Exploring the gap in part-time employment among female workers between countries: A cross-national comparative study between the Netherlands and Sweden

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Abstract

The distribution of part-time work between women and men is more unequal in the Netherlands compared to Sweden, as Dutch women continue to dominate in part-time employment while many Swedish women have moved from part-time into full-time employment. Consequently, gender inequalities are reinforced in the Netherlands because more female workers suffer from the part-time employment penalty. In this qualitative study, using Rosenfeld and Birkelund's (1995) framework, I analyse three factors that may explain the gap in part-time employment between Dutch and Swedish female workers: the availability of work, policies, and the broader political and ideological context. This cross-national comparative study draws on secondary literature and secondary quantitative data. Empirically, I find that policies and the broader political and ideological context matter more in explaining the gender gap in part-time employment between the Netherlands and Sweden.

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1. Introduction

The Netherlands performs worse than Sweden with regard to reducing gender inequalities, which is highlighted in the Global Gender Index of 2021 (World Economic Forum, 2021). The more unequal distribution of part-time employment between women and men in the Netherlands, in part, helps to explain why the Netherlands ranked 31st while Sweden ranked 5th in the Global Gender Index of 2021 (World Economic Forum, 2021). Over the years, Sweden has significantly reduced the share of female workers in part-time work by moving them into full-time employment instead. Consequently, the distribution of part-time work between Swedish women and men has become more equal (OECD, 2022).

In the Netherlands, however, female workers continue to dominate in part-time employment (OECD, 2022). This is problematic because part-time employment has negative effects on career advancement opportunities, work benefits and wages (Landivar, 2015; Van Osch and Schaveling, 2020). It means that a large share of Dutch women experience the part-time employment penalty. As a result, gender inequalities are reinforced in the Netherlands (OECD, 2019). In Sweden, part-time employment does not reinforce gender inequalities to the same extent since a smaller share of women experience this penalty. Reducing the unequal distribution of part-time employment between women and men through the reduction of part-time employment among female workers is therefore desirable since this can reduce gender inequalities. Thus, Sweden sets a good example for the Netherlands.

Consequently, the above begs the question 'Why is part-time employment among female workers higher in the Netherlands compared to Sweden?' In order to answer this question, a cross-national comparative study will be conducted which draws on secondary literature and secondary quantitative data related to country-level variables that could help explain the gap in female part-time employment between these two countries. Many scholars have written about the determinants of female labour supply. Relevant literature discusses how economic development- and crises, family- and tax policies and cultural norms help explain differences in female labour supply between countries. Nevertheless, the extent to which women participate in the labour force (working hours) is rarely discussed. Despite its importance, cross-national differences in part-time employment (vs. full-time employment) among female

workers in particular have remained understudied. This qualitative study aims to fill this gap through a cross-national comparison between the Netherlands and Sweden.

The following chapter provides the motivation for conducting a study on the topic of female part-time employment. In Chapter 3, the conceptual model as well as related literature is presented. Three plausible explanations for the gap – "(1) availability of part-time work […]; (2) the costs, advantages, and accommodations to women's work […]; and (3) the broader political and ideological context." (Rosenfeld and Birkelund, 1995: 114) – are empirically tested in Chapter 4. Finally, the main conclusions of this study will be summarised in Chapter 5.

I find that the last two mechanisms, policies and the broader political and ideological context, help in explaining why part-time employment is higher among female workers in the Netherlands compared to Sweden. The findings of this study provide a good starting point for further research in understanding the variables that affect part-time employment among females in general.

2. Background motivation

Although governments are actively trying to reduce gender inequalities, it still persists in today's most developed countries, including in the Netherlands. Importantly, the unequal distribution of part-time work between female– and male workers reinforces gender inequalities (OECD, 2019). This is because part-time employment has "negative effects on organizational career growth" meaning that part-time workers experience less "career goal progress, professional ability development and promotional speed" than full-time workers (Van Osch and Schaveling, 2020: 338). Part-time workers are, for example, less likely to participate in trainings (OECD, 2010).

