Universalism	Conservation / Self-transcendence	Postmaterialist	Social

Source: compiled by authors based on Miller et al. (2002), Rokeach (1973), Schwartz (1992), Inglehart (1977,1990) and Ros et al. (1999)

Rokeach (1973) distinguishes between terminal and instrumental values. Terminal values show what individuals aim to achieve while instrumental values are the ways of behaviour to reach those ends. Centrality of work guides how one organizes life - work as a priority. Self-reliance can be translated into behavioural trait: independence. Hard work is a behavioural means to success. Morality-ethic includes honesty, integrity, which are ways of relating to others. Leisure as the only terminal value relates to pleasure/happiness as an end-state. Schwartz (1992) groups values into ten motivational types, arrayed along higher-order dimensions. Miller et al.'s (2002) work ethic dimensions only include five of these motivational types: self-direction, achievement, hedonism, conformity and universalism. Self-direction covers independence and creativity. Achievement emphasizes success through competence. Hedonism is pleasure and enjoyment. Conformity is restraint of actions that upset others and universalism - justice, ethical principles. Inglehart (1977, 1990) describes a shift from materialist values to postmaterialist values. Materialist orientations emphasize discipline, security and economic achievement while postmaterialist privilege autonomy, leisure, moral/ethical issues and self-expression. Ros et al.'s (1999) viewpoint includes four dimensions, but three of them are relevant to this case: intrinsic, extrinsic and social. Centrality of work, also known as valuing work as a defining life-role reflects seeking fulfillment in the work itself. Self-reliance emphasizes autonomy and independence on the job – core to intrinsic satisfaction. Hard work reflects a desire for challenging effort and responsibility, rather than merely outcomes. Leisure corresponds to

valuing work-life balance and non-monetary, external rewards of a job. Morality-ethic centers on ethical conduct and social norms- aligns with collegiality and helping others.

While using the MWEP framework, Woehr and contributors (2024) identified three work ethic profiles with a person-centred approach. These profiles were "Live to Work", "Work to Live", and "Work as a Necessary Evil". They found that the first profile, live to work, reflected a strong commitment to hard work, with high scores across all work ethic dimensions except for leisure, which was lower than the other two profiles. The second profile, work to live, represented individuals who view work as necessary, scoring relatively low on all work ethic dimensions except for leisure, which was notably higher. The third profile, work as a necessary evil, described those who perceive work negatively, showing very low scores on all work ethic dimensions except for leisure, which fell between the other two profiles. (Woehr et al., 2024) The profiles derived from MWEP are treated in this thesis as reflections of individual motivational identity. Rather than assuming a uniform "ideal worker" value set, the aim is to see how different value patterns correspond to people's employment situations. This supports an individualised understanding of employment status, as something shaped by personal priorities, not just economics.

What might play a role in developing a person's work values? There are suggestions (Arciniega et al., 2019) that societal structures and values are a response to the limitations imposed by factors like physical (e.g. climate), economic (e.g. income per capita, investment), and the social environment (e.g. access to education/health services, the effectiveness of the government). Countries experiencing resource scarcity or frequent climate disasters typically develop stricter social norms and exhibit lower tolerance for deviant behaviour (Gelfand et al., 2011). Similarly, the regional economic prosperity perceived by the employees in its community could affect their job values and attitudes (Arciniega et al., 2019). Many studies have found that national culture impacts the work ethic formation in individuals because cultural values usually transfer over to work values. (Runić-Ristić et al., 2024; Qureshi, et al., 2024) For example, Sage (2019) confirmed that cultures that value work often respect employed people more than the unemployed. That is why the unemployed might have vastly different opinions on work and wellbeing. (Sage, 2019) Another research discovered that work ethic measured by the MWEP framework does not differ between genders. Meriac and collaborators (2009) found that males and females tend to answer the MWEP components similarly. They discussed that gender roles may not influence attitudes toward the value of work as previous research has shown. (Meriac et al., 2009) Another study was conducted in Iceland, one of the most equal countries in the world, to compare the work ethics between genders. The results indicated that women tend to have higher work ethic scores in the MWEP framework. However, only three of the seven subcomponents were statistically significant. (Harðardóttir et al., 2019)

While traditional models sort values into categories (e.g., intrinsic or extrinsic), they often overlook how individuals navigate conflicts between these values daily. For example, a person who values hard work may still decline jobs that violate their moral standards or personal

boundaries. This thesis treats work values as dynamic, coexisting motivations that shape how people make employment choices, even when those choices appear irrational from the outside.

1.2. The interplay of work values and (un)employment

In the following subchapter, the authors will introduce previous works on the study of work ethic and how it could determine individual's employment status. Since the authors view work values and a work ethic as changeable, they have provided an explanation in this subchapter. In addition, the authors will propose different research questions relevant to this work theme. Since cultural values usually transfer to work values, people often perceive employment as a valuable part of life, as it provides meaning and supports adherence to cultural work ethics (Knabe et al., 2010).

Work involvement, defined as psychological identification with work, is generally stable over time. However, some studies on unemployment challenge this view. The authors agree that in some cases work values could change. Isaksson et al. (2004) findings indicate that work values remain relatively stable over 15 months, though long-term unemployed individuals, particularly active job seekers, show increased work involvement over time. While no gender differences were observed in work involvement, women were more likely to endorse the belief that individuals are entitled to work. Additionally, unemployment was linked to adverse health effects, but only among men.

Additionally, Arciniega and collaborators (2024) researched if previously mentioned Woehr and collaborators' (2024) proposed work ethic profiles changed during the 2-year-long COVID-19 pandemic. The longitudinal study showed that most employees remained similar before and after the lockdown. Approximately 20% of the employees changed their attitudes and beliefs about the relevance of work in their lives after the lockdown. Moreover, they found that the younger employees were more likely to change their attitudes towards work from "Work to Live" to "Work as a Necessary Evil" than older peers. (Arciniega et al., 2024) This suggests that extended non-work or altered work environments may lead to a decline in intrinsic motivation or a reduced perception of work as a central and meaningful part of life to some degree. The pandemic also had a lasting impact on how people viewed work. For some, it strengthened the work values they already held. However, for others, it made them rethink what mattered—putting more emphasis on personal well-being and a healthier balance between work and life.

But what do the studies show about the relationship between (un)employment and certain work values? An individual's work values are important in job selection, career development, and job satisfaction. For example, Sortheix and collaborators (2015) found from their longitudinal study that intrinsic work values predicted better person-job fit, rewards work values predicted higher chances of employment, and security work values predicted lower chances of employment after higher education in Finland. They concluded from their research that if the expectations and the opportunities in the job market do not align, there is a higher chance for the individual to be unemployed. (Sortheix et al., 2015) In a large financial management organisation, Miller et al. (2002) found that three out of the seven MWEP dimension scores—Self-Reliance, Leisure, and Delay of Gratification—are positively associated with the overall

performance rating. This could mean those with lower scores in these dimensions are more likely to be fired or unemployed. Van den Broeck, with co-authors (2010), concluded that individuals with an intrinsic work value orientation were more likely to accept flexibility in training and pay. In contrast, those with an extrinsic work value orientation were less inclined to do so. Vansteenkiste et al. (2007) found that employees with an extrinsic work value orientation, compared to those with an intrinsic orientation, reported lower levels of job satisfaction, vitality, and commitment and higher levels of exhaustion. This could mean that individuals with an intrinsic work value orientation could be less likely unemployed.

There is also sociodemographic data, which seems to be important investigating work values and employment status. Commonly studied variables about employment status include age, gender and education level (Axelrad et al., 2018; Núñez & Livanos, 2010; Özberk, 2021; Yoana et al., 2024). Studies reveal that the likelihood of being employed decreases with age, as individuals who exit the workforce often face greater difficulty re-entering it. Older individuals also tend to experience longer periods of unemployment, which can lead to discouragement and reduced job-seeking activity. (Axelrad et al., 2018; Núñez & Livanos, 2010; Özberk, 2021) Research by Hetschko and colleagues (2014) found that people who had been unemployed long-term experienced a notable boost in wellbeing after retiring—even when factors like increased income were considered. The study suggested this improvement came from a shift in how they saw themselves: once retired, they were no longer weighed down by the pressure to work or the stigma of joblessness. This suggests that retirement liberates individuals from the pressures of labour market participation, eliminating the expectation to work and, consequently, any associated shame. (Hetschko et al., 2024) Seifert et al. (2023) discovered that there are differences in work ethic views between Baby Boomers and Generation Z. While analysing the generational differences in work ethic using MWEF framework, they found that the two generations differed five of the seven subcomponents. Similarities were found in the Leisure and Delay of Gratification components. (Seifert et al., 2023) Van den Broeck et al. (2010) found that age was negatively associated with education level, professional status, and intrinsic work values but positively related to the duration of unemployment. Research has also shown that females are more likely to be unemployed than males. (Axelrad et al., 2018; Azmat et al., 2006; Núñez & Livanos, 2010; Özberk, 2021) This may be due to women being less active in the labour market and more selective in job opportunities, leading to longer periods before entering the workforce again. (Barsoum & Rashad, 2018; Núñez & Livanos, 2010; Matysiak & Cukrowska-Torzewska, 2021). Additionally, higher educational attainment decreases the chances of individuals being unemployed, suggesting that education significantly improves employment prospects. (Axelrad et al., 2018; Núñez & Livanos, 2010; Yoana et al., 2024) In one study, higher education correlated with greater professional status, intrinsic work values, and training flexibility but was negatively linked to unemployment length, extrinsic work values, and willingness to accept undemanding jobs (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Dunn (2010) found that individuals with higher education increased their employability. His research defined employability as an employee's overall attractiveness to employers. However, these individuals tended to be more selective when

seeking a job since obtaining higher education increased their expectations. Even though they were more selective, they often got better jobs. Meanwhile, Zhang and Chen (2020) discovered that workers with less formal education frequently develop stronger proactive habits than their highly educated counterparts. These findings suggest that while higher education enhances employability and job prospects, individuals with lower education may compensate through proactive work behaviours. Based on sociodemographic findings, the authors included age, gender, and education level as control variables in the data analysis.

Among the six MWEP components selected for this study, centrality of work - the belief that work plays a crucial and defining role in an individual's life - stands out as particularly indicative of one's orientation toward employment. Existing literature suggests that those employed may internalise a stronger centrality of work value compared to the unemployed. This assumption is grounded in the idea that holding a job reinforces the belief that work is necessary and a core element of identity and social function (Woehr et al., 2024).

Kittel, Kalleitner, and Tsakoglou (2019) support this reasoning empirically. Their study explored two dimensions: the Relative Importance of Work (RIW), which captures the degree to which individuals prioritise work over leisure, and the Nonfinancial Employment Commitment (NEC), which reflects the intrinsic value people assign to work, independent of financial necessity. Europeans don't all think about work the same way - where you live shapes your outlook. In some places, people build their identities around their jobs. However, in others, people care more about their free time or work to pay the bills. Although the study did not directly compare employed and unemployed individuals, it implies that employment status may influence how work is perceived, with those in stable employment likely placing more excellent value on work beyond financial motives. Taken together, these arguments suggest that being employed may reinforce or even cultivate a stronger belief in the centrality of work. In contrast, those who are unemployed may begin to devalue work's central role, either as a coping mechanism or due to prolonged disconnection from structured labour. Accordingly, the authors pose the following hypothesis:

- (1) Employees have higher centrality of work value than unemployed.

