CHILDCARE POLICIES AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE POST-SOVIET EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

by

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Author's declaration

I, the undersigned Maryna Lebid hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

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Abstract

Welfare mainstream theories have been criticised greatly in recent decades for their failure to account for a gender perspective in their analysis. Care work is argued to be a crucial element that impacts the welfare system and gender regime. Devaluing the care work and shifting its provision within the family solely to women exacerbates social stratification. Childcare leave policies may serve as a tool for the state to challenge traditional gender norms engaging men in caregiving activities and promoting women's equality in the private sphere. At the same time, leave policies can be used to familialize care provision and reinforce traditional values in society. The childcare policies in post-Soviet Eastern Europe are understudied and underrepresented in English-writing academic work. Nevertheless, decades of Soviet legacy dominated by one-sided gender equality in employment and years of neoliberal capitalist experimentations make post-Soviet Eastern Europe a suitable avenue for investigation of gender relations and the way they are impacted by leave regulations. Drawing on the theoretical work of Fraser this research investigates the extent to which childcare policies in seven post-Soviet countries conform to the models of labour division and promote gender equality. The conclusions produced in this research provide evidence that the non-EU members carry on the Soviet legacy of neglecting gender equality in the private sphere and characterized by refamilialization. At the same time, the Baltic countries are remarkably affected by the EU membership and introduce leave policies that contribute to greater gender symmetry in the countries.

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1. Introduction

What do we know about gender relations in post-Soviet countries and how childcare policies relate to gender equality? The study of welfare regime mostly focuses on Western Europe and the post-Soviet countries and their gender regimes are understudied. Dominated by seventy years of Soviet one-sided discourse on gender equality that was focused solely on women's employment, but not on equality in the private sphere, the region has been going through transformation processes for the past thirty years that might bring a change in approaching gender equality (Pascall and Kwak 2005; Szikra and Szelewa 2010). Childcare leave policies reflect states' intentions on changing gender roles and valorize care work that is mainly performed by women. Their transformative effect can be triggered by particular policy designs, however, childcare policies can also be tools to reinforce traditional norms and keep women in inferior position in comparison to men (Gornick and Meyers 2003). Analysing childcare policies in post-Soviet countries helps to bridge the knowledge gap between Western and Eastern Europe and improve policy-making in the gender equality field. To help to systematize the knowledge on gender regimes in post-Soviet countries this study looks at the extent to which childcare policies in seven countries in Eastern Europe are contributing to gender role transformation and gender equality.

A developing body of scholarship bringing a gender perspective to welfare study emphasizes the importance of care work inclusion to the analysis. The scholars criticize mainstream theories for overlooking the family as a welfare actor and neglecting unpaid labour mostly performed by women (Bussemaker and Kersbergen 1994; Lewis 1992; Orloff 1993). To answer a question of the welfare model in the after family-wage era

Fraser (1994) puts care work in the middle of the analysis and offers three models of labour division as an alternative to the model that shaped traditional welfare analysis, the *male breadwinner*. The models are reflecting the level of gender equality. Among the various models the *universal caregiver* model represents the greatest potential for achieving gender equality. In this context childcare leave policies are argued to be transformative instruments challenging traditional norms of fatherhood and gender roles within the family (Ciccia and Verloo 2012). A short leave with high compensation and reserved time only for fathers can incentivize men to get involved in care work and change the societal perception of family roles (O'Brien and Wall 2017). At the same time, long leaves are proven to adversely affect women's employment encouraging the traditional division of gender roles (Gornick and Meyers 2003). Other factors like the presence of specific incentives for fathers and equality of the entitlements to care in the family have significant effect on the transformative power of the leaves (Ciccia and Verloo 2012).

Eastern Europe covers a great part of the former USSR republics. It combines decades of Soviet legacy and a recent period of transition from the centrally planned economy. The diversity of post-USSR paths taken by the countries makes the region especially interesting. The Soviet legacy shared by the countries in terms of gender equality is represented by "facade equality" that focused more on women's labour force participation, excluding patriarchy, the unequal position of women in the household, and the double burden women carry from the public discourse (Pascall and Kwak 2005; Pascall and Manning 2000; Szikra and Szelewa 2010). Refamilialization became a common trend for the freshly independent countries handling the economic hardship of the transition period. Cuts of social expenditures, long parental leaves and other policy developments were

designed to shift childrearing responsibilities back to family, drive women out of the labour market and increase the birth rate (Hantrais 2004b; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007). However, despite the similarities of the early transition period, some scholars underscore the countries divergence in term of their welfare system and gender regime formation (Fenger 2007). As the childcare leave regulations reflect gender equality efforts in the country their analysis may contribute to better understating of the regional diversity in terms of gender assymmetries.

Using theoretical models developed by Fraser this study utilizes fuzzy-set ideal type analysis method to investigate the conformity of childcare policies to the theorized models, ideal types, and their relation to gender equality. The child care policies in seven countries, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Georgia are examined based on the analytical framework developed by Ciccia and Verloo (2012). The results show the region has a diversity manifested in the significant difference between the non-EU members and EU members. The Baltic countries almost do not conform to any of the models but lean mostly to the *universal caregiver* which promotes gender equality the most and the *caregiver parity* models. On the other hand, all the non-EU members correspond to the traditional *male breadwinner* model with Ukraine and Russia showing the highest correspondence and Belarus and Georgia deviating slightly from the trend. Based on these findings we may conclude that post communist legacy was carried on by the post-Soviet countries and, at the same time, the EU membership had a remarkable effect on the Baltic countries' approach to gender equality. The qualitative results are also complemented with the quantitative analysis utilizing the Gender

Inequality Index. The results confirmed the hypothesis about the countries confirming the male breadwinner model are associated with the lowest commitment to gender equality.

The study contributes to a better understanding of the gender regimes in post-Soviet Eastern Europe, their diversity and the role of childcare policies in impacting gender equality. In addition, the study applies an analytical framework developed to study Western societies to test its relevance for Eastern Europe and provides a consolidated analysis of the countries thanks to the data collected by the author.

This thesis starts with presenting the main points in academic debates on the care work as a part of welfare analysis and transformative power of the childcare leave. It proceeds with the background information on the gender regimes in the Soviet Union and after its collapse. A separate section discusses the method applied and gives an overview of the collected data. In the next parts, I introduce the main findings of the analysis and conclude with the discussion of the results connecting them to the theory.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Welfare State and Gender

In recent years mainstream welfare theories have become the subject of extensive criticism due to their failure to account for the role of gender in the development of the welfare state. The decline of the male breadwinner model has revealed the role of family, and women, as an essential actor in welfare provision. With this shift, it has become clear that gender should be included in analysis of welfare regimes. In particular, Lewis (1992) emphasizes the importance of unpaid and paid work interaction analysis as a crucial point for understanding welfare regimes. Bussemaker and Kersbergen (1994) also argue that fixating on state and market overlooks the role of the family in welfare provision and unpaid care work supplied mostly by women.

Orloff (1993) takes further the critique of classical welfare theory and offers a new conceptual framework for welfare analysis. She criticizes Esping-Andersen's typology and argues that state-market-family relations in the organization of welfare provision should be taken into consideration. In her view, decommodified labour has a different impact on men and women and treatment of paid and unpaid work serves to exacerbate social stratification. Thus, the role played by both these forms of labour should be considered in welfare analysis (1993:323)**.** To account for these factors Orloff defines two new dimensions that help to incorporate gender into welfare analysis: access to paid work and the ability to form and maintain an autonomous household (1993:319). The inclusion of these two dimensions also highlights the importance of the private sphere which has historically tended to be more associated with unpaid work carried out by women and has consequently been largely neglected.

Continuing discussion on the male-breadwinner family model decline, Fraser (1994) defines it as the end of the family-wage era. By introducing a concept of "social reproduction", she brings a private domestic sphere dominated by women out of the shade of "economic production" (Leonard and Fraser 2016). The separation of these two spheres is gendered and comprises the "principal institutional basis for women's subordination" (Leonard and Fraser 2016) she argues. At the same time, the social organization of care work is emphasized as "crucial to human well-being" and "social standing of women in particular" (Fraser 1994:600). Care work labour division serves as the basis for Fraser's (1994) alternative welfare models of the post-family wage era that will be discussed later in this paper.

