Differences in strike attitudes and behavioural reactions among British, German, and French samples

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ABSTRACT

Strikes are an important work phenomenon. However, research on third-party strike attitudes has been limited. In this study, we used a dataset that was previously collected for other purposes to assess strike attitudes and behavioural reactions and their relations to willingness to strike, union membership, and previous strike participation in samples from the United Kingdom (n = 444), Germany (n = 454), and France (n = 463). We used multivariate analyses of covariance to assess differences between the three samples. Between the British, German, and French samples, we found significant differences in their strike attitudes and willingness to strike. Finally, we found support for the assumptions that union members and people with a strike history evaluate strikes more positively than people who are not union members and without strike history.

KEYWORDS

attitudes; industrial relations; strikes; third-party; unions; willingness to strike, MANCOVA

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Strikes are a long-known phenomenon of industrial relations and a powerful tool for workers in collective bargaining. Kelly (1998) describes them as the most powerful means of workers and most costly for the employers on the other side of the bargaining table. Examples for strikes are strikes among train and aircraft workers in the United Kingdom (Jasper & Harris, 2022), from Lufthansa staff in Germany (Deutsche Welle, 2022), and from rail workers in France (RFI, 2022). There can also be concerted strike actions across countries affecting multinational companies (e.g., Geary, 2022). These strikes likely differ from country to country due to legal or cultural differences in the industrial relations system of the respective countries. Nonetheless, what all these strikes have in common is that they in some way or another affect the public in their daily lives. Some strikes have direct effects on the public, such as cancelled flights or reduced public transport, whereas other strikes might not directly influence the public but still hope for and rely on approval and support from the public for their case. From the union's perspective, the public is an important stakeholder for strikes, as the unions build on the public approval of strikes. Public approval can be more or less important for the union, depending on the sector, affected group, media coverage, and caused disruption. This approval can also consist of the positive third-party evaluation of strikes (Kelloway et al., 2008). Thus, having knowledge about public attitudes to strikes can be considered helpful during the decision-making process among union members in all countries. Furthermore, it is also important for employers to know about the public attitudes to strikes, as they are sitting on the other side of the bargaining table and can also use negative public attitudes to strikes in their negotiation strategy.

To assess these public attitudes, Vesper and König (2022) introduced the strike attitudes and behavioural reactions scale (SABeRS). They found that their measure consists of five factors: negative reactions to strikes, legitimacy of strikes, informing oneself about strikes, strike-related social network behaviour, and support of strikers. Furthermore, they found in two studies that union members and people with a strike history evaluated strikes more positively than non-union members and people without a strike history (Vesper & König, 2022). What is missing so far is the comparison of these strike attitudes between samples from different countries. This comparison is necessary to further develop robust explanations for similarities and differences between countries.

In this article, we compare the strike attitudes between a British, a German, and a French sample. We decided to focus on these three countries as they are the three most important Western European countries and are comparable regarding their size and economic strength. Despite these similarities, the three countries differ in their traditions and regulations

regarding strikes. Furthermore, we assess in all three samples the relationship between the SABeRS and willingness to strike, union membership and previous strike participation. With our article, we contribute to the literature in several ways: first, we show that strike attitudes do differ between different countries. Second, we show that the relationships between strike attitudes and other variables such as willingness to strike or union membership are similar across the three samples. These similarities indicate that although the samples do overall differ in their strike attitudes, some processes that form strike attitudes are likely comparable between the three countries, such as attitude formation through experiencing a strike.

Case Descriptions and Theoretical Background

To understand cross-country similarities and differences in strikes and the attitudes towards strikes, it is necessary to consider the industrial relations system of the specific countries, especially as the differences have further increased (Hyman, 2001, 2018). In the UK, for example, the industrial relations system can be described as a liberal-individualist repressive regime since the Thatcher era (Howell & Givan, 2011). This means that the state abstains from intervening in industrial relations, implies a focus of free collective bargaining, and solving labour disputes is mostly left to unions and employers (Allern & Bale, 2017; Visser, 2019). However, individualized procedures are the dominant form as there has been a massive de-collectivization and individualization of regulatory mechanisms since the Thatcher era (Howell, 2007). Furthermore, the UK has a relatively low coverage of collective agreements, contrary to Germany, where the bargaining coverage is rather high. However, in both countries, the bargaining coverage has considerably decreased from 1980 to 2014 (Hyman, 2018), in contrast to France, where still more than 90% of workers are covered by national or company agreements (Hyman, 2018; Visser, 2019). Collective bargaining in the UK is also more decentralized with bargaining mostly taking place at the company-level, again contrary to France and Germany, where bargaining is mostly conducted at the sector or industry level (Visser, 2019).

The German industrial relations systems is often described as a social-partnership regime characterised by a strong sense of cooperation (Allern & Bale, 2017; Dribbusch, 2016). Employee representation takes place in a dual system with sectorial bargaining and local work councils. The principle of collective bargaining autonomy guarantees and at the same time limits the action field of unions to conflicts about wages and working conditions (Brinkmann & Nachtwey, 2013). Works councils on the other hand are committed to protect

the bargaining peace at work and address more individualized grievances other than wages. The works councils are elected by the whole workforce and are institutionally separated from the unions. This and the concept of centralized multi-employer industry-wide agreements ensures that the level of conflict is rather low in Germany compared with France, where protest is much more likely to include strikes (Dribbusch, 2007, 2009; Larsson, 2014).