The second MWEP component under examination is self-reliance, an individual's orientation toward achieving autonomy and self-sufficiency. While direct empirical comparisons between employed and unemployed individuals regarding self-reliance remain limited, several lines of research suggest a robust association between employment, particularly self-employment, and heightened autonomy.

Taylor (1996) provides early evidence that self-employment is not merely a financial strategy but often a deliberate choice motivated by a desire for independence. Recent research backs this up: Dvouletý (2023) found that when unemployed workers start their businesses with government help, they often end up happier and more financially secure. These studies reveal an important truth: choosing self-employment can lead people to greater financial freedom. The

evidence shows this is not just theoretical - Tosun's 2019 research found that even traditional jobs, including entry-level positions, give workers substantially more control over their economic lives. Together, these studies paint self-employment as more than just a way to pay the bills; it is a shot for reaching freedom and control over your future, which is why so many people are drawn to it. These findings suggest that employed individuals, especially those who are self-employed, may exhibit a stronger belief in the significance of independence and self-sufficiency than their unemployed counterparts.

Research question 2. Do employed individuals express stronger self-reliance work value than unemployed individuals?

The third component in the MWEP that the authors want to investigate is leisure - beliefs and attitudes about the importance of activities outside of work. It feels intuitively clear that those who are scarce of free time, that is to say the employed, value leisure more than their unemployed counterparts. Those who work, especially full-time, often face time constraints that make non-work activities more precious and, consequently, more deliberately sought out. In contrast, unemployed individuals, despite having more unstructured time, may experience that time as less meaningful due to the lack of contrast or external structure.

Psychological research substantiates this argument. Paul and Moser (2009) demonstrate that unemployment is frequently associated with diminished mental health, including increased anxiety, lower self-esteem, and reduced participation in social life. Such outcomes naturally undermine the capacity to enjoy leisure activities, regardless of availability. Additionally, individuals facing prolonged unemployment often experience boredom due to the lack of structure in their days, leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation as social contacts outside the home diminish (Nordenmark, 1999).

At the same time, employment can facilitate participation in activities contributing to subjective wellbeing, such as supporting a family, engaging in philanthropy, or pursuing education. While employment may not directly increase wellbeing, it is crucial in enabling individuals to partake in meaningful non-work activities that are essential for overall life satisfaction (Theodossiou, 1998; Fryer et al., 2006).

Thus, existing research complies that employment status significantly influences engagement in such activities. People with jobs usually have an easier time joining meaningful activities outside work—they have the schedule and means to make it happen. However, for those without work, it is tougher. The mental toll and social hurdles often get in the way of staying involved. The hypothesis is thus:

(3) Employed individuals assign more value to leisure than unemployed individuals.

The fourth MWEP component under examination is delay of gratification - the ability to postpone immediate rewards to achieve long-term goals. This trait has been widely recognised in

psychological and behavioural economics literature as a critical predictor of life outcomes, including educational attainment, financial stability, and employment success. The classic “Marshmallow test” which is popularized in studies like Falk et al. (2019) showcases the point: individuals who can resist immediate temptations tend to do better in long-term pursuits like employment. Recent evidence strengthens the link between delay of gratification and employment-related outcomes. Using machine learning techniques, a study by Buchanan and Clark (2020) identified delay discounting (a measure of one's tendency to devalue future rewards) as a stronger predictor of income than demographic factors such as age, ethnicity, or even height. Since income is closely tied to job performance and career progression, this finding suggests that individuals who can prioritise long-term gains are more likely to secure and retain employment.

Furthermore, Friedman and Jorgensen (2021) uncovered a negative correlation between job satisfaction and delay discounting, with individuals who experience higher job satisfaction showing lower delay discounting, suggesting they are more capable of valuing long-term rewards over immediate ones (Friedman & Jorgensen, 2021). The research indicates that employed individuals—particularly those with higher incomes or greater job satisfaction—tend to demonstrate stronger ability to prioritise long-term gains over immediate rewards. However, this relationship is not straightforward, as individual differences in cognitive functioning and personality characteristics play significant moderating roles. Thus, the authors are posing the following hypothesis:

(4) Employees have a higher delay in gratification than unemployed.

The fifth component of the MWEP that authors want to investigate further, is the wasted time - the recognition of the value and significance of time. It seems natural to think that individuals who work - thus are forced to do activities they might not enjoy to earn a paycheck - have less time for choosing pleasurable activities. People who are unemployed have more free time and more time to waste, for example, on the media (Müller et al., 2017). Study by Wanberg et al. (1997) found that unemployed individuals tend to have lower levels of time structure than their employed counterparts. However, when people moved from unemployment to employment, they reported better organisation of their daily time—highlighting how having a job can help individuals manage their time more effectively and view their time as more meaningful. Additionally, job loss has been shown to alter psychological perceptions of time, including changes in psychological age and life expectancy, with comparative studies revealing significant differences in life satisfaction, meaning, and locus of control between employed and unemployed individuals (Tan et. al, 2022; Paul & Moser, 2009). Building on this, Creed & Klisch (2005) study revealed how future-oriented thinking and personal aspirations fundamentally influence career-related self-efficacy. This aligns with broader findings showing employed individuals typically develop a stronger temporal consciousness—they value time more highly and use it more purposefully. A steady job helps people develop a clearer sense of time, changing how they

structure their days and decide what matters most. On the other hand, unemployment tends to throw off this natural rhythm. When people lose that structure, time can start to feel empty or pointless—which often hurts their day-to-day happiness and their ability to plan. The hypothesis is thus:

(5) Employees have a higher perception of wasted time than unemployed.

The last component in MEWP that the authors have interest in investigating is morality-ethic - the belief in living a life guided by justice and moral principles. Work relationships are built on moral values like fairness, authority, and care. Studies applying Moral Foundations Theory to the workplace show that job environments strengthen certain ethical principles, shaping how employees approach moral behaviour (Lopes, 2017). Conversely, unemployment can significantly reshape moral perceptions - the experience of job loss appears to undermine notions of merit-based deservingness, subsequently modifying attitudes toward distributive justice (Choi & Bowles, 2016). Van Hooft and co-authors (2004) found that unemployed people are more proactive in their job search than employed people. Proactive behaviour can be explained by cultural norms, financial needs, and the individual's overall job search intention. (Van Hooft et al., 2004) Hence, this result could indicate that unemployed people have higher work ethic scores than employed people. The cumulative evidence suggests employment status is a determinant of ethical orientation, with meaningful differences emerging between employed and unemployed individuals. The hypothesis is thus:

(6) Employees have stronger morality-ethic work values than unemployed.

Hill & Fouts (2005) examined the work ethic attributes of jobseekers based on their employment status, age, and gender. The study revealed that full-time employed jobseekers exhibited notably lower work ethic scores than individuals who had been unemployed for under three months or those who had lost their jobs due to layoffs.

The importance an unemployed individual places on employment is not the sole factor influencing job flexibility; the nature of their work values also plays a role (Kanfer et al., 2001). Different work value orientations may shape the degree and type of flexibility displayed when seeking employment (Van den Broeck et al., 2010).

According to the Self-Determination Theory, job flexibility is influenced by whether a position aligns with an individual's work values. Intrinsic work value orientation prioritising personal growth and skill development is more likely to accept jobs requiring additional training but less inclined to take undemanding or underpaid positions with limited development opportunities. Conversely, individuals with an extrinsic work value orientation who seek financial security and status are less willing to accept low-paying or underemployment roles that do not fulfil these aspirations. (Van den Broeck et al., 2010)

In sum, while much literature discusses work ethic as a set of behavioural and moral norms, this thesis emphasises on a broader interpretation by viewing work ethic dimensions as part of the larger framework of work values. By doing so, the authors seek to understand how individuals' value-based orientations toward work, such as autonomy, effort, fairness, and leisure, relate to their current employment status. This person-centred approach helps reframe the debate: it is not only about whether someone has a strong work ethic, but about how their deeper work values align with or diverge from the opportunities and demands of the labour market.

2. Methodology and Sample

2.1. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this thesis, analysing collected data within a theoretical framework and its application in the research implementation. Using previous works' compiled measuring instruments for work ethic and previously categorised work ethic profiles, the study explores how an individual's work values influence their employment status. R programming language was used during data analysis.

Data from this study were sourced from "Cross-cultural validation of the work ethic profiles: live to work, work to live, and work as a necessary evil". This questionnaire aimed to understand how people from different regions perceive various aspects of work, not just their current jobs. Although the questionnaire has been conducted worldwide, the study uses only data specific to Estonia.

In Estonia, work plays a central role in influencing personal identity and contributions to society. However, job satisfaction and commitment to organisations differentiate based on job security, salary, career growth, workplace culture, and leadership styles (Alas & Edwards, 2005). Notably, generational differences in occupational values are evident, with younger Estonians prioritising self-fulfilment and personal growth, while older generations emphasise job security and stability (Titma & Helemäe, 1996). However, business ethics is not widely prioritised in Estonia, as shown in a study where students and business practitioners were familiar with ethical concepts but showed limited interest in them. The study suggested that ethics should receive greater emphasis in education and business practices to strengthen professional integrity (Gurvitsh et al., 2017).

Estonian data was gathered by the Salary Information Agency (Palgainfoagentuur) using its employee contact database in February 2024 in two languages, including back-and-forth translation. Five Elamus OÜ digital gift cards worth 54.99 were raffled among the respondents. The responses for this questionnaire are anonymous (have answer IDs) but ask for general socio-demographic data (age, gender, level of education) in order to compare different groups.

Besides the socio-demographic questions, the questionnaire asked the participants to rate their opinions about 28 work-related statements. Respondents were asked to scale their opinions about the statements on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 symbolises strong disagreement, and 5 denotes strong agreement towards the statement. The statements were derived from the previously mentioned Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP) framework. Additional

questions about the respondent's current job form of work, length of service and satisfaction were also inquired. The full questionnaire can be seen on appendix A.