Pascall and Lewis (2004) recognize care work as an essential element of gender equality analysis. In their attempt to derive a model of gender equality they identify five key dimensions which determine gender regimes as interconnected systems: paid work, income, care work, time, and voice. However, care work division in households stands out as a cross-cutting issue influencing all the dimensions. For instance, making parents responsible for providing care results in gender differences in "labour market attachment, continuity, and flexibility" (Pascall and Lewis 2004:381). Since care work is not recognized at the same level as paid work it also has a negative impact on women's income as primary carers. Women are also often forced to combine housework with a paid job, reducing both their leisure time and ability to participate in the public sphere, limiting their career perspectives and voice. Thus, the way care work is divided in the household has a disproportionally high effect on women's position in society along all the identified dimensions of paid work, income, care work, time, and voice.

A developing body of scholarship compensating for traditional welfare analysis' failure to address gender issues indicates an importance of inclusion of care work as a part of gendered perspective into welfare analysis. This opens room for further examination of how welfare policies impact men and women differently and how welfare provision targeted at changing labour division within a household can reduce stratification and influence gender equality in society.

2.2. Models of Care Work Organization and Gender Equality

The way care work and economic work are distributed within the household impacts gender equality. The dominant way of organising care work that prevailed in most welfare states after the Second World War is the so-called **male breadwinner** model. Despite the claims of its demise it is still shown to be common for European welfare settings (Ciccia and Verloo 2012) and shapes gender regimes. The model implies a traditional division of gender roles where a man is responsible for family wage provision and a woman dedicates her time to childrearing and other domestic work. Since welfare benefits are connected to employment women are dependent on their husbands and indirectly entitled to the benefits their husbands get (Lewis 1992, 1997).

Nancy Fraser (1994) in her pioneering work tries to address the trend of male breadwinner model decline. She attempts to answer the question of what the new welfare state, where men are not the only primary earners, should look like. Fraser offers three models of care labour division in the household that also impact gender equality differently.

The **universal breadwinner** model implies bringing women up to parity with men through the provision of jobs. The welfare benefits are linked to employment and distributed through social insurance. Care responsibilities, in this case, are shifted from family to the

state and the market. This in turn creates a separate field of professional care provision. This labour division helps to protect women from poverty and exploitation; however, it still implies women fitting in a field traditionally valorised according to male-dominated norms – employment. By putting a higher value on paid work, it denigrates care work which creates an obstacle for equality (Fraser 1994). Other scholars have used the same model in their work, e.g. adult worker model described by Lewis and Giullari (2005).

The **caregiver parity** model keeps childbearing, child-raising, and other forms of domestic labour within the household. A publicly funded caregiving allowance is a way to compensate women for their work and put them on a par with men's breadwinner role. Despite an effort to equalize men's and women's roles in society the model encourages preserving traditional gender associations of feminine care work and masculine paid work.

The **universal caregiver** model implies gender deconstruction, the transformation of traditional gender roles, and equal division of care work, where fathers are responsible for caregiving on the same level as mothers and other actors. Each worker in this model is also a caregiver eligible for "employment-enabling services" and paid work organization allows combining caregiving responsibilities with economic activities (Fraser, 1994:612). This model is defined by Fraser as the closest to the gender equality ideal that entails structural changes causing gender deconstruction.

The four models present the ideal types of labour division in the household (Table I) and will serve as the basis for this research analysis to examine the extent to which leave policies promote gender equality in the private sphere. Male breadwinner is taken as a ground zero model. It implies women are only responsible for childcare (length +,

concentration of rights +) and devalues childcare work by providing no remuneration for it (money -). The universal breadwinner model is considered relatively closer to gender equality as it puts some value on childcare work by remunerating it through the market instruments (money +), however, since the provision of maternity leave is available just for women the model suggests childcare rights concentrated at women. The caregiver parity model is also relatively closer to gender equality as it compensates women for care work on the same level with productive work (money +). Nevertheless, care work is still just women's responsibility (concentration +). The universal caregiver model is taken in this research as the highest manifestation of gender equality. It demands that care work be valorized and put on the same level with productive work by engaging fathers in doing it (concentration -, father's incentives +).

***Table 1**. Parental leave ideal types.*
Source: inspired by Ciccia and Verloo (2012), adjusted by adding GE score that stands for the proximity to gender equality in the household. (+) means membership in the set and (-) demotes absence in the set.

Ideal types	Women's leave		Men's leave		Concentration of rights	Father's incentives	GE score
	Length	*Money*	*Length*	*Money*			
Male breadwinner	+	-	-	-	+	-	1
Universal breadwinner	-	-	-	-	+	-	2
Caregiver parity	+	+	-	-	+	-	3
Universal caregiver	+	+	+	+	-	+	4

To examine my theoretical assumption regarding the correlation between the four models and gender equality level in society, I will use the Gender Inequality Index (GII). I will link the results of the qualitative analysis of care regimes to this internationally acknowledged quantitative measure of gender equality. GII is one of the Human Development Index components which measures the human development cost of gender inequality. The higher the GII value and country's rank in the index the higher the difference between male and female and drop in human development in the country. The index incorporates three components to measure gender inequality: reproductive health expressed in maternal mortality rate and adolescent birth; empowerment presented by the share of parliamentary seats and proportion of male and female adults aged 25 years and older who have at least secondary education; and economic status that is measured by employment rate of female and male population over 15 years (Human Development Reports 2020).

As will be shown later the childcare policy design can have a different effect on women's labour force participation. Longer homecare leave tends to lower female labour force participation and wage rates (Gornick and Meyers 2003; Lewis 2006a). Based on this evidence we can build a hypothesis regarding the correlation between a given country's labour division model and its place in terms of the Gender Inequality Index.

Hypothesis: the countries analysed are ranked higher on GII when they conform more closely to the male breadwinner model and lower when they belong to the universal breadwinner and caregiver parity models. Countries that comply with the universal caregiver model are ranked lowest in the GII.

Before proceeding further with our analysis, we should, however, note a number of limitations in the GII's methodology. As has been shown by some scholars the length of homecare has an impact not just on female employment rates, but also on wage rate and occupational segregation (Ruhm 1998; Lewis 2006). The GII does not account for income and occupational disparities between male and female population and so its explanatory power of gender equality in the examined countries might have limitations.

2.3. Parental Leave as a Transformative Policy Tool

The transformational power of leave policies lies in its capacity to change how mothers and fathers share work and childcare and to counter traditional gender relations (Ciccia and Verloo, 2012). Compared to public childcare services they are designed to facilitate maternal employment and defamilialize care responsibilities in general, rather than to regulate gender relations (Leitner 2003). At the same time, parental leave policies have the potential to challenge "conventional wisdom about mothers as "natural" carers" and fathers as primary earners (Leira 2002:84). By emphasizing the father's right to take up care they can set new norms about "good" fathers, create a space for the development of "new masculine and fatherhood identities" (2002:84). However, parental leave can bring positive changes to gender symmetry in specific settings. According to Leitner (2003), de-gendered family policies which are not linked to biological sex differences can stimulate gender equality by validating family care and providing "comparable benefits for different family care arrangements"(Leitner 2003:368). One such policy example is the "father's quota" which has been widely introduced in Western European countries in recent decades (Lammi-Taskula 2006). With this policy, the state intervenes in the way the family decides how to use the leave and puts a moral obligation on fathers to take up

care. This approach interferes with the commonly overlooked inequality in the private sphere and brings it to the same level as inequality in areas of the public sphere such as employment.

To evaluate parenthood policies' potential impact on gender equality the policies should be treated as an interconnected system that can result in different outcomes conditioned on policy design. Leave length and generosity are classical criteria which many studies use to evaluate policy impact on gender equality (Evertsson and Duvander 2011; Galtry and Callister 2005; Gornick and Meyers 2003; Ray, Gornick, and Schmitt 2010). Nonetheless, other components like equality in entitlements to care leaves between parents, incentives for father's uptake of care, etc., should be included in the analysis of the effect of increased leave provision.

