

Is it Worth the Hustle?

Stage 1

**Is it Worth the Hustle? A Multi-Country Replication of the Effort Moralization of Effort
Effect and an Extension to Generational Differences in the Increasing Aversion to
Bullshit Jobs Appreciation of Effort**

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Abstract

Inferring the character of individuals is an adaptive need for partner and mating decisions as well as to avoid harm. ~~Yet, direct observations of moral characters (e.g., from faces) are no valid source of information.~~ The effort moralization effect ~~describes~~ the ~~process of deriving information through the~~ finding that people who exert more effort invested into a given task are seen as more moral, even if higher effort does not enhance the outcome (e.g., higher performance or better quality). We aim to replicate this effect, based on Celniker et al. (2023, Study 6), in countries not yet included in this research (Germany, ~~and~~ Mexico, ~~Netherlands, and South Africa~~). ~~Further, based).~~ Furthermore, drawing on the discussions surrounding "bullshit jobs" and "quiet quitting", criticizing "quiet quitting" that criticize the so-called supposedly lower work ethic of younger individuals (e.g., the so-called Gen Z), we will examine whether lower effort moralization will be observed as a function of age (including non-linear terms). This will allow us to examine whether younger generations do indeed moralize ineffective effort less than older generations.

[remainder will be completed in Stage 2]

Keywords: Registered Report, Effort moralization, Generation effect, Replication, Multi-country, Work ethic

PCIRR-Study Design Table

Table 1

PCI-RR Design Table

Question	Hypothesis	Sampling plan	Analysis plan	Rationale for sensitivity	Interpretation given different outcomes	Theory that could be shown wrong by the outcomes
Can the effort moralization effect be replicated in the overall sample?	<p>Participants will rate the person, showing high-effort behavior, as more moral, even though the added effort doesn't increase the productivity or quality</p> <p>Participants will indicate that the person, showing higher effort, deserves a higher hourly pay, than the person, showing lower effort, even</p>	<p>We will use the services of online panel providers (e.g., Prolific) as well as social media sampling to reach a total sample of 6840 complete cases (210340 per country) to have at least $N = 154327$ valid cases (passing exclusion criteria) by country. We will aim to achieve a roughly equal distribution of participants in the following age groups:</p>	<p>We will use two-sided dependent t-tests on the pooled data as well as by country to test the differences in moral evaluation (core goodness and value commitment) by effort condition and differences in deserved pay by effort condition. We will further test differences in perceived warmth and perceived competence. Yet, prior research indicated variance</p>	<p>Based on a prior We aim for a sensitivity of $d = 0.20$ as the smallest effect size of mean differences in moral evaluation from the Study we plan to use the vignette from (Celniker et al., 2023, Study 6, p. 73, right column; second line from bottom, $d = 0.42$); we conducted of interest. Targeting a power analysis, using G*Power 3.1.9.7 [see supplemental</p>	<p>If the effect is significant and points in the expected direction, we interpret the effect as generalizable to the respective countries.</p> <p>If the effects vary in any of these regards (significance, direction, magnitude [$< 50\%$ of original effect]), we interpret the effect as partly generalizable to the respective countries.</p> <p>If the effect is never observed for any of</p>	<p>Effort moralization theory's generalizability could be shown undetectable under the current conditions of the study</p>

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	<p>though the added effort doesn't increase the productivity or quality</p>	<p>18 – 30, 31 – 45, 46 – 60, > 60 years</p> <p>We will fill the sample in other groups if the sample in a respective age group is not completed within 3 weeks after the beginning of data collection.</p>	<p>of effects between countries here.</p>	<p>material] for dependent t tests. We adjusted the α-level for repeated tests in every country and the pooled data by DV: $\alpha = \frac{.05}{5} = .01$. Aiming for of .95, a power of .99, the respective test produced a minimum sample size of $N = 154.327$ was computed. We plan to oversample every country to 210340 to compensate for potential exclusions. Power analysis was conducted, using G*Power 3.1.9.7 [see supplemental material].</p>	<p>the countries, we interpret the effect as non-replicable in the respective countries under the given conditions. We will use the criteria by LeBel et al. (2019) to evaluate the replication, utilizing the reported $d = 0.42$ from Celniker et al. (2023, p.73, study 6) for core goodness and $d = 0.76$ for value commitment. This will be done, using the criteria signal, consistency, and direction.</p>	
<p>Does the strength of the effort moralization effect depend on the age of</p>	<p>The effort moralization effect will be predicted positively by the age</p>		<p>We will extend the analyses regarding the previous hypothesis by</p>	<p>To detect the smallest effect of interest of $R^2 = .15$ with one predictor,</p>	<p>If the effect is significant, pointing in the expected direction and of</p>	<p>The idea that effort moralization is less expressed in younger participants</p>

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<p>the evaluator in situations where further effort does not improve the quality of the outcome?</p>	<p>of the participants (higher age, stronger effect).</p>		<p>conducting by-country regression analyses with age as predictor and the discrepancy in moral evaluation, and deserved pay between ratings as dependent variables.</p>	<p>power = .9995 and $\alpha = .0105$, a minimum sample size of $N = 14076$ complete and valid cases by countries is required. As described above, we aim to sample 210340 complete cases per country.</p>	<p>expected magnitude in all countries, we interpret the effect as generalizable to all respective countries</p> <p>If the effect is only observed in <u>some</u> of the countries, it is <u>not</u> generalizable to <u>some of the all sampled</u> countries</p> <p>If the effect is never observed, the effect cannot be assumed under the given conditions</p>	<p>could be shown to be undetectable under the current circumstances or not generalizable across all investigated countries</p>
	<p>Pay deservingness differences by condition will be predicted positively by the age of the participants (higher age, higher deservingness).</p>					
	<p>These effects will be found in every by-country analysis</p>					

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Introduction

'It seems like nobody wants to work these days.' (Kardashian, K. in Variety, 2022).