The survey's conductor had categorised employment status into three separate groups: 1) people who are working; 2) individuals, who are not working; 3) people who are not working, but have a valid employment relationship. The latter employment status can be interpreted in different ways in Estonia. For example, employees are entitled to various types of leave, such as annual, parental, study, and unpaid (Tööinspektsioon, 2025). Sick leave allows employees to take time off for medical reasons and receive temporary incapacity benefits from the Health Insurance Fund. If an individual has reduced work capacity, they may still hold a valid employment contract but are not required to work while receiving support from the Unemployment Insurance Fund, either through a disability pension or temporary incapacity benefits. In certain situations, employers may suspend work temporarily due to economic challenges, resulting in forced leave or work stoppage. A suspended employment relationship, though rare, may occur when the employer and employee agree to pause the contract for a specific time without terminating it. If an employee fails to show up for work without a valid reason, the employer may issue a warning or terminate the contract for non-compliance with obligations. Employees may also request unpaid leave, which requires the employer's consent. Lastly, during unavoidable circumstances, such as natural disasters, pandemics, or state-imposed restrictions, work disruptions can occur without ending employment contracts, as seen in the measures taken during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Tööinspektsioon, 2025)

In order to analyse how work values influence an individual's employment status, the authors present coding iterations that were made in order to examine this relationship. Main variables used for the analysis are employment status and work values based on work ethic profiles. Control variables age, gender and education were used based on previous works. Employment status was coded as a binary variable, with 1 representing employed individuals and 0 representing unemployed individuals. Age was categorized and sequentially coded from 1 (the youngest age group) to 5 (the oldest age group). For gender, a binary coding was implemented: 0 for females and 1 for males. The authors also categorized different education levels into 4 groups. Basic and vocational education was coded as 1, higher vocational education received a code of 2, bachelor's degree was noted as 3, and doctoral or master's degree was coded as 4.

This coding served as a basis for the binary logistic regression models, conducted with R programming language. The authors present the general binary logistic regression model applied in the analysis. Upon further examination of the datasets, it was observed that the number of work values included in the model varied depending on the factor structures derived from the linguistic groups. Accordingly, the binary regression model is as follows:

$$\text{logit}(\text{employment}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{work value}_1) + \beta_2(\text{work value}_2) + \dots + \beta_k(\text{work value}_k) + \beta_{k+1}(\text{age}) + \beta_{k+2}(\text{gender}) + \beta_{k+3}(\text{education level}) + \beta_{k+4}(\text{language of the questionnaire})$$

where β_0 is an intercept, representing the baseline log-odds of being employed for the reference group (female, aged 15-34, with basic/vocational education), $\beta_1 - \beta_k$ represent how

each work value is associated with the likelihood of employment, $\beta_{k+1} - \beta_{k+3}$ represent the effects of the control variables (age group, gender, education level) on employment status. Additionally, control variable, language of the questionnaire, is only used on the entire sample model. Hence, β_{k+4} represents how language is associated with the likelihood of employment.

2.2. Sample

Initially, the dataset had 2377 responses, but with cleaned data, the final sample included 2360 valid responses. The authors decided to remove a total of 17 responses due to identical variance across all 28 statements, suggesting similar response patterns that were unlikely to contribute meaningful insights to the analysis.

Table 2 presents the distribution of the sample's demographic and professional characteristics, both for the total sample and separately for Estonian and Russian respondents. The majority of respondents completed the questionnaire in Estonian ($n=1866$; 79%), while Russian respondents constituted 21% of the sample ($n=493$). One respondent did not indicate their preferred questionnaire language. The age distribution shows that most respondents fall within the 35-44, 45-54, and 55-64 age groups, representing nearly three-quarters of the participants. Among Estonian respondents, the age distribution was relatively even across these three categories. In contrast, Russian respondents were more concentrated in 35-44 and 45-54 age groups, which together made up 59% of that subgroup. Additionally, the youngest age group (15-34) had fewer Russian respondents (12%) than Estonian respondents (20%). Same can be noted in the oldest age group (65+) as well, where Russians accounted for 7% and Estonians 10%. Most of the respondents in the sample were female (64%), with a higher proportion of women among Estonian respondents (67%) than Russian respondents (56%), indicating a relatively greater male representation of the latter group. Total respondents were distributed relatively evenly across the education levels, although the bachelor's degree holders are the smallest group in this sample (19%). Russian respondents completed their basic or higher vocational education (64%) more than Estonian respondents (53%). On the other hand, university-level education (bachelor's, master's or doctoral degrees) was more common among Estonian respondents, with 48% obtained such degrees compared to 35% of Russian respondents. In terms of employment status, the majority of the sample was employed (81%). Estonian respondents reported a slightly higher employment rate (82%) than Russian respondents (75%). Unemployment was more prevalent among the Russian-speaking group (23%) than among Estonians (15%). The proportion of respondents who were not working but had a valid employment relationship was marginal in both groups (2%).

Table 2. Distribution of the characteristics in the sample

Characteristic	Total n (%)	Estonian respondents n (%)	Russian respondents n (%)
Language of the questionnaire			
Estonian	1866 (79%)	1866 (100%)	
Russian	493 (21%)		493 (100%)
missing value	1		
Age			
15-34	425 (18%)	366 (20%)	59 (12%)
35-44	561 (24%)	414 (22%)	147 (30%)
45-54	599 (25%)	453 (24%)	145 (29%)
55-64	556 (24%)	447 (24%)	109 (22%)
65+	219 (9%)	186 (10%)	33 (7%)
Gender			
Female	1518 (64%)	1242 (67%)	275 (56%)
Male	829 (35%)	613 (33%)	216 (44%)
missing value	13	11	2
Education			
Basic and vocational education	673 (29%)	518 (28%)	154 (31%)
Higher vocational education	625 (26%)	461 (25%)	164 (33%)
Bachelor's degree	455 (19%)	371 (20%)	84 (17%)
Doctoral or master's degree	607 (26%)	516 (28%)	91 (18%)
Relationship to working			
Yes, I am working	1909 (81%)	1538 (82%)	370 (75%)
No, I am not working	395 (17%)	283 (15%)	112 (23%)
No, I am not working, but I have a valid employment relationship (employment contract suspended)	56 (2%)	45 (2%)	11 (2%)

Source: compiled by the thesis authors based on Salary Information Agency survey

In further analysis of the questionnaire results, the descriptive statistics provide insight into respondents' attitudes toward the components of the MWEP scale across the total sample, as well as separately for Estonian and Russian respondents. Each category was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where higher values indicate stronger agreement with the dimension in question. The detailed statistical results can be found in appendix B. Among the total sample, Morality-ethic had the highest mean score (mean = 4.46), suggesting a strong collective agreement with moral and ethical views on work across respondents. Additionally, Self-reliance (mean = 4.03) and Wasted Time (mean = 4.00) also received high mean scores, indicating that respondents generally value independence and the efficient use of time. On the other hand, the lowest scoring dimension was Delay of gratification (mean = 2.56) dimension, implying that the respondents feel that postponing rewards does not bring more fulfilment to them. When

comparing mean scores by linguistic groups, some notable differences emerge. For example, Russian respondents had higher mean scores across most of the MWEP components when comparing to Estonian respondents. The most notable differences are in Hard Work (Russian mean = 3.64; Estonian mean = 3.05) and Wasted Time (Russian mean = 4.22; Estonian mean = 3.95) dimensions. Despite these differences in most of the components, both groups scored similarly on Centrality of work (Russian mean = 3.33; Estonian mean = 3.30) and Delay of gratification (Russian mean = 2.55; Estonian mean = 2.56) components, suggesting shared views on both of these categories.

Since Estonian and Russian versions of the questionnaire were used, it was necessary to assess whether both language versions functioned similarly. In order to examine similarities in response patterns, a multi-group confirmatory factor analysis was conducted (Brown et al., 2015). Specifically, configural, metric, and scalar invariance were tested between the language groups. (Brown et al., 2015; Hirschfeld & von Brachel, 2014) Configural invariance examines whether the overall factor structure is the same across groups. Metric invariance tests whether the relationships between the items and their underlying factors are equivalent across groups. Scalar invariance assesses whether respondents in different groups have the same item intercepts, indicating similar baseline response tendencies. (Hirschfeld & von Brachel, 2014) The analysis was conducted using the pre-defined MWEP model with the questionnaire's statements during the tests. The results of the tests showed that configural invariance was established, while metric and scalar invariance were not supported (appendix C). The results suggest that the Estonian and Russian versions of the questionnaire do not function identically. As a result, the authors conducted separate factor analyses to ensure accurate factor identification for each language group.

Factor analysis is a multivariate statistical procedure that reduces many variables into a smaller set. Additionally, factor analysis creates underlying dimensions between measured factors and latent constructs, thereby allowing the formation and refinement of theory. Factor analysis is divided into two main categories: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). (Taherdoost et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2010) Both of these analyses will be used to determine the factors.

EFA determines the number of factors and the distribution of questions that will emerge during the analysis. EFA allows the authors to identify factors that influence work ethic without having a predefined hypothesis about the structure. (Taherdoost et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2010) Factor loadings are considered meaningful when they are above 0.30. Items that have reached this minimum level across multiple factors are referred to as cross-loading items, indicating ambiguity in their association with a single factor. Therefore, items that have not reached the minimum threshold or exhibit cross-loadings should be removed from the model. (Guvendir & Ozkan, 2022) By reducing the complexity of the data, EFA makes it easier to identify meaningful patterns or clusters in participants' answers. Overall, EFA is appropriate for this analysis as it helps to explore the structure of work ethic in a large sample, providing insights that can guide further theory development or refinement of the measurement tool.

On the other hand, CFA, as a form of structural equation modelling (SEM), is used to test either the proposed theory by the researcher or the model. In contrast to EFA, CFA has assumptions and expectations based on prior theory regarding the number of factors and which factor theories or models best fit. (Taherdoost et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2010) Therefore, CFA is used to confirm the model found in EFA.

Data was analysed in two stages. Each language version of the questionnaire was divided into two subsets based on participant ID numbers, with even and odd ID numbers allocated to separate datasets. The Estonian version contained 936 even IDs and 930 odd IDs, while the Russian version included 242 even IDs and 251 odd IDs. EFA was conducted on the even ID datasets to explore the underlying factor structure. CFA was subsequently performed on odd ID datasets to confirm the factor structure derived from the EFA procedure. EFA and CFA have different size requirements. The minimum sample requirement for EFA is 100 (Kyriazos, 2018). For the CFA, at least 200 observations are recommended (Jackson, 2003). The sample sizes for all datasets met the minimum recommended level for performing both EFA and CFA.

Before performing EFA, it was essential to check for sample adequacy using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity (Howard, 2016). The KMO results indicated high sampling adequacy for both the Estonian (overall MSA = 0.85) and Russian (overall MSA = 0.83) questionnaire datasets, suggesting the data were suitable for factor analysis. The results for each of the items are presented in appendix D. Bartlett's test of sphericity also showed that both Estonian ($\chi^2 = 9233.898$ at $p < 0.001$) and Russian ($\chi^2 = 2757.975$ at $p < 0.001$) questionnaires include significant relationships among the variables, making them suitable for factor analysis.