Numerous studies show how leave policies can impact gender relations (Gornick and Meyers, 2003; Ray et al., 2010; Morgan and Zipper, 2003). A strong positive correlation between gender equality and generosity of leave was illustrated by Ray et al. (2010). Short or moderate leave can also have several effects on women's position in society and the labour market in particular (Gornick and Meyers 2003). It increases women's labour force participation before the first child is born and raises the likelihood of re-entering the labour market before within a year after the birth of a child. It is also likely to decrease the wage penalty for mothers in comparison with non-mothers. At the same time, however, Morgan and Zippel's (2003) analysis suggests that long leave policies produce lower labour force participation among mothers with children under three years, thus reinforcing traditional gender roles and care work division. Among other negative effects of such leave policies, we may also identify higher discrimination of women as potential

employees. This is caused by the fact that women are perceived as a more expensive investment for the employer who will have to provide leave benefits and bear financial loss while women are on leave. Additionally, wage penalties are emphasized as a consequence of longer leave. However, leave policies should not be analyzed just through the criteria of length or generosity, but rather a multidimensional framework is needed to assess the effect of different policy design on gender equality (Ciccia and Verloo 2012).

In addition to generosity and length, Ciccia and Verloo (2012) suggest looking at the equity of leave entitlement between parents and the presence of incentives for fathers to take leave. Thus, the inclusion of non-carers, often fathers, in care activities through leave policies challenges "organizational work cultures" (2012: 508). At the same time, to make sure fathers exercise their right to take childcare, parental policy should be specifically designed for it. The compensation level should be higher than 50 per cent of earnings and leave duration should be longer than fourteen days (O'Brien 2009). Higher compensation works as a strong incentive for fathers and helps to break a vicious circle for women stuck in a caregiver role. Policies aimed at engaging fathers in childcare, paternity leave, or exclusive fathers' right for a time off from their job to provide childcare, despite its great popularity is criticized for its limited capacity to transform gender relations. It is relatively short and often taken up while mothers are also at home. Thus, it keeps women in the role of primary caregivers, while fathers provide additional help, rather than taking full responsibility for caring for a child (Lammi-Taskula 2006). It may be concluded that in contrast to paternity leave, parental leave taken by fathers has more

power to impact gender relations symmetry providing fathers with a significant care experience and helping mothers to reduce double burden.

2.4. Gender Regimes and Parenthood Policies in Post-Communist Countries

Seventy years of socialism, followed by thirty years of neoliberal capitalist period makes Eastern Europe a “laboratory of experimentation” as Esping-Andersen noted (1996: 27). The welfare regime formation in the region is an interaction of two processes: path-dependency and policy diffusion (Fenger 2007). In his efforts to analyze the region’s welfare regimes Deacon (2002) suggests that post-communist countries form a single “temporary” ‘post-communist conservative corporatist’ cluster that can be added to Esping-Anderson classification. However, Fenger (2007) divides the region into three types: post-communist states which are the closest to Western Europe, former USSR members, and countries with immature welfare regimes. In addition, several studies disprove a notion that post-communist countries represent one solid bloc in terms of gender relations (Fenger 2007; Javornik 2016; Johnson 2007; Mahon and Williams 2007; Szelewa and Polakowski 2008). As we have shown already welfare regimes are intrinsically linked to gender relations in society and the role of women in welfare provision should be studied to understand the situation with gender equality.

2.4.1. The Soviet legacy

The Soviet period in terms of gender relations was aptly characterized by Szikra and Szelewa (2010:84) as a “Marshal citizenship theory upside-down”. Women often were given social and economic rights earlier than civil rights and especially political rights that came later after the Soviet Union collapsed. Driven by the economic need in the intensively industrializing country the state actively engaged women in the labour market.

Thus, occupational welfare became a key source of welfare provision for women (Pascall and Kwak 2005). To make women able to reconcile work and family the Soviet Union was among the first ones that introduced affordable childcare services and extensive parental leave (Szelewa and Polakowski 2008). As economic equality was "state-imposed" (Pascall and Manning 2000:43) it caused a situation of "gender equality facade" that was represented by high levels of women's employment. However, this was not backed up by women's strong political voice and equality in the private sphere (Pascall and Kwak 2005; Pascall and Manning 2000; Szikra and Szelewa 2010).

Despite its generosity, the policies which were supposed to support working women had contradictory features and imposed a double burden on Soviet women. The socialist state combined defamilializing the labour market and childcare policies with maternal leave policies. In this way, the state attempted to encourage women's labour force participation and deal with the slower demographic development at the same time (Szikra and Szelewa 2010). As the policies were aimed solely at supporting employed women they were not designed to involve men in childcare. As scholars point out this resulted in a double burden for women and their disproportional emancipation that was attained just in the economic field (Pascall and Manning 2000; Szikra and Szelewa 2010).

Describing the limited nature of gender equality in the Soviet Union Pascall and Kwak (2005) point out that since women's emancipation was driven by the state, the state also decided what can be a part of equality discourse and what not. Thus, equality in the private sphere, patriarchy, and double burden were forbidden topics that could not be raised openly. And while socialist women took a much bigger part of paid work in comparison with Western women equality in the household was behind the scene.

Factors like limited access to housing and low salaries further constrained options for separation and the capacity to maintain an independent household. The model of parental care emphasised traditional gender divisions, leading to a disproportional burden on women rather than gender equality in the family realm.

2.4.2. Transition period

The economic hardship of the post-USSR transition period put new governments in the position when they must cut social expenditures and at the same time take steps to legitimize new regimes. This caused a general trend of shifting child-rearing responsibilities to families, "refamilialization", and at the same time keeping rather generous unemployment, disability, sickness, and early retirement schemes (Fenger 2007). Women's participation in the post-Soviet period can be described as a well-established dual-earner household that was based on the long history of working women and the fact that countries simply could not afford the male breadwinner model. Women were forced into the labour market to sustain their families (Pascall and Kwak 2005; Szikra and Szelewa 2010). As a result, women chose to pursue their careers in this situation of economic instability, and the fertility rate consequently decreased (Szikra and Szelewa 2010). Alongside this, the labour market continued to shrink, and unemployment rates grew sharply. Economic and political crises, the need for nation-building in the newly independent countries, and outstanding rates of demographic decrease granted legitimacy to pro-natal policies. In the situation when the government is not able to support families the "importance of traditional family values has been reinforced" (Hantrais 2004a:162) and the policies of refamilialization increased in popularity.

Women did not have enough opportunities to commodify themselves and fathers' income was too low to support the family. Marketization that worked in the West was not that successful in Eastern Europe since women could not afford private childcare services (Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007). In its attempt to deal with high unemployment the states tried to substitute work for women with family responsibilities that were supported with public funds. However, since social provision was not sufficient women were put at risk of high poverty. Coupled with high dependency on housing which was not resolved with marketization, and domestic violence with no options for escape, women's equal position in the post-communist world was an open question (Pascall and Kwak 2005). Since "gender equality" was state-imposed, the historical stage of women's political voice formation was skipped. Despite the legal basis for equality as high engagement at the labour market weak civil society and women's voice in it prevented changes in private sphere equality for women. As a result, women faced an increased double burden in post-communist countries.

Refamilialization as an answer to a difficult transition period was argued by many scholars as a common trend for post-socialist countries (Hantrais 2004b; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007). Hantrais (2004b) describes refamilialization as a process that was triggered by the Soviet Union's collapse and the end of the universal provision of basic services, e.g. health and child care, housing etc. The responsibility for family care was shifted from the state back to families. Women were forced to take this responsibility since they were driven out of the labour market in the situation of high unemployment. Despite the similar trend for post-socialist countries, cultural differences, degree of economic crises, institutionalized policies, the influence of the European Union and international

organizations accounted for different scales of refamiliarization in the countries of the region (Pascall and Manning 2000). Although former USSR countries share the anti-feminist Soviet ideology stemming from the absence of discussion on patriarchy and gender equality in the family, independent countries are now a part of political change and extended freedom of political organization. Thus, more radical voices regarding mothering and fathering arise in post-Soviet countries (Pascall and Kwak 2005). At the same time, a push back on state intervention into the private sphere is evident in some fields, for example, domestic violence. It is caused by opposition to the lengthy period of state domination and engineering policies and can be an obstacle to the implementation of leave policies that entail family life regulation. Since equality in the private sphere was never in the centre of discourse in the USSR and post-transition periods it is particularly important to study how childcare leave regulatory framework reflects gender equality now in the post-communist societies. Intervening in gender roles in the family can prove an opportunity for radical increase in gender equality. This makes childcare leave policies research necessary for exploring the potential for major social transformation in the countries.