The ideological debate about the lack of qualified workforce, ~~especially and specifically~~ younger potential employees, has become a common theme of the news (Medlar et al., 2022). While there is a series of objective reasons, which reduce the supply of workforce to certain fields, such as demographic changes, stagnating wages, working conditions, and delayed effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Mūrage et al., 2022; Pillai, 2023; Silverstein, 2008; Smith, 2022), debates often focus on constructs like 'work ethic' or 'laziness' and commonly target the youngest generation in the workforce (Formica & Sfodera, 2022). The idea that younger generations are lazy and morally worse than following generations is neither new nor based on evidence, but is a reoccurring theme in history, as it can be traced back thousands of years (Aristotle [384 - 322 BC], 2020). On the other hand, the perspectives on work are indeed changing, confronting companies with prospective employees who are less willing to deliver unpaid services or excessive overtime (Chillakuri, 2020; Xueyun et al., 2023).

One ~~potential~~ avenue to ~~scientifically~~ approach this topic is the so-called effort moralization effect (Bigman & Tamir, 2016; Celniker et al., 2023), which describes the translation of observed ~~effort in behavior to the moral judgment of the agent, even if the effort was not productive. We argue that younger individuals might show less effort moralization – not judging higher, ineffective effort as a sign of higher morality – which in turn offers a perspective on lower 'work ethic' or 'quiet quitting' which essentially describe that people refrain from delivering unpaid additional work for employers.~~ behavioral effort into a moral judgment of the agent. An effect that persists even if the effort is not productive (Celniker et al., 2023). Regarding the above-described debates, we hypothesize that younger individuals show less effort moralization of ineffective labor – not judging higher, ineffective effort as a sign of higher

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morality. This offers a new perspective on debates around the supposedly lower 'work ethic' of younger generations or 'quiet quitting'.

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~~The Moralization of Effort~~

Impressions of character as a function of behavior

To infer character values of new encounters is an adaptive and ~~inherently human~~inherent behavior ~~and has concerned~~, concerning philosophy and ~~(later)~~ psychology for the longest (Doris & The Moral Psychology Research Group, 2010). ~~It is crucial to select cooperation and mating partners and to avoid potential threats. This includes estimations on how moral, virtuous, or integer a person might behave in the future. We value morality in~~Several philosophical traditions suggest, that morality can be inferred only from the actions of individuals (Fengyan, 2004; Johnson & Cureton, 2004; Telfer, 1989). Indeed, for many social decisions, we rely on moral judgments - an often automatic process by which we form impressions about the morality of others' behavior (Uhlmann et al., 2015). This is crucial to select romantic partners (Brown et al., 2022; Chan, 2023; Oda & Hayashi, 2020) and in cooperation settings (Celniker et al., 2023; Everett et al., 2016; Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994). Yet, this estimation of future moral behavior is by nature not trivial, as with most traits.

The estimation of future moral behavior is by nature not trivial illustrated by the multitude of models and measures around moral foundations, moral identity, virtue, or similar ideas (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Haidt & Joseph, 2008; Ruch et al., 2010; Schlenker, 2008). Still, most individuals depend on approximations of character virtue through observation in daily life. While individuals rely on a variety of cues for this purpose, including facial and body expressions (Horberg et al., 2013), stereotypical appearance (Grizzard et al., 2018), or religious beliefs (Gervais, 2011), one of the main signals for inferring the morality of others remains behavioral observation (Mickelberg et al., 2022; Pizarro & Tannenbaum, 2012). Naturally, these require some sort of quantification to tell, how moral a person is, based on mostly trivial actions.

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The Moralization of Effort

Reading virtue, measuring morals

The idea that moral virtue could be observable or deductible from physiological traits (e.g., someone ‘looks’ suspicious) has led medicine, philosophy, and psychology in some of the darkest alleys of scientific history. These ideas inspired thoughts on ‘race theory’, discriminatory profiling, physiognomy, and phrenology (Ahonen, 2014; Karnes, 2009; Shortland, 1986). Without detailing the absurdities of these approaches, they were usually motivated by finding physiological features of virtue and commonly encapsulated the wish to biologically justify social hierarchies as well as gender and ‘race’ discriminations. It should further be noted that no valid or scientifically sound results have ever been reported from these practices (Foo et al., 2022; Parker Jones et al., 2018; Petrocelli et al., 2003).

While scientific attempts to observe personality from the outside have not received successful results, humans still rely strongly on perceived approximations, especially faces (for an overview, see Todorov et al., 2015). This behavior can already be observed in children (Cogsdill et al., 2014) and we derive extensive inference from facial impressions, such as trustworthiness (Bayliss & Tipper, 2006; Doallo et al., 2012), mating qualities (South Palomares & Young, 2018), sentencing decisions (Eberhardt et al., 2006; Zebrowitz & McDonald, 1991), competence (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009) and criminality (Porter et al., 2010). Yet, these ratings should not be considered a valid source of information, as judgments range around chance level (Porter et al., 2008; Rule et al., 2013) and are biased by ‘race’ (Blair et al., 2004; Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2008) and status cues (Peschard et al., 2018).

Impressions of morality as a function of behavior

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As suggested across philosophical traditions, morality can be inferred only from the actions of individuals. Aristotle offers the idea, that moral behavior is the consequence of a wise and moral being (Telfer, 1989). This was mirrored in Confucian ethics (Fengyan, 2004), seeing morality as something to be practiced and done routinely. In reversal, Kant argued, that moral actions only allow inference on the moral character, if the action was not based on sole duty but motivated by the morality of the agent (Johnson & Cureton, 2004). This statement did receive support in early psychoanalytic thinking by Freud, combining the ideas that actions as well as motives are worthy of consideration (Jones, 1966). While at least the scientific attempts in estimating virtue from physiology are concerns of the past, the temptation of quantifying virtues of morality in humans remains undampened. This is best illustrated by the flood of measures, which offer insight into moral identity, virtue, or related concepts (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Black & Reynolds, 2016; Ruch et al., 2010; Schlenker, 2008; Tissot, 2023). But not only scientists are interested in assessing these domains. The values in action scale (Ruch et al., 2010) can be completed for free online or purchased for extended feedback and was, according to the website, completed by literal millions. Yet, in light of all measurement enthusiasm, it may be worth bearing in mind the Nietzschean warning, that the emphasis on morality always holds the potential of reinforcing traditional values, which might require reevaluation (Leiter, 1997).

