DISCOURSE, POLICY, AND GENDER: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FAMILY WELFARE AND LABOR MARKET DYNAMICS IN TURKEY AND HUNGARY

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Abstract

This thesis explores how family welfare policies and government discourse influence gender roles and labor market dynamics in Turkey and Hungary. Governments play an important role in shaping ideal family structures through their policies and the ideas they promote through discourse and content. Turkey and Hungary provide interesting case studies because their conservative regimes focus heavily on traditional family values and increasing birth rates. In Turkey, President Erdoğan advocates for traditional gender roles, urging women to embrace motherhood and have at least three children, often citing religious and cultural reasons. However, the actual family welfare benefits in Turkey are limited in number and they predominantly target at low-income families. This gap between the government's pronatalist rhetoric and the lack of substantial policy support correlates to low female labor force participation. However, Prime Minister Orbán of Hungary likewise supports a greater birth rate and traditional Christian values. Straight families with two earners receive greater welfare payments in Hungary than in Turkey according to social policy. Yet these advantages are often linked to work, which relates to greater rates of female labor force participation, even despite the conservative rhetoric. This thesis applies the theoretical frameworks of Diane Sainsbury and Sigrid Leitner to the cases of Turkey and Hungary based on the family welfare programs they provide, highlighting the inconsistencies between the rhetoric and policies. Furthermore, it examines labor market participation and employment rates, as well as reasons why women are not in the workforce, to understand these dynamics better. This comparative analysis analyzes the complex nature of welfare states.

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Introduction

Governments can advocate for a certain type of family structure, determining the ideal number of children and the role of the parents through family welfare policies and discourse. By advocating for a certain type of family, they can reinforce or disrupt gender roles too. For example, a conservative government may advocate women to be stay-at-home wives and mothers, while a progressive one may want them to have a high labor force participation even when they have children. Based on this idea, this thesis aims to analyze the welfare states of Turkey and Hungary based on family welfare programs and discourse on this topic to pinpoint the family structure that the respective governments aim to promote or indicate as acceptable. Lastly, as welfare states are "gendered institutions which both reflect and influence the attitudes that determine female employment" (Buğra & Yakut Cakar 2010, 519), this research also analyzes labor market statistics on women's participation in the labor market after having a child to understand how the welfare state might be reinforcing or disrupting "traditional" gender roles.

Turkey and Hungary were chosen as comparative cases because, in spite of their comparable rhetoric from the government, their policies are actually quite different in the family welfare benefits they provide and have rather distinct effects on the labor market.

Both governmental rhetoric and cultural standards have shaped Turkey's socio-political climate, which is marked by a heavy emphasis on traditional family values. In his remarks, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan frequently asserts that it is a woman's responsibility to be a mother and that she should have at least three children (The Guardian, "Turkish president says

childless women are 'deficient, incomplete'," June 6, 2016). He links this argument to religion. As explained by Ayata and Doğangün (2017), the religio-conservative gender climate in Turkey "relies on the reconceptualization of family and motherhood in reference to religion, tradition and custom" (610). In turn, these elements restrict women's role in society to their role in the family unit (Ayata and Doğangün 2017, 622). In other words, by utilizing traditional and religious arguments in constructing an ideal family through discourse and policies, the AKP is reinforcing traditional gender roles that give women the role of the caregiver. Furthermore, even though he has put immense value on family values in his discourse, the family welfare benefits in Turkey are only eligible by very low-income earning families or those in disadvantaged conditions, which will be analyzed in this thesis in detail.

Hungary's socio-political landscape is also somewhat shaped by tradition and Christian values, as emphasized by Victor Orbán in his speeches that he wants to build a country that is "Christian and with national values" (Khalili-Tari 7 April 2018). Furthermore, Orbán has stated that the aim of the demographic policies is not just to increase the fertility rate, but also to help Christianity gain its strength back in Europe (Orbán 5 September 2019). Hence, the ideal family the Hungarian government is creating through discourse and policies does not strictly align with a model where the wife would be the caregiver, which is what Erdoğan implies as the ideal family through his rhetoric. On the contrary, in Hungary family welfare policies are used as tools to encourage higher birth rates among economically stable families (Orbán 5 September 2019). Turkish family welfare policies, on the other hand, do not necessarily incentivize higher birth rates or aim to compensate for women's carework. Hence, while both leaders have similar

rhetoric that relies on tradition, religion, and pronatalism, they are different in their relationship with gender roles.

From this discussion, it is possible to state that conservative and pronatalist rhetoric does not always lead to traditional-gender-role-reinforcing policies, or birth incentivizing ones. Erdoğan's discourse suggests that his ideal structure for a Turkish family is one with at least three children, but he is using this to reinforce women's role in the private sphere as the caregiver, and not providing welfare programs that would make it more convenient or attractive for women to actually assume this role. On the other hand, Orbán's discourse is rebranding "tradition" by building a norm that is in its core, Christian, but does not use traditional gender norms of religion where women's role would be in the private sphere. Instead, he is opting to create a Hungarian family norm that values work above all, which inadvertently supports women's role in the public sphere, at least for the middle- and upper-income earning ones. Thus, there is a misalignment with the policies and the discourse for both countries, and they have distinct influences on the labor market. In other words, there is a gap between the intention of the family welfare policies of the respective welfare state and the discourse of the respective government officials, as well as how this is observed in the labor market.

To categorize the welfare states of Turkey and Hungary based on the family welfare programs, this thesis utilizes the typologies proposed by Diane Sainsbury (1994) and Sigrid Leitner (2003). The feminist argument for a gendered analysis of welfare states emphasizes that merely including women and men in mainstream welfare state analysis is not sufficient for understanding gender dynamics. Instead, it's crucial to examine the interplay between the public

and private spheres and conceptualize welfare provision in terms of a public-private mix. This means an analysis of paid and unpaid work and policies related to these elements is necessary (Sainsbury 1994, 152). Sainsbury describes two social policy models: the breadwinner model and the individual model. They differ in terms of family roles, eligibility criteria, benefit units, employment and wage policies, primary care settings, and compensation for care work. The breadwinner model has a "strict division of labor" where the husband is the earner, and the wife is the carer. Carework is unpaid and the employment and wage policies prioritize men. On the other hand, the individual model assigns "shared roles" to the husband and wife, giving them both the earner/carer role, with carework having a paid component and employment and wage policies targeting both spouses. Furthermore, the sphere of care for the breadwinner model is mainly private, while the individual model has strong state involvement (Sainsbury 1994, 153). Hence, Sainsbury's framework offers a valuable theoretical background in categorizing the welfare states of Hungary and Turkey in terms of the benefits and programs they provide to families.

Moving on, Leitner's (2003) "Varieties of Familialism" framework complements Sainsbury's framework and helps classify the intentions and effects of care policies in the two countries. Leitner builds his framework on Gøsta Esping-Andersen's (1999) definitions of the familialistic and de-familializing regimes which follow:

> De-familialization does not imply 'anti-family'; on the contrary it refers to the degree to which households' welfare and caring responsibilities are relaxed—either via welfare state provision, or via market provision. A familialistic system, again not to be confused with 'pro-family', is one in which public policy assumes—indeed insists—that households must carry the principal responsibility for their members' welfare (Esping-Andersen 1999, 51).

In other words, Esping-Andersen's definition states that de-familializing welfare states offer strong state intervention that allows families to be unburdened by care work. On the other hand, familialistic systems place the care work in the private sphere with its policies or lack thereof. Leitner builds on this definition by suggesting four ideal types of familialism with different degrees of familialization and de-familialization. The types are explicit familialism, optional familialism, implicit familialism, and de-familialism. His typology indicates that explicit familialism has strong support for family care without policies that help families take the carework outside of the private sphere, while implicit familialism is weak in both, meaning it also does not have policies that support the caring function of the family. However, in both of these types, family is the main caregiver. On the other hand, optional familialism has policies that are familialistic and de-familialistic at the same time, giving the families the option to be in partially unburdened. Lastly, de-familialism has strong policies in place that offer strong welfare provisions of care services, either given by the government or the market, without any policies that put the family as the main caregiver. According to Leitner, this typology serves as an analytical tool for understanding care policies on three levels: identifying the intentions of care policies as articulated by governments, examining the empirical effects of these policies on care arrangements, and analyzing the structural implications of care policies (Leitner 2003, 358-359.. On that account, categorizing the Hungarian and Turkish welfare systems by implementing both Sainsbury's and Leitner's framework, it is possible to pinpoint the differences in the intentions behind the policies, empirical effects of them on women's choice to become mothers while working, as well as the structural implications of the policies.

To explain further, this thesis aims to answer the following question: How do the family welfare policies in the Turkish and Hungarian welfare regimes, as analyzed through Sainsbury and Leitner's frameworks, influence family structures, gender roles, and labor market dynamics, and to what extent are these policies and their underlying discourses aligned and explicit in their framing?