To answer the research question of to what extent the transformative approach is introduced in several former USSR members this research will use Fraser's models of labour division as the ideal types. The models reflect the composition of different policy dimensions and are linked to the level of gender equality in society. The thesis tries to connect leave regulations with the theoretical models (Figure 1), ideal types, and map the differences in policies across Eastern European former USSR states in relation to the

theoretical models. The next section will present data, methods, and analytical framework to measure conformity of policy designs in post-communist countries to the models.

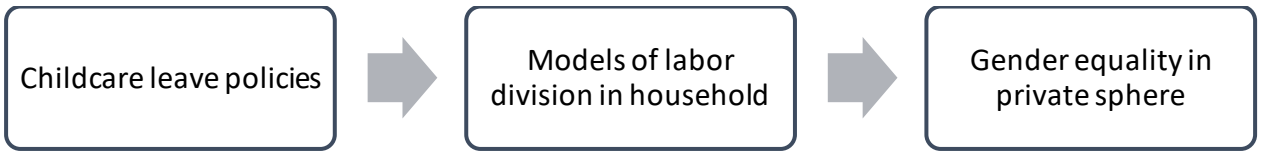

***Figure 1**. A causal model of childcare leave policies and gender equality in the private sphere.*

3. Research Design

3.1. Methodology

Fuzzy-set ideal type analysis (FSITA) will be used in this study as a method. FSITA helps to assess diversity across a limited number of cases (Kvist 2007) and has its origin in qualitative comparative studies. The method was applied in several studies of welfare regimes and to compare childcare provisions (Szelewa and Polakowski 2008). It is particularly useful for this research as it takes cases as the configuration of dimensions where differences in each dimension define membership in the ideal type. It also allows evaluating cases relative conformity to ideal types as it implies partial case membership (Kvist 2007). Since we perceive leave policies as interconnected systems FSITA suits this research goal as it evaluates each dimension not as a separate variable, but as a part of a policy design that can significantly impact policy outcome. To apply FSITA we have to go through four steps: identify dimensions of the ideal types; define conditions for case membership (operationalization and calibration); calculate case membership scores; evaluate case membership and define policy configuration with the highest score (Ciccia and Verloo 2012). This and the next sections will go through these four steps.

3.2. Dimensions and Measures

Inspired by Ciccia and Verloo (2012) this study takes four dimensions of leave policies to evaluate how they correspond to theoretical models of labour division, ideal types. Two out of four dimensions are classical criteria often used to analyze leave policies: (1) length of the leave and (2) compensation level (Gornick and Meyers 2003; Morgan and Zippel 2003; Ray et al. 2010). Additional two dimensions offered by Ciccia and Verloo (2012) are (3) concentration of care (distribution of right to care between parents); and (4)

transformation of gender roles in the family. Combinations of these four dimensions form 16 possible configurations and four of them represent ideal types described earlier.

The measures of dimensions are also based on the analytical framework offered by Ciccia and Verloo and are summarized in Table 2. The measures, however, were adjusted to better reflect post-socialist countries reality. Applying the initial analytical frame that was designed to evaluate the Western countries revealed almost no compliance to any of the models, except the Georgian case, and no significant difference between the countries. This mostly was caused by the high leave concentration index in all the countries under the analysis meaning that it indicated fathers and mothers are equally entitled to the leave rights. However, as the evidence shows, formal eligibility to the leave for fathers doesn't transform into the leave uptake by fathers. Only around 2 per cent of the leave uptakes are done by fathers in Ukraine and Russia (Russian Federation Social Security Fund 2019; Дутчак, Стрельник, and Ткаліч 2021) which makes the leave concentration index poorly correlating with the real picture. Since the formal entitlement results in a considerably low uptake, the concentration index was modified to count the father's leave

***Table 2**. Dimensions and measures.*
*FTE = duration of paid weeks of leave * wage replacement*

Dimension	Measure
Reliance on family care	Length of leave
Monetary value of family care	FTE*/ length of leave
Concentration of care work	Index of leave concentration
Transformation of gender roles	Fatherhood opportunity index

entitlement just in the cases when the leave is compensated at the level of a minimum 50 per cent of the previous salary. To avoid duplication between the measures one of the

components of the initial fathers' opportunity index was taken out, namely shared time for leave compensated with at least 67 per cent of the previous salary.

Reliance on the family care dimension stems from the assumption that differences in leave length reflect importance in familial care. To measure this dimension total length of leaves granted to the family is calculated: maternal, parental, and paternity leaves. The longer the leave – the higher state reliance on family care. In cases where a couple of schemes are available the least generous and the shortest option is considered for the research.

Calibration: 14 weeks of leave is taken as the minimum threshold based on the ILO standard (ILO Maternity Convention 2000). The maximum point is 156 weeks which stands for 3 year-birthday, the most widespread maximum threshold for states to support family childcare. The cross-over point which suggests a point after which the leave can harm parents' employment is one year (78 weeks) (Ciccia and Verloo 2012).

Monetary value of family care. The childcare leave take-up is crucially dependent on either it is paid or not (O'Brien 2009). It also shows how valued family care is in comparison to productive work. To account for differences in family care remuneration across the region and a value attributed to family care I measure a ratio between the full-time equivalent (FTE) entitlement and the length of leave in a number of weeks. To estimate FTE the duration of paid weeks of leave is multiplied by the wage replacement rate. Thus, it indicated the number of weeks if those were paid a full wage or of 100 per cent. In cases when payment is flat-rate replacement it is calculated based on the average salary in the country. When payment is not intended childcare allowance available during the leave is considered as a payment. The ratio between FTE and total length of leave

shows how valuable family care is. When it is zero it means family care has no value in the country, and when it is 100 family care has the same value as productive work.

Calibration: The lowest threshold is set at 30 per cent and it indicates family care is not valued in society (Ciccia and Verloo 2012). The highest threshold is 90 per cent (fully in) and the middle point is 60 per cent that shows that leave time starts to move from unvalued to being mostly valued.

Gender concentration of leave. To see to which extent mothers and fathers enjoy equal rights to leave time and benefits Ciccia and Verloo developed an index of leave concentration. To measure it, first, entitlements are coded according to the person they are exclusively available: only mothers, only fathers, or both parents. For fathers entitlements were counted just in the cases when leave is compensated at the level of at least 50 per cent replacement rate. This level of compensation is considered in the literature as a sufficient level to incentivise fathers to take leave (O'Brien and Wall 2017). The index represents a ratio between the difference in entitlements available to fathers and mothers and their joint entitlements:

1– (FTE mother's leave – FTE father's leave)/ (FTE mother's leave + FTE father's leave)

The index equals zero means just mothers are entitled to leave (upper limit of concentration), the index amounts to 2 means fathers only enjoy leave benefits, and 1 represents equal rights.

Calibration: 0.85 is set as the maximum point that corresponds to equalized rights. It is not set at 1 to account for mandatory postnatal leave for mothers. Zero represents the minimum point as it means fathers are not eligible for leave benefits at all. The point of

ambiguity is 0.60 as this is the moment when fathers' entitlement becomes to represent a considerable part of the family entitlements.

Transformation of gender roles. To transform a traditional view on gender roles real incentives should be offered to fathers to make them take leaves, not prolonged unpaid leave or a couple of well-paid days of reserved leave for fathers. Since compensation level is one of the crucial aspects for fathers to decide on leave take up it should be considered. The flexibility of the leave can mitigate the consequences of being away from the job and should be also included. At the same time, fathers taking leave simultaneously with mothers do not contribute much to the development of new norms of fatherhood, so regulation of simultaneous take up has to be a part of the measure. Thus, Ciccia and Verloo offer three components of the fathers' opportunity index (Table 3): (1) reserved time paid at least at the level of 67 per cent of normal wages (6 points maximum); (2) flexibility in terms of part-time (1 point) or piecemeal (1 point) leave or both (3 points); (3) non-simultaneity of entitlements (1 point). Initially, Ciccia and Verloo also included shared time

***Table 3**. The components of the father's opportunity index measuring transformation of gender roles.*

Characteristics	Points
Reserved period of more than 1 week and up to 1 month	2
Reserved period of more than 1 month	6
Only part-time leave	1
Only piecemeal leave	1
Both part-time and piecemeal leave	3
Non-simultaniouty of entitlements	1

compensated at the level of 67 per cent of normal wages to the index. However, for this research, this measure was removed and reflected in the leave concentration index.