Besides career advancement opportunities, part-time employment also affects work benefits and wages (Landivar, 2015). Statistics confirm this for the Netherlands. "In 2019, women's average annual earnings - including special bonuses - were 38 percent lower than men's. Two-thirds of the wage difference can be explained by the fact that women work fewer hours" (CBS, 2022). Moreover, in many cases part-time employment contributes to an unequal distribution of unpaid work (OECD, 2019). Thus, when the share of women employed in part-time work is larger than the share of men employed in part-time work, which is often the case, then it is mostly female workers that experience the part-time employment penalty described above. This in turn reinforces gender inequalities (OECD, 2019). It can therefore be argued that it is undesirable for a country to experience a large gender gap in part-time employment.

The gender gap in part-time employment can be defined as the difference between the share of women and men employed in part-time work among the total employed women and men; the total employed individuals includes part-time and full-time employees but part-time employees work less than 30 hours per week (OECD, 2022). Instead, a small and/or declining gender gap in part-time employment through the reduction of part-time employment among female workers is desirable since fewer female workers experience the part-time employment penalty this way. When female workers move from part-time into full-time employment, gender inequalities could reduce as a result.

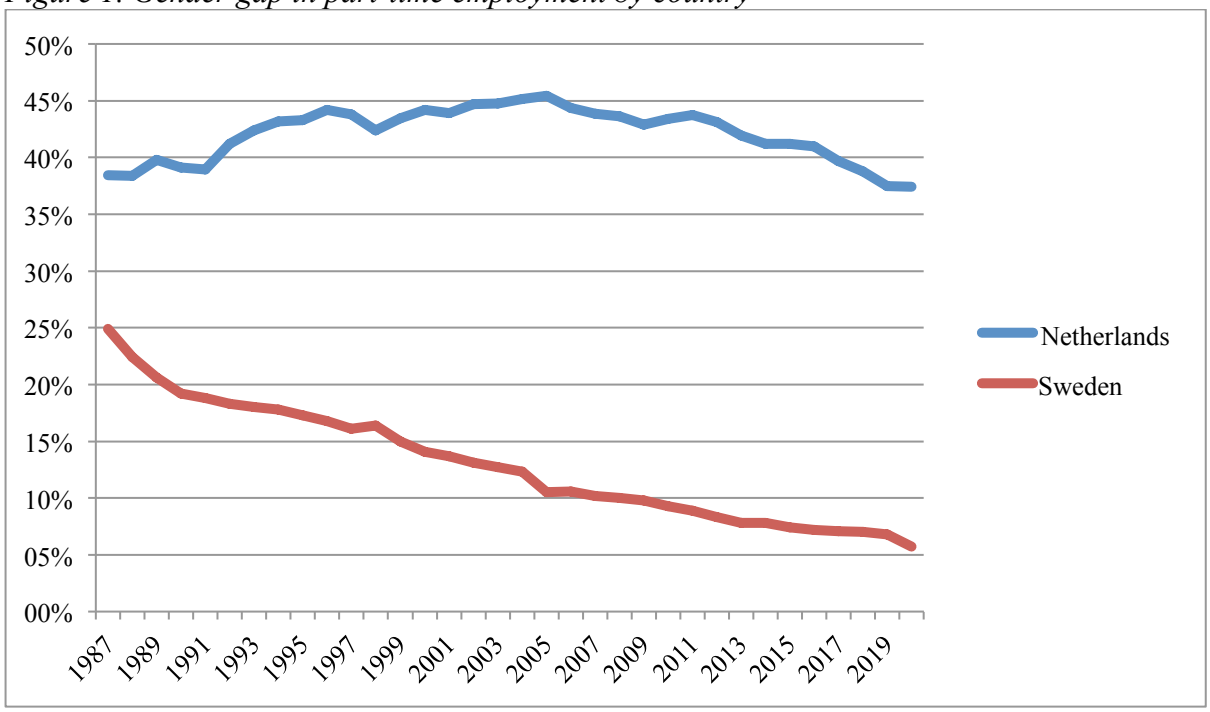
Every year, the World Economic Forum "benchmarks the evolution of gender-based gaps among four key dimensions (Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment) and tracks progress toward

closing these gaps over time" through the Global Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum, 2021: 5). This index demonstrates that Sweden performs better than the Netherlands, namely Sweden ranked 5th while the Netherlands ranked 31st (World Economic Forum, 2021).