Still, most individuals depend on alternative approximations of character virtue, as they cannot assess it through standardized questionnaires in daily encounters. As physiology and face-derived information do not hold meaningful value, the typical approach remains similar to the one of ancient philosophy, namely observation of behavior. Yet, these observations require some sort of quantification to tell, how moral the person is, based on mostly trivial actions, as the observations typically don't include extreme situations, where outstanding morality could shine.

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Effort as vehicle to infer moral behavior and individual virtue

One phenomenon, that has raised scientific psychology's interest in recent years is the observation, that people appear to use effort, invested in given tasks, as information on the morality of agents, further summarized as effort moralization effect. While the core idea likely follows the lay idea heuristic of higher effort resulting in higher performance, the focal interest in the effect concentrates on a special case of effort moralization: when effort makes no difference in the outcome.

Bigman and Tamir (2016) delivered foundational insights into this effect across seven studies. These showed that moral behaviors are considered as more effortful than immoral behaviors and that higher perceived effort on the same task led to more extreme intensified judgments of both immoral and moral agents (e.g., higher effort on moral behavior led to higher moral judgment of the described person). The effect of higher effort in moral behavior, leading to a more positive judgment was still observed when the behaviors were not successful (e.g., returning a found wallet). Similarly, Celniker et al., (2023), demonstrated these effects across eight studies, ruling out potential biases, such as differences in quality of work or effort withholding. Further, they demonstrated, that participants were more likely to choose individuals who invested higher effort in a task as cooperation partners, even when the behavior did not lead to better or more outcomes. These findings demonstrate that effort is used as a heuristic signal for judgment of character as well as partner selection. Yet, it was also demonstrated Further research suggested that effort moralization follows certain norms as boundary conditions (Berry & Lucas, 2022). In four studies, it was shown that the effort moralization effect does not linearly increase character judgment but plateaus, when agents recruit 'excessive' effort, which that reaches beyond societal standards of effort investment (e.g., revisiting the spot of the found wallet three days in a row). Celniker et al. (2023), tested

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the effort moralization effect across eight studies, ruling out potential biases, such as differences in quality of work or effort withholding. Further, they reported that participants were more likely to choose individuals who invested higher effort in a task as cooperation partners, even when the behavior did not lead to better or more outcomes. This finding

How moralization of effort may lead to harmful norms on a societal level

Building on these findings, Celniker et al. (2023) discuss effort moralization as a 'deeply rational' heuristic process (Kenrick et al., 2009). The authors argue that effort may serve as a signal of cooperative intent. This view is similar to Barclay's (2013) remarks on the nature of altruism, which is thought to be expressed in order to be seen as a more attractive option in the market of available cooperation partners. Likewise Research on the 'martyrdom effect' finds that people report greater willingness to donate to a charitable cause when the contribution process is expected to be effortful rather than easy (Olivola & Shafir, 2013). Thus, the expression of effort, despite being an inconsistent indicator of ability or productivity (Markovits, 2019; Shepperd et al., 1994), may seem to be utilized as a reliable heuristic signal for judgment of character as well as cooperation intentions.

How moralization of effort may lead to harmful norms on a societal level

Celniker et al. (2023) discuss effort moralization as a 'deeply rational' heuristic one's intention to cooperate. On a similar note, research on the 'martyrdom effect' finds that people report greater willingness to donate to a charitable cause when the contribution process is expected to be effortful rather than easy (Olivola & Shafir, 2013). The (Kenrick et al., 2009). The authors argue that the display of effort therefore enables others to easily incline cooperative intent and therefore facilitates social decision-making and judgments of others' moral character (Celniker et al., 2023). Such heuristic processes prevent individuals from demanding

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~~reconsiderations, saving~~ heuristics reduce decision-making effort and required time and cognitive effort. However, even though such mechanisms might prove fruitful on the individual level, they might ~~no longer be adequate in modern day societies or even~~ lead to harmful norms on a societal level (Li et al., 2018).

~~To illustrate this point, let's take a closer look at the consequences of the aforementioned (fruitless) display of effort. As seen above~~ Apparently, hard work is valued even when the effort does not produce ~~direct~~ added economic benefits. ~~While this is reasonable at the individual level and may provide information necessary for social decision-making, at the societal level the same heuristic may encourage engagement in socially useless or redundant work done merely out of monetary or social obligation.~~ Graeber (2019) ~~aply~~ described this type of redundant work with the term 'bullshit jobs'. Recent studies suggest that around 25% of employees worldwide perceive their jobs as socially useless, ~~or doubt their usefulness~~ (Dur & van Lent, 2019; Walo, 2023). This is ~~not great news,~~ particularly alarming because meaningful work is a central component of work well-being (Rosso et al., 2010). ~~However, this may even be economically harmful.~~ Celniker et al. (2023) theorize that effort moralization may help explain how bullshit work is maintained and rewarded within otherwise efficient economic systems, as it may provide a way to signal moral worth through (useless) hard work. The deeply rooted heuristic of effort moralization could Further, Celniker et al. (2023) theorize that effort moralization might explain the maintenance of bullshit work through virtue signaling by engaging in unproductive work. Virtue signaling aims to enhance one's moral reputation by publicly displaying actions that are socially perceived as moral, while the motivating source for this is status-seeking and not the moral expression itself (Westra, 2021). Signaling morality through (ineffective) effort might also foster resistance to less effortful processes or automated

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alternatives, and to policies that promote alternatives to economically redundant labor, such as universal basic income.

~~Are we witnessing a change in effort moralization?~~

~~The notion of effort is evident in many of today's major debates about~~ Taking the futurebullshit out of work. In particular, the job

~~The~~ disapproval of lack of effort, or ~~in other words~~ the fear of perceived free riders, ~~implicitly~~ frames such discussions in terms of perceived deservingness and activates strong social emotions (Petersen et al., 2011, 2012). The ~~media~~ prominence and widespread discussion of phenomena such as the 'anti-work' movement, the 'great resignation', or 'quiet quitting' suggest that certain sections of today's workforce are tired of meaningless work and are striving for change (Medlar et al., 2022). ~~Of course, such~~ Such trends are widely criticized ~~with phrases such as 'nobody~~ ('nobody wants to work anymore!') and the supposedly poor work ethic of the younger generation (predominantly Gen Z) is ~~suggested~~ denounced (Lang, 2023; Royle, 2024). But if people's perceptions of the appropriateness of (too much) effort are changing, what does this mean for the moralization of effort? Do younger generations generally moralize unfruitful effort less than older generations? And if so, is this a ~~global~~ generalizable phenomenon?