For both linguistic groups, a principal component analysis with Promax rotation was conducted to extract factors. This method was chosen because prior research has indicated that the dimensions of the MWEP are intercorrelated (Miller et al., 2002; Woehr et al., 2007). Additionally, some studies have previously used this rotation for discovering new dimensions based on MWEP statements (Mann, 2000; Runić-Ristić et al., 2024). Hence, Promax rotation was deemed appropriate, as it enables correlation among factors (Finch, 2006). To assess the internal consistency of the resulting factor structures, Cronbach's alpha was also calculated. Internal consistency describes the extent to which all the items in a test measure the same concept or construct. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1, where values above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable. (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011)

In order to determine the appropriate number of factors to extract for the Estonian version of the questionnaire, parallel analysis, eigenvalues and scree plot were used. The scree plot derived from the parallel analysis is presented in appendix E. Initially, a 7-factor structure was implemented, however, two of the factors did not achieve an internal consistency, and the removal of items from these factors did not improve Cronbach's alpha values. Therefore, a 6-factor solution was examined. Although it showed some improvement, one factor still failed to meet the internal consistency threshold. As a result, a 5-factor structure was explored, where all factors demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency. Throughout the factor structure

refinement process, items that did not load on any factor or exhibited cross-loadings were removed iteratively. The final EFA supported a 5-factor structure with 24 items for the Estonian questionnaire.

The results of the EFA, including item loadings, SS loadings, variances and proportions for the Estonian dataset, are presented in Table 3. The final factor structure accounted for 45% of the total variance. The first factor explained 11% of the variance and was characterized by strong loadings on items related to hard work. The highest loading was observed for item Q.3.20. (“If you work hard you will succeed.”), with a factor loading of 0.99. Given the thematic coherence of items within this factor, it was labelled as Hard Work. The second factor had the highest loading on item Q.3.25. (“People should have more leisure time to spend in relaxation.”), with a loading of 0.95. Since this factor was defined by items reflecting attitudes toward leisure, it was defined as Leisure. The second factor accounted for 10% of the variance. The third factor contributed 9% to the variance and was comprised of items characterizing the concept of delayed gratification. The strongest loading was on item Q.3.8. (“Things that you have to wait for are the most worthwhile.”), with a loading of 0.90. This factor was named Delay of Gratification. The fourth factor had three high loadings with statements Q.3.19. (“I strive to be self-reliant.”, 0.68), Q.3.26. (“It is important to control one’s destiny by not being dependent on others.”, 0.63), and Q.3.10. (“Self-reliance is the key to being successful.”, 0.60), which reflect themes of independence and self-responsibility. Additional items within this factor introduced aspects of self-reliance with thoughtful judgement (Q.3.13., Q.3.14.) and reciprocal fairness (Q.3.23., Q.3.27.) Based on these themes, the fourth factor was named Self-Reliant Morality, which accounted for 8% of the variance. The fifth factor had two high loadings with statements Q.3.2. (“I feel content when I have spent the day working.”, 0.74) and Q.3.1. (“It is important to stay busy at work and not waste time.”, 0.69), which emphasized productivity and emotional reward from working. Complementary items in this factor addressed intentional time management (Q.3.17., Q.3.24.) and work satisfaction (Q.3.28). Based on these topics, the fifth factor was named Purposeful Productivity, which explained 7% of the variance. As noted previously, all five factors in the Estonian version of the questionnaire demonstrated acceptable internal consistency.

Table 3. Results of EFA for Estonian respondents

Item	Factor 1: Hard Work	Factor 2: Leisure	Factor 3: Delay of Gratification	Factor 4: Self-Reliant Morality	Factor 5: Purposeful Productivity
Q.3.9.	0.48	-0.05	0.13	0.02	0.14
Q.3.11.	0.88	0.05	-0.05	0.04	-0.07
Q.3.20.	0.99	0.07	-0.12	0.02	-0.07
Q.3.22.	0.83	0.07	-0.09	0.01	0.02
Q.3.4.	-0.04	0.48	0.01	0.05	-0.03
Q.3.16.	0.03	0.72	-0.02	-0.01	-0.04
Q.3.18.	0.08	0.78	0.09	-0.04	-0.10
Q.3.25.	0.12	0.95	0.06	-0.12	-0.05

Item	Factor 1: Hard Work	Factor 2: Leisure	Factor 3: Delay of Gratification	Factor 4: Self-Reliant Morality	Factor 5: Purposeful Productivity
Q.3.9.	0.48	-0.05	0.13	0.02	0.14
Q.3.11.	0.88	0.05	-0.05	0.04	-0.07
Q.3.20.	0.99	0.07	-0.12	0.02	-0.07
Q.3.22.	0.83	0.07	-0.09	0.01	0.02
Q.3.6.	-0.10	0.07	0.80	0.05	0.03
Q.3.8.	-0.17	0.04	0.90	0.09	0.02
Q.3.15.	0.06	0.00	0.42	-0.07	0.03
Q.3.21.	0.03	0.01	0.77	0.05	-0.06
Q.3.10.	0.12	-0.12	0.10	0.60	-0.15
Q.3.13.	-0.04	-0.06	-0.08	0.42	0.11
Q.3.14.	-0.06	0.08	0.08	0.47	0.05
Q.3.19.	0.04	-0.09	0.06	0.68	-0.21
Q.3.23.	-0.02	0.10	-0.06	0.32	0.23
Q.3.26.	0.05	-0.01	0.02	0.63	-0.07
Q.3.27.	-0.05	0.25	-0.09	0.36	0.21
Q.3.1.	-0.06	-0.02	-0.05	0.02	0.69
Q.3.2.	-0.04	-0.07	0.06	-0.18	0.74
Q.3.17.	0.00	-0.03	-0.01	0.20	0.44
Q.3.24.	0.15	-0.09	0.04	-0.01	0.41
Q.3.28.	0.22	-0.03	0.23	-0.04	0.34
SS loadings	2.61	2.30	2.21	1.92	1.72
Proportion variance	0.11	0.10	0.09	0.08	0.07
Cumulative variance	0.11	0.20	0.30	0.38	0.45
Proportion explained	0.24	0.21	0.21	0.18	0.16
Cumulative proportion	0.24	0.46	0.66	0.84	1.00
Cronbach's alpha	0.856	0.802	0.784	0.707	0.707

Note. Factors extracted by principal component analysis with Promax rotation; bold loadings indicate which factor the item loaded onto

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Similarly to Estonian factor extraction process, the Russian version of the questionnaire was examined using parallel analysis, eigenvalues and scree plot to determine the appropriate number of factors. The scree plot derived from the parallel analysis is presented in appendix F. Initially, a 5-factor structure was implemented, but after the removal of items that either failed to load on any factor or exhibited cross-loadings, one factor retained only two items, which is generally considered insufficient for meaningful interpretation (Goretzko et al., 2019; Raubenheimer, 2004). Hence, a 4-factor structure was subsequently evaluated, in which each factor had at least three items with significant loadings. Items were removed iteratively during the factor structure refinement process to improve clarity and reliability. The final EFA supported

a 4-factor structure consisting of 21 items, with all factors exhibiting acceptable levels of internal consistency.

The results of the EFA, including item loadings, SS loadings, variances and proportions for the Russian dataset, are presented in Table 4. The final factor structure accounted for 43% of the total variance. The first factor was anchored by the highest-loading item, Q.3.20. (“If you work hard you will succeed.”), with loading of 0.97, reflecting a strong belief in effort-driven success. Additional items reinforced the theme by emphasizing self-determined success through effort (Q.3.9., Q.3.11., Q.3.22.) and self-reliance (Q.3.10.). Hence, the factor was named as Meritocratic Work Ethic, which explained 13% of the variance. The second factor integrated themes of personal integrity (Q.3.3., Q.3.19.), moral fairness (Q.3.13.; Q.3.23, Q.3.27.), time management (Q.3.5., Q.3.17.), and meaning derived from work (Q.3.24). The highest loading item was Q.3.27. (“People should be fair in their dealings with others.”), with a loading of 0.68, indicating fairness as a central theme in the second factor. Therefore, this factor was labelled as Fairness and Personal Integrity, which accounted for 13% of the variance. The third factor, which explained 8% of the variance, was mostly defined by item Q.3.16. (“More leisure time is good for people.”), with a loading of 0.73. Other items also emphasized the value of leisure, and thus the factor was named Leisure. The fourth factor had the highest loading with item Q.3.6. (“I get more fulfilment from items I had to wait for.”), with a loading of 0.73. There was a consistent thematic focus on delayed rewards within the other items as well and therefore the factor was labelled as Delay of Gratification. This factor accounted for 8% of the variance. As previously noted, all four factors in the Russian version of the questionnaire demonstrated acceptable internal consistency.

Table 4. Results of EFA for Russian respondents

Item	Factor 1: Meritocratic Work Ethic	Factor 2: Fairness and Personal Integrity	Factor 3: Leisure	Factor 4: Delay of Gratification
Q.3.9.	0.72	0.05	-0.01	-0.03
Q.3.10.	0.41	0.15	0.11	-0.04
Q.3.11.	0.69	0.03	-0.09	0.10
Q.3.20.	0.97	-0.13	0.08	-0.08
Q.3.22.	0.79	-0.09	0.00	0.01
Q.3.3.	-0.06	0.59	-0.04	-0.10
Q.3.5.	-0.05	0.63	-0.01	0.05
Q.3.13.	-0.01	0.61	0.15	-0.10
Q.3.17	0.08	0.46	0.05	0.04
Q.3.19	0.05	0.51	0.09	0.01
Q.3.23	-0.05	0.59	-0.05	0.07
Q.3.24	0.14	0.43	-0.25	0.03
Q.3.27.	-0.04	0.68	0.11	-0.09
Q.3.4.	0.01	-0.02	0.61	-0.12
Q.3.16.	0.02	-0.06	0.73	-0.01

Item	Factor 1: Meritocratic Work Ethic	Factor 2: Fairness and Personal Integrity	Factor 3: Leisure	Factor 4: Delay of Gratification
Q.3.18.	0.06	0.03	0.55	0.13
Q.3.25.	-0.08	0.25	0.62	0.10
Q.3.6.	-0.16	-0.05	0.07	0.73
Q.3.8.	-0.01	-0.01	0.05	0.67
Q.3.15.	0.11	0.13	-0.12	0.52
Q.3.21.	0.20	-0.13	0.03	0.65
SS loadings	2.82	2.74	1.78	1.76
Proportion variance	0.13	0.13	0.08	0.08
Cumulative variance	0.13	0.26	0.35	0.43
Proportion explained	0.31	0.30	0.30	0.19
Cumulative proportion	0.31	0.61	0.81	1.00
Cronbach's alpha	0.838	0.782	0.725	0.745

Note. Factors extracted by principal component analysis with Promax rotation; bold loadings indicate which factor the item loaded onto

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

When comparing the EFA results for the Estonian and Russian datasets, it was observed that the Leisure and Delay of Gratification factors exhibited similar item loadings across both versions. Consequently, these two factors were analysed on the whole dataset, which included both Estonian and Russian respondents.

To confirm the factor structures identified in the EFA, a CFA was conducted on the second half of the dataset, which included participants with odd ID numbers. Commonly used indicators were used to assess model adequacy: Chi-square, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), adjusted goodness-of-fit Index (AGFI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (Chu, 2008).