The gender gap in part-time employment can, in part, explain why Sweden performs better than the Netherlands. Calculated using the data from OECD (2022), figure 1 presents the gender gap in part-time employment by country. In 2020, 17.1 percent of Swedish women and 11.4 percent of Swedish men worked part-time. This is a difference of 5.7 percent between female- and male workers in Sweden. During that same year, 56.8 percent of Dutch women and 19.4 percent of Dutch men worked part-time. This is a difference of 37.4 percent between female- and male workers in the Netherlands and therefore a difference of 31.7 percent between the Netherlands and Sweden in 2020. In 1987, these two countries only experienced a difference of 13.6 percent (OECD, 2022). It means that the difference between the Netherlands and Sweden with regard to the gender gap in part-time employment is now the larger.

The OECD (2022) data also shows that besides the fact that Sweden's gender gap in part-time employment has been lower compared to the Netherlands, this Scandinavian country has also experienced a steady decline in the gap in part-time employment between women and men. The Netherlands has not experienced such a decline. In fact, gender gap in part-time employment of 2020 (37.4 percent) was only slightly below that of 1987 (38.5 percent). The large difference between the Netherlands and Sweden exists due to the diverging trend in part-time employment among female workers in particular. Swedish women have declined part-time employment by 12.7 percent between 1987 and 2020 meaning that many Swedish women have moved from part-time into full-time employment. Dutch women, however, have increased part-time employment by 5.8 percent between 1987 and 2020.

Figure 1. Gender gap in part-time employment by country



Source: author's elaboration from OECD data (OECD, 2022)

In the general public discussion and debates, the Dutch media also discusses the topic of female part-time employment extensively. In some cases, women are accused of perpetuating inequalities (Van Hoeven, 2021) and they are called 'lazy' or 'balance bitches' (NPO Radio 1, 2018). Schimmelpenninck (2019) calls the "part-time decadence" of the Netherlands the "ultimate Dutch taboo". "If Dutch women worked as much as the rest of West Europe, it would add 114 billion euros to the economy per year" (Schimmelpenninck, 2019). Hence, Dutch media shows little understanding toward female employment behaviour and barriers to full-time work are often not mentioned.

On the contrary, Swedish media shows more understanding toward female employment behaviour, namely it is recognised that childcare responsibilities are unequal and linked to female part-time employment (Åhrman, 2022; Linder and Lindström, 2022). The media therefore highlights that and new policies should be introduced to reduce the burden of unpaid care work borne by women and allow for more equal work opportunities. Johansson and Söderberg (2022), for example, point out that Swedish Social Democratic Party wants to "create an equality pact between employers, with the goal of increasing men's take of parental leave and thus women's full-time work". This could result in a redistribution of caring responsibilities, which would make it easier for Swedish women to pursue a full-time career.

Consequently, the cross-national comparative study can provide clarity regarding the barrier to full employment experienced by Dutch women by asking why female part-time employment is higher in the Netherlands compared to Sweden. Staats (2021) has already made an effort, as she points out that the Dutch system expects one parent to be at home to take care of the children and these responsibilities usually fall on mothers rather than fathers; schools close at around 2.30 pm and childcare facilities are expensive.