Replication and Extension

The current study aims to replicate and extend the original findings by Celniker et al. (2023), specifically Study 6 ~~from the manuscript.~~ The procedure included one vignette, describing two workers, controlling for economic output, quality, and working on maximum capacity, and all earlier discussed possible biases in effort moralization (e.g., the output is identical, but the quality is higher, when the effort is higher, ~~or: the~~ low effort individual is withholding effort by working slowly ~~); etc.).~~ Only the required effort for the work differs

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between the described workers. ~~†~~The vignette can be found in Celniker et al. (2023, p. 72, method, procedure, or below). Note, that we ~~will~~ focus on the focal effort moralization effect and, ~~therefore, won't~~ don't test the second part of the experiment about preferred cooperation partners. We further apply the same measures for perceived moral virtue, separated by core goodness and commitment (see Piazza et al., 2014). While we replicate the procedure of Celniker et al. (2023), we will test the effect in countries, which, to our knowledge, have not been included in earlier effort moralization research (Germany; and Mexico, ~~Netherlands, and South Africa~~) to evaluate the generalizability of the effect. Celniker et al. (2023) demonstrated in Studies 2a-c that the magnitude of the effect may differ between populations (France: $d = 0.38$, South Korea: $d = 0.71$, United States of America: $d = 0.60$).

We will further extend the ~~field~~available evidence by ~~applying the findings of testing potential differences in~~ effort moralization ~~on the described, so-called generation conflict of work ethic by participants' age~~. If younger individuals are ~~more~~less prone to moralize unproductive effort ~~averse, the magnitude of~~ the effect should be observable as a function of age, ~~with larger effects in older participants~~. We will test this, using age as a continuous (non-)linear and non-linear, quadratic terms, as we have no a priori predictions on the shape of this potential effect predictor of the magnitude of effort moralization.

Deviations

We will deviate from the original study (Celniker et al., 2023) in three aspects. First, we will not apply the second part of the experiment, which tests whether individuals who display higher effort in a task are more likely to be chosen as cooperation partners, as this is not part of the focal effect. Second and third, we will not assess ethnicity and income as in the original study.

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Method

Important links

The table below includes all necessary links to access the materials of the study.

Table 2

Summary of links to materials, code, data, and supplemental material

content	link
code and data (GitHub) project (OSF)	https://github.com/rothl16/mev
code and data (OSF)	https://osf.io/k3f4y/
supplemental material (OSF)	https://osf.io/zcq7m/?view_only=d59a57c6f8af4f05ba90f1c445639b1f
Qualtrics (OSF)	https://osf.io/jxecn/?view_only=e3d2187196684f15b696be7625f3210c
	https://osf.io/98p7r/?view_only=5c77775d4d314e7397c78dee29dc3b6b

Open Science

All materials, code, and data will be made openly accessible [OSF link] except data, which can identify individuals, such as mail addresses.

Power computation

The power computation for mean differences was based on the ~~results of moral differences by effort condition in Celniker et al. (2023) Study 6 ($d = 0.42$, rounded to 0.40)~~ smallest effect size of interest ($d = 0.20$) (Lakens, 2022). The smallest effect, reported by Celniker et al. (2023), critical for our study was $d = 0.42$, quantifying differences in moral judgment (core goodness). We used G*Power 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2009) to compute the required minimum sample size to detect the effect, using a dependent two-sided t-test ($1 - \beta = .99$) ~~and a within test class alpha correction for the number of tests (95% , $\alpha = \frac{.05}{5} = .01$), $.05$)~~ resulting in a minimum sample size of $N = 454327$ by country. The sample size for the regressions, used for the effect of age on effort moralization was computed, using the *pwrss*-package (Bulus, 2023)

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($N = 14076$ per country). Both computations are documented in the supplemental material. We decided to oversample the number of complete cases to 210340 by country to compensate for possible exclusions (see Data cleaning).

Data collection

As the study aims to test for age effects, we tried to reach approximately equal cell sizes within each country by the following branches: 18 – 30; 31 – 45; 46 – 60; > 60. If one cell was not filled after three weeks of data collection, the next highest cell was oversampled to the by-country sampling goal. We ~~used~~offered a voucher of 50~~€~~/ 250 MXN as a possible prize for participating in the study to ~~sample~~collect data ~~through~~on social media in Germany, ~~and Mexico, Netherlands, and South Africa~~ and ~~completed~~ the cell sizes through Prolific. Individuals participating via Prolific received a compensation of £0.5 for completing our study.

Data cleaning

We applied a series of measures to ensure high data quality. Participants, indicating a respective language proficiency level below ‘very good’ (Germany: German, Mexico: Spanish, ~~Netherlands: Dutch, South Africa: English~~) were excluded from participation in the study as well as participants who indicated not to currently live in the respective target country. Participants, failing one of the two attention checks, distributed across the experiment were excluded from the analysis: (labeled with AC in the materials, e.g., please choose ‘describes him very well’). The chance of correctly solving both attention checks at random filling behavior was $\frac{1}{7} \times \frac{1}{7} = 2.04\%$. We excluded participants who completed the study three standard deviations (SD) faster than the average by country or who did not complete the study. There was no exclusion for slow participation. Following the procedure by Celniker et al. (2023), we further excluded all participants who rated the low-effort condition as equally or less effortful

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compared to the high-effort condition- [as a manipulation check](#). The number of exclusions by reason and sample is documented in the supplemental material [link supplemental material].

Samples

We collected data from ~~four~~two countries, where, to our knowledge, the effort moralization effect hasn't been studied- (~~Germany, and Mexico, Netherlands, and South Africa~~). We aimed to collect ~~210~~340 complete cases per country. Table 3 -gives an overview of the collected data- ([at the moment the content is based on simulated test responses](#)).