The French regime of industrial relations is much more polarized and can be described as consisting of a fragmented trade union movement and high hostility from employer organizations (Larsson, 2014; Visser, 2019). In France, working life is also a relationship with the state and not only with the employer (Visser, 2019). Hence, trade unions are also more concerned with shaping the public provision of social benefits than with the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements (Crouch, 2017; Hyman, 2001). French law allows any of the five main unions to appoint a workplace representative in any firm with at least 50 employees (Bryson et al., 2011). This representative is allowed to negotiate certain terms and conditions once a year, such as pay, working hours, or pensions.

The three countries also differ in their prevalent employee workplace representation (Addison & Teixeira, 2019). In Germany, employees can only be represented by works councils at the workplace – this is the case for 47% of the employees (Addison & Teixeira, 2019). These work councils have strongly anchored legal rights, contrary to French work councils which have a much weaker position (Visser, 2019). In the UK and France, it is however possible to be represented by a union only, a works council only, or both. In the UK, the most prevalent form of representation is the works council only (16%; Addison & Teixeira, 2019) followed by both, works council and union (13%; Addison & Teixeira, 2019). In France, employees are mostly represented by both (45%; Addison & Teixeira, 2019). Furthermore, the countries also differ in their union density rate: in the UK, 23.5% are members of a union, whereas in Germany only 17.0% are union members, and in France only 7.9% (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2019). The traditional union density rate also differs, with France having a traditionally low membership rate, whereas those from UK and Germany can be interpreted as middle membership rates (Allern & Bale, 2017; Uba & Jansson, 2021). What all three have nonetheless in common is that unions experienced a decline in membership from the 1980s to today (Crouch, 2017). France has also a traditionally conflict ridden and politicized pluralistic organization of workers in unions (Visser, 2019). These union density differences might lead to the belief that there are less strikes in France than in the other two countries. However, the opposite is the case: in France, the level of strike participation based on the ratio of employees involved in strikes per 1000 dependent

employees was 10.6%, compared to 4.8% in the UK and 0,7% in Germany (Checchi & Visser, 2005). Despite all differences, France and Germany have been found to have similarities in their process of interest representation in that employee representatives' effectiveness is based on their handling of daily issues on the shop floor and on their integration with the outside trade union (Hege & Dufour, 1995). Hence, it is important to move from the concrete to the abstract, that is to the process and relationships within that process, to establish a better basis for comparisons (Hege & Dufour, 1995; Hyman, 2001).

There are also differences in the right to strike among the three countries (Büttgen & Clauwaert, 2021; Guedes & Balanescu, 2021; Inversi & Clauwaert, 2021). Whereas in the UK no fundamental right to strike exists and organizers and participants can be held liable for damages (Inversi & Clauwaert, 2021), strikes are considered an individual right guaranteed by the Constitution in France (Guedes & Balanescu, 2021). Furthermore, industrial action can be interpreted as a breach of the employment contract in the UK and hence, the employer can dismiss the worker after the period of statutory protection of twelve weeks is over (Inversi & Clauwaert, 2021). This is not the case in France or Germany. In France, strikes are an individual right and not a trade union right, and this is guaranteed by the French Constitution. The only exception in France is the public service for which the right to strike is regulated by law (Guedes & Balanescu, 2021). In Germany, the freedom to strike derives from the constitutional freedom of association (Büttgen & Clauwaert, 2021). The German right to strike is almost entirely based on case law and only some regulations, such as a linkage to a collective agreement and initiation of a strike by a union, exist (Büttgen & Clauwaert, 2021). Furthermore, a peace obligation exists only in Germany. A peace obligation prohibits strikes and other forms of collective action during the time of the collective agreement (Visser, 2019). German unions also have to follow the ultima ratio principle, which implies that industrial action may only be used as a last resort, and to follow rules of fair play when calling for a strike (Waas, 2014).

The strikes in the three countries also differ in their duration and participation (Piazza, 2005). In the UK, strikes are typically of medium duration and medium participation rate compared to other countries, whereas typical strikes in Germany are short with relatively few participants and strikes in France are often brief but with mass participation. Some French strikes are rather a protest against the state than a protest against employers (Larsson, 2014). Furthermore, the recourse to the strike threat during the annual collective bargaining is considered rather natural by both sides in France (Besancenot & Vranceanu, 1999). What all three countries have in common is that the rate of strikes after 1980 was significantly (i.e., at

least 30%) lower than that prior to 1980 (International Labour Organization, 2020; Piazza, 2005). However, at least in France, strikes have become more dispersed regarding the affected sectors and cities, spontaneous and shorter, and there has also been an increase in individual conflict manifestations (Pilati & Perra, 2019).

Previous research on strikes has frequently been linked to trade unions. Nonetheless, unions and union membership do not constitute a necessary condition for strikes around the globe (Vesper & König, 2022). For instance, if UK trade unions call for strikes during collective bargaining, any worker may participate in strikes, whether or not they are a trade union member (Government Digital Service, 2020). The same applies to Germany (Dribbusch, 2016) – the only difference between German union members and non-members is that union members receive strike pay from the union during the strike. In France, strikes are an individual right, so strikes can be conducted without the involvement of trade unions (Poutvaara et al., 2017). Since unions are not a necessary condition for strikes in all countries, strikes should be considered as a separate issue from trade unions.

Not only can strikes affect strikers, unions, and employers, but very often also the public. Examples for strikes with considerable impact on third parties are the strikes of university lecturers in the UK (Weale & Al-Khalaf, 2020), healthcare workers in Germany (The Local, 2019), and employees in public transport in France (Nossiter, 2019). The public must cope with the consequences of having no lectures, adjusting to the emergency plan in hospitals, being forced to adjust travel plans, and being stuck in traffic jams. All of these consequences can be perceived as burdensome depending on how they are assessed by those affected (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the event of strikes, affected third parties may find the situation uncontrollable and unpleasant and hence, experience a rather high level of stress.