Literature Review

This analysis aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on the subject by focusing only on the family welfare programs and family-related discourse of the governments of Turkey and Hungary, as well as by extending the analysis to include the effects of these elements on the labor market in Turkey and Hungary. The existing work on this topic mostly includes separate studies of Turkish and Hungarian welfare states, with one exception by a study by Dorottya Szikra and Kerem Gabriel Öktem (2022) in which they compare the welfare programs of Hungary and Turkey as two countries with "illiberal welfare states" (202). Szikra and Öktem focus on the democratic decline in these countries, and how it affects the welfare policies (2022, 202). Their research is significant as they analyze the similarities in the Turkish and Hungarian welfare states by welfare effort, policy content, discourse, and policy procedures, and find that both have traditional and pronatalist family discourse, which this thesis also concurs with (Öktem and Szikta 2022, 212). However, their research gives little emphasis to the analysis of the actual policies, which this thesis will go into detail on. On the pronatalist discourse of Turkish government officials, Umut Korkut and Hande Eslen-Ziya (2016) also analyze Turkish politicians' discourse through newspaper articles about their speeches. The authors draw the

conclusion that this discourse seeks to impact public opinion without depending on legislative means, pointing out a discrepancy between the pronatalist rhetoric and the party's real family welfare measures (Korkut and Eslen-Ziya 2016, 570). Korkut (2017) further analyzes the discourse of the right-wing elite in Hungary and concludes that they employ anti-Western rhetoric to support family policies based on religious, traditional, and patriarchal values (89–90). This thesis aims to build on this literature to clarify how the intersection of family policy and discourse influences women's labor market participation in Turkey and Hungary.

Moving on to literature on the employment of Turkish women, Nazlı Kazanoğlu (2019) examines the AKP's work and family life policies in a different light, focusing on how they relate to Turkey's EU ambitions. Despite efforts to Europeanize, she finds that reforms are incomplete and contradictory, especially regarding female employment and work-life balance programs. This is because the Turkish government has passed some policies that are de-familialization, such as giving the right to work part-time to female employees that gave birth for some time or giving paternity leave right for 10 days to new fathers, but it also still keeps the family as the core space for childcare (Kazanoğlu 2019, 9-10). This thesis builds on this idea by analyzing the family policies implemented by the Turkish government using Leitner's framework of famillialism and de-familialism in order to analyze the degree of state intervention. Başak Akkan (2018) highlights the paradox in the AKP's emphasis on traditional family values, considering that they have to pass care laws to help families fulfill their caregiving obligations. This paradox is that while the AKP is implementing some policies that are in line with the EU standards, such as cash support, time-off from work, and childcare services provided through market mechanisms rather than solely by the state, they are still promoting sacred familialism,

tying the value of the family to tradition and religion, and conservative gender politics (Akkan 2018, 84). Hence, she is also highlighting the contradictory nature of policy and rhetoric in Turkey.

Furthermore, Anıl Duman (2023) investigates the gender disparities in wages associated with temporary and informal employment in the Turkish labor market, utilizing data from labor force surveys between 2005 and 2019. While this thesis will not go into detail on formal and informal employment of women in Turkey, it is significant that Duman argues that "in countries with deeply gendered roles and an uneven distribution of caring responsibilities falling on women, such as Turkey, increasing the availability of permanent and formal sector jobs for women would help to raise their bargaining power" (Duman 2023, 219). In other words, Duman's argument supports the idea that the labor market participation of women is connected to the carework that falls on them in the context of their culture. This thesis concurs with the idea by extending it to the availability of policies that support women's double role as caregivers and workers. Other works on the employment of women in Turkey include Ayşe Buğra and Burcu Yakut-Cakar's (2010) article on how the transition from an import-substitution model to a market-oriented economy in Turkey has paradoxically led to a decline in female employment. The authors highlight the impact of patriarchal labor market dynamics and conservative social policies that reinforce traditional gender roles, limiting women's participation in the workforce (Buğra and Yakut-Cakar 2010, 534). Similarly, Funda Hülagü (2021) examines the Turkish state's use of anti-feminism to manage economic crises and maintain political stability. Hülagü argues that the Turkish government employs anti-feminist narratives to distract from economic issues and reinforce patriarchal dividends, consolidating male dominance and societal control

(2021, 34). These studies are significantly related to this research as one of the findings is that the Turkish government's social policies and rhetoric on family and gender roles are related to less participation in the labor market by women.

On the Hungarian welfare state, Szikra (2014) provides insight into the impact of economic crises on welfare policies and democracy in post-socialist states, particularly focusing on Hungary under the conservative coalition of Fidesz and KDNP between 2010 and 2014. She suggests that while there has been a shift in Hungarian social policy on families, which supports the better-off families more than the financially struggling ones, this shift has not been successful in increasing the birth rate (Szikra 2014, 494-495). This finding further suggests the misalignment in Hungarian family welfare policies, suggesting that the intention of the programs does not align with the outcome. Furthermore, Duman and Horvath (2013) study how EU influence on work-family reconciliation policies in Hungary evolved over three distinct periods, highlighting the increasing integration of European principles and processes into parliamentary debates and policy framing, while also noting the strategic use of European norms by different political parties for their agendas, with European funding playing a significant role in triggering reforms. They suggest that Hungary's EU accession in 2004 played a critical role in shaping the argument around family policies that at least in discourse, gave more importance to female labor market participation (Duman and Horvath 2013, 27), which gives historical context to the current welfare programs towards female employees that this thesis analyzes. Fodor, Glass, Kapachi, and Popescu (2002) compare the family welfare benefits available to women in Romania, Hungary, and Poland and find that in Hungary, women face more favorable conditions for balancing work and family responsibilities. However, they find that the state prioritizes assisting middle-class

women over those already vulnerable to poverty, which the findings of this thesis also support (Fodor, Glass, Kapachi, and Popescu 2002, 488)**.**

Szikra (2018) also analyzes the changes that the Orbán government made in family policies over the years and finds that Hungary switched to a "work-based" family welfare program, which means that the families that have a better labor market standing get better benefits than those who do not (6). This conclusion is highly important for this thesis as one of the main arguments is that by advocating for a work-based society, Orbán is incidentally creating a non-traditional family norm as opposed to his discourse, where both the husband and the wife are caregivers and workers. Furthermore, Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa (2021) find that while Hungarian government officials' religious discourse on traditional family life has increased, religious spending has also gone up. They also state that the word gender has been replaced by family in government terminology, highlighting the value they put on family (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa 2021, 565). This finding is somewhat contradictory in nature, highlighting the misalignment in Hungarian policies and discourse which this thesis is trying to clarify, as even though the Hungarian government values family over individual in discourse and written content, their policies benefit the family unit as individuals. In other words, this thesis finds that women benefit separately from the men in the family unit by having their own, independent benefits such as tax reliefs, which actually suggests that they *can* exist outside the family unit.

On the theoretical side, beyond the typologies by Leitner and Sainsbury, this thesis also utilizes Jane Lewis's conceptualization of the family welfare policies are utilized for clear definitions when analyzing the respective welfare states. This framework breaks down welfare

policies into three dimensions—time, money, and services—that impact care arrangements and gender equality. The definitions follow: 1) "Time: the regulation of working time and the provision of time to undertake informal care"; 2) "Money: cash for carers to buy formal care, cash for carers while they are on leave, and direct expenditure on services"; 3) "Services: for child and elder care that are directly provided by the state, or provided by the independent sector and employers" (Lewis 2009, 83). These three dimensions are time offered to parents for maternity and care work reasons, cash benefits offered by the government for childcare, or cash paid to parents when they are on parental time off, and services provided by the government that unburden the private sphere on care work, for example, kindergarten services, are integral to the gendered analysis of the welfare state.

This conceptualization is similar to the one of Esping-Andersen (1990), who also states that the "decisions of women…to enter the labor force are even more intimately patterned by the welfare state, in terms of its service delivery (childcare), transfer system (ability to utilize the option of absenteeism), tax system, and its labor demand (social-welfare jobs)" (160). In other words, welfare state benefits that relate to childcare services, time-off work for parental reasons, tax breaks and labor demand influence the decisions of female employees on being part of the workforce. Hence, the qualitative analysis in this thesis focuses on not only discourse, but also policy analysis and secondary data on labor market participation and employment to understand how these three dimensions of family welfare policies, time, money, and services provided by the state, incentivize or block women from participating in the labor market.

Methodology

This research utilizes a qualitative approach. The methodology includes policy analysis which focuses on the relevant family welfare programs of the Turkish and Hungarian welfare states, which include cash benefits, paid time off from work, services provided by the government for childcare, childcare subsidies, as well as other possible benefits such as tax breaks. This part analyzes if these benefits exist for female citizens of the respective country, and if they have conditions such as being employed or having a certain familial status or income level, to understand the level of generosity of the welfare state, helping to analyze if they play a part in women's decision to be part of the labor force, or choosing to remain in the private sphere, and having children.

Furthermore, this research includes discourse and content analysis of the government officials and election manifestos and constitution. News articles and official texts of speeches are utilized for discourse analysis, in which thematic analysis of the spoken and written content is performed to analyze how the policies align with them. This method is utilized to understand if the government only promotes their "ideal" family structure through family welfare policies, or if they also promote them through speech and writing.

Lastly, the research includes empirical analysis of the labor market and family structure statistics from the OECD Family Database, EUROSTAT, and TURKSTAT. The secondary statistics on labor markets serve to analyze the outcomes of the policies in mother's participation in the labor market, the time off they are granted for parental reasons, and their utilization of it. The aim is to analyze whether the Hungarian and Turkish welfare states are familialistic or de-

familializing, and whether they have a strong state presence in this sphere or not. Secondary data on labor participation, employment, and unemployment rates for women with or without young children, maternal employment rates by full or part-time status, and reasons for not being in the labor force for women in Turkey and Hungary provide context for evaluating policy and discourse impact.

Limitations

The limitations of this research are mostly due to available data sources. For the discourse analysis of Turkish President Erdoğan, news articles were used due to the lack of full-text speeches from official sources. On the other hand, for the discourse analysis of Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán, full-text speeches were available on official government sources. Furthermore, while the AKP's (the Justice and Development Party) election manifestos were published on their official website, this was not an option for Fidesz. Hence, speeches and the Constitution were used as substitutions for the content analysis.