For the Estonian version of the questionnaire, the CFA yielded a Chi-square value of 1344.288 (df = 242), which was significant at the $p < 0.001$ level. However, the significance of the Chi-square test is known to be sensitive to large sample sizes (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). The remaining fit indices suggested a reasonably acceptable model fit (RMSEA = 0.070; SRMR = 0.070; AGFI = 0.853; CFI = 0.854), supporting the factor structure derived from EFA.

Similarly for the Russian version of the questionnaire, the Chi-Square test was not satisfactory, with a value of 397.414 (df = 183) and a significance of $p < 0.001$. As previously mentioned, the significance may be due to the large sample size. However, the alternative indices provided an acceptable model fit (RMSEA = 0.068; SRMR = 0.075; AGFI = 0.835; CFI = 0.869). These values indicate that the factor structure identified through EFA is reasonably supported by the data.

Additionally, the correlation coefficients between the factor scores extracted from the EFA are presented for both language versions to examine the relationship among the factors. Before conducting the analysis, the normality of the factor score distributions was assessed, and

the assumption of linearity was considered. Pearson correlation coefficients were then computed to evaluate the strength and direction of the relationship between the factors. The correlation matrices of both Estonian and Russian respondents' factors are presented in appendix G and appendix H, respectively.

For Estonian respondents' factors, all of the correlations between the factors were statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level. Notably, Hard Work demonstrated moderate positive correlations with both Delay of Gratification ($r = 0.526$) and Purposeful Productivity ($r = 0.608$). Purposeful Productivity also showed moderate correlations with Delay of Gratification ($r = 0.485$) and Self-Reliant Morality ($r = 0.478$). In contrast, Leisure exhibited weak negative correlations with all the other factors. Overall, while several moderate associations are observed, none of the relationships indicate strong correlations.

For Russian respondents' factors, statistically significant correlations ($p < 0.001$) were observed between Meritocratic Work Ethic and Fairness and Personal Integrity, Meritocratic Work Ethic and Delay of Gratification, and Fairness and Personal Integrity and Leisure. Notably, Meritocratic Work Ethic demonstrated moderate positive correlations with both Fairness and Personal Integrity ($r = 0.491$) and Delay of Gratification ($r = 0.546$). The Leisure factor exhibited weak or non-significant correlations with the other factors. Additionally, the correlation between the Delay of Gratification and Fairness and Personal Integrity factors was weak and not statistically significant ($r = 0.041$). Overall, no strong correlations were observed between the Russian factors.

Since the CFA results confirmed that the factor structures identified in the EFA were adequately supported for both language versions, the authors proceeded with presenting the results and analysing their significance. Additionally, the correlation analyses revealed no strong correlations between the factors, suggesting that each factor captures a distinct aspect of the underlying construct.

3. Results

This chapter presents the results of the study based on both the Estonian and Russian versions of the questionnaire. First, the authors report the factor means by employment group for each linguistic group. This is followed by the results of the logistic regression analyses, where employment status serves as the dependent variable and the predictors include the factors extracted from the EFA, as well as control variables age, gender, and education level. Most of the factors are analysed separately for the Estonian and Russian datasets, however, the Leisure and Delay of Gratification factors are analysed across the entire sample, as they share identical factor loadings in both language versions.

Table 7 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of the identified factors across employment statuses for both Estonian and Russian respondents. ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the mean score differences among employment groups were statistically significant. The ANOVA results are presented in appendix I for Estonian respondents and appendix J for Russian respondents. When a significant difference in factor mean scores was

identified, a Bonferroni post-hoc test was performed to determine which specific employment groups differed significantly.

Among Estonian respondents, factor mean scores were relatively consistent between employed and unemployed individuals, with only slight variations. ANOVA test results showed significant differences in the mean scores of the Hard Work, Leisure and Delay of Gratification factors across employment groups ($p < 0.001$). Bonferroni test result for the Hard Work factor indicated that the Not Working group differed significantly from both the employed ($p = 0.002$) and unemployed ($p = 0.008$) groups. This result suggests that individuals in the Not Working group place greater emphasis on hard work (mean = 3.47) compared to employed (mean = 3.04) and unemployed (mean = 3.06) individuals. Similarly, Bonferroni test result for Leisure factor showed that the Not Working group differed significantly from both the employed ($p = 0.002$) and unemployed ($p = 0.005$) groups. This result indicates that Not Working individuals value leisure more (mean = 4.23) than employed (mean = 3.90) or unemployed (mean = 3.90) individuals. Bonferroni test result for Delay of Gratification revealed a significant difference between the employed and unemployed groups (p -value = 0.006), suggesting that employed individuals value delaying gratification less (mean = 2.53) compared to unemployed individuals (mean = 2.68).

Among Russian respondents, ANOVA test indicated no statistically significant differences in factor mean scores across employment groups. However, Meritocratic Work Ethic factor had the highest mean score among unemployed individuals (mean = 3.88), exceeding those of employed (mean = 3.67) and Not Working individuals (mean = 3.58). Additionally, the Fairness and Personal Integrity factor was rated highly across all groups, with employed individuals showing the highest endorsement (mean = 4.46), followed by unemployed (mean = 4.42) and Not Working individuals (mean = 4.25).

The Leisure factor was rated relatively high across all employment groups in both linguistic samples, with the highest mean scores found among the Not Working group for Estonians (mean = 4.23) and employed Russians (mean = 4.14.). Although Delay of Gratification factor had comparatively lower means across the entire sample, Estonian employment groups reported higher mean scores on this factor than the Russian employment groups.

Table 7. Factor means and standard deviations across employment groups

Factor	Estonian respondents			Russian respondents		
	Employed Mean (SD)	Unemployed Mean (SD)	Not Working Mean (SD)	Employed Mean (SD)	Unemployed Mean (SD)	Not Working Mean (SD)
Hard Work	3.04 (0.826)	3.06 (0.886)	3.47 (0.924)			
Leisure	3.90 (0.643)	3.90 (0.688)	4.23 (0.673)	4.14 (0.683)	4.12 (0.737)	3.98 (0.891)
Delay of Gratification	2.53 (0.702)	2.68 (0.782)	2.74 (0.850)	2.52 (0.915)	2.65 (0.955)	2.45 (0.865)
Self-Reliant Morality	4.17 (0.405)	4.15 (0.421)	4.26 (0.443)			

Factor	Estonian respondents			Russian respondents		
	Employed	Unemployed	Not Working	Employed	Unemployed	Not Working
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Purposeful Productivity	3.73 (0.553)	3.68 (0.617)	3.77 (0.570)			
Meritocratic				3.67 (0.872)	3.88 (0.810)	3.58 (1.08)
Work Ethic						
Fairness and Personal Integrity				4.46 (0.477)	4.42 (0.556)	4.25 (0.709)

Note. SD – standard deviation

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Following the analysis of factor means across employment statuses for both the Estonian and Russian questionnaire versions, the authors proceed with a binary logistic regression model to examine how employment status predicts individuals' endorsement of various work values. The scores of the work values were calculated based on EFA results and used as independent variables in the corresponding dataset.

The detailed logistic regression results for Estonian respondents are presented in Table 8. Model diagnostics, included in appendix K, indicate that multicollinearity is not a significant issue within the model due to the variables remaining below the critical threshold of 5. Among Estonian respondents, none of the included factors reached statistical significance, suggesting that these dimensions did not meaningfully distinguish between employed and unemployed individuals in this group. However, the control variable education level significantly predicted employment likelihood: individuals with higher levels of education has substantially increased odds of being employed. For instance, respondents holding a doctoral or master's degree had 181% higher odds of being employed (odds ratio = 2.813) compared to those with only basic or vocational education. Regarding age, the odds of being employed decreases with increasing age. The only significant effect was observed in the oldest age group (65+), whose odds of being employed were approximately 79% lower (odds ratio = 0.209) than those in the youngest age group (15-34). As for gender, the results indicate that men were less likely to be employed than women, however, this finding was not statistically significant.

Table 8. Logistic regression results for Estonian respondents

	Odds ratio	Estimate	Std. error	z	Pr(> z)
Intercept	4.182	1.431	0.189	7.583	0.000***
Factor					
Hard Work	0.908	-0.097	0.145	-0.670	0.503
Self-Reliant Morality	1.236	0.212	0.244	0.868	0.385
Purposeful Productivity	1.389	0.329	0.215	1.526	0.127
Age group (reference category: 15-34)					

	Odds ratio	Estimate	Std. error	z	Pr(> z)
35-44	1.197	0.180	0.225	0.801	0.423
45-54	1.159	0.148	0.218	0.678	0.498
55-64	0.990	-0.010	0.219	-0.047	0.962
65+	0.209	-1.568	0.236	-6.646	0.000***
Gender (reference category: female)					
Male	0.767	-0.265	0.142	-1.861	0.063
Education level (reference category: basic and vocational education)					
Higher vocational education	1.680	0.519	0.176	2.945	0.003**
Bachelor's degree	2.374	0.865	0.208	4.159	0.000***
Doctoral or master's degree	2.813	1.034	0.190	5.438	0.000***

Note. AIC = 1462.1; ** indicates a p-value < 0.01, signifying higher statistical significance; *** indicates a p-value < 0.001, signifying the highest level of statistical significance.

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

The detailed logistic regression results for Russian respondents can be seen in Table 9. The diagnostics results, included in appendix L, indicate that multicollinearity is not a significant issue within the model due to the variables remaining below the critical threshold of 5. Among Russian respondents, Meritocratic Work Ethic factor reached statistical significance, indicating that individuals with stronger beliefs in this factor were 39.3% less likely to be employed (odds ratio = 0.607). This counterintuitive finding may suggest that there is a misalignment between personal beliefs and societal realities within the Russian respondents. Although stronger beliefs in Fairness and Personal Integrity suggested an increase in the odds of being employed, this finding was statistically insignificant. Similar to the Estonian sample, the results for age suggest that the increase in age decreases the likelihood of being employed. The only significant effect was observed in the oldest age group (65+), whose odds of being employed were 81.3% (odds ratio = 0.187) lower compared to the youngest age group (15-34). The results for gender suggest that men are more likely to be employed than women, however, this result was not statistically significant. In contrast, the control variable education level significantly predicted employment status. Individuals with higher levels of education were more likely to be employed. For example, respondents holding a doctoral or master's degree had 127.2% higher odds of being employed (odds ratio = 2.272) compared to those with only basic or vocational education.

Table 9. Logistic regression results for Russian respondents

	Odds ratio	Estimate	Std. error	z	Pr(> z)
Intercept	1.945	0.665	0.361	1.841	0.066
Factor					
Meritocratic Work Ethic	0.607	-0.499	0.195	-2.554	0.011*
Fairness and Personal Integrity	1.687	0.523	0.309	1.693	0.090
Age group (reference category: 15-34)					
35-44	1.103	0.098	0.390	0.251	0.802
45-54	1.325	0.281	0.394	0.714	0.475
55-64	0.711	-0.340	0.402	-0.848	0.397
65+	0.187	-1.676	0.511	-3.277	0.001**
Gender (reference category: female)					
Male	1.502	0.407	0.235	1.729	0.084
Education level (reference category: basic and vocational education)					
Higher vocational education	1.816	0.597	0.277	2.151	0.032*
Bachelor's degree	2.917	1.071	0.380	2.816	0.005**
Doctoral or master's degree	2.272	0.821	0.346	2.374	0.018*

Note. AIC = 503.66; * indicates a p-value < 0.05, signifying statistical significance; ** indicates a p-value < 0.01, signifying higher statistical significance.