The beliefs and behavioural actions of third parties to strikes also have an important function in indicating public consent with strikes. This public approval is a powerful tool for unions, especially when it comes to creating the impression of legitimacy. The ability to achieve legitimacy is a crucial factor according to institutional theory for the survival of organizations (e.g., Díez-Martín et al., 2013; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). This argument from institutional theory is also relevant to the area of strikes. Organizations such as unions and employers follow societal norms to avoid public criticism. Hence, they legitimize their behaviour. Both in advance of strikes and during strikes, unions and employers try to present their position to the public as rational and comprehensible (e.g., with press releases and television interviews). For this purpose, trade unions use media

campaigns in which they invest much time to sell their positions to the public (Hansen & Hau, 2022; Kelloway et al., 2008). Obtaining this support can significantly influence the success of the union (Hennebert & Faulkner, 2017), because public support has the ability to influence the political activities of unions, to affect the loyalty of members, and to shape employers' dealings with trade unions (Chang & Cooke, 2018). Hence, public opinions and behavioural intentions towards strikes determine, at least in part, the support and legitimacy of strikes.

To assess public opinion towards strikes, Vesper and König (2022) introduced the strike attitude and behavioural reactions scale (SABeRS). This scale consists of five factors, which map behavioural reactions to strikes (support of strikers, strike-related social media behaviour, and informing oneself about strikes), cognitive aspects (legitimacy of strikes), and affective aspects (negative reactions to strikes). However, this scale has, up to now, only been used in Germany, and differences between the three countries (France, Germany and UK) in regard of strike attitudes, behavioural reactions to strikes, and willingness to strike have not been studied. As the number of days not worked due to strikes varies considerably from 209,435 in Germany to 1,738,537 in France in 2016 (International Labour Organization, 2020), strike attitudes and reactions of third-parties should differ between the three countries. Especially in France, strikes are almost considered as a cultural good and many French citizens consider it the most influential way to achieve their goal (Ancelovici, 2008). Hence, the strike attitudes and reactions of French respondents might be more positive than the ones of British and German respondents. Furthermore, as Germany is widely considered a low-strike country, whereas the UK has mixed numbers and France is usually described as a high-strike country (Vandaele, 2016), the willingness to strike should differ accordingly across the three countries. Hence, we investigated the following two research questions: *Do the strike attitudes and behavioural reactions differ between the three countries (RQ1)* and *does the willingness to strike differ between the three countries (RQ2)*?

Next to direct differences in attitudes, the countries could also exhibit differences in the relationships between their attitudes and other variables. In this study, we hence assess the relationships of the SABeRS with willingness to strike, union membership, and strike participation across the three countries to test whether similar or different relations are found across the countries. Willingness to strike is especially important for unions, as they rely on the willingness to strike of their members to plan their procedure during collective bargaining (Martin, 1986). Furthermore, as strikes can cause harm to all parties involved, knowing about the willingness to strike of the employees is important for unions, employers and organizers of strikes in order to plan further activities (Barling et al., 1992). Willingness to strike is

enhanced when unfairness in work relationships is perceived by employees and when these employees have a high collectivistic orientation towards work (Buttigieg et al., 2008). It decreases when employees judge the societal system as justified (Jost et al., 2012). Willingness to strike was also associated with loyalty to one's union (Barling et al., 1992) and appears to be increased for workers with lower perceived employability (Jansen et al., 2017). Vesper and König (2022) showed that the five factors of the SABeRS were related to willingness to strike in three different German samples. Thus, we test whether these relationships are also found cross-culturally. We hypothesize more formally: willingness to strike is expected to be negatively related to negative reactions towards strikes in the United Kingdom, Germany and France (H1), and positively associated with legitimacy of strikes in the United Kingdom, Germany and France (H2), informing oneself about strikes in the United Kingdom, Germany and France (H3), strike-related social network behaviour in the United Kingdom, Germany and France (H4), and support of strikers in the United Kingdom, Germany and France (H5).

For unions, next to public attitudes to strikes, the attitude of their members towards strikes during a collective bargaining process is also important. Union members tended to be more willing to strike (Jansen et al., 2017). They also reported to support strikers more, to show more strike-related social-network behaviour, and to inform themselves more about strikes compared to non-members (Vesper & König, 2022). Furthermore, union members expressed a higher legitimacy of strikes, and fewer negative reactions to strikes than participants who were not members of a union (Vesper & König, 2022). We thus hypothesize: Union members show fewer negative reactions towards strikes in the United Kingdom, Germany and France (H6) and report a higher legitimacy of strikes in the United Kingdom, Germany and France (H7) than non-members. Additionally, union members inform themselves more about strikes in the United Kingdom, Germany and France (H8), show more strike-related social network behaviour in the United Kingdom, Germany and France (H9), and support strikers more than non-members in the United Kingdom, Germany and France (H10).

To have already participated in a strike seems to enhance the probability to participate in another strike (Campolieti et al., 2005; Martin & Sinclair, 2001). Thus, past participation in a strike could affect behavioural reactions toward strikes and strike attitudes, as well as perceptions of the usefulness of strikes during collective bargaining. People with a strike history reported more positive attitudes to strikes than people who had no strike history (Vesper & König, 2022). We hypothesize more formally: People with a strike history will

report fewer negative reactions towards strikes in the United Kingdom, Germany and France (H11), perceive strikes as more legitimate in the three countries (H12), inform themselves more about strikes in the three countries (H13), show more strike-related social network behaviour in the three countries (H14), and support strikers more in the three countries (H15) than people without strike history.