Calibration: The fully in membership corresponds to 13 points with all the incentives present and fully out is zero with no incentives at all. Point 6 is taken as a middle one to represent a situation when fathers either enjoy just exclusive long well-paid leave, or short exclusive leave but also other incentives.

Table 4*. Combinations of leave policies in correspondence to the models.*
The uppercase letters stand for the membership in a set when ~ indicates absence in a set.

Models	Time to care (T)	Monetary value of care (V)	Concentration of leave rights (C)	Father's incentives (F)
Male breadwinner	T	~V	C	~F
Caregiver parity	T	V	C	~F
Universal breadwinner	~T	~V	C	~F
Universal caregiver	T	V	~C	F

.

3.3. Case Selection

The policies in seven countries, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, will be investigated. Choosing just countries that are ex-members of the Soviet Union helps to control for path-dependency factor since all of them share very similar Soviet legacy. At the same time, looking at the countries which combine this legacy, and the European Union membership allows us to see the effect of EU policies on gender equality in Eastern Europe.

3.4. Data overview

The data collected on the seven countries under the analysis mostly comes from the primary analysis of legal and policy documentation in the country. The majority of policy regulations are mentioned in the Labor Codes of the countries and domestic laws on leaves or social benefits. The primary data collection process was also complemented with data from policy analysis conducted by international organizations, e.g. UN Women and UNECE. This section will briefly introduce leave policy regulations in each of the countries and their position in terms of the Gender Inequality Index.

Ukraine was the last among the seven republics that declared its independence from the Soviet Union in August 1991. Its childcare policies are divided into conventional three parts: maternal, paternal and parental leaves. Parental leave is provided till the child reaches three years, for 156 weeks, which is one the longest duration in our dataset. Maternity leave is of 18 weeks and is fully compensated (Verkhovna Rada 1996). Ukraine very recently introduced changes to the Law on Leaves and enacted two-week fully paid paternity leave for fathers (Verkhovna Rada 2021). At the same time, parental leave in Ukraine is still unpaid and only childcare benefits are available amounting to 40 EUR which are paid monthly throughout the parental leave. The benefits constitute less than the tenth part of the average monthly wage which is a very small amount to compensate parents for the childcare provision at home. According to regulations, technically fathers, grandparents or other people taking care of the child are eligible for parental leave. However, as in many non-EU post-soviet countries, due to the traditional gender norms, the percentage of non-mothers taking leave is very small (Дутчак et al. 2021).

Russia is similar to Ukraine in the way the childcare policies are designed. A job-protected leave for parents, grandparents or other persons involved in childcare is granted for 156 weeks. The maternity leave is fully compensated and has a length of 20 weeks (Russian Labour Code 2021). Although Russia does not offer fathers a separate leave the policies provide 40 per cent of a person's average income in the last two years as a remuneration for the person taking parental leave (Russian Federal Law 2021). The paid part consist covers just a half of the parental leave duration, 78 weeks, and the rest unpaid part can be taken in piecemeal. Also, part-time employment is allowed while being on a paid parental leave.

Belarus similarly to other non-EU countries provides long parental leave till the child reaches three years old. According to the Belarusian Labor Code (1999) fathers are not eligible for paternity leave. The maternity leave lasts 18 weeks and is fully covered. The parental benefits are paid through the whole leave duration at the rate of 35 per cent of the average salary in the country. In our dataset, Belarus provides the longest paid parental leave. Parents are allowed to work part-time when on leave and it is permitted for other family members, including grandparents, to take parental leave. Worth noticing, the government has been considering reducing parental leave length since 2020 and instead to provide more opportunities for flexible working conditions and shift childcare responsibilities to the state and market (Коршун 2021). The discourse on policy change is mostly focused on women's involvement in the labour market and the issue of fathers' involvement in childcare is barely discussed.

Georgia has two legal regimes regulating childcare leaves: Labor Code enacted in 2010 and Law on Public Service from 2015 (UN Women 2020). Georgia provides "paid

maternity leave" of the 26 weeks (183 days) duration and extended maternity leave for pregnancy, childbirth and childcare of 104 weeks (703 days) which are provided universally (Georgian Labor Code 2010). However, compensation for the paid part of maternity leave varies significantly across two legal regimes. The public servants are entitled to full monetary compensation when private employees receive a cash transfer of 1,000 GEL, equivalent to 240 EUR. The cash benefit amounts to only around 11 per cent of the average salary if received monthly. The women who are not employed or are engaged in the informal sector are not eligible for the benefits. Public servants in addition are entitled to 79 weeks of parental leave, 13 out of which are fully paid. Fathers are allowed to take parental leave, however, just in case if mothers reject it (Law on Public Service). This policy setting demonstrates the state heavily rely on mothers in childcare responsibilities. The benefit provision is occupation-based, and just partly universal. It is also important to mention, however, that the Georgian Labor Code is currently under review and new regulations on parental leave might be introduced soon.

The childcare policies in Latvia give an option for parents to decide if they want to stay longer on the leave, but receive less compensation or stay on parental leave just one year and be better compensated. The compensation is also relatively generous amounting to an 80 per cent salary replacement rate for maternity and paternity leave and a 44 per cent rate for the extended parental leave of two years long. Total leave lends adds up to 96 weeks. Parents without social insurance are not eligible for maternal, paternal or parental benefits, but they receive childcare benefits that amount to around a third of the monthly minimum wage (Karnite 2020). Childcare benefits are the most generous in the Latvian tax-benefit system and also the most often changed. Thus, since 2013 the parental leave

was extended, benefit ceilings were removed as well as parental benefits were granted to some groups among the unemployed. New policies also allow income-earning parents on leave to receive a part of parental benefits and grant more flexibility in combining work and childcare(UNECE 2018; Rastrigina 2015). These changes increased parental benefits uptake almost twice in four years from 2014 to 2018 (UNECE 2018).

Lithuania grants its citizens 104 weeks (two years) of parental leave. However, parents can go for a shorter leave and get compensated at a higher rate. The maternity leave of 18 weeks and a month of paternity leave are compensated at a level of 78 per cent of the last salary. The same level of compensation is provided for a short one-year parental leave with its alternative of being paid 54 per cent for the first half of the extended two-tear leave and a 31 per cent rate for the rest. The parental leave can be taken piecemeal and part-time work is permitted during the leave (Ministry of Social Security and Labour 2020, Aidukaite and Telisauskaite-Cekanavice 2020). Lithuania also incentivises fathers to get engaged in child care by providing better compensation for parental leave and more flexibility in the way it is taken. In Lithuania ceiling for parental benefits was not removed, the last changes to childcare leave regulations were introduced in 2018 and it also shows that policies increase parental allowance take up, and noticeably this trend is more salient among men (UNECE 2019).

Estonia is the last Baltic country in our dataset. It was also the first country that declared its sovereignty in 1988 and exited the Soviet Union in 1990. Despite Estonia provides the shortest childcare leave that adds up to 86 weeks it scores the highest for the remaining three dimensions. Estonian parental policies include 20 weeks of maternity, a month of paternity and around 1.2 years of parental leave which are all fully paid (European

Commission). The gender concentration of childcare right is 0.89 which even slightly exceeds the maximum point that corresponds to equalized rights. Estonia also provides the most incentives for fathers as it allows part-time employment during the leave, taking the leave in parts till the child reaches three years and compensate parental leave enough to stimulate leave uptake by fathers (Social Insurance Board 2019). Important to mention that not only working fathers are eligible for parental benefits but also those unemployed which makes welfare provision more universal (Social Insurance Board 2019). The childcare policies, however, are a recent development and many of the described provisions were introduced just in 2020.