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Logistic regression results for the Leisure and Delay of Gratification factors are presented in Table 10. Model diagnostics are included in appendix M, which confirmed that multicollinearity is not an issue within the model. For the total dataset, neither Leisure nor Delay of Gratification were significant employment predictors. Similarly to separate language models, individuals in the oldest age group (65+) were significantly less likely (odds ratio = 0.225) to be employed compared to the youngest age group (15-34). Gender was not significantly associated with employment status in this model. However, higher education levels significantly increased the likelihood of being employed across the entire sample. Particularly, respondents with a bachelor's degree had 147.7% higher odds (odds ratio = 2.477) and those with a doctoral or master's degree had 164.4% higher odds (odds ratio = 2.644) of being employed compared to the reference group. Additionally, control variable language of the questionnaire was also added for the entire sample model. The results for this control variable showed that Russians were significantly less likely (odds ratio = 0.559) to be employed compared to Estonians.

Table 10. Logistic regression results of Leisure and Delay of Gratification factors

	Odds ratio	Estimate	Std. error	z	Pr(> z)
Intercept	3.845	1.347	0.165	8.144	0.000***
Factor					
Leisure	0.882	-0.125	0.148	-0.846	0.397

	Odds ratio	Estimate	Std. error	z	Pr(> z)
Delay of Gratification	0.871	-0.138	0.089	-1.556	0.120
Language of the questionnaire (reference category: Estonian)					
Russian	0.559	-0.581	0.136	-4.270	0.000***
Age group (reference category: 15-34)					
35-44	1.243	0.218	0.191	1.142	0.253
45-54	1.281	0.248	0.187	1.327	0.185
55-64	0.963	-0.038	0.187	-0.204	0.839
65+	0.225	-1.490	0.210	-7.106	0.000***
Gender (reference category: female)					
Male	0.885	-0.122	0.120	-1.021	0.307
Education level (reference category: basic and vocational education)					
Higher vocational education	1.708	0.535	0.147	3.635	0.000***
Bachelor's degree	2.477	0.907	0.182	4.990	0.000***
Doctoral or master's degree	2.644	0.972	0.166	5.873	0.000***

Note. AIC = 1961.4; *** indicates a p-value < 0.001, signifying the highest level of statistical significance.

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Based on the logistic regressions, the authors aim to explore the previously formulated research questions. The initial analysis examines the total dataset, where Leisure and Delay of Gratification factors share the same factor structure for both linguistic groups. Following this, the remaining research questions are answered by considering how relevant items loaded onto different factors in each language group.

The odds ratio for the Leisure factor was not statistically significant (odds ratio = 0.882, $p = 0.397$), indicating that the value individuals place on leisure does not significantly explain differences in employment status. Therefore, the authors are unable to make definitive conclusions in response to hypothesis (3): “Employed individuals assign more value to leisure than unemployed individuals.”

Similarly, the authors cannot draw firm conclusions in response to hypothesis (4): “Employees have a higher delay in gratification than unemployed.”. The odds ratio for the Delay of Gratification factor was also not statistically significant (odds ratio = 0.871, $p = 0.120$). Therefore, this result also suggests that the value placed on delaying gratification does not distinguish between employed and unemployed individuals.

To address hypothesis (1): “Employees have higher centrality of work value than unemployed.”, the authors determined that the items about centrality of work (Q.3.2., Q.3.24., Q.3.28.) loaded onto the Estonian Purposeful Productivity factor. The odds ratio for this factor was not statistically significant (odds ratio = 1.389, $p = 0.127$). Based on these findings, the

value placed on centrality of work does not explain differences between employed and unemployed groups in this study.

In order to answer research question (2): “Do employed individuals express stronger self-reliance work values than unemployed individuals?”, item loadings about self-reliance were examined. The featured items loaded onto Estonian Self-Reliant Morality factor (Q.3.10., Q.3.14., Q.3.19., Q.3.26.) and also to Russian Meritocratic Work Ethic factor (Q.3.10.). The odds ratio for Estonian factor was statistically insignificant (odds ratio = 1.236, $p = 0.385$), whereas the odds ratio for Russian factor was statistically significant (odds ratio = 0.607, $p = 0.011$). These results suggest that for the Estonian sample, the value placed on self-reliance does not distinguish between employed and unemployed individuals. In contrast, the results for Russian respondents indicate that stronger beliefs in self-reliance decreased the likelihood of being employed. However, clear definitive conclusions cannot be made in regard to research question 2 due to inconsistency across groups.

For hypothesis (5): “Employees have a higher perception of wasted time than unemployed”, it was noted that the items about wasted time (Q.3.1., Q.3.17.) perception loaded onto the Estonian Purposeful Productivity factor. The odds ratio for this factor was not statistically significant (odds ratio = 1.389; $p = 0.127$). Hence, strong endorsements towards wasted time do not explain the differences between employed and unemployed individuals.

Finally, hypothesis (6): “Employees have stronger morality-ethic work values than unemployed” involved items that loaded onto Russian Fairness and Personal Integrity factor (Q.3.3., Q.3.13., Q.3.23., Q.3.27.) and Estonian Self-Reliant Morality factor (Q.3.13., Q.3.23., Q.3.27.). For both of these factors, the odds ratio was not statistically significant, with Russian odds of 1.687 ($p = 0.090$) and Estonian odds of 1.236 ($p = 0.385$). Based on these findings, the results suggest that higher values placed on morality-ethic work values do not explain differences in employment status.

In conclusion, the evidence across formulated hypotheses and research questions remains inconclusive. However, consistent results emerged among the control variables. Individuals in the oldest age group (65+) were significantly less likely to be employed compared to the youngest age group (15-34). Gender was not significantly associated with employment status within the models. In contrast, education level emerged as a strong predictor of employment status: individuals with higher education levels had significantly greater odds of being employed. Additionally, it was discovered that in the entire sample model, the Russians were significantly less likely to be employed than Estonians.

4. Discussion

In this chapter, the authors will discuss whether this study’s results align with theory. Firstly, the authors will compare the results of the research questions with previous studies. Then, the authors will continue discussing the results of the control variables with the theory.

Regarding the (1) hypothesis, the results indicated a positive association between centrality of work values and employment status (estimate = 0.329), suggesting that employed individuals tend to place greater importance on work compared to their unemployed

counterparts. However, this relationship did not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.127$). Despite the lack of significance, the positive effect aligns with Kittel, Kalleitner, and Tsakoglou (2019), who concluded that employment status influences how the value on work is placed, with employed individuals expressing stronger endorsement of work-related values.

The results for second research question can be interpreted for both Estonian and Russian factors. Among Estonians, the estimate was positive (estimate = 1.236), suggesting that individuals who emphasize self-reliance are more likely to be employed. Although this finding was not statistically significant ($p = 0.385$), the direction of the estimate is in alignment with previous literature indicating that employment is associated with higher autonomy and economic self-sufficiency (Dvouletý, 2023; Taylor, 1996; Tosun's 2019). In contrast, the estimate for Russians was negative and statistically insignificant (estimate = -0.499, $p = 0.011$), indicating that unemployed report higher endorsement of self-reliance. This finding contradicts theoretical expectations. The authors propose that one potential contextual explanation may lie in structural or historical differences between the two linguistic groups. For example, Russians in Estonia may have faced labour market disadvantages and institutional barriers, which may contribute to a sense of forced self-reliance among the unemployed.

The findings for the (3) hypothesis revealed a negative estimate (estimate = -0.125), indicating that individuals who place a higher value on leisure are less likely to be employed. However, this result was not statistically significant ($p = 0.397$). Previous studies have shown the opposite effect, with employed individuals often placing a higher value on leisure due to their ability to afford and structure meaningful activities outside of work (Theodossiou, 1998; Fryer et al., 2006). The authors suggest that the divergence between the current findings and the literature could be attributed to contextual or cultural nuances, possibly reflecting how the unemployed might express their preference for leisure due to increased free time, while the employed may focus on work obligations, underreporting their valuation of leisure in a self-report format.

For the (4) hypothesis, the negative estimate (estimate = -0.138) suggested that placing a higher value on delaying gratification decreases the likelihood of being employed, although the result was not statistically significant ($p = 0.120$). This finding contradicts prior research, which has indicated that employed individuals are more likely to prioritize long-term rewards over immediate gratification (Buchanan & Clark, 2020; Friedman & Jorgensen, 2021). The authors suggest that cultural and generational differences in how delayed gratification is interpreted may influence how individuals perceive and respond to such value items. For instance, Seifert et al. (2023) found that Baby Boomers and Generation Z had different views on the MWEP subcomponents. Additionally, the difference between the result and previous literature can be also due to unobserved variables such as personality traits, which can mediate the link between gratification delay and employment outcomes.

Regarding the (5) hypothesis, the results indicated a positive association (estimate = 0.329), suggesting that employees have a higher perception of wasted time than unemployed. Although this finding was not statistically significant ($p = 0.127$), the direction of the effect aligns with existing literature. For instance, Wanberg et al. (1997) found that unemployed individuals

tend to have lower levels of time structure compared to employed counterparts. Additionally, the findings have found that employment status can affect psychological perceptions of time (Tan et al., 2022; Paul & Moser, 2009). For example, employed individuals tend to develop a clearer sense of time, shaping their daily routines and decision-making processes. (Creed & Klisch, 2005) While this positive estimate supports previous findings, the lack of statistical significance means the results remain inconclusive.

Both Estonian (estimate = 0.212) and Russian (estimate = 0.523) samples produced positive estimates for the (6) hypothesis, indicating that placing a higher value on work ethics may increase the likelihood of being employed. However, neither result was statistically significant ($p = 0.385$ for Estonians; $p = 0.090$ for Russians). These findings contradict previous studies, which have observed that unemployed individuals tend to score higher on work ethic measures (Choi & Bowles, 2016; Lopes, 2017; Van Hooft et al., 2004). The authors suggest that the difference in results may be because unemployed individuals report stronger work ethic in self-assessments due to perceived societal expectations.

When comparing sociodemographic findings with theory, it can be noted that the eldest age group (65+) was significantly less likely to be employed compared to the youngest age group (15-34). This isn't a surprise, considering there are many individuals of retirement age and have thus exited the labour force. This result also aligns with previous findings, indicating that the likelihood of being employed decreases with age, as older individuals often face greater difficulties in re-entering the workforce after retirement or periods of unemployment (Axelrad et al., 2018; Núñez & Livanos, 2010; Özberk, 2021). Therefore, the age-related findings in this study align with previous literature.