Furthermore, as the empirical data for the countries had to be taken from different sources, namely TURKSTAT for Turkey and EUROSTAT for Hungary, due to the availability, there are slight differences in the indicators. Firstly, the TURKSTAT Labor Force statistics on the reasons why Turkish women are not in the labor force also include women who are looking to be in the labor force, while the Hungarian one is only for women who are out of the labor force who do not wish to be in it (Tables 2 and 3). Secondly, the TURKSTAT ones say the number of children in the household, while the Hungarian one says with/without children. And, the Hungarian stats are for adults with a child under 6, while for Turkey it is 3 (Tables 6, 7, 9,

10). Lastly, the data on Maternal Employment from the OECD Family Database is only available for the years 2004-2013 for Turkey and 2006-2021 for Hungary (Table 4).

Lastly, this thesis analyzes the Turkish and Hungarian welfare states by the family welfare programs they provide to heterosexual families consisting of a wife and a husband.

Contributions

By examining the cases of Turkey and Hungary, this research highlights the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of welfare state policies under conservative regimes. It shows how political and cultural agendas shape the lived experiences of women, either reinforcing traditional roles or inadvertently promoting emancipation. This comparative analysis is crucial for understanding the broader implications of family welfare policies and their impact on gender equality and women's rights within different socio-political contexts.

The findings of this research indicate that while the Hungarian prime minister, Victor Orbán promotes Christianity and traditional family structure, the Hungarian welfare state's benefits are more supportive of somewhat non-traditional family models where both the husband and the wife have caregiving and money-making duties simultaneously. In other words, while the rhetoric advocates for a traditional family structure with more children leading to more benefits and government support, they do not reinforce traditional gender roles at the same time. In contrast, families with only one spouse working and one caregiver are not supported as much with the benefits. Hence, in reality, the welfare state is promoting a Hungarian family model with two breadwinners, where the family will still be the main caregiver but with some government support to balance the work-life responsibilities of the spouses. Despite the conservative

discourse, the policies inadvertently empower middle and upper income earning women by linking family benefits to employment and certain income levels, thus encouraging female labor market participation among those who can access these benefits while having a family at the same time.

On the other hand, this research reveals that while the Turkish government is promoting pronatalism through discourse, it is not implementing family welfare policies that incentivize higher birth rates, which would compensate for women's carework through economic support. The family welfare program is focused on aiding the lower income earners for their lack of finances, not rewarding more reproduction. This lack of family welfare support comes off as contradictory for a pronatalist welfare regime. Unlike Orbán, Erdoğan's rhetoric *does* reinforce somewhat traditional gender roles where the wife is above all, the mother in the family, which binds the family together and leads to its future and suggests that women who prioritize their careers after having a child are unnatural. While both leaders use religion and tradition to make their points about pronatalism, their approaches to gender roles are highly different. This difference in the discourse, analyzed together with the family welfare policies, also influences the labor market. Where female participation in the labor market in Turkey is low, with the biggest reason being women's care responsibilities, it is contrastingly high in Hungary, with very low difference in participation between women with and without children.

By emphasizing the gendered nature of welfare policies and government rhetoric using the theoretical frameworks by Sainsbury and Leitner, the thesis contributes to the literature on gender studies and social policy, particularly in the context of conservative regimes.

Findings

This chapter explores the welfare state provisions for working moms in Turkey and Hungary, looking at the ways in which these laws impact the employment of women and the structure of families. This analysis aims to analyze the goals and results of the family welfare policies in Hungary and Turkey by examining the aspects of paid time off from work, cash benefits offered by the respective governments as well as other family welfare benefits, and statistical evidence from both countries. In other words: do these policies incentivize or block women from being able to have both roles, as a money-earner and caregiver? Sainsbury's breadwinner and individual social policy models and Leitner's framework of familialism, provide theoretical foundations in this analysis. Based on the findings, it is possible to argue that Turkey has a breadwinner model with implicit familialism, reinforcing traditional gender roles and limited state intervention in the family sphere. Hungary, on the other hand, is more of an optional familialist welfare state, which provides some flexibility but still gives the family the primary caregiving role.

Esping-Andersen asks questions on the conditions of labor supply, labor contracts, and the demand for labor when analyzing the instances, or windows as he calls them, where the labor market and welfare policies are connected the most. The original questions inquire about the elements that determine whether people remain in, or exit from, the labor force, to what extent and under what conditions can workers exercise their own choices under the contract, and how the welfare state influences labor demand (Esping-Andersen 1990, 149-150). It is possible to adapt these questions to the comparison of the Hungarian and Turkish family welfare policies directed towards women, namely by rephrasing the questions as: How do the family welfare

policies, including cash benefits for childcare subsidies, amount of paid time off work, tax incentives, or other services, such as state kindergartens, determine whether women remain in, or exit from, the labor force in these respective countries?

Starting with the policy analysis, it is possible to state that Turkish family welfare policies mostly target low-income families or women with vulnerable conditions. For example, the welfare program that aims to pay nursery support can only be utilized by candidates who are seen as needy, such as children of veterans and prisoners and children that come from very poor families (Ministry of Family and Social Services, "Özel Kreş, Gündüz Bakımevleri ve Çocuk Klüpleri," 2023). The "family support program," another family welfare program that aims to support families in need via a one-year payment can only be utilized by families if their household income is less than 1/3 of the monthly net minimum wage of that year (Ministry of Family and Social Services, "Aile Destek Programı", 2023). Birth aid, which is a one-time payment that amounts to only about 10 Euros for the first-born, about 12 Euros for the second-born, and about 18 Euros for the third-born child, is given to all Turkish women that give birth (Ministry of Family and Social Services, "Doğum Yardımı, 2024). Additionally, the Ministry of Family and Social Services has aids that are allocated to women who have lost their spouses, with monthly payments and additional assistance provided every two months; however, if the woman remarries or becomes part of the labor market, the payment is cut (Ministry of Family and Social Services, "Eşi Vefat Etmiş Kadınlara Yönelik Yardımlar," 2024). Under Law No. 3294, the Turkish government also offers social assistance payments that are only for health and education expenses for families with children who are financially struggling. However, this payment is also a lowly one, with around 5 Euros per child (Ministry of Family and Social

Services, “3294 Sayılı Kanun Kapsamındaki Sosyal Yardımlar”, 2024). Another subsidy which is reserved for needy families with multiple births grants financial aid for up to 24 months, about 12 Euros per child (Ministry of Family and Social Services, “Çoklu Doğum Yardımı”, 2024). The Turkish government also extends support programs that are only for families of highly vulnerable states, aiding those affected by extreme circumstances such as natural disasters, terrorism, domestic violence, and extreme poverty (Ministry of Family and Social Services, “Sosyal Yardımlar Genel Müdürlüğü”, 2024). The Turkish welfare state also allows female employees that have given birth the right to part-time for some amount of time according to how many children they had. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security’s explanation of this part-time work, it is stated that: “Starting from the end of the postpartum maternity leave, [mothers] can take unpaid leave for sixty days for the first birth, one hundred and twenty days for the second birth, and one hundred eighty days for subsequent births, for half of the weekly working time, for the purpose of caring for and raising the child” (the Ministry of Labor and Social Security 2011, 8-9). However, as seen in this explanation, this is outlined as an “unpaid leave”, which means that this policy is not offering any compensation for the trade-off that women face when deciding to have a child while being part of the labor market. If the female employees utilize this right, they need to give up their full-time salary.

On the other hand, Hungarian welfare policies mostly target already well-off female employees, as argued by Dorottya Szikra, who states that Orbán’s focus on “work-based society” means that “the governing party now decided to devote formerly unseen resources to the “hard-working”, that is, people with stable labor market position and good wages” (2018, 6). In other words, quite contrary to the Turkish case, most of the welfare support for families in Hungary is

reserved for parents who already have a stable income through constant labor market participation. The analysis of the related cash and service benefits confirms Szikra's argument. One such example is "NÉTAK," which is "the allowance granted to mothers raising four or more children" (Albert 2020, 1). According to this policy, a mother of 4 children can benefit from total tax exemption if they have income from various sources such as wages, self-employment, agricultural production, and others. Of course, this means that only female employees who already have a professional identity can benefit from this. Furthermore, the tax benefit program prior to NÉTAK was already benefiting families that have a certain amount of income, as it "provided a reduction in the tax base of 880,000 HUF (€2588) total income per month" (Albert 2020, 2).

Continuing with the Hungarian family welfare benefits, since 2018, Hungarian families with three or more children and a mortgage on their home are eligible to reduce their debt by one million HUF (€3,200) after the birth of their third child (Albert 2018, 1). Again, this cash benefit is only relevant to middle- and upper-class individuals, as it is only directed towards those who already own a house with a mortgage. What's more is that the Hungarian government also offers to suspend or completely dismiss student loans of women if they have kids, with one child equaling suspension of loans, two children equaling a fifty percent discount in the loans, and complete dismissal with the third child (Albert 2018, 1). Again, this benefit is only relevant for those women who are financially well-off enough to have a university degree. Indeed, the OECD data for employment percentages for women (15–64-year-olds) with children (0–14-year-olds) by level of education indicates that the employment rate of higher-educated mothers are 90% while this rate is respectively 77,5% and 44,1% for medium- and lower-educated mothers in

2021 (OECD Family Database, “LMF1.2. Maternal employment rates”, 5). Analyzed together with the welfare benefits for higher-educated or middle-class women, it is possible to argue that the welfare benefits in Hungary create an incentive for women to stay employed if they already have middle or high-paying jobs.