Methods

Sample

We collected our data in January 2020 using an online panel provider that operates panels in seven countries, among these are the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. All data is uploaded to an OSF project (https://osf.io/46bdr/?view_only=f0f58b6c57154b93b534f80e550ae51f). All participants received a small compensation for their participation (0.50 €). A total of 1652 people participated in the study. The only inclusion criterion was that participants needed to be employed. Following our preregistration (https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=tx4q7x), we adhered to several steps to ensure data quality. These steps are based on recommendations from Meade and Craig (2012). As a first step, participants who were unemployed were screened out (n = 92). This step was conducted to ensure that participants could go on strike. Secondly, we excluded participants who chose the option "No" when asked whether their responses could be used for scientific analyses (n = 33). In our third step, we took care of swift completion and excluded all participants (n = 78) who answered the items faster than two seconds per item on average (Huang et al., 2012). Our last step was to excluded participants who consecutively selected the same response option for more than six items (n = 88; Johnson, 2005). Hence, our final sample included N = 1361 participants.

Overall, the mean age of the participants was 46.33 (SD = 10.03). In the total sample, 33.1% reported being male and 66.9% reported being female. Furthermore, 82.6% were not union members and 71.3% had never participated in a strike. The British participants (n = 444) had a mean age of 46.82 (SD= 10.68). In the British sample, 34.2% indicated that they belong to the male sex and 65.8% reported to belong to the female sex. Of the British participants, 77.5% were not union members and 81.8% had never participated in a strike. The mean age in the German sample (n = 454) was 44.80 (SD = 10.64), 34.6% were male and 65.4% were female. Of the German participants, 86.3% were not union members and 78.2% had not participated in a strike. The French participants (n = 463) had a mean age of 47.36

(*SD* = 8.53). A third of the French participants were male (30.7%) and 69.3% were female. In the French sample, 83.8% were not union members and 54.6% had no strike history

Materials

To assess the strike attitudes and behavioural reactions, we used the 15 item SABeRS (i.e., three items for each factor, Table 1). Items were answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "Do not agree" to 5 = "Agree." To measure *willingness to strike*, we used four items based on Akkerman et al. (2013). An example item is "I would strike for more money." All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Not at all" to "Very likely" and can be found in Table 1. The SABeRS and the willingness to strike scale were translated from German to English and French using a back-translation process (e.g., Schaffer & Riordan, 2003) with two individuals who were fluent in German and either English or French independently translating the items. Issues that arose were solved through discussion. *Membership in a union* was assessed with one item asking participants whether they were a union member (as in the European Social Survey Round 9, 2019). *Strike history* was measured with a single item asking participants if they had ever participated in a strike (as in the World Values Survey Round 6, 2014). The reliability scores of the different scales and measures for the three samples were calculated to ensure that the items worked sufficiently, using Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω (Dunn et al., 2014; McDonald, 1999; see Table 2).

Procedure

First, participants had to choose their preferred language. On the welcoming page, the purpose of the study was explained, and participants read a definition of strikes. Then participants answered demographic items. Those who were currently unemployed were screened out. All employed participants continued to the next page, where they had to fill out the SABeRS, the willingness to strike items, the general system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003), one item assessing the political orientation, the item about union membership, and the item about strike history. The results regarding the general system justification and the political orientation can be found in a different article (XXX [names suppressed for blind review], 2022).

Statistical Analyses

To answer H1-H5 (relation between SABeRS and willingness to strike), the respective correlations for each sample were calculated. We computed several multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) to answer RQ1 (country differences in strike attitudes), RQ2 (country differences in willingness to strike), H6-10 (differences between union and non-union members), and H11-15 (differences between participants with and without strike

history). For all MANCOVAs, the included covariates were age, gender, and education. The independent variables varied according to the question that should be answered. For RQ1 and RQ2, country affiliation was used as the independent variable. Union membership was the independent variable in the MANCOVA answering H6-10 and strike history was the independent variable in the MANCOVA regarding H11-15. For all MANCOVAs except for RQ2, the five factors of the SABeRS were the dependent variables. The dependent variable used to answer RQ2 was willingness to strike.

MANCOVA is used to assess whether significant mean differences in the dependent variable(s) exist between the groups used as independent variable (Pituch & Stevens, 2016). It removes the effects of the covariates from the model by regressing the covariates on the dependent variables. The residuals of this regression are then used to test whether the independent variable still influences the dependent variable(s). This allows to assess the true effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable(s).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

We assessed the measurement equivalence of the SABeRS between the three samples and obtained partial scalar equivalence. This implies that no systematic response biases exist between the three groups (Chen, 2008). Hence, mean comparisons between the three samples are valid and meaningful. The analyses are reported in another article, currently under review (XXX [names suppressed for peer-review]). Furthermore, we assessed the measurement equivalence of the willingness to strike scale. Although we found no partial scalar equivalence for the willingness to strike scale in its current form, excluding the item "I would strike for better working hours" (based on modification indices) resulted in partial scalar equivalence when the restrictions for item 2 ("I would strike for better working hours") were relaxed. Hence, we can compare the means between the three samples.