The collected data gives a preliminary understanding of the childcare policy regimes divergence between the countries. In terms of reliance on family care (Figure 2) expressed by the total leave length, Baltic countries members of EU form a bloc of the shortest leave duration in comparison to three Eastern European states, Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus, which can also be defined as culturally similar. Georgia is the only non-EU

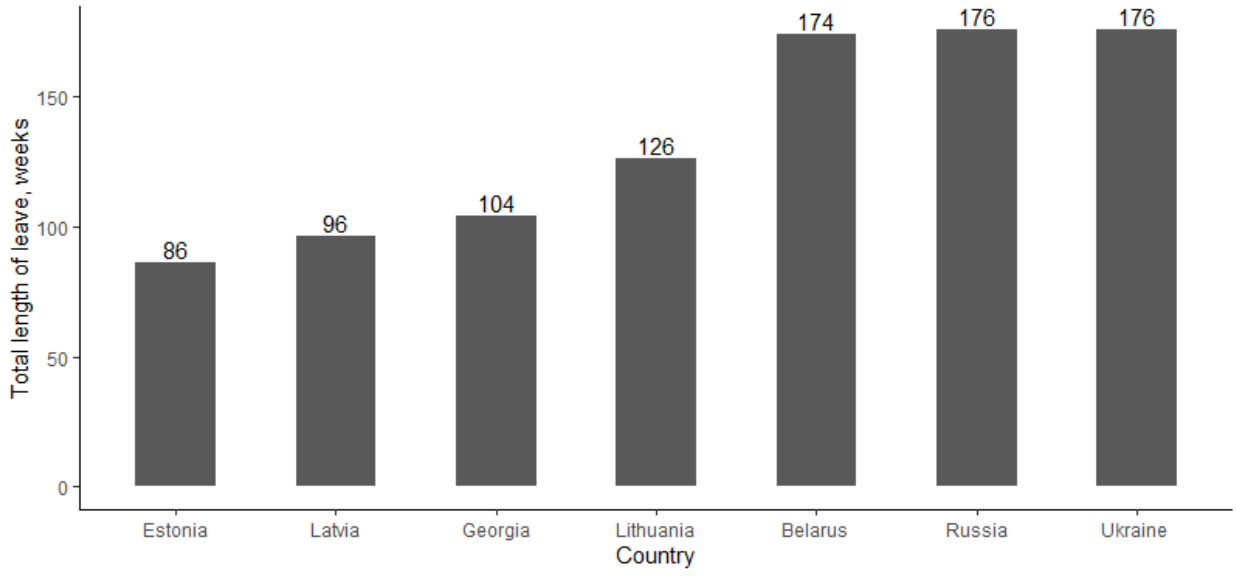

***Figure 2**. Reliance on family care measured by the leave length in weeks.*

member states which stand out with its relatively shorter total length of leave.

If looking at the monetary value of family care (Figure 3) the Baltic countries again form a separate bloc, by providing the highest rates of family care compensation. The top compensation rate, 100 per cent, is provided in Estonia which also has the shortest leave length. Thus, the country relies the least on the family in the provision of childcare, but value it at the highest level. Russia and Ukraine rely the most on family, but value care work at the lowest. The same low value on childcare is placed in Georgia. Belarus value family care below the mean but still stands out in comparison to Russia and Ukraine. This is because Belarus compensate parents throughout the whole parental leave, while in Russia just a part of it is compensated and in Ukraine, the value increased due to the fully compensated paternity leave that has been just recently introduced.

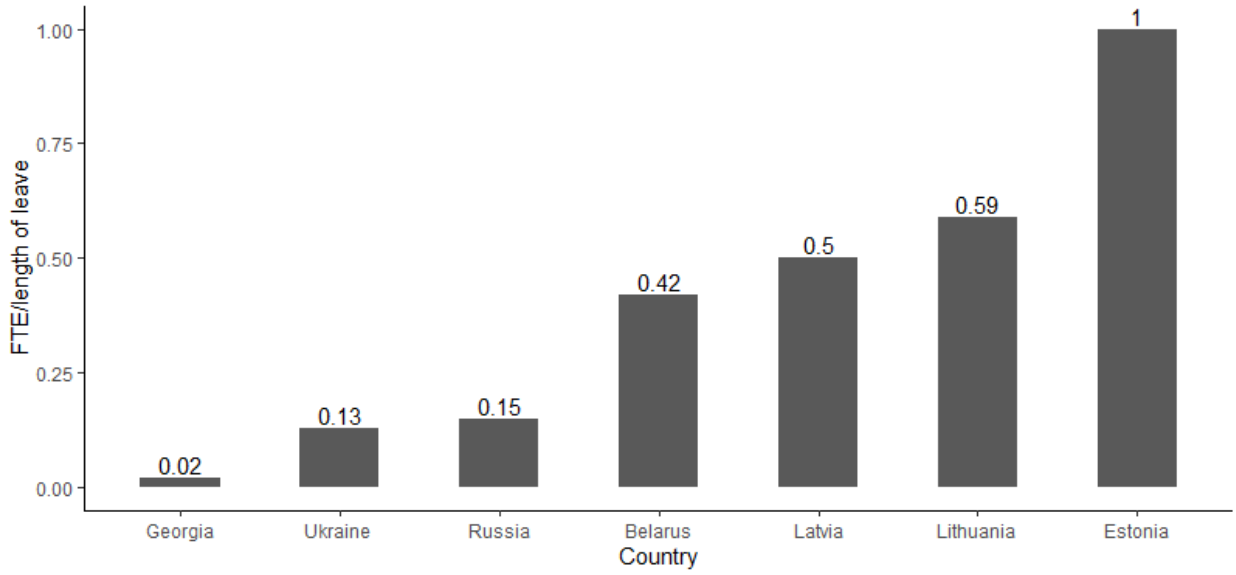

***Figure 3**. Monetary value of family care measured by the FTE divided by the leave length.*

Looking at the concentration of rights to care work (Figure 4) within the family, meaning the extent to which fathers and mothers are equally entitled to take the leave, Estonia and

Lithuania score the highest. This indicates the distribution of rights to care is close to equal in these countries. Belarus, Georgia and Russia score zero which expresses mothers only are entitled to care rights. This is due to the absence of a right to parental leave for fathers as well as extremely low or absence of monetary compensation of the leave. Latvia and Ukraine score higher than zero, but still very low to claim they have equal care rights since the family care remuneration are relatively low. None of the countries is close to 2 which expresses fathers dominated rights in the provision of child care.

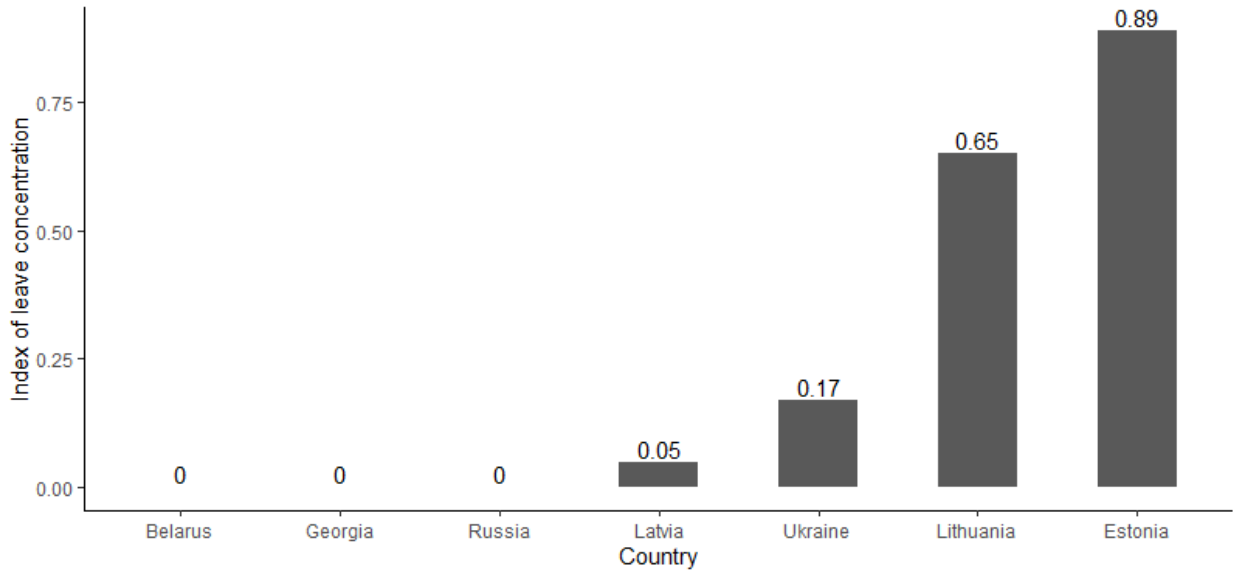

***Figure 4**. Equality of the distribution of rights to care between parents expressed in the Index of leave concentration.*

Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia are the leaders in providing fathers with incentives for parental leave uptake (Figure 5) and setting the new norms for fatherhood. Estonia is the only country that has a provision regulating non-simultaneous leave uptake for mothers and fathers. However, none of the countries has a reserved period for fathers more than one month. Thus, out of 13 points, just 6 points is the maximum score among the analyzed

countries. Since Georgia does not provide parental leave universally and compensates very poorly for family care it is the only country that scores 0 on the transformation of gender roles scale.