Table 3

Overview of samples and demographic properties

	sampling period	sampled/ valid	Age M (SD)	min	max	med	f/m/σ
Germany	mm.yy. – mm.yy.	xxx/xxx	69.25 (30.26)	19	120	68	29/28/57
Mexico			72.4 (30.96)	220	120	74.5	38/29/59
Netherlands			66.79 (30.6)	118	120	67	
South Africa			68.79 (28.54)	118	120	69	
overall			69.34 (30.07) 70.91 (30.0761)	118 <u>19</u>	120	69 <u>70</u>	67/57/116

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Procedure

After completing an informed consent form, participants were informed that they would be presented with a scenario on the following page, followed by several questions about the actors depicted in these scenarios. The vignettes used in this study were adopted from Celniker et al. (2023, Study 6). They feature two employees, Marc- and Justin, who work in a widget factory and have identical jobs. On the next page, participants read character descriptions, one

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of the low-effort target (Justin) and one of the high-effort target (Mark). The vignette reads as follows:

Justin and Mark work in the same factory and make the same widgets. Both Justin and Mark are able to produce approximately six widgets per hour, one widget around every 10 minutes. The market value for these widgets is \$4.00. Quality control inspections indicate that 96% of Justin's widgets and 96% of Mark's widgets work flawlessly, which means they can be sold. Thus, in an average hour, both Justin and Mark are able to produce \$23.04 worth of high-quality widgets. For Justin, making widgets requires minimal effort—although he works as quickly as possible, it is easy work. For Mark, making widgets requires a lot of effort—although he works as quickly as possible, it is hard work.

Participants completed separate sets of dependent measures for each target in randomized order after reading the vignette. Because we were conducting the study in ~~multiple countries~~ Germany and Mexico, we translated the vignettes to the respective languages using a team translation approach (Behr & Braun, 2023) ~~and adapted names, currency, and product values to~~. We worked closely with native speakers of the respective languages (German and Spanish). The questionnaire was translated into each language by two independent translators, one of whom was one of the two authors of this paper and the other a native speaker of the target language. The initial translations were then thoroughly discussed in joint review sessions between the two authors and the native speakers until a consensus on the final translation was reached. To ensure not only a correct translation but also an appropriate adaptation to the target countries, we considered the choice of wording, names, currency, and product values of the respective countries.

Measures

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To replicate Celniker et al. (2023) we employed ~~the~~ identical instruments (study 6). Table 4 summarizes the employed concepts with example items and measurement anchors. All items were measured on 7-point ~~Likert~~ scales, except for one item that asked about the deserved pay for each actor in the used scenario. For this item, participants responded on a sliding scale, anchored at a midpoint that was based on a realistic average salary in the respective countries where we conducted our study. For estimating realistic salaries in the target countries we relied on data shared on the webpage of the ERI Economic Research Institute (<https://www.erieri.com>).

~~In addition, we employed several items focused on opinions about widely debated subjects around the future of work such as basic income, the four day workweek, and perceptions of other generations' willingness to exert effort.~~

Table 4

Overview of measures

Construct	N items	Example item	Low anchor	High anchor
core goodness ^a	6	honest	does not describe X well	describes X extremely well
value commitment ^a	7	dedicated	does not describe X well	describes X extremely well
competence / warmth competence ^a / warmth ^a	2	competent	does not describe X well	describes X extremely well
deserved salary ^a	1	<u>How much do you think X should make per hour?</u>	<u>Germany: 6 €;</u> <u>Mexico: \$30</u>	<u>Germany: 18 €;</u> <u>Mexico: \$90</u>
perceived effort ^b	1	How much effort do you think X puts into his work?	no effort at all	a lot of effort

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quality of work ^ε	1	What quality of widgets do you think X produces? Compared to other jobs, how difficult is X's job?	very low quality	very high quality
job difficulty ^ε	1	How valuable do you think X's work is?	not at all difficult	extremely difficult
work value ^ε	1		not valuable at all	extremely valuable

deserved salary ^ε <i>Note.</i> ^a These variables are the focal dependent measures, ^b This measure serves as manipulation check and exclusion criterion, ^c These measures serve as manipulation check but not as exclusion criterion.	1	How much do you think X should make per hour?	\$6	\$18
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Formatierte Tabelle

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—— Reliabilities by effort condition, country, and dimension can be found in the supplemental material.

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Data analysis

Replication of effort moralization effect

To test whether the effect of effort moralization was replicated, we conducted mean comparisons across the entire sample ($N =$ [add in Stage 2]) and by country. While having directional assumptions for effects in perceived morality ~~and pay deservingness~~ (higher effort: higher morality and higher deservingness), prior research has shown between-country variance ~~as well as differences in detectability by country in further analysis for perceived warmth and competence (e.g., Celniker et al., 2023, Study 2a-c)~~. We therefore ~~conducted two-sided dependent Welch's t tests to compare the measures within persons between ratings (high and low effort)~~. ~~To adjust~~ aimed for ~~category-specific multiple testing, we Bonferroni adjusted the threshold for statistical significance ($\alpha = \frac{.05}{5} = .01$)~~ a considerably lower effect size, to reach adequate sensitivity ($d = 0.20$). To quantify the results, we computed Cohen's d with its respective 95% confidence interval as well as the log-transformed Bayes Factor.

Evaluation of replication

We used the criteria by LeBel et al. (2019) with the original effect size of $d = 0.42$ for core goodness and $d = 0.76$ for value commitment (Celniker et al., 2023, p. 73, right column) as a reference. The criteria include the dimensions signal (was a significant result detected?), consistency (is the original effect size within the confidence interval of the current estimate?), and direction (is the effect smaller, larger, or opposite?).

Extension to age as a predictor of effort moralization

To test the hypothesis that effort moralization is an age-dependent effect with possible variations between countries, we ran a series of regression models (overall and by country) with the difference of moral judgment between the vignettes by participant as dependent variable

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(Δ high effort, low effort), predicted by age (linear and quadratic term). ~~We adjusted the α level as described above.~~ as a continuous measure. To quantify the evidence, we report the adjusted R^2 as well as the log-transformed Bayes Factor, compared to the null model (for the linear model) and against the linear model (for the quadratic model). Additionally, we ran an exploratory random-effects multi-level model, including fixed effects interactions of country and age⁽²⁾ as well as random intercepts for country along random slopes for age.