Test of Hypotheses

To assess whether there are differences between the three countries in the SABeRS (RQ1), a MANCOVA with the independent variable country affiliation and the control variables age, gender, and education was conducted (see Table 3).[2] We found statistically significant effects

[2] We also conducted all analyses without control variables as their usage is controversially discussed in social sciences (see Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016; Wysocki et al., 2022). The results differed only slightly and can be found in the supplemental materials.

of country affiliation after controlling for the effect of age, gender, and education on negative reactions, $F(2, 1355) = 14.37$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, legitimacy, $F(2, 1355) = 12.57$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, and support of strikers, $F(2, 1355) = 5.84$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. There were no significant differences in informing oneself about strikes and strike-related social network behaviour. German participants reported significantly fewer negative reactions towards strikes compared to British and French participants. British and French participants did not differ in their negative reactions. Furthermore, German participants reported a significantly higher legitimacy of strikes than British participants and a descriptively higher legitimacy of strikes compared to French participants. British participants reported significantly less legitimacy of strikes compared to French participants. Regarding the support of strikers, British participants reported significantly more support of strikers than French and German participants. Thus, we can answer Research Question 1 with yes, there are significant differences between the three countries in three of five subscales of the SABeRS.

To answer Research Question 2 (i.e., whether the willingness to strike differs among the three countries) we conducted an analysis of covariance with the factor country affiliation, the covariates age, gender, and education, and the dependent variable willingness to strike. The covariates age, $F(1, 1355) = 21.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, and gender, $F(1, 1355) = 4.25$, $p = .039$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$, were significantly related to the willingness to strike. Education did not exhibit a significant effect on willingness to strike, $F(1, 1355) = 3.37$, $p = .067$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$. There was also a significant effect between the three groups in their willingness to strike, $F(2, 1355) = 26.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. To determine which group means differed significantly, we computed Bonferroni-corrected planned contrasts. The means of the German and the British sample ($p < .001$), as well as the means of the German and the French sample ($p < .001$) differed significantly from each other. The means from the British and the French sample did not differ significantly from each other ($p = .277$). Germans reported the highest willingness to strike ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.17$), followed by the British sample ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.16$) and the French sample ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.16$). These results answer Research Question 2: Differences in the willingness to strike do exist between the three samples.

To answer hypotheses H1 to H5 (i.e., the relations between the five factors of the SABeRS to willingness to strike), correlations between the willingness to strike and the five factors were calculated for each sample (Table 4). In the British sample, negative reactions to strikes were significantly negatively correlated to willingness to strike. Furthermore, the other four factors (support of strikers, informing oneself about strikes, strike-related social network behaviour, and legitimacy of strikes) were all significantly positively correlated to willingness

to strike in the British sample. For the German and the French sample, the same correlation patterns were found. Thus, hypotheses H1 to H5 were supported.

Hypotheses 6 to 10 concerned the differences between union members and non-members on the SABeRS factors. To answer these hypotheses, one MANCOVA for each sample was calculated with the independent variable union membership, the covariates age, gender, and education, and the five subscales of the SABeRS (i.e., negative reactions to strikes, legitimacy of strikes, informing oneself about strikes, strike-related social network behaviour, and support of strikers, Vesper & König, 2022) as dependent variables (see Table 5). Significant differences were found between union members and non-members for the British sample, $F(10, 868) = 4.27$, $p < .001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .91$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, the German sample, $F(10, 888) = 2.59$, $p = .004$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .94$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, and the French sample, $F(10, 906) = 4.58$, $p < .001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .91$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, with union members evaluating strikes more positively compared to non-members for each subscale (i.e., they reported fewer negative reactions towards strikes and a higher legitimacy of strikes, sought more information about strikes, reported more strike-related social network behaviour, and supported strikers more than non-members, only in the German sample did union members and non-members not significantly differ in their strike-related social network behaviour.). Thus, Hypotheses 6 to 10 were supported.

Hypotheses 11 to 15 concerned the differences between people with vs. without a strike history. To answer these hypotheses, one MANCOVA for each sample was calculated (see Table 6). This time, strike participation was used as the independent variable, covariates were age, gender, and education, and the five subscales of the SABeRS as dependent variables. There was a statistically significant difference in the five SABeRS subscales based on prior strike participation in the British sample, $F(10, 868) = 7.95$, $p < .001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .84$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$, the German sample, $F(10, 888) = 6.96$, $p < .001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .86$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, and the French sample, $F(10, 906) = 11.99$, $p < .001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .78$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$. In all three samples, people who had a strike history assessed strikes as more legitimate, reported fewer negative reactions towards strikes, reported more strike-related behaviour in social networks to strikes informed themselves more about strikes, and supported strikers more than people who had no strike history. Hence, Hypotheses 11 to 15 were supported.

Discussion

This study assessed differences between a British, a German and a French sample in their strike attitudes and behavioural reactions, as well as in their willingness to strike. We found

significant differences between the three samples in three of five factors of the SABeRS and in their willingness to strike. The second objective of this study was to assess whether the SABeRS shows similar relationships with willingness to strike, union membership and previous strike participation in all three countries. These hypotheses were also supported. The factors strike-related social media behaviour, informing oneself about strikes, support of strikers, and legitimacy of strikes were positively associated with willingness to strike in all three samples, whereas negative reactions to strikes were negatively related to willingness to strike. In addition, union members in all three samples reported fewer negative reactions, a higher legitimacy, more strike-related social network behaviour, informing themselves more about strikes, and more support of strikers than non-union members. The same pattern was also obtained for participants who already participated in a strike compared to those who had no strike history.

Regarding the differences between the three countries in their strike attitudes and behavioural reactions, one could have assumed that the French sample might report the most positive attitudes as they consider strikes almost a cultural good (Ancelovici, 2008), but in these analyses the French sample reported the highest negative reactions to strikes and the lowest support of strikers compared to the British and German samples. This might be due to the ongoing general strike in France during the time of the data collection which might have taken its toll on the nerves of the French public. The French sample still reported a rather high legitimacy of strikes and reported informing themselves as much about strikes as the British sample and more than the German sample. In the strike-related social network behaviour, all three samples reported rather low levels. Thus, there are differences in the three countries regarding their strike attitudes and reactions, but further research is needed to look for causes of these differences.