In contrast, gender was not a significant predictor of employment status in any of the models. However, the estimates varied: they were negative in the Estonian (estimate = -0.265) and entire sample model (estimate = -0.122), suggesting slightly lower employment likelihood for males. Whereas the Russian model showed a positive estimate (estimate = 0.407), suggesting higher employment likelihood for males in that subgroup. However, none of these estimates were statistically significant and the results were inconsistent across models. The literature has found that females are more likely to be unemployed than males (Axelrad et al., 2018; Azmat et al., 2006; Núñez & Livanos, 2010; Özberk, 2021). The result in the Russian model aligns more with previous studies than Estonian and entire sample model. The authors suggest that the difference can be due to changing gender dynamics in the labour market, where women may be increasingly more represented in the labour market.

Education level was the strongest and most consistent predictor among the control variables. The results showed that individuals with higher levels of education were significantly more likely to be employed. This aligns with previous literature, which has also found that higher educational attainment decreased the chances of individuals being unemployed (Axelrad et al., 2018; Núñez & Livanos, 2010; Yoana et al., 2024). The positive relationship can be explained by that the higher education increases individual's professional qualifications as well

as fosters intrinsic work values (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Therefore, the results for education level are similar to theory.

In conclusion, the estimates for hypotheses in related to wasted time, centrality of work and Estonian self-reliance align with theory, although they did not reach statistical significance. Among the sociodemographic control variables, age and education level aligned strongly with existing literature and were statistically significant predictors of employment status.

5. Conclusion

This study contributes to the underexplored intersection of work values and unemployment. The analysis was made conducting both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis on the data, which was collected by the questionnaire based on the MWEP framework.

The main research question was: “Do certain work values, including those reflecting work ethic, determine whether someone is unemployed?” Although the sample size was quite large for testing, the authors did not reveal statistically significant results for most of the posed hypotheses and research questions. The only statistically significant result was that unemployed Russian responders were more self-reliant than employed Russian responders. Since the data shows no meaningful gap in work values between employed and unemployed individuals, maybe individual’s unemployment isn’t about person’s work values. Instead, it could be educational mismatch or flawed systems—lack of jobs, biased hiring or other economic variables. Still, the investigation suggests that individual’s work values might play a role in unemployment, but further research is needed. Since there were differences between the results of national and subnational responders, the research found that culturally sensitive measures are essential for valid cross-group comparisons. Control variables including age and level of education did have significant effect on employment status with older people (65+) being more likely unemployed, which is understandable due to the retirement and also previous studies finding that older individuals tend to face greater difficulty re-entering it once they have exited the workforce. Higher education levels also proved to increase the likelihood of being employed, which aligns with previous theories that the higher education increase individual’s professional status. Additionally, it was discovered that Russians were significantly less likely to be employed than Estonians in the entire sample model.

In the progress of this study, the authors have found several areas to investigate further in the case of work values and employment status. The authors propose that for future research, studies could:

- A. Include the time individuals have been unemployed. In that case, short-term unemployed can be viewed separately from long-term unemployed. In the introduction the authors brought out that long-term unemployment is more problematic, while short-term unemployment can be inevitability.
- B. Investigate the differences between employed who are self-employed and working for someone else. As the authors brought out in the literature review, self-employed particularly could have higher self-reliance work values than unemployed.

- C. Explore the bigger sample of employed but currently not working individuals to better understand this category's work values distribution.
- D. Include longitudinal data to track how work values evolve with employment transitions, since cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences.
- E. Investigate regional economic disparities (e.g., urban vs. rural) and sector-specific differences (e.g., public vs. private). Comparative studies across post-Soviet economies could clarify cultural influences.

In conclusion, this study enhances the understanding of work values and their relationship to employment status. Although there aren't many statistically significant results, there could be certain work values that have an impact on an individual's employment. This comprehensive analysis provides a robust foundation for future research.

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Resümee**TÖÖVÄÄRTUSTE ROLL INDIVIIDI TÖÖSTAATUSELE**

Birgit Allekõrs, Triinu Jakson

Selle töö eesmärk oli uurida, kas töötute ja töötavate inimeste tööväärtused erinevad, kasutades selleks Multidimensionaalset Tööeetika Profiili (*MWEP*). Analüüs põhines suuremahulisel küsitlusel ($n= 2359$), mis viidi läbi Eesti elanikkonna seas. Töö käigus viidi läbi faktoranalüüsid ja koostati logistiline regressioonimudel, et hinnata tööväärtuste seost indiviidi tööhõiveseisundiga, võttes arvesse ka demograafilisi muutujaid nagu sugu, vanus, haridus. Tulemused ei andnud statistilist kinnitust, et töötute ja töötajate vahel tööväärtused oluliselt erineksid. Seetõttu viitab uuring, et töötus ei pruugi olla tingitud väärtushinnangutest või tööeetika puudumisest, vaid muudest teguritest. Siiski, venekeelsed vastajad osutasid suurema tõenäosusega töötuteks ning töötud venekeelsed vastajad olid venekeelsetest töötajatest rohkem iseseisvad (*self-reliant*).

Appendices

Appendix A. Work ethic questionnaire

Q1.1 Thank you for participating in this study which seeks to identify what people from different parts of the world perceive regarding some aspects relating to work; that is to say, work in general and not work in terms of their daily activities in their current position. Your participation is entirely anonymous, so we will not ask for your name. We will only ask some general socio demographic data to make the necessary comparisons between different groups. Please click on the BLUE button to start, by doing this you express your consent to take part in this study

Q.2.1 Please read each of the following sentences and rate them by clicking on the option that best represents your feelings.

- 1- Strongly disagree
- 2- Disagree
- 3- Neutral
- 4- Agree
- 5-Strongly agree

Q.3.1. It is important to stay busy at work and not waste time.

Q.3.2. I feel content when I have spent the day working.

Q.3.3. One should always take responsibility for one's actions.

Q.3.4. I would prefer a job that allowed me to have more leisure time.

Q.3.5. Time should not be wasted, it should be used efficiently.

Q.3.6. I get more fulfilment from items I had to wait for.

Q.3.7. A hard day's work is very fulfilling.

Q.3.8. Things that you have to wait for are the most worthwhile.

Q.3.9. Working hard is the key to being successful.

Q.3.10. Self-reliance is the key to being successful.

Q.3.11. If one works hard enough, one is likely to make a good life for oneself.

Q.3.12. I constantly look for ways to productively use my time.

Q.3.13. One should not pass judgment until one has heard all of the facts.

Q.3.14. People would be better off if they depended on themselves.

Q.3.15. A distant reward is usually more satisfying than an immediate one.

Q.3.16. More leisure time is good for people.

Q.3.17. I try to plan out my workday so as not to waste time.

Q.3.18. The world would be a better place if people spent more time relaxing.

Q.3.19. I strive to be self-reliant.

Q.3.20. If you work hard you will succeed.

Q.3.21. The best things in life are those you have to wait for.

Q.3.22. Anyone who is able and willing to work hard has a good chance of succeeding.

Q.3.23. It is important to treat others as you would like to be treated.

Q.3.24. I experience a sense of fulfilment from working.

Q.3.25. People should have more leisure time to spend in relaxation.

Q.3.26. It is important to control one's destiny by not being dependent on others.

Q.3.27. People should be fair in their dealings with others.

Q.3.28. A hard day's work provides a sense of accomplishment.

Q.4.1. What is your age in years ? (e.g., 25, just enter numbers)

Q.4.2. To which gender do you most identify:

Female

Male

Other

Prefer not to say

Q.4.3. Please indicate your highest level of academic studies:

Less than basic education

Basic education

Vocational education after basic education

Vocational secondary education

General secondary education

Post-secondary vocational education

Professional higher education (polytechnic)

Bachelor's degree

Doctorial or master's degree

Q.4.4. How many years have you been working for your current company/ organization/ institution (If less than a year, enter 1).

Q.4.5. What is your preferred work modality?

100% face to face

100% remote

Hybrid

Q.4.6. What percentage of time during the week do you work in the facilities of your employer?

0%.....100%

Q.4.7. What is the industry of your company or organization?

Agriculture, forestry and fishing (3)

Mining and quarrying (12)

Manufacturing (11)
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (17)
Water supply, sewerage and waste management (26)
Construction (5)
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles/motorcycles (27)
Transportation and storage (15)
Accommodation and food services activities (1)
Information and communication (16)
Financial and insurance activities (7)
Real estate activities (13)
Professional, scientific and technical activities (21)
Administrative, and support services (2)
Government (8)
Public administration and defence (23)
Education (6)
Human health and social work activities (9)
Arts, entertainment and recreation (4)
Activities of households as employers (24)
Activities of extraterritorial organizations or bodies (25)
Management of Companies and Enterprises (10)
Other services and activities (18)

Q.5.1. Finally please indicate your own personal feelings about your PRESENT JOB, by marking how much you agree with each of the statements .

- 1-Disagree strongly
- 2- Disagree
- 3- Disagree slightly
- 4- Neutral
- 5- Agree slightly
- 6- Agree
- 7- Strongly agree

Q.6.1. Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my current job.

Q.6.2. I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in my current job.

Q.6.3. I rarely think about quitting my current job.

Appendix B. Descriptive statistics table

MWEP component	Obs	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
<i>Total respondents</i>					
Centrality of work	2360	3.31	0.742	1	5
Self-reliance	2360	4.03	0.557	1	5
Hard work	2360	3.18	0.897	1	5
Leisure	2360	3.96	0.669	1	5
Morality-ethic	2360	4.46	0.460	1	5
Delay of gratification	2360	2.56	0.767	1	5
Wasted time	2360	4.00	0.609	1	5
<i>Estonian respondents</i>					
Centrality of work	1866	3.30	0.708	1	5
Self-reliance	1866	3.98	0.513	1	5
Hard work	1866	3.05	0.840	1	5
Leisure	1866	3.91	0.653	1	5
Morality-ethic	1866	4.43	0.419	1	5
Delay of gratification	1866	2.56	0.721	1	5
Wasted time	1866	3.95	0.571	1	5
<i>Russian respondents</i>					
Centrality of work	493	3.33	0.857	1	5
Self-reliance	493	4.23	0.662	1	5
Hard work	493	3.64	0.957	1	5
Leisure	493	4.13	0.699	1	5
Morality-ethic	493	4.61	0.564	1	5
Delay of gratification	493	2.55	0.923	1	5
Wasted time	493	4.22	0.694	1	5

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Appendix C. Invariance test results

Model	Df	AIC	BIC	χ^2	$\Delta\chi^2$	RMSEA	Δ Df	Pr(> χ^2)
Configural model	658	145239	146450	3450.1		0.060		
Metric model	679	145351	146441	3604.2	154.08	0.073	21	0.000**
Scalar model	700	146266	147235	4561.0	956.81	0.194	21	0.000**

Note. ** indicates a p-value < 0.001, signifying the highest level of statistical significance.