Summary of hypotheses

Table 5 summarizes the key hypotheses of the current Study. Note that it does not include assumptions for perceived warmth and perceived competence, as prior Studies showed incoherent results. Further, we have no specific hypothesis on the superiority of a non-linear quadratic model above the linear model. Hence, the table only includes the hypothesis, that both models outperform the null model.

Table 5

Specific hypotheses tested

ID	hypotheses
1	investing more effort will be judged as more moral by participants
2	investing more effort leads to judgment of higher pay deservingness
3	age ⁽²⁾ predicts the effort moralization effect positively

We have no a priori assumptions on between-country differences and hence expect the same effect in each country as well as in the overall sample.

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Results

[the results are written, based on simulated test responses and will change, when replaced with the actual data, as well as the interpretation]

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Manipulation checks and exclusion criteria

Out of the initial [add in Stage 2] participants, $N =$ [add in Stage 2] participants remained in the final sample. Country-specific sample sizes can be retrieved from Table 3. Across samples, there was no significant difference in perception of work quality ($p = .483380$, $d = -0.032057$, 95% CI [-0.120183, 0.0570], $BF_{10} = 0.1064$), difficulty of the job ($p = .707159$, $d = -0.0917$, 95% CI [-0.105036, 0.071218], $BF_{10} = 0.054193$), or value of the product ($p = .974831$, $d = 0.0014$, 95% CI [-0.087113, 0.090140], $BF_{10} = 0.054074$). The by-country analysis can be found in the supplemental material.

Replication of effort moralization effect

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Table 6

Within-subject effort moralization effect by low/high effort case (core goodness)

	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>CI_{low}</i>	<i>CI_{high}</i>	<i>Log(BF₁₀)</i>	<i>refl</i>	Eingefügte Zellen
Global sample	3.9591 (0.8275)	3.99400 (0.7578)	.409161	-0.037091	-0.125218	0.054036	- 2.6461.65 3	ns	
Germany	3.94 (0.72)	3.990 (0.76)	.673	0.04	-0.144	0.223	-2.177	ns	
Mexico	3.87 (0.78)	4.08 (0.78)	.023	-0.205	-0.381	-0.029	0.235	s - i - o	
Netherlands	3.9 (0.85)	4 (0.7)	.292	-0.094	-0.269	0.081	-1.766		
South Africa	4.1 (0.88)	3.98 (0.76)	.261	0.099	-0.074	0.272	-1.702		

Note. ns = no signal; s = signal; i = inconsistent; o = opposite; reference effect: $d = 0.42$.

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Table 7

Within-subject effort moralization effect by low/high effort case (value commitment)

	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>CI_{low}</i>	<i>CI_{high}</i>	<i>Log(BF₁₀)</i>	<i>repl n</i>
Global sample	43.98 (0.7776)	3.974.00 (0.7471)	.537795	-0.028017	-0.06143	0.116	-2.796594	ns
Germany	4.00 (0.8)	3.85 (0.69)	.103	0.154	-0.031	0.338	-0.957	ns
Mexico	3.96 (0.73)	4.13 (0.71)	.068	-0.164	-0.34	0.012	-0.671	ns
Netherlands	3.96 (0.8)	4.03 (0.77)	.431	-0.07	-0.245	0.105	-2.007	
South Africa	4.06 (0.77)	3.84 (0.75)	.027	0.197	0.022	0.371	0.073	

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Eingefügte Zellen

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Note. ns = no signal reference effect; $d = 0.76$.

Table 8

Within-subject difference in pay deservingness by low/high effort case

	$M (SD)$	$M (SD)$	p	d	CI_{low}	CI_{high}	Log(BF ₁₀)
Global sample	24.13 (21.17-35.33) (25.76)	24.35 (21.85-36.28) (26.32)	.718 <u>.431</u>	- 0.051 <u>.6</u>	- 0.1041 <u>.77</u>	0.072 <u>.6</u>	-2.9232
Germany	12.02 (3.68)	11.95 (3.53)	.886	0.013	-0.17	0.197	-2.254
Mexico	56.43 (17.67)	58.29 (16.87)	.407	-	-0.249	0.101	-1.975
				0.074			
Netherlands	14.91 (4.27)	14.3 (3.94)	.227	0.108	-0.067	0.283	-1.596
South Africa	12.3 (3.47)	11.98 (3.61)	.462	0.065	-0.108	0.238	-2.059

Table 9

Within-subject difference in perceived warmth by low/high effort case

	$M (SD)$	$M (SD)$	p	d	CI_{low}	CI_{high}	Log(BF ₁₀)	Formatierte Tabelle
Global sample	3.984 (2.04-4.11) (2.04-4.11)	4.041 (1.98) (1.98)	.627 <u>.627</u>	-0.022 <u>.003</u>	-0.112 <u>.129</u>	0.066 <u>.124</u>	-2.868 <u>.627</u>	
Germany	4.04 (2.06)	4.13 (1.94)	.733	-0.032	-0.216	0.152	-2.207	
Mexico	4.17 (2.00)	4.10 (2.02)	.767	0.026	-0.148	0.201	-2.269	
Netherlands	3.79 (2.01)	4.04 (1.94)	.32 <u>.32</u>	-0.089 <u>.009</u>	-0.264	0.086	-1.827	
South Africa	3.91 (1.97)	3.88 (2.03)	.92 <u>.92</u>	0.009 <u>.009</u>	-0.164	0.181	-2.319	

Table 10

Within-subject difference in perceived competence by low/high effort case

	$M (SD)$	$M (SD)$	p	d	CI_{low}	CI_{high}	Log(BF ₁₀)	Formatierte Tabelle
Global sample	3.989 (2.02-4.03) (2.02-4.03)	3.94 (2.03-4.07) (1.99)	.785 <u>.568</u>	-0.013 <u>.37</u>	-0.076 <u>.163</u>	0.401 <u>.09</u>	-2.946 <u>.7</u>	