The Hungarian welfare state also offers cash benefits that are similar to the Turkish case. Family Allowance, or Családi pótlék, offers monthly allowances intended for raising and educational expenses for children, with eligibility extending to biological parents, adoptive parents, guardians, and other caregivers, and the amount is between about 31 Euros to 66 Euros per month, depending on the circumstances of the family such as being a single parent or having a disabled child. Child Care Allowance, or Gyermekgondozást segítő ellátás, is payable to parents or guardians raising children under their roof until the age of three, with additional provisions for grandparents in certain cases. This cash benefit is a fixed amount of about 72 Euros. Another welfare program, Child Raising Support, or Gyermeknevelési támogatás, supports parents with three or more children between the ages of three and eight, allowing for limited employment while receiving assistance, and it is also a fixed amount of 72 Euros. Another welfare program, Childcare Fee, or Gyermekgondozási díj, provides financial aid to parents or foster parents of children up to age two, with additional provisions for grandparents, and for this payment, parents below the age of 25 or mothers under 30 can get a higher amount of pay (European Commission Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, “Hungary - Family Benefits”, 2024). These cash benefits, which are offered without the need for employment or certain income, are higher than Turkish welfare offerings towards mothers, already suggesting

that Hungarian welfare, while exclusionary in most cases, is still more accommodating than the Turkish one.

Moving on to the birth grants offered by the Hungarian government, the Infant care allowance (Csecsemőgondozási díj), is only eligible to mothers who are on their maternity leave. In other words, this allowance is tied to health care insurance, and employment, as the mother needs to be on maternity leave, and it is equal to 100% of the average daily pay in the 168 days following birth. On the other hand, a birth grant (Anyasági támogatás) is available to women who gave birth with the condition that they complete four prenatal medical examinations, which would mean a one-off payment of about 164 Euros (European Commission Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, "Hungary - Maternity and paternity benefits", 2024). While some of these cash benefits towards mothers or parents in general in Hungary are directed towards all classes, without harsh eligibility criteria, it is important to note that the government has been criticized for being exclusionary still, as they raised the amounts for the family tax allowance, family home creation loan (CSOK), infant care allowance (CSED), and child care fee (GYED), which primarily advantage the already well-off families with stable employment, while leaving the other allowances that benefit all families unchanged, meaning that the lack of adjustment has resulted in a significant decrease in real value, estimated at around 30% (Albert 2018, 2).

Applying this framework to the cases of Turkey and Hungary in terms of the family welfare benefits they provide to employed mothers, it is possible to state that the Turkish case mostly resembles the breadwinner model with implicit familialism, while the Hungarian model mostly resembles the optional familialism that has components from both the breadwinner and

individual models of welfare states. According to Sainsbury's framework of the breadwinner and individual welfare state models, the breadwinner model categorizes husbands as the provider for their families while the wives manage the home, with benefits and entitlements often tied to the husband's status. This means that this model supports "traditional" gender roles, with the husband in the public sphere and the wife in the private one. On the other hand, the individual model emphasizes shared responsibility between spouses, with benefits based on individual contributions and a more fluid boundary between private and public spheres. In this model, both spouses share the role of the caregiver and the worker (Sainsbury 1994, 152-153). Leitner's framework for “Varieties of Familialism” acts as a complementary framework to Sainsbury. Building on Esping-Andersen's definitions of familialistic and de-familializing welfare states Leitner's model states that familialistic policies aim to enhance the family's responsibility for caregiving, encompassing support for childcare, elderly care, and support for the handicapped. These policies involve granting time rights such as parental leave, offering financial transfers like cash benefits, and providing social rights such as pension benefits. They can take three forms: explicit, where reliance on family care is complete; optional, which provides services while still emphasizing family care; and implicit, which relies on family care without direct support. In contrast, de-familializing policies aim to alleviate the family's burden by providing care services through public or market-driven means. Interestingly, from the four ideal types, optional familialism offers both strong familialism and de-familialism, while implicit familialism offers both weak familialism and de-familialism. In other words, while the former incentivizes both approaches, the latter does not incentivize either (Leitner 2003, 358-359).

Implicit familialism refers to a welfare state that does not support either of the ends of the spectrum, by not offering sufficient policies such as cash benefits and parental leave, or other policies that may create a work-life balance for female employees with children (Leitner 2003, 359). Hence, this model supports the breadwinner model by being complacent to gender roles; it does not reinforce or interrupt gender roles due to weaker state involvement in the family welfare policies. Indeed, in Sainsbury's model, she states that in the breadwinner model, the wife has the carer role by default due to unpaid caring work and primarily private sphere of care, which means the state is not compensating the carer's efforts; only the worker, or the breadwinner, or in this case the husband earns benefits and money (Sainsbury 153). On the other hand, optional familialism refers to a welfare state where "the caring family is strengthened but is also given the option to be (partly) unburdened from caring responsibilities" (Leitner 2003, 359). In other words, in this model, there are available options to compensate the caregiver, at least partly, with welfare benefits such as time off and cash. However, the family is still the main caregiver instead of complete state-led care services. It is possible to argue that this model falls somewhere in between the breadwinner model and the individual model from Sainsbury's framework. In the individual model, there is a strong state involvement, and the caring work has a paid component (Sainsbury 1994, 153). Optional familialism could have a strong state involvement, or at least some level of it with the possibility of the private sphere being the main sphere of care, and while the caring work does have a paid component, there may be eligibility criteria or limits. Furthermore, the individual model offers equal tax relief and separate taxation, as well as giving both the husband and the wife in a family the roles of the earner and the carer (Sainsbury 1994, 153). However, it is possible to argue that while optional familialism could offer this level of

individual benefits, it may be a variation in between, as it does not have to give equal roles to both the male and female in a family.

As seen in the analysis, in Turkey, all other cash benefits than Birth Aid are only eligible to families with extremely low income or seriously disadvantaged status. Furthermore, Turkey offers below-EU and OECD average maternity leave with no possibility of parental or home care leave. In this case, it is possible to suggest that by being an ineffective agent in creating work-life balance policies for working mothers, the Turkish welfare state is implicitly supporting the breadwinner model and by not offering any incentives for women to become main caregivers either, they are weak in both familialistic or de-familializing policies. For the Turkish case, class does lead to big differences for *working* women, as the Turkish welfare state does not offer tax deductions for women with a certain income with kids or more time off to more earning women. Of course, the low economic class makes it possible for women to get some cash benefits. However, as seen in the analysis, these are mostly for widows who do not have anyone to depend on financially or not working women, with the cash benefits being cut off if they start work or remarry. Hence, it is possible to conclude from the Turkish case that no economic class of women has incentives or disincentives to work or become housewives; instead, the welfare state is passively supporting the status quo.

On the other hand, the Hungarian case offers different welfare programs to different income levels. As seen in the analysis, there are fixed cash benefits for families with children that all Hungarian families can benefit from; however, these cash benefits are not substantial and they are not adjusted to inflation or cost of living. Still, as they offer these cash benefits as well

as a longer maternity and homecare/parental leave time-off, which parents can benefit from if they wish to, it is possible to categorize the Hungarian welfare state as an optional familialist welfare state. It is more flexible in its benefits, and has some level of de-familializing components, while still seeing the private sphere as the primary care sphere as seen in the leave policies. Of course, parental leaves can only be employed by those who already have official jobs. Furthermore, they provide more benefits to families who are already earning a middle or upper-level income, with tax breaks for more children they have, mortgage discounts, student loan erasures, and so on. In this case, in Sainsbury's framework, they fall somewhere in between the breadwinner model and the individual model. It is possible to argue that for the lower-earning class, the welfare state creates households that function with the breadwinner model, as benefits such as tax reliefs and paid uncared work only benefit the already working mothers with a certain level of income. Furthermore, even though working middle and upper-class women get more welfare benefits when they become mothers, it is still not possible to say that both the husband and the wife in the household share the carer/worker role, as women still get more paid time from work with maternity and parental leave time-offs while the same is not possible for the fathers. Lastly, women actually get more financial relief from having more children, unlike the individual model which states equal benefits for both the husband and the wife (Sainsbury 1994, 153). Hence, the Hungarian welfare system benefits female employees with middle and upper levels of income more when they decide to have kids when compared to their husbands and lower-earning women.

As Szikra and Öktem (2022) indicate, "[d]iscourse has been highly salient, especially in family policy reforms where Erdoğan and Orbán employed a pro-natalist rhetoric and extolled

the virtues of marriage and child-rearing, particularly emphasizing the three-child family model" (213). In other words, both the Turkish and Hungarian welfare states utilized discourse as a significant tool in asserting their pro-natalist campaigns that present marriage and a three-child family model seem attractive. Hence, it is possible to support the policy analysis with discourse and written content analysis from the respective governments' officials to understand whether their policies align with their ideals.