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

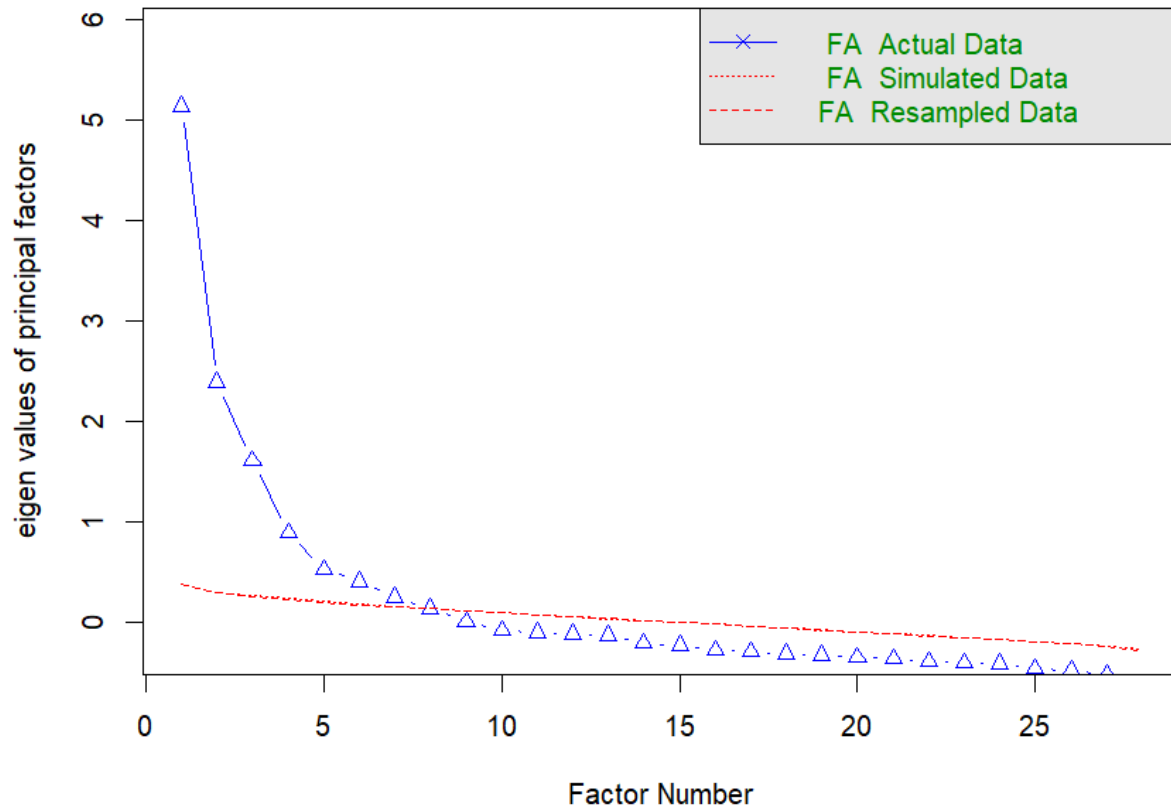
Appendix D. Keiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test results

MWEP Category	Statements	Estonian responders, overall MSA=0.85	Russian responders, overall MSA=0.83
Centrality of work	Q.3.2.	0.87	0.83
	Q.3.7.	0.82	0.76
	Q.3.24.	0.92	0.83
	Q.3.28.	0.86	0.76
Self-reliance	Q.3.10.	0.83	0.78
	Q.3.14.	0.89	0.81
	Q.3.19.	0.80	0.91
	Q.3.26.	0.88	0.83
Hard work	Q.3.9.	0.93	0.91
	Q.3.11.	0.88	0.88
	Q.3.20.	0.85	0.87
	Q.3.22.	0.89	0.88
Leisure	Q.3.4.	0.84	0.78
	Q.3.16.	0.85	0.72
	Q.3.18.	0.77	0.76
	Q.3.25.	0.74	0.82
Morality-ethic	Q.3.3.	0.86	0.82
	Q.3.13.	0.85	0.88
	Q.3.23.	0.81	0.85
	Q.3.27.	0.81	0.86
Delay of gratification	Q.3.6.	0.84	0.72
	Q.3.8.	0.81	0.80
	Q.3.15.	0.89	0.84
	Q.3.21.	0.85	0.80
Wasted time	Q.3.1.	0.85	0.83
	Q.3.5.	0.89	0.88
	Q.3.12.	0.87	0.86
	Q.3.17.	0.86	0.82

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Appendix E. Parallel analysis scree plot of Estonian respondents

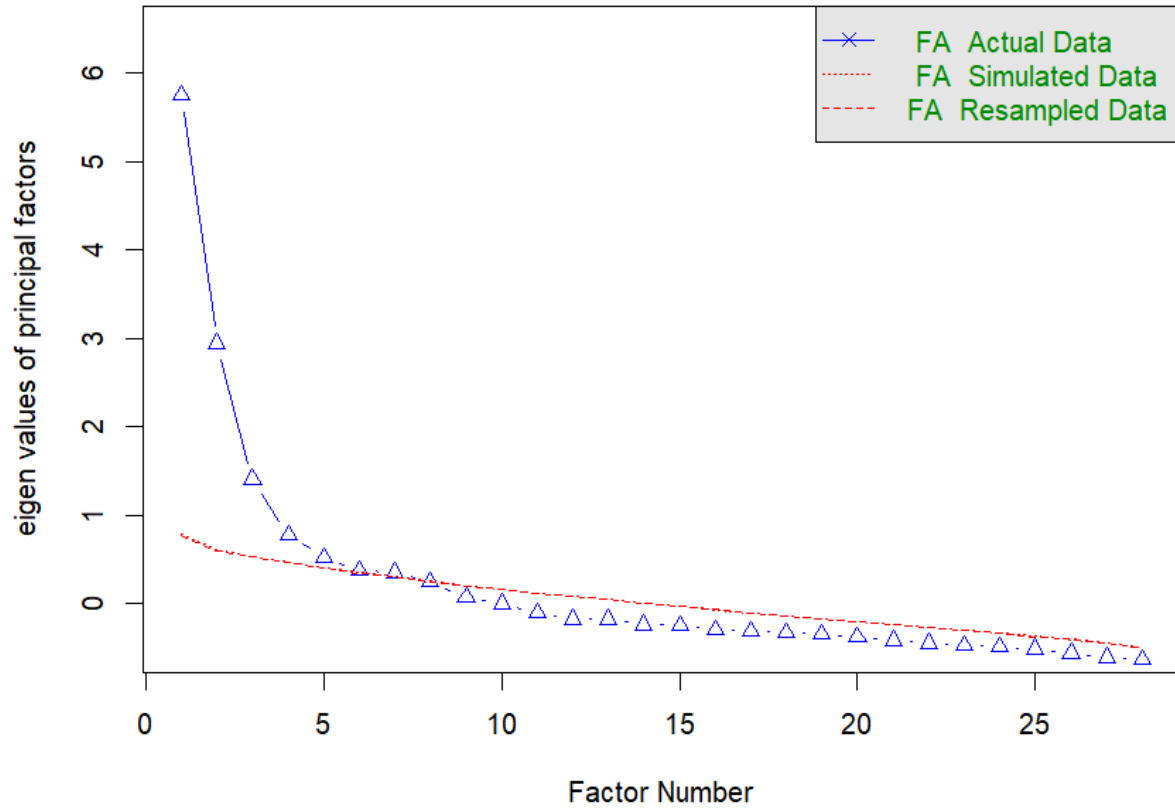
Parallel Analysis Scree Plots



Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Appendix F. Parallel analysis scree plot of Russian respondents

Parallel Analysis Scree Plots



Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Appendix G. Correlation matrix of Estonian factors

Factors	1	2	3	4	5
1: Hard Work	1				
2: Leisure	-0.149**	1			
3: Delay of Gratification	0.526**	-0.083**	1		
4: Self-Reliant Morality	0.327**	-0.298**	0.190**	1	
5: Purposeful Productivity	0.608**	-0.321**	0.485**	0.478**	1

Note. Correlations calculated with Pearson coefficient; ** indicates a p-value < 0.001, signifying the highest level of statistical significance.

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Appendix H. Correlation matrix of Estonian factors

Factor	1	2	3	4
1: Meritocratic Work Ethic	1			
2: Fairness and Personal Integrity	0.491**	1		
3: Leisure	-0.034	0.348**	1	
4: Delay of Gratification	0.546**	0.041	-0.066	1

Note. Correlations calculated with Pearson coefficient; ** indicates a p-value < 0.001, signifying the highest level of statistical significance.

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Appendix I. ANOVA results for Estonia

Factor	Effect	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
Hard Work	Employment status	2	8	4	5.72	0.003**
	Residuals	1863	1308	0.702		
Leisure	Employment status	2	4.8	2.411	5.689	0.003**
	Residuals	1863	789.7	0.424		
Delay of Gratification	Employment status	2	6.5	3.262	6.314	0.002**
	Residuals	1863	062.4	0.517		
Self-Reliant Morality	Employment status	2	0.53	0.264	1.584	0.205
	Residuals	1863	310.27	0.167		
Purposeful Productivity	Employment status	2	0.7	0.367	1.153	0.316
	Residuals	1863	592.5	0.318		

Note. ** indicates a p-value < 0.01, signifying higher statistical significance.

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Appendix J. ANOVA results for Russia

Factor	Effect	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
Meritocratic Work Ethic	Employment status	2	4	1.993	2.673	0.070
	Residuals	490	365.4	0.746		
Fairness and Personal Integrity	Employment status	2	0.57	0.285	1.132	0.323
	Residuals	490	123.45	0.252		
Leisure	Employment status	2	0.31	0.155	0.315	0.73
	Residuals	490	240.38	0.491		
Delay of Gratification	Employment status	2	1.5	0.765	0.898	0.408
	Residuals	490	417.7	0.853		

Note. ** indicates a p-value < 0.01, signifying higher statistical significance.

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Appendix K. Multicollinearity Test Results for Estonian Respondents

Variable	GVIF	Df	GVIF ^{1/(2*Df)}
Factor 1: Hard Work	1.792	1	1.339
Factor 4: Self-Reliant Morality	1.318	1	1.148
Factor 5: Purposeful Productivity	2.154	1	1.468
Age group	1.216	4	1.025
Gender	1.056	1	1.028
Education level	1.110	3	1.018

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Appendix L. Multicollinearity Test Results for Russian Respondents

Variable	GVIF	Df	GVIF ^{1/(2*Df)}
Factor 1: Meritocratic Work Ethic	1.425	1	1.194
Factor 2: Fairness and Personal Integrity	1.455	1	1.206
Age group	1.216	4	1.025
Gender	1.045	1	1.022
Education level	1.205	3	1.032

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

Appendix M. Multicollinearity Test Results of Hard Work and Leisure factors

Variable	GVIF	Df	GVIF ^{1/(2*Df)}
Factor: Leisure	1.101	1	1.050
Factor: Delay of Gratification	1.047	1	1.023
Language of the questionnaire	1.090	1	1.044
Age group	1.186	4	1.022
Gender	1.031	1	1.015
Education level	1.131	3	1.021

Source: compiled by the thesis authors

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