Additional differences were found in regard of the willingness to strike. We assumed that the French sample might show the highest willingness followed by the British sample and then the German sample, based on the differing frequency of strikes in the three countries (Vandaele, 2016). Our results draw a different picture: the German sample reported the highest willingness to strike despite living in the country with the lowest strike frequency. The British and French samples did not differ significantly from each other in their willingness to strike. Hence, strike frequency in a country might not picture the willingness to strike of the public but influences of regulations and laws that inhibit or foster the tendency to strike. These relations could be assessed in further studies. Another reason for this unexpected result might be that the ongoing general strike in France also influenced the willingness to strike

among French participants in a negative way as they might already have participated themselves in this general strike. This also aligns with the fact that in the French sample almost half of the participants reported to have participated in a strike before, compared to only around 20% in the other samples. Future research could further assess other reasons for this result, for example one other reason could also be that our German participants have a greater intention-behaviour gap (Sheeran & Webb, 2016) than our French participants. Hence, they might report a higher willingness, but when it comes to strike, they might shy away from their initial intention and not participate.

Furthermore, we showed that the relationship of the strike attitudes with the variables willingness to strike, union membership and strike history was similar across the three samples: negative reactions were negative related to willingness to strike, all other factors of the SABeRS were positively related with willingness to strike across all countries. Additionally, union members and participants with a strike history reported in all three samples more legitimacy, informing themselves more about strikes, more support for strikes, more strike-related social network behaviour, and fewer negative reactions to strikes than non-union members and participants without strike history. This indicates that some processes that might influence attitudes, such as experiencing a strike as a striker, work in the same way across the three countries. Furthermore, this aligns with previous research showing that a collective identity can develop during strikes (López-Andreu, 2020) which might have long-lasting influences on strike attitudes.

Hence, although the samples differ overall in their strike attitudes, some similarities regarding the relationships with other variables were also found. Reactions to strikes could thus differ depending on where these strikes take place due to cultural, legal, or other differences. This study gave a first indication of differences between the three countries examined, but further studies are needed to look at these differences in more detail. This also includes the question as to when a strike is considered legitimate, which is especially important for unions building on public support for strikes during collective bargaining (Kelloway et al., 2008). In accordance with institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977), trade unions' survival hinges on public support of strikes to some extent.

Limitations and Future Research

This study also has its limitations. Two of these seem particularly noteworthy. First, the legitimacy of strikes and support of strikers' factors correlated rather highly with each other. This correlation could be caused by the subjunctive formulation of the support of strikers-items: people who evaluated strikes as legitimate reported that they would rather support strikers. However, it should be waited whether this correlation remains high if the scale is used for a specific strike, as a specific strike allows for the reformulation of the items measuring the support of strikers' factor, so that they display real behaviour and not only behavioural intentions. Second, this study followed a cross-sectional design with a single questionnaire containing all scales. Hence, common-method bias might be an issue in our study (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Future research could try to assess the strike attitudes and other variables at different time points. Furthermore, other measures such as actual strike participation and not the mere willingness might also be considered in future research. The most important aspect that future research could tackle is to assess what might be reasons for the differences found between British, German and French participants in their strike attitudes. This research should also consider the role of crises such as the Covid 19 pandemic, the Ukraine war, or the cost of living crises on strike attitudes and willingness to strike.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to assess the differences in strike attitudes between British, German and French samples. We found that the three samples did differ in both attitudes to strikes and their willingness to strike. Surprisingly, Germans reported the most positive attitudes to strikes and the highest willingness to strike. We also found that the strike attitudes and behavioural reactions were significantly related to willingness to strike and differed between union members and non-members in all three samples. Future research can assess reasons for the differences found in strike attitudes.

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Table 1

Items in English, German, and French

Factor	English	German	French
Negative reactions to strikes	I feel disturbed by strikes.	Ich fühle mich von Streiks gestört.	Les grèves me dérangent.
Negative reactions to strikes	Strikes strain myself.	Streiks belasten mich.	Les grèves m'accablent.
Negative reactions to strikes	I am annoyed by strikes.	Von Streiks bin ich genervt.	Les grèves m'énervent.
Legitimacy of strikes	Strikes are necessary.	Streiks sind notwendig.	Les grèves sont nécessaires.
Legitimacy of strikes	Strikes are justified.	Streiks sind gerechtfertigt.	Les grèves sont justifiées.
Legitimacy of strikes	Strikes are a waste of time. (reverse-coded)	Streiks sind eine Zeitverschwendung.	Les grèves sont une perte de temps.
Informing oneself about strikes	I read news about strikes.	Ich lese Nachrichten über Streiks.	Je consulte les informations au sujet des grèves.
Informing oneself about strikes	I am interested in the reasons of strikes.	Ich interessiere mich für die Gründe von Streiks.	Je suis intéressé(e) par les raisons des grèves.
Informing oneself about strikes	I acquire background knowledge about strikes.	Ich eigne mir selbst Hintergrundwissen zu Streiks an.	J'acquiers moi-même des connaissances de fond sur les grèves.
Strike-related social network behaviour	I share information about strikes on social media.	Ich teile Informationen zu Streiks in den sozialen Netzwerken.	Je partage des informations sur les grèves dans les réseaux sociaux.
Strike-related social network behaviour	I comment on posts about strikes on the social media.	Ich kommentiere Beiträge in sozialen Netzwerken zu Streiks.	Je commente les publications concernant les grèves sur les réseaux sociaux.
Strike-related social network behaviour	I look at posts about strikes on social media.	Ich schaue mir Beiträge zu Streiks in sozialen Netzwerken an.	Je regarde les posts concernant les grèves sur les réseaux sociaux.
Support of strikers	I would show my support to strikers.	Ich würde Streikenden meine Unterstützung zeigen.	Je voudrais montrer mon soutien aux grévistes.
Support of strikers	I would accept flyers from strikers.	Ich würde Flyer von Streikenden entgegennehmen.	J'accepterais des tracts de grévistes.
Support of strikers	I would support the strikers' position in conversations.	Ich würde die Seite der Streikenden bei Diskussionen einnehmen.	Je prendrais le parti des grévistes dans une discussion.
Willingness to strikes	I would strike for more money.	Ich würde für mehr Geld streiken.	Je ferais la grève pour une meilleure rémunération.
Willingness to strikes	I would strike for better working hours.	Ich würde für bessere Arbeitszeiten streiken.	Je ferais la grève pour de meilleurs horaires de travail.