Starting with the Turkish case, since they came to power, the AKP has always had the subtitle of "women" in their election manifestos that outline their promises to the voters they will deliver once elected. However, it is worth noting that women and the family are usually not considered apart from each other in these election manifestos of the AKP. Starting with their first manifesto in 2002 after their founding, which is also the year they came to power, they stated that the AKP "attaches importance to solving women's problems *in order to* raise healthy generations and ensure happiness in the family" (the AKP 2002, 84, emphasis added). From this statement, it is possible to conclude that the reason why the AKP cared about women's issues, which include domestic violence, suicides, material issues, femicides and so on, is because they see women as the agents that are necessary for new and healthy Turkish generations, as well as the wellbeing of the unit of the family. So, even from the time that the AKP was founded, which is the time that they were more committed to "Western values" that promote gender equality (Acar and Altunok 2012, 14), they actually still imposed the idea that the woman is the caregiver of the family unit, and the necessary element for social reproduction.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has declared that Turkish women should have at least three children many times. Erdoğan's view on women's role is that a "woman who rejects motherhood, who refrains from being around the house, however successful her working life is, is deficient, is incomplete" (*The Guardian*, "Turkish president says childless women are 'deficient, incomplete'," 6 June 2016). In other words, according to the discourse of the Turkish president, even if a woman has a professional career and identity in the public sphere that is independent of her family life, a woman cannot be "complete" without carework and motherhood. He also stated that women should have at least three kids in this speech, highlighting his pronatalist agenda (*The Guardian*, "Turkish president says childless women are 'deficient, incomplete'," 6 June 2016). He even proclaimed in his International Women's Day speech in 2016 that "a woman is above all a mother," stating that the capitalist system has forced women to pursue profits over family (*The Guardian*, "Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: 'A woman is above all else a mother'", 8 March 2016).

This approach is actually quite different from Orbán's point of view, as he expressed in his speech where he explained the economic foundations of the Hungarian family welfare policy, stating that for a"stable long-term family policy… as many family support elements as possible must be linked to employment" (Orbán 5 September 2019). In other words, Orbán thinks that providing family support is highly important to support families bringing up children *only* if they are also contributing to the nation's economy. In the same speech, he also states here that if people could benefit from the family welfare policies without employment or certain income, they would not be incentivized to work (Orbán 5 September 2019). So family welfare benefits do not only outline the norm for a Hungarian family but also for the individual- which must be a

worker. Indeed, Szikra (2018) states that the Orbán government rejected the main aim of welfare states, which is "to protect the most vulnerable social groups from extreme poverty and hardship," and instead adopted a welfare state that only benefits citizens with "a stable labour market position" who deserve "the merits of redistribution" ("Welfare for the Wealthy", 9-10). Indeed, Orbán himself stated in 2012 that his government aimed to establish a "work-based society" instead of "the Western type of welfare state that is not competitive" (Szikra 2018, Welfare for the Wealthy", 5). Hence, his speech gives an explanation as to why Hungarian family welfare policies are more generous towards those who earn more, which is the idea that people need competition, and not protection from poverty through the welfare state.

In the 2011 General Election manifesto of the AKP, women's role was again approached as equal to being mothers and caregivers. They stated that women are integral to society's well-being, because they "are the central element of both social life and the family that builds the future, our children and youth" (the AKP 2011, 92). Again, this statement paints the idea that the reason that the subtitle "Women" is even included in the manifesto is that without women, there is no procreation, meaning no Turkish children, youth, or future. On the other hand, Orbán stated that the Hungarian constitution, which was changed by Fidesz in 2011, was built on the concept of "we" which aimed to promote communal ties such as family- he stated that the Constitution "affirms the place where [their] children will live as being [their] homeland. It affirms our identities as men and women, because that is what we call family" (Orbán 22 July 2023). While both leaders put the focus on family in their speeches, there is an important distinction between their discourse that supports the Sainsbury classification of the welfare regimes. Erdoğan states that women are important because they are potential mothers who will be the foundation of a

family, while Orbán's statement suggests that because *men* and *women* form the unit of the family, building a "we", or a family is important. This is so that the "we" of man and wife leads to social reproduction, which will lead to Hungarian children still forming the nation of Hungary. Hence, the Hungarian regime also puts family responsibility on the men and not just women.

Furthermore, both leaders utilize religion in their discourse. Erdoğan's rhetoric has Islamic roots. He emphasizes that it is Islam that "defined" the position of women as mothers (*The Guardian*, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: 'Women not equal to men', 24 November 2014). He also suggested that methods of sexual barriers are against population increase, and they are not good for Turkish society because they do not have a place in Islam (Bruton 8 June 2016). This sentence by Erdoğan suggests that the population he wants to expand in Turkey is precisely the Muslim population. As Acar and Altunok (2012) also suggest, from this discourse analysis of the president of Turkey's perception of women, "patriarchal and moral notions and values, often framed by religion, have increasingly become dominant in the [AKP's] rhetoric regarding the regulation of social and cultural domains, and even political and international relations" (14). In other words, when analyzed with the related policies that also implicitly support women's role as the main, unpaid caregiver in the family, the AKP's rhetoric is filled with patriarchal undertones that use both moral arguments about the role of mothers as well as religious ones to create a norm of what women's role in the society should be, which extends to all domains including public and private spheres. Hungarian Prime Minister's rhetoric can be likened to Erdoğan's in terms of utilizing religion and conservative values in his speeches. For example, in a speech, Viktor Orbán outlined two distinct perspectives within European thought. He first described the "progressive, liberal leftist" perspective, which he claimed promotes anti-family policies and

views Christianity as irrelevant to governance. He then contrasted this with a second perspective, one based on Christian culture. He argued that this Christian perspective, which he believes Hungarians have inherited, values Christian social teachings and considers the family to be an essential component of society (Orbán 8 July 2020). Indeed, the Hungarian constitution states: "We recognize the role of Christianity in preserving nationhood. We value the various religious traditions of our country" (Ministry of Justice 2017, 2). Analyzing these two statements together, it is possible to state that since he believes that preserving nationhood is through social reproduction, but also Christianity, he also has a clear vision of the demographic that needs to expand in Hungary. Like Erdoğan is doing for the Muslim religious class in Turkey, Orbán is highlighting that he wants a very specific population to grow, which is Christian middle and upper class.

Indeed, one argument about the rhetoric of Orbán and Erdoğan, and the family welfare policies, which together create the family norm for the respective country as argued in this thesis, can be attributed to the main voter demographics of the respective parties. As Béla Greskovits (2020) emphasizes, Orbán was an important figure in the Civic Circles Movement aimed to transform civil society in Hungary between 2002 and 2006 amid the frustration of right-wing parties after losing the 2002 election. His ideas urged people to form small groups to organize and resist the government, and the movement combined civic activities with efforts to gain influence over society. The movement focused on reclaiming national identity and Christian values, attracting members from various professions and social classes, particularly the educated middle class (Greskovits 2020, 250-253). In other words, Orbán's utilization of Christian values not only in his rhetoric but also in the constitution and family welfare policies, can be analyzed

as a tactic to cater to his main voter group which is the educated Christian middle class. Indeed, according to a survey done by the CEU Democracy Institute, in the 2022 general elections "[m]aterial reasons, such as tax benefits, defending family policy measures and preserving the purchasing value of salaries and pensions, together accounted for the first and/or second reason of three out of four Fidesz voters" (CEU Democracy Institute 2022). Hence, it is possible to state that family welfare benefits are among election strategies of Fidesz. On the other hand, the Turkish president's rhetoric and the welfare state's family policies are focusing on the Muslim population. This can also be attributed to tactics per voter demographics of the AKP. Since its founding, the AKP defined itself as a conservative party. The AKP has also utilized the already existing cleavage between religious and secular citizens in Turkey, favoring the religious side by using the already mentioned rhetoric, by using Islam as a supporting element in the religio-conservative environment they created (Güneş-Ayata and Doğangün 2017).

Having examined the discourse surrounding family welfare policies in Turkey and Hungary, it is essential to understand the tangible impacts these discourses and policies have on the labor market, particularly regarding gender roles and family structures, to understand how these elements come together to create the family norm in the respective countries. The analysis of labor statistics provides empirical evidence that complements the qualitative insights derived from the policy and discourse analysis. Starting the analysis with the paid absence from work, which is one important dimension of this puzzle on how the welfare state and labor market are connected, it is possible to make some conclusions about how the allowed time off work affects female employment in the respective countries. In Turkey, female employees can use 16 weeks of maternity leave**,** with 100 percent of pay. However, this amount of time is below both the

OECD average and EU average, which are respectively 18,6 and 21,3 weeks. On the contrary, Hungary allows mothers 24 weeks of maternity leave with 100% pay, which puts them above average for both standards. Furthermore, Turkey does not allow time off for parental leave or home care leave. According to the OECD definition, parental leave is a period of job-protected time off granted to employed parents to care for their child, typically following maternity or paternity leave. Home care leave, on the other hand, allows at least one parent to remain at home to provide care for their child until the child is two or three years old, often with limited or no pay (OECD Family Database, "PF2.1. Parental leave systems", 1, 2024). Hungary allows for 136 weeks combined for these types of leaves with an average payment rate of 35,3 percent, which is above the OECD one but below the EU one (OECD Family Database, "PF2.1. Parental leave systems," 3, 2024). Furthermore, it is possible to see that in Hungary, out of the 69,6% of employed mothers with at least one child aged 0-2, 52,6% were absent on parental leave in 2021, while this rate was 0 for Turkey in 2013 (OECD Family Database, "LMF1.2. Maternal employment rates", 7, 2024). This would also explain the most common reason for women not participating in the job market being home care responsibilities in Turkey (Table 2, Turkstat Labor Force Statistics). On the other hand, in Hungary only 5% of women are not seeking work due to care responsibilities, suggesting that the welfare benefits provided to working women are helping to balance their care responsibilities (Table 3, Eurostat LFS Survey).