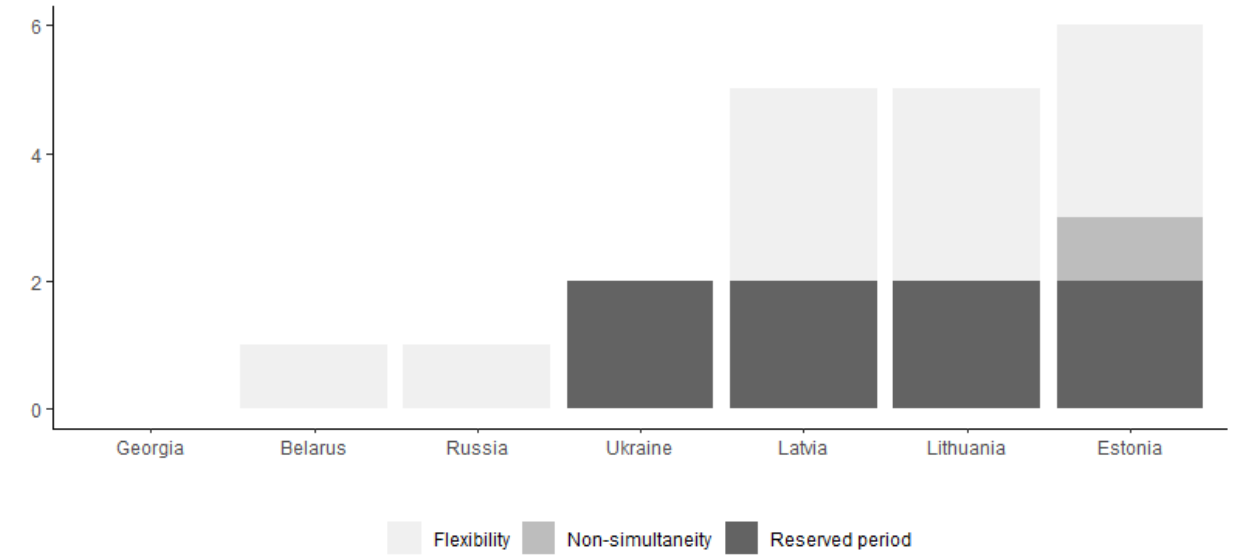

***Figure 5**. Transformation of gender roles measured by the Fatherhood opportunity index.*

If we look at where these countries stand on the Gender Inequality Index (Figure 6) my preliminary findings show that Ukraine and Russia go hand in hand being ranked at 51

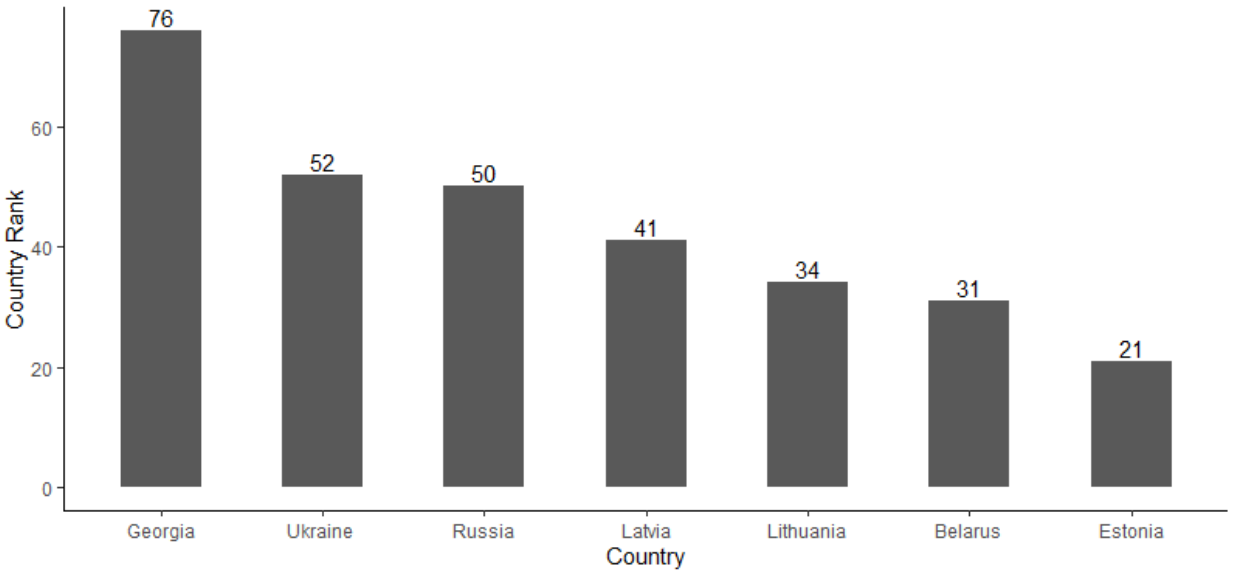

***Figure 6**. The Gender Inequality Index ranking for the analyzed countries.*

and 50 respectively. Belarus shows the lowest gender inequality according to the Gender Inequality Index among the non-EU countries in this analysis and is placed close to Baltic countries being ranked 31st. Lithuania and Latvia have similar scores on the Index ranked 34th and 41th respectively. Estonia is ranked the lowest among the seven countries taking 21st place meaning the highest levels of gender equality. Georgia is ranked 76th in Gender Inequality Index which places the country among the top three worst-performing states in the very high human development category and the last among the seven countries in this research (Human Development Reports 2020).

4. Results

4.1. Models Conformity

Table 5 represents countries membership scores in the four ideal-type models: the male breadwinner, caregiver parity, universal breadwinner, and universal caregiver. The table illustrates a significant divergence between countries members of the European Union and non-members. All the countries which are not EU members confirm significantly to the male breadwinner model with Belarus being almost at a cross-point. The Baltic countries, EU member states, however, come further from the male breadwinner demonstrating the diversity of their regimes, though just Latvia conforms neatly to one of the models, caregiver parity.

The *male breadwinner* model is presented in our analysis by Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, and Belarus. The model is characterized by the high reliance on family care, the low monetary value of family care, the concentration of care rights on women, and the absence of incentives for fathers to get involved in the care work (T ~V C ~F). Ukraine and Russia are the most eminent representatives of this ideal type model conforming to it at the level of 0.8 and 0.88 out of 1 respectively. The very low monetary value of family care does not allow Ukraine and Russia to belong to the *caregiver parity* model, despite the long length of the leave and high care right concentration. The countries could not fall within the *universal breadwinner* model, as the three-year-long parental leave shows the state relies on care provision within families, not on the market. The absence of adequate remuneration for care work, its high concentration with mothers and lack of incentives for fathers explain together the very low correspondence with the *universal caregiver* model.

Georgia and Belarus depict less explicit male breadwinner cases confirming the model at the level of 0.67 and 0.53 respectively. For Georgia the length of the leave is lower than in Ukraine and Russia which drives the membership score down, however, the length is also too high for Georgia to conform to the universal breadwinner model (UB). At the same time, the score of 0.33 for UB shows the country's intentions to shift care responsibilities to the market. Since only women are eligible for parental leave in Georgia and the monetary value of family care work is low, Georgia has extremely low scores on the universal carer and caregiver parity models. Thus, Georgia can be defined as the country with childcare policies that promote the male breadwinner model and some orientation to the market-based model of the universal breadwinner.

Belarus stands out scoring almost at the level of cross-over point for the male breadwinner model and caregiver parity. The state provides compensation for the family care throughout the whole parental leave duration of three years. This in combination with one of the longest leaves among seven countries make the country close to both models. However, for the country to conform to the caregiver parity model the care work remuneration should be higher.