Willingness to strikes	I would strike for better working conditions.	Ich würde für bessere Arbeitsbedingungen streiken.	Je ferais la grève pour de meilleurs conditions de travail.
Willingness to strikes	I would strike for more days off.	Ich würde für mehr freie Tage streiken.	Je ferais la grève pour plus de jours de congé.

Table 2

Internal Consistencies of the Five Factors of the Strike Attitude and Behavioural Reactions Scale (SABeRS) and Willingness to Strike for the Three Samples (N_{UK} *= 444,* N_{DE} *= 454,* N_{FR} *= 463)*

Sample	Factor	Cronbach's α	McDonald's ω	*M*	*SD*
UK	Negative reactions towards strikes	.75	.76 [.72-.81]	2.75	0.95
UK	Legitimacy of strikes	.86	.86 [.83-.89]	3.41	0.96
UK	Informing oneself about strikes	.69	.69 [.64-.74]	3.40	0.89
UK	Strike-related social network behaviour	.84	.85 [.82-.88]	1.89	0.98
UK	Support of strikers	.85	.85 [.83-.88]	3.20	1.03
UK	Willingness to strike	.91	.91 [.89-.93]	3.54	1.18
DE	Negative reactions towards strikes	.88	.88 [.85-.90]	2.41	1.05
DE	Legitimacy of strikes	.79	.80 [.76-.84]	3.76	0.85
DE	Informing oneself about strikes	.81	.81 [.78-.84]	3.30	0.97
DE	Strike-related social network behaviour	.86	.86 [.83-.89]	1.79	0.98
DE	Support of strikers	.80	.80 [.76-.83]	3.01	0.98
DE	Willingness to strike	.90	.90 [.87-.92]	3.93	1.09
FR	Negative reactions towards strikes	.87	.87 [.85-.90]	2.85	1.28
FR	Legitimacy of strikes	.86	.86 [.84-.89]	3.59	1.11
FR	Informing oneself about strikes	.68	.69 [.64-.74]	3.36	0.98
FR	Strike-related social network behaviour	.85	.85 [.82-.88]	1.91	1.12
FR	Support of strikers	.87	.88 [.85-.90]	2.95	1.31
FR	Willingness to strike	.87	.87 [.84-.89]	3.38	1.21

Note. UK = United Kingdom, DE = Germany, FR = France. Numbers in brackets represent the 95% confidence interval.

Table 3

Results of the MANCOVA with the Independent Variable Country Affiliation

	British participants		German participants		French participants	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Negative reactions towards strikes	2.75	1.10	2.44	1.11	2.82	1.12
Legitimacy of strikes	3.41	0.99	3.74	1.00	3.61	0.99
Informing oneself about strikes	3.40	0.93	3.34	0.94	3.32	0.95
Strike-related social network behaviour	1.89	1.03	1.78	1.04	1.93	1.05
Support of strikers	3.20	1.12	3.00	1.13	2.96	1.14
Multivariate results						
F	15.16					
df_1	10					
df_2	2702					
p	< .001					
Wilk's Λ	.90					
η_p^2	.05					

Note. N_{UK} = 444, N_{DE} = 454, and N_{FR} = 463. UK = United Kingdom, DE = Germany, FR = France. Control variables: Age, gender, education. The covariates age, $F(5, 1351) = 13.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, gender, $F(5, 1351) = 3.35$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, and education, $F(5, 1351) = 12.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, were significantly related to the SABeRS,

Table 4

Correlations of the Five Factors of Strike Attitudes and Behavioural Reactions Scale and Willingness to Strike for the Three Samples