Looking at the paternity leaves in both countries, it is possible to see that Hungary only gives fathers 2 weeks of paternity leave with an average of 70% pay, with 8.8 weeks of paid parental and home care leave possible with only 10 percent pay. This is still almost in alignment with OECD and EU averages. Turkey, on the other hand, offers fathers only 1 week of paternity

leave with 100% pay with no possibility of paid parental and home care leave, below OECD and EU averages (OECD Family Database, "PF2.1. Parental leave systems", 7, 2024). Hence, it is possible to state that in both countries, women are still given the role of the primary caregiver, with considerably less time off allowed for men who become parents. However, in Hungary, this role of the caregiver is somewhat compensated with the allowed time off from work, while in Turkey, women do not have the chance to have both roles at the same time with considerably less time allowed off work for parental reasons.

According to OECD's "Maternal Employment Rates" report in 2021, on average, 71% of mothers with at least one child aged 0-14 years who live in the same household as them, are employed in part-time or full-time jobs in Hungary. On the other hand, Turkey is on the lower end of this spectrum, with 30 percent of mothers that fit this category being employed, while Hungary is above the average of the OECD member countries with almost 80 percent of mothers being employed. In both countries, full-time employment is significantly higher, with part-time employment being 8,5 per cent in Turkey in 2013 while only 4 per cent in Hungary in 2021 (OECD Family Database, "LMF1.2. Maternal employment rates", 1-2, 2024). This rate was actually 16,1% in 2023 in Turkey for part-time employment of women (TURKSTAT, "Women in Statistics 2023", 2024). This statistical evidence already suggests that Hungarian family welfare policies are more accommodating towards mothers while Turkish welfare policies are not so much, as Turkey is the OECD country with the lowest employment rate for mothers with at least one 0–14-year-old child. On the other hand, this graph suggests that women with employment and children in Turkey might be subject to more of an opportunity to have part-time employment while in Hungary this is less of an option. However, it is possible to argue that this

may not be such a positive thing in terms of female participation in the labor market. As Anıl Duman argues, "[n]on-standard contracts, temporary, casual, part-time, are regarded as the main forms of precarious employment in developed countries" (2020, 10). In other words, part-time work would be considered as a form of precarious employment as the benefits from this type of contract is not the same as a full-time, permanent contract. While this is true for developed countries, for a developing country such as Turkey, it is possible to state that with benefits not really helping balance work-family life for new mothers, and the possibility of employers switching to informal modes of existing and providing even less security to women (Duman 2020, 20), Turkish women be receiving even less than the promised benefits.

When we look at how the employment of mothers with at least one child aged 0-14 has changed since the Orbán government came to power, it is possible to see an increase in the employment rate in Hungary. In 2010, the rate was 52,3 percent. While it dropped from 2010 to 2011 to 50.7 percent, it has been in constant increase since 2011, ending up in 77 percent in 2021. However, it is worth noting that while the full-time employment rate went up from 49 percent of mothers with at least one 0-14 aged child in 2011 to 73 percent in 2021, the part-time employment rate for this group almost stayed the same, with 3,3% in 2010 going up to 4% in 2021 (Table 4, OECD Family Database, "LMF1.2 Maternal employment"**)**. On the other hand, the OECD data is limited on this subject for Turkey, with the statistics only covering the period from 2004 to 2013, during which time the AKP government was in constant power. However, based on this, it is possible to see a constant increase in the employment rate of mothers with at least one child aged 0-14, with the rate for full-time employment going up from 21% in 2004 to 30% in 2013. Furthermore, the part-time employment rate went up from 3,3% in 2004 to 8,5% in

2013, suggesting that there may be family welfare policies allowing mothers with young children to work part-time in Turkey as opposed to them not existing in Hungary.

When we look at the more recent available data for Turkish employment rates from TURKSTAT, it is possible to see that female employment has been on the rise. Labor force participation of women, which was 21,3% in 2005, has gone up to 35,8% in 2023 (Table 5, TURKSTAT, "Main labor force indicators"). However, when we look at the employment rate of women aged 25-49 with a child under age 3 living in the household for 2022, it is possible to see a stark difference between the rate for women which is 28 percent, and men, which is 90 percent (Table 6, TURKSTAT, "Employment rate of persons aged 25-49 with a child under age 3 living in the household by sex, 2014-2022"). Furthermore, the employment rate of persons without children indicates that the employment rate for women aged 25-49 without a child under 3 in their household is 56,2%, almost double the rate of women with a child under the age of 3 (Table 7, TURKSTAT, "Employment rate of persons aged 25-49 with no children living in the household by sex, 2014-2022"). Indeed, this analysis aligns with TURKSTAT's statistics on the reasons why people are not part of the workforce in Turkey in 2023, in which almost 43% of women stated that they cannot work due to home responsibilities, while 0 percent of men said that this was the reason they cannot work (Table 2, Turkstat Labor Force Statistics). In contrast, the same indicators for Hungary show a much different picture of women in the labor force. The labor force participation of women in Hungary is 73% with 2% unemployment (Table 8, EUROSTAT, "Employment and activity by sex and age - annual data"). Furthermore, the stark difference between the employment of women with and without children that exists in Turkey is not existent in the Hungarian labor market. According to the employment rate of Hungarian

women aged 25-49 with a child under age 6, 83% are employed, while the same rate is 88% for women with no children, showing a 5% difference where it was 28% for Turkey (Table 9 and 10, EUROSTAT, "Employment rate of adults by sex, age groups, educational attainment level, number of children and age of youngest child (%)"). As seen in this calculation, the empirical data on labor force participation, employment, and unemployment support the conclusions of the policy and discourse analysis on the family welfare benefits for both countries.

From this analysis, it is possible to draw two conclusions. 1) Hungarian family welfare policies are more accommodating towards employed mothers when compared to Turkey, with more weeks off given to them both maternal leave and parental leave. Together with the other welfare policies such as the tax breaks and cash benefits for mothers, they actually help create a level of work-family balance for female employees with children. 2) Even though Hungarian family welfare policies are more accommodating, they still give women the main caregiver responsibility, as they are still the ones expected to take this time off from work to bring up their children, still following a traditional family model, which is also supported by Victor Orbán's speeches on the topic. At the same time, by allowing women to compensate the economic trade-off they face when deciding to become mothers through family welfare benefits in the form of cash benefits, tax breaks, paid time-off from work, and student loan breaks, the Hungarian government is creating a reality where middle and upper-income earning female employees can make the choice to become mothers *for* their individual benefit, while also supporting a "traditional" family model, as they still need to be in heterosexual marriages to get these benefits.

	Turkey	Hungary
Policy	Breadwinner model with implicit familialism. Reinforces traditional gender roles with a lack of family welfare policies and limited state intervention in caregiving. Benefits target low-income or vulnerable families through cash subsidies and kindergarten support.	Optional familialist model that provides flexibility through welfare benefits but still emphasizes the family's primary caregiving role. It has more state intervention, but the welfare benefits differ for families with different economic conditions and labor market standing. The implemented model is individual for families with a good labor market standing, but for families with lower labor market standing and income, the breadwinner model is reinforced.
Discourse	The government promotes traditional family values through speeches and policies. Pronatalist and religious rhetoric utilized without supporting them with policies.	The government emphasizes traditional family values and higher birth rates and a work-based society at the same time. Pronatalist and religious rhetoric is supported by implemented family welfare policies.
Impact	Policies target low-income or vulnerable families with little or no support for working mothers, imposing the unpaid housewife role onto women. Welfare policies are for the struggling, so they are not seen as rewards but as aid for survival. This results in less labor force participation by women, and the biggest reason behind is their care responsibilities at home.	Middle and upper-income families and women with stable and long-term labor market positions get more incentives to have bigger families from the government. A work-based family welfare program benefits those with better labor market standing, making the welfare benefits reward the families that contribute to Hungary's economy more. Accidental support for women's individual existence through employment, policies that do not necessarily help the birth rate but correlates to high female participation in the labor market.
Misalignment	The misalignment is that the government is promoting pronatalism through speech, but not implementing family welfare policies that incentivize higher birth rates, which would compensate for women's carework through economic support.	The misalignment is that while Prime Minister Victor Orbán always promotes Christianity and traditional families, the Hungarian welfare state's benefits are more supportive of somewhat non-traditional family models where both the husband and the wife have caregiving and moneymaking duties simultaneously. In contrast, families with only one spouse.

Table 1, Summary of Findings

Conclusion

This research indicated that Erdoğan and the AKP prioritize women's reproductive roles over other parts of their lives, mainly their career, as part of their pronatalist agenda. Erdoğan promotes motherhood as a defining characteristic of Turkish identity. The family welfare benefits fall in line with the breadwinner model, prioritizes the family as the main care sphere without policies to unburden them and gives the husband the money-maker role while the wife assumes the role of the mother and the caregiver. The promises about gender equality on their election manifestos stay as words on a page instead of future policies. This not only lets the AKP impose their conservative agenda, which also has Islamic roots and gets votes from both the conservative population and the lower class, but also keeps women less involved in the workforce, creating job opportunities for men (Buğra and Yakut-Cakar 2010).