Forming a separate bloc as was expected Baltic countries, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, mostly do not match neatly with any of the ideal type models. Only Latvia shows conformity to the model, *caregiver parity* (T V G ~F). Relatively high remuneration of family care and greater eligibility to rights to care for mothers make the country score more or less beyond the cross-over point for this model. However, the country also shows relatively high membership in other models, i.e. male breadwinner and universal breadwinner. But since Latvia provides comparably generous compensation it does not

Table 5. *Fuzzy membership scores of parental leave policies in ideal types.*

Country	Male breadwinner	Caregiver parity	Universal breadwinner	Universal caregiver
Ukraine	**0.80**	0.11	0.00	0.11
Russia	**0.88**	0.13	0.00	0.00
Lithuania	0.24	0.24	0.19	0.38
Georgia	**0.67**	0.02	0.33	0.00
Estonia	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.46
Belarus	**0.53**	0.47	0.12	0.00
Latvia	0.44	**0.56**	0.38	0.06

correspond neatly to the male breadwinner model and the length of the leave of almost two years prevents it from universal breadwinner conformity. Lithuania demonstrates a similar trend of policy goals heterogeneity as it does not conform neatly to any of the models, but rather have features of each of them. The highest membership score it has, 0.38, correlates with the *universal caregiver* model (T V ~G F). However, the lack of incentives for fathers to take parental leave restricts it from the full membership. In contrast, Estonia shows relative homogeneity of the childcare policy approach since it scores more than 0.05 just for one model. It comes the closest to the universal caregiver model scoring 0.46. The rights to provide care in Estonia are close to equal which makes it a bad fit for the male breadwinner, caregiver parity, and universal breadwinner models. However, Estonia still has an insufficient score for the neat membership in the universal caregiver model. This is due to the lack of incentives for fathers to provide care within the

family. Specifically, Estonia does not grant fathers the reserved period of leave which is longer than one month.

The analysis illustrates how the male breadwinner model is well-entrenched in the post-socialist welfare systems. The dominance of the male breadwinner model also supports the argument of the former USSR republics moving in the direction of refamilialisation as a result of the transition period, as was discussed previously. Due to the economic hardship, the welfare benefits were cut significantly which is reflected in the low monetary value of family care shown in our analysis. At the same time, long childcare leave demonstrates the appeal to traditional values coupled with little efforts from the state to encourage fathers to be primary caregivers. This shows how Eastern European post-socialist countries building upon the anti-equality practices of the Soviet Union reinforce traditional gender norms and put the main responsibility for childrearing on women. On the other hand, Baltic countries that joined European Union in 2004 demonstrate more dedication to gender equality promotion and moving in a different direction from the other post-Soviet states. The countries still rely considerably on family in the provision of care, however, also support families with an adequate level of financial remuneration and include in the policy design stimulus for fathers to become the carers.

4.2. Gender Inequality Index Reflection in the Models

With the results of FSITA on countries correspondence to different theoretical models, I can now test my assumption on the correlation between the four models and gender equality level in the society. The hypothesis that I made implies countries that confirm the most to the male breadwinner model have the highest rank on Gender Inequality Index and those corresponding to universal carer are ranked the lowest.

Figure 7 illustrates an interaction between the country's conformity to the ideal type models and Gender Inequality Index. As it can be seen Lithuania and Estonia which scored the closest to the universal caregiver model are ranked the lowest on the GII. Latvia conforms to the caregiver parity model with the score slightly over the cross-over point and is ranked 41st on the GII which is an average value for my country sample. As it was hypothesized the countries matching the male breadwinner model, Georgia, Ukraine and Russia are ranked the highest on the GII meaning the index indicates the highest disparity in human development in these countries due to gender inequality. Belarus is the only country that does not fall into the trend assumed by my hypothesis. It conforms to the male breadwinner model but is ranked lower than the majority of the countries in my sample. This doesn't come as a great surprise since Belarus' membership score in the male breadwinner model is around the cross-over point and the country also have a comparably high membership score in the caregiver parity model. This makes Belarus fairly similar to Latvia which GII ranks are also reasonably close.

***Figure 7**. Interaction between the ideal type models and Gender Inequality Index.*

As a conclusion on the correlation between the Gender Inequality Index and models conformity could be stated that the analysis conducted in this research proves the hypothesis I formulated. Four models taken as a backbone for this study correspond to the level of gender equality in the society and the experience of post-Soviet countries also confirm this. Thus, the countries which childcare policies resemble the male breadwinner model promote gender equality the least and the ones confirming the universal caregiver model, mostly presented by the Baltic countries, are associated with gender equality more.

5. Conclusion

The thesis utilizes a fuzzy-set ideal type analysis method to investigate to what extent the transformative approach to gender roles is introduced in the childcare policies of seven post-Soviet Eastern European countries. The theoretical models of labour division described by Fraser are used in this research as the ideal types. As organization of care work is one of the crucial elements that defines gender relations (Pascall and Lewis 2004; Sarah Leonard, Fraser Nancy 2016) this study looks at childcare leave regulations and relates them to gender equality in the countries. Its contribution is in testing an analytical framework that is mostly applied to Western countries on post-Soviet countries. The study also contributes to the systematization of the knowledge about the parental leave policies in the post-Soviet part of Eastern Europe and mapping the differences in terms of gender regimes within the region.

The result of this analysis shows that leave policies in post-Soviet countries are characterized by a fairly clear cut between the EU member states and non-members. The non-EU member countries, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Georgia lean to the male-breadwinner model, supporting traditional division of labour within the household. In their policies mothers are put in the centre of childrearing activities. In addition, extremely low compensation for family care indicates the considerably lower value placed on the work performed mostly by women. The leave duration of two years and more, that is common for these countries, is considered to be harmful to women's career (Gornick and Meyers 2003; Lewis 2006b; Ruhm 1998). Thus, this adds evidence to the refamilialisation trend in post-socialist countries which persist till nowadays (Hantrais 2004b; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007). As the women were driven out of the labour market due to the lack of

jobs in the transition period the state intended to encourage their stay at home and higher birth rate with the longer leave (Pascall and Kwak 2005; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007). Since social expenditures were cut due to economic hardship women's care work was not given an equal with productive work value. In addition, similar to the Soviet Union's one-sided gender equality that was not focused on equal rights within households, but solely on women's employment (Pascall and Kwak 2005; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007; Szikra and Szelewa 2010), the current policies reflect a similar approach. The policy analysis also shows that fatherhood promotion is not an explicit goal of the gender regimes since minimum incentives for fathers to take up the leave are provided.

Another cluster is formed by the Baltic countries former USSR members, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia. These three countries represent more diversity in terms of matching the ideal type models. Estonia is the closest to the *universal caregiver* model which is associated the most with gender equality and implies both parents are equally engaged in productive and reproductive work. The country provides a couple of incentives for fathers to take up the leave and generously compensate for family care. Lithuania, like Estonia, is placed the closest to the universal caregiver model, however, the country does not match neatly any of the models. Although the policy approach in Lithuania is similar to Estonia, its longer and less generous leave put the country further from the universal caregiver model. Latvia represents the caregiver parity model which implies two tracks of occupation within the household, care work and productive work, where care work is valued equally to productive work (Fraser 1994). Relatively long and generous leave with not many incentives for fathers makes the country close to this model. These findings contribute to the argument of the diverse gender regime development despite the

common trend of refamilialisation in post-socialist countries (Fenger 2007). The EU membership factor seems to be a crucial element for countries to take a step towards more gender equality. Cultural and political differences might also explain a slight divergence of Belarus and Georgia from the male breadwinner trend. The explanation of differences between the countries can guide further research of the post-socialist gender regimes.

The qualitative findings of this study were complemented with the quantitative analysis of the correlation between the Gender Inequality Index and the models the countries confirm. As the analysis showed there is an association between the rank in the index and the model of labour division. Thus, countries that are close to the male breadwinner model are ranked higher in the index. This indicates there is more divergence in human development in the countries caused by gender inequality. On the other hand, countries that are closer to the universal caregiver model are ranked the lowest among those in the research sample. This contributes to the notion that the care organization in society and labour division in the household has a great effect on gender equality in post-socialist countries.

The results of this research might be considered as a step towards a better understanding of the post-Soviet countries gender regimes and childcare policies in particular. However, since the country sample is characterized by relative cultural similarity the findings are applicable just for the Eastern European countries, not the Central Asian part of the former Soviet Union. More research should be done with a broader country sample to make conclusions on the gender regimes diversity of post-socialist countries. In addition, due to the focus on the childcare leave policies, more research should be done with the

inclusion of other policies affecting household level gender relations, e.g. public childcare services, working time regulations, etc., to integrate important aspects impacting gender equality.

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