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		UK/DE/FR	UK/DE/FR	UK/DE/FR	UK/DE/FR	UK/DE/FR	UK/DE/FR	UK/DE/FR	UK/DE/FR	UK/DE/FR
1	Negative reactions towards strikes	-								
2	Legitimacy of strikes	**-.58**/**-.58**/**-.76**	-							
3	Informing oneself about strikes	-.11*/**-.20**/**-.33**	**.43**/**.43**/**.47**	-						
4	Strike-related social network behaviour	-.08/-.08/**-.26**	**.31**/**.25**/**.33**	**.45**/**.49**/**.51**	-					
5	Support of strikers	**-.48**/**-.40**/**-.66**	**.74**/**.65**/**.76**	**.50**/**.63**/**.63**	**.42**/**.44**/**.51**	-				
6	Willingness to strike	**-.41**/**-.32**/**-.43**	**.67**/**.53**/**.53**	**.32**/**.33**/**.41**	**.32**/**.21**/**.34**	**.57**/**.48**/**.53**	-			
7	Age	-.04/.03/-.00	-.07/-.01/-.06	.00/.10*/.09	-.16**/-.09/-.08	-.04/.10*/.01	**-.20**/-.09/-.05			
8	Gender	-.02/-.01/.05	-.00/.07/-.09*	.12**/**.16**/.01	.06/.02/-.03	.00/.11*/-.05	.03/.08/.03	.10*/-.02/**.18**		
9	Education	.07/.13**/.14**	.00/-.05/-.07	**.18**/.12*/.06	.12*/-.01/-.05	-.00/.01/-.08	-.00/.01/-.09	**-.19**/**-.24**/-.14**	-.00/.06/-.06	
	M	2.75/2.41/2.85	3.41/3.76/3.59	3.40/3.30/3.36	1.89/1.79/1.91	3.20/3.01/2.95	3.54/3.93/3.38	46.82/44.80/47-36	1.34/1.35/1.31	4.06/3.73/4.64
	SD	0.95/1.05/1.28	0.96/0.85/1.11	0.89/0.97/0.98	0.98/0.98/1.12	1.03/0.98/1.31	1.18/1.09/1.21	10.68/10.64/8.53	0.48/0.48/0.46	1.96/1.85/1.54

Note. N_{UK} = 444, N_{DE} = 454, N_{FR} = 463. UK = United Kingdom, DE = Germany, FR = France. Values in bold are significant with $p < .001$. Gender was coded with 1 = female, 2 = male. Education was coded from 1 = primary education to 8 = doctoral degrees.* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Results of the MANCOVA with the Independent Variable Union Membership for All Three Samples

	British sample				German sample				French sample			
	$M_{union\ members}$	$SD_{union\ members}$	$M_{non-members}$	$SD_{non-members}$	$M_{union\ members}$	$SD_{union\ members}$	$M_{non-members}$	$SD_{non-members}$	$M_{union\ members}$	$SD_{union\ members}$	$M_{non-members}$	$SD_{non-members}$
Negative reactions towards strikes	2.47	0.95	2.83	0.94	2.00	1.03	2.48	1.02	2.26	1.24	2.96	1.23
Legitimacy of strikes	3.88	0.94	3.27	0.94	4.11	0.83	3.70	0.83	4.11	1.09	3.49	1.09
Informing oneself about strikes	3.59	0.87	3.34	0.86	3.59	0.94	3.26	0.95	3.80	0.96	3.28	0.96
Strike-related social network behaviour	2.15	0.96	1.80	0.96	1.88	0.98	1.78	0.97	2.50	1.09	1.79	1.09
Support of strikers	3.66	1.00	3.05	0.99	3.45	0.96	2.93	0.97	3.57	1.28	2.83	1.27
	Multivariate results											
F	4.27				2.59				4.58			
df_1	10				10				10			
df_2	868				888				906			

p	< .001	.004	< .001
Wilk's Λ	.91	.94	.91
η_p^2	.05	.03	.05

Note. $n_{British\ union\ members}$ = 100, $n_{British\ non\text{-}members}$ = 338, $n_{German\ union\ members}$ = 62, $n_{German\ non\text{-}members}$ = 388, $n_{French\ union\ members}$ = 75, $n_{French\ non\text{-}members}$ = 382; the sample sizes are different to the overall sample sizes as some participants chose the option "not specified" for union membership and were excluded from these analyses. Covariates were age, gender, and education.

Table 6

Results of the MANCOVA with the Independent Variable Strike Participation for All Three Samples

	British sample				German sample				French sample			
	$M_{strike\ participatiion}$	$SD_{strike\ participation}$	$M_{no\ strike\ participation}$	$SD_{no\ strike\ participation}$	$M_{strike\ participatiion}$	$SD_{strike\ participation}$	$M_{no\ strike\ participation}$	$SD_{no\ strike\ participation}$	$M_{strike\ participatiion}$	$SD_{strike\ participation}$	$M_{no\ strike\ participation}$	$SD_{no\ strike\ participation}$
Negative reactions towards strikes	2.11	0.93	2.89	0.91	2.00	1.02	2.53	1.01	2.37	1.19	3.28	1.18
Legitimacy of strikes	4.03	0.95	3.28	0.93	4.18	0.82	3.64	0.82	4.07	1.03	3.17	1.02
Informing oneself about strikes	3.71	0.87	3.33	0.85	3.78	0.91	3.18	0.92	3.75	0.91	3.03	0.91
Strike-related social network behaviour	2.35	0.96	1.78	0.95	2.22	0.96	1.68	0.95	2.15	1.10	1.69	1.10
Support of strikers	3.89	0.99	3.04	0.99	3.59	0.93	2.84	0.94	3.55	1.19	2.44	1.20
	Multivariate results											
F	7.95				6.96				11.99			
df_1	10				10				10			
df_2	868				888				906			
p	< .001				< .001				< .001			

Wilk's Λ	.84	.86	.78
η_p^2	.08	.07	.12

Note. $n_{British\ strike\ participation} = 81$, $n_{British\ no\ strike\ participation} = 360$, $n_{German\ strike\ participation} = 99$, $n_{German\ no\ strike\ participation} = 350$, $n_{French\ strike\ participation} = 210$, $n_{French\ no\ strike\ participation} = 248$; the sample sizes are different to the otherwise reported sample sizes as some participants chose the option "not specified" for strike participation and were excluded from these analyses. Covariates were age, gender, and education.