On the other hand, Victor Orbán's rhetoric does not align with the policies either, but unlike the Turkish case, in the Hungarian case the rhetoric supports tradition and religion while the family welfare policies support work-based society and Sainsbury's individual model. As the Hungarian government encourages childbirth and offers support for families, middle and upper-class women in Hungary have greater opportunities and resources to juggle family duties with their career goals. What's more is that linking family welfare benefits to employment serves as an incentive for women to join the workforce, which gives them more their economic independence. Nevertheless, judging by Viktor Orbán's policies and speeches, as well as the exclusionary family welfare policies that are not as generous to the lower-income families, his primary aim seems to be to uphold traditional values, the Christian family model, and the continuation of Hungarian heritage, rather than advancing gender equality or giving women

independence from their family roles. The benefits for women's financial independence and existing outside of the family are a byproduct of these birth-incentivizing policies, and not the intention.

It is possible to suggest that further research on this subject could expand the comparative analysis to include other countries that have similar government discourse and different or similar family welfare policies. Expanding this research would give a broader view of how different policies affect gender roles and work participation in various contexts. It would also show if other conservative regimes experience the same gap between policy and rhetoric.

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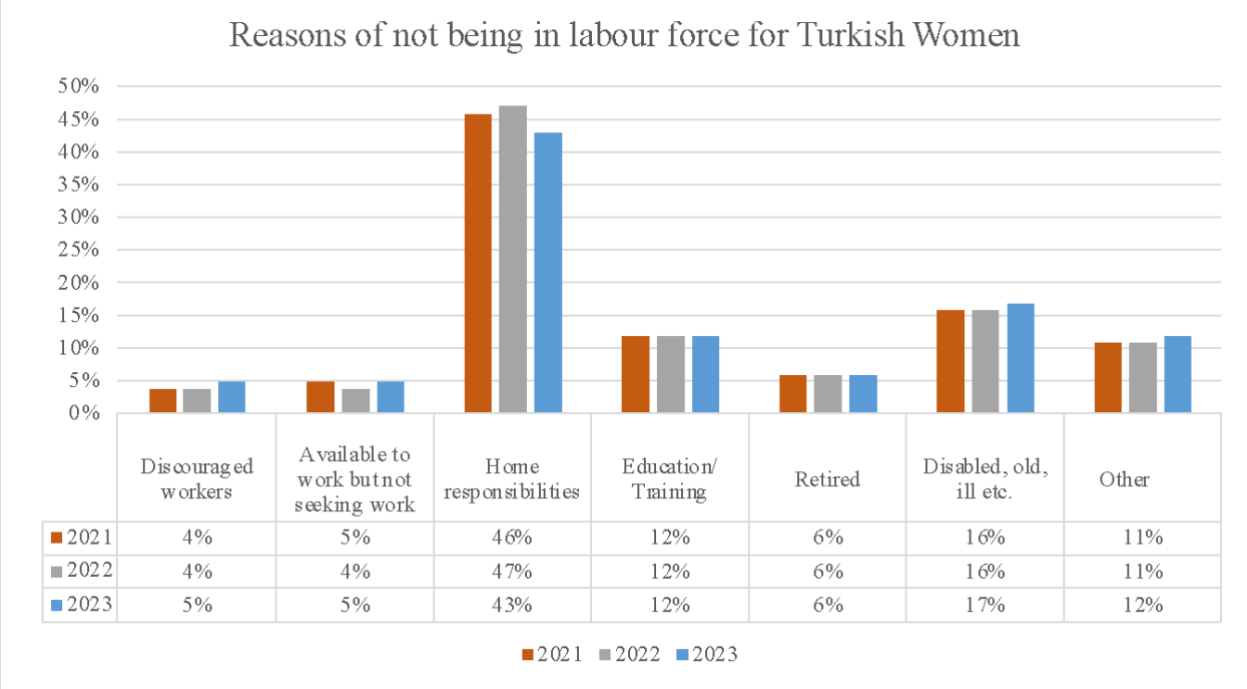
Tables



	Discouraged workers	Available to work but not seeking work	Home responsibilities	Education/ Training	Retired	Disabled, old, ill etc.	Other
2021	4%	5%	46%	12%	6%	16%	11%
2022	4%	4%	47%	12%	6%	16%	11%
2023	5%	5%	43%	12%	6%	17%	12%

Table 2, Author's calculations based on TURKSTAT, Labor Force Statistics 2021-2023.

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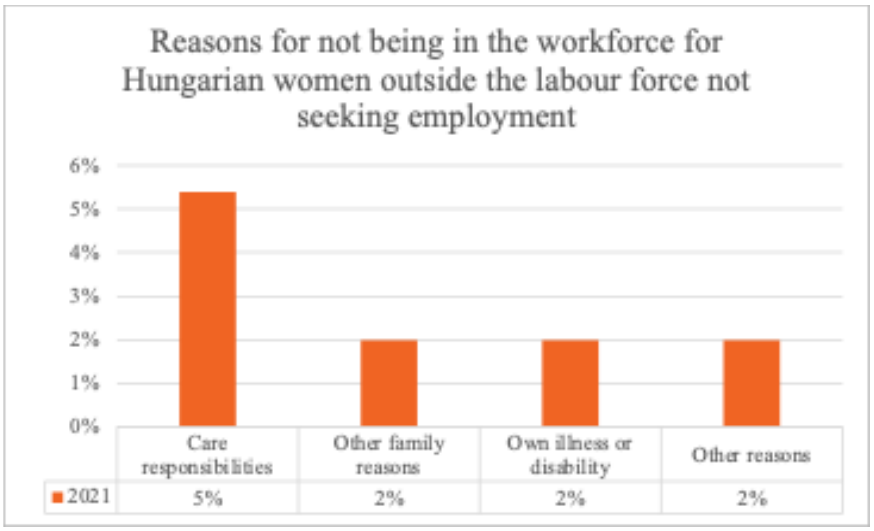

Table 3, Edited from: EUROSTAT LFS Survey, People outside the labor force not seeking employment by sex and main reason, 2021

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Maternal employment rates by part-time/full-time status

Employment rates (%) for women (15-64 years old) by the presence of at least one child (aged 0-14), disaggregated by part-time/full-time status, 1998-2021

Country	Presence of children and part-time/full-time status	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Hungary	No children aged 0-14	..	..	..	50,0	49,7	49,2	48,6	49,5	50,2	51,3	52,1	55,1	57,3	60,2	61,0	62,6	62,8	63,1	64,8
	At least one child aged 0-14	..	..	..	53,9	53,4	53,6	52,3	52,3	50,7	53,5	54,3	58,1	59,2	60,4	61,9	61,7	63,4	60,4	77,0
	- Part-time	..	..	..	3,0	3,1	2,6	3,0	3,3	4,1	4,2	4,2	4,2	3,9	2,9	2,9	3,4	3,4	3,3	4,0
	- Full-time	..	..	..	50,9	50,2	51,0	49,3	49,0	46,6	49,3	50,1	52,0	53,6	55,7	57,2	56,2	58,0	55,8	73,0
	- No information on hours	..	..	..	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	1,7	1,8	1,8	2,2	2,1	1,3	0,0
Türkiye	No children aged 0-14	..	23,3	23,4	23,7	23,9	24,7	24,9	26,4	27,9	28,5	29,4	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
	At least one child aged 0-14	..	21,0	20,9	21,4	21,2	21,8	23,3	25,9	27,8	29,0	30,0	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
	- Part-time	..	3,2	3,5	4,6	5,1	5,0	6,6	7,2	7,9	8,2	8,5	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
	- Full-time	..	17,8	17,4	16,8	16,1	16,8	16,7	18,7	19,9	20,8	21,5	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
	- No information on hours	..	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

Table 4, Source: OECD Family Database, LMF1.2 Maternal employment.

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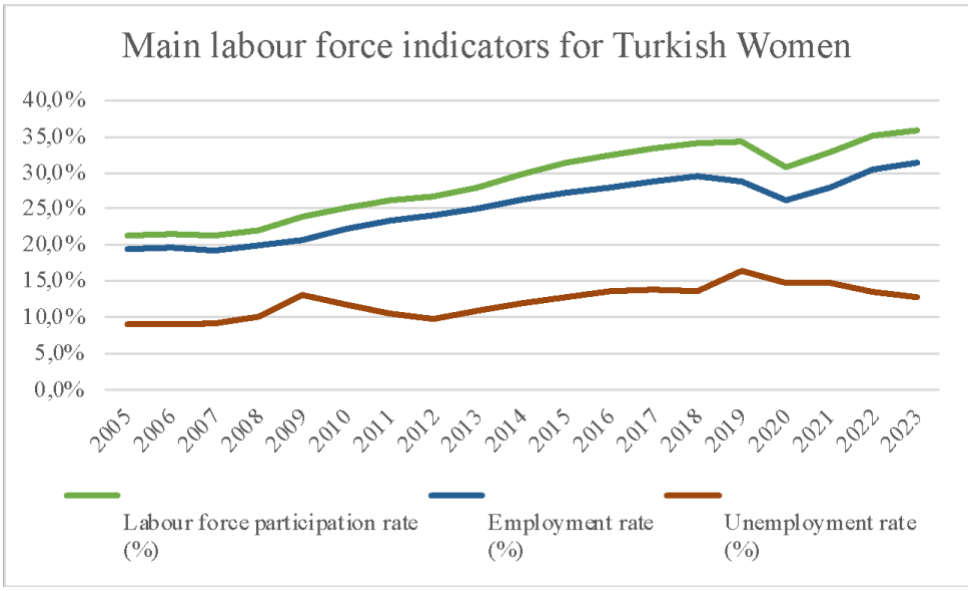

Table 5, Edited from: TURKSTAT Labour Force Statistics, 2024.