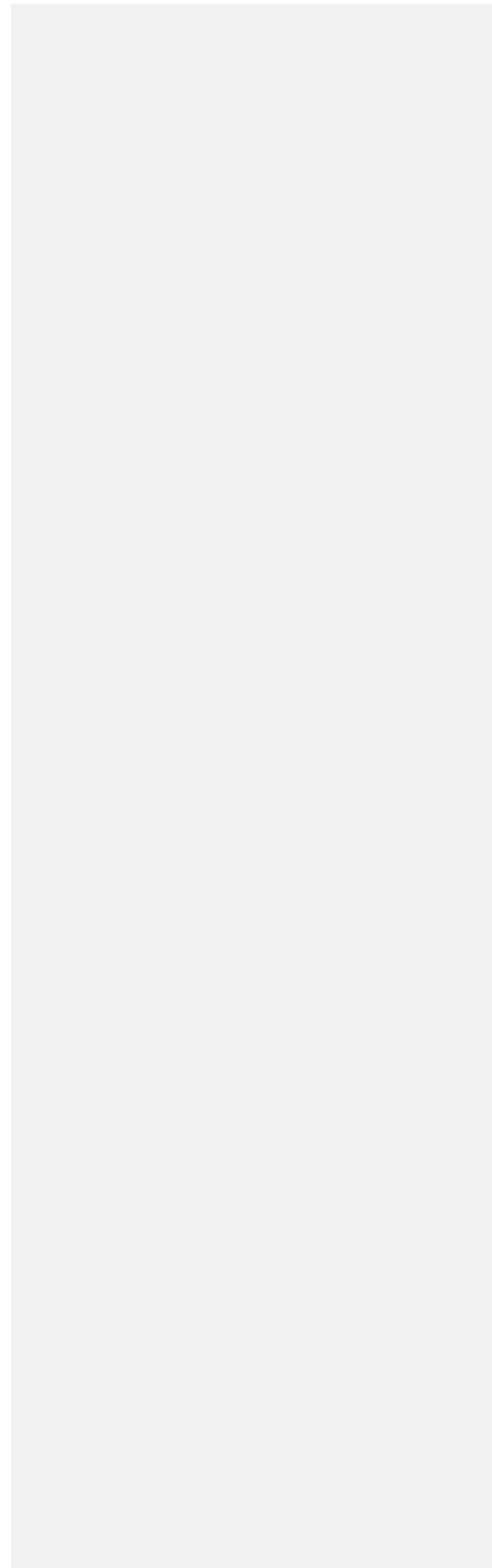
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Germany	3.93 (2.06)	3.94 (1.99)	.974	-0.003	-0.187	0.18	-2.264
Mexico	4.00 (2.01)	4.19 (1.99)	.45	-0.067	-0.242	0.107	-2.032
Netherlands	4.25 (1.93)	3.84 (2.13)	.122	0.139	-0.037	0.314	-1.14
South Africa	3.73 (2.06)	3.8 (2.01)	.788	-0.024	-0.196	0.149	-2.288

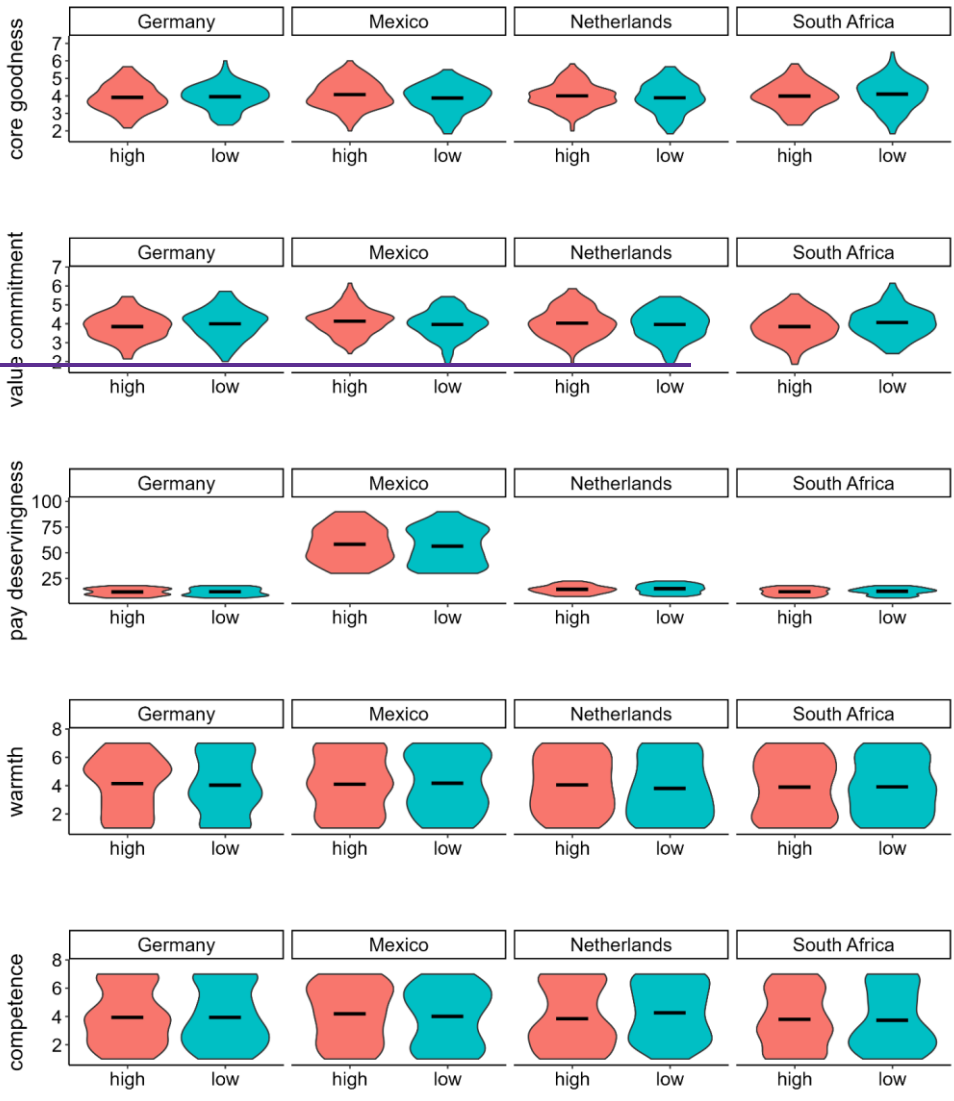
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Figure 1