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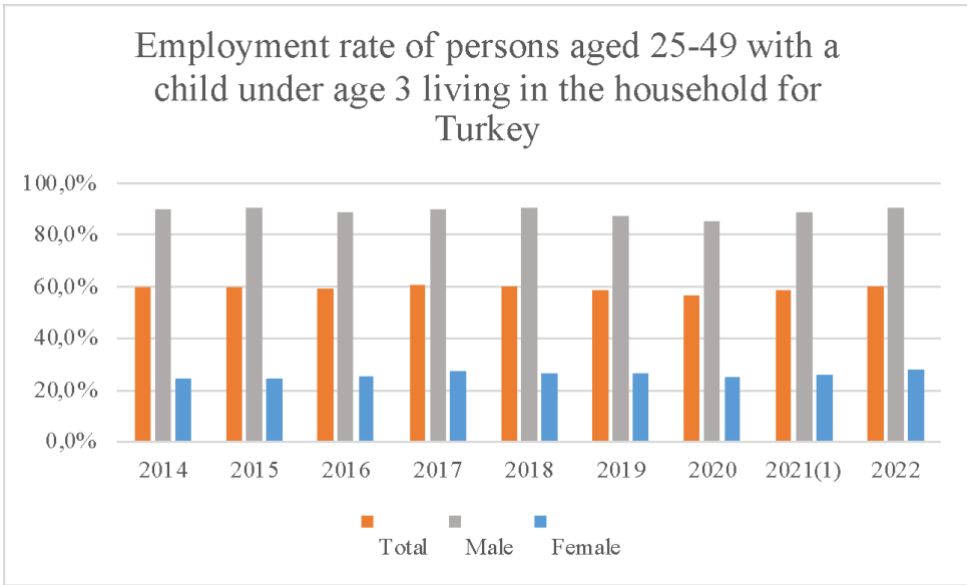

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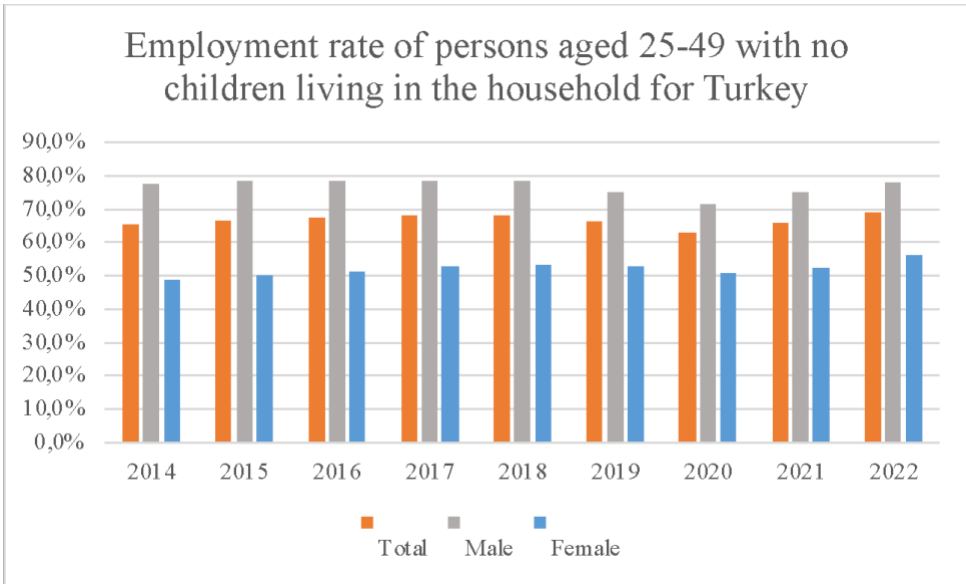

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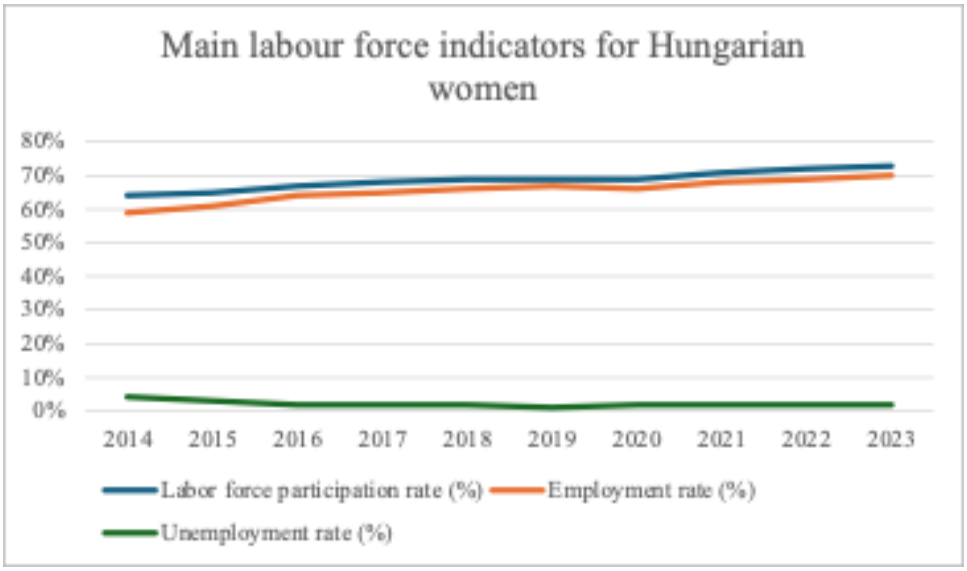

Table 8, Edited from: EUROSTAT, Employment and activity by sex and age - annual data,

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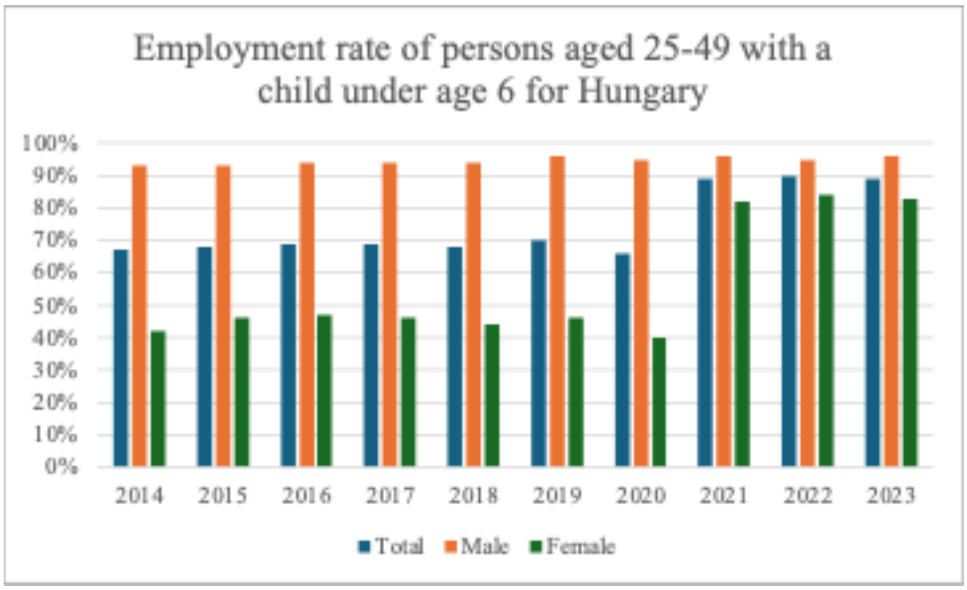

Table 9, Edited from: EUROSTAT, Employment rate of adults by sex, age groups, educational attainment level, number of children and age of youngest child (%)

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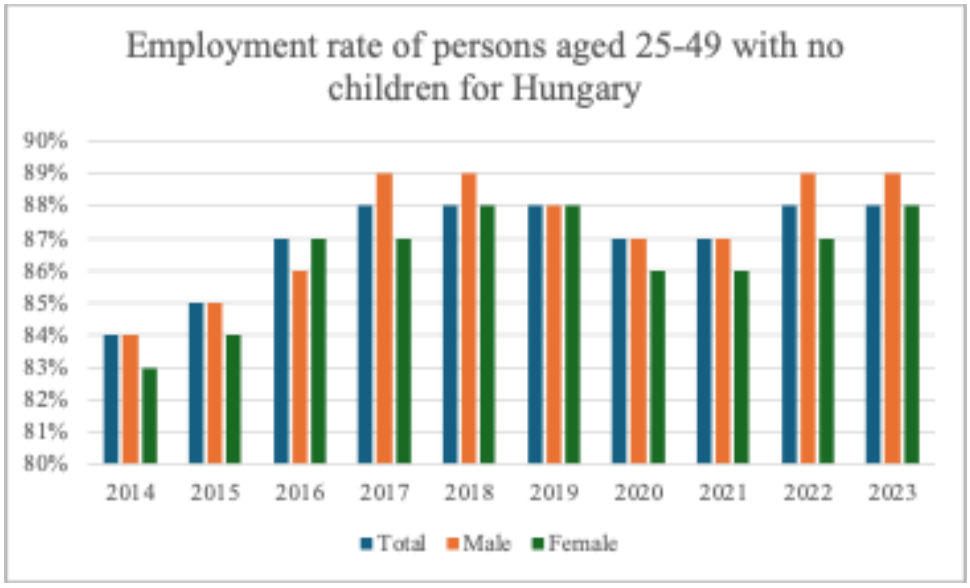

Table 10, Edited from: EUROSTAT, Employment rate of adults by sex, age groups, educational attainment level, number of children and age of youngest child (%)

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