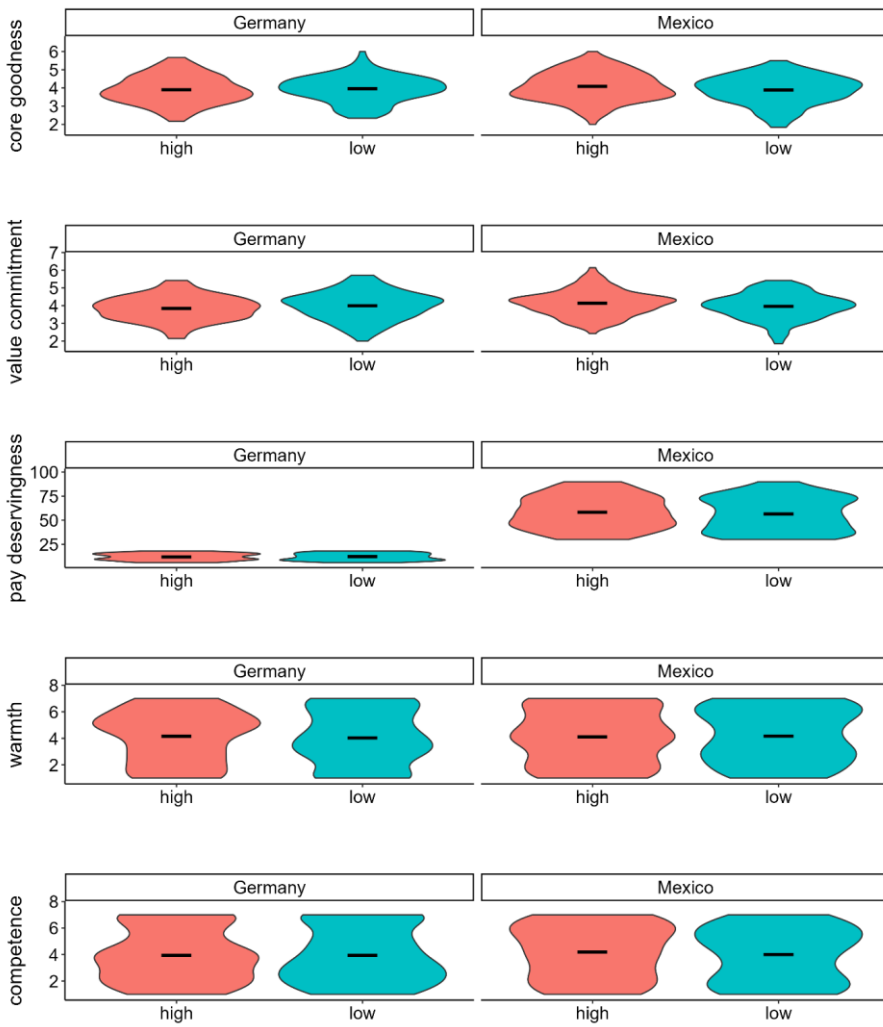
Distribution plots of data with mean by variable and group



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Extension to age as a predictor of effort moralization

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Table 11

Explanatory value of age on effort moralization effect (core goodness)

	β	95% CI	p	$R^2_{adj.}$	Log(BF ₁₀)
Global sample					
age	-.045	-0.05 - 0.13	.406398	-.001	-2.755379
age ²	.0408	-0.06 - 0.14	.458268	-.0020	-2.825116
		.07 - .24			
Germany					
age	-.02	-.21 - .17	.844	-.009	-2.348
age ²	.24	.02 - .47	.030	.025	0.055
Mexico					
age	-.10	-.28 - .08	.274	.002	-1.806
age ²	-.05	-.25 - .16	.664	-.005	-2.321
Netherlands					
age	0.09	-.09 - .26	.337	-.001	-1.947
age ²	-.03	-.25 - .18	.775	-.008	-2.376
South Africa					
age	.14	-.03 - .32	.103	.013	-1.076
age ²	.03	-.15 - .20	.777	.006	-2.388

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Table 12

Explanatory value of age on effort moralization effect (value commitment)

	β	95% CI	p	$R^2_{adj.}$	Log(BF ₁₀)
Global sample					
age	-.0306	-.12 – .0618	.485381	-.001	-2.857352
age ²	.0402	-.07 – .1213	.773760	-.0035	-3.0602.693
Germany					
age	-.07	-.26 – .12	.469	-.004	-2.100
age ²	-.08	-.31 – .14	.476	-.009	-2.109
Mexico					
age	-.06	-.24 – .11	.489	-.004	-2.161
age ²	.10	-.11 – .30	.361	-.005	-1.989
Netherlands					
age	.03	-.15 – .21	.747	-.007	-2.365
age ²	-.04	-.26 – .18	.717	-.014	-2.350
South Africa					
age	-.04	-.22 – .13	.623	-.006	-2.306
age ²	.03	-.15 – .21	.755	-.013	-2.380

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Discussion

Summary

The present study aimed to replicate and extend prior work on the effort moralization effect, which describes the attribution of moral value to individuals, based on the observed effort, they recruited. Critically, this was earlier observed even in situations, in which bespoke effort did not change the outcome of the action. We utilized an earlier research design by (Celniker et al., 2023) to replicate the effect in countries, which haven't been subject to these observations. Further, we applied the theoretical concept of effort moralization to a current debate, held in public discourses around the world, often termed as 'the mass resignation' or 'quiet quitting'. These describe neighboring phenomena of individuals leaving specific fields of the workforce or reducing their efforts to the amount of work, agreed on in the contract. This was done by testing, whether the age of participants was related to a smaller effort moralization effect.

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Replication evaluation

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Extension evaluation

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Limitations

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Future directions

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Conclusion

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We thank Gema Souvenir and Hilde Depauw for their help with translating the materials as well as Celine Bencker for her feedback on an earlier version of the draft.

Ethics

The study was approved by the Departmental Review Board (DRB) of the Faculty of Psychology, Department of Occupational, Economic, and Social Psychology (2024/M/001).

Conflict of interest

The authors report no conflict of interest

Monetary Support

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