Employers, however, highlight the workforce shortages that the Netherlands is currently experiencing due to an aging population and fewer young people entering the labour force (Schouten, 2021). Specifically, the healthcare sector and the education sector experience severe workforce shortages. In both sectors, many female part-time workers are employed (Ministerie van Financiën, 2020). Consequently, general employers' association AWVN (RTL Nieuws, 2021) suggests that an increase in working hours among female workers could help counter workforce shortages. The largest political party of the Netherlands, the Conservative Liberals, agrees with this statement (De Kruif and Jonker, 2019). Thus, the cross-national comparison between the Netherlands and Sweden can be considered a fitting comparison because many Swedish women are now employed full-time and therefore work more hours than Dutch women.

All quantitative data and public discussions beg the question 'Why is part-time employment among female workers higher in the Netherlands compared to Sweden?' The qualitative study includes an analysis of the female worker, which explains why it focuses on the gender gap in part-time employment rather than the gender gap in working hours, namely part-time employment includes a clear gender dimension; part-time jobs were introduced to offer women the flexibility to combine paid and unpaid work (Plantenga, 1996).

3. Methodology

3.1 Conceptual model

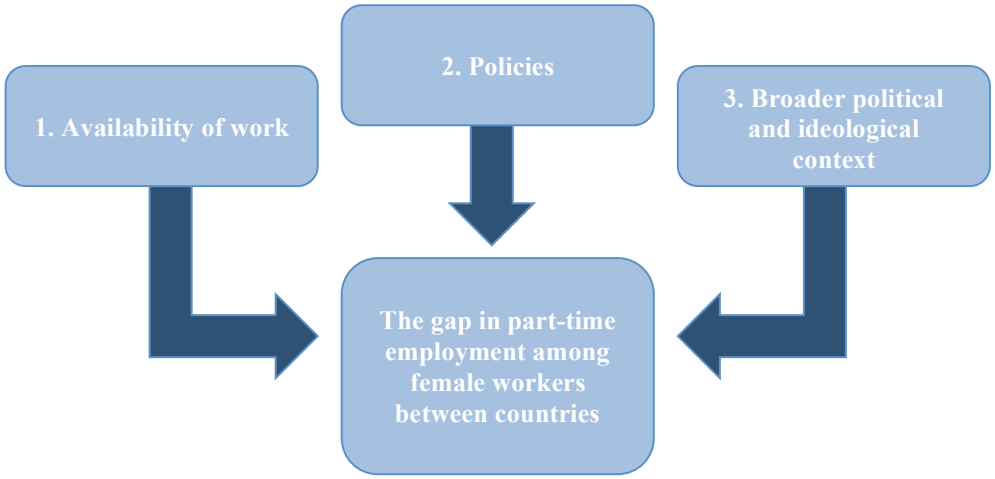
Country-level variables that help determine part-time employment remain understudied despite their importance. Nevertheless, Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995: 114-120) identified three plausible explanations for the gender gap in part-time workers that allows for cross-country study, namely:

1. The **"availability of part-time work**" refers to "labour demand in general" as well as "certain types of jobs that lead to increases in women's part-time employment"
2. The "**costs, advantages and accommodation to women's work**" refers to "various kinds of family, employment, and welfare policies" that can affect "the cost of part-time work as compared with full-time work"
3. The "**broader political and ideological context**" refers to the political and ideological characteristics that influence "employment–family linkages" as well as the "outcome of legislation, regulations, and practices with regard to gender equality"

The above-mentioned factors are in line with the subject of this study. Consequently, these factors will be used as the mechanisms of this study since it is likely to create a holistic picture as to why part-time employment among female workers is higher in the Netherlands as compared to Sweden. However, employment (part-time vs. full-time) among female workers has changed over the past two decades meaning that the research by Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995) is outdated. Therefore, this study aims to bring their research up-to-date. Although Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995) conducted quantitative research, this study will include qualitative research instead.

By drawing on secondary literature and secondary quantitative data, this cross-national comparative study aims to determine whether the availability of work, policies and/or the broader political and ideological context help in explaining the gap in part-time employment among female workers between the Netherlands and Sweden. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual model that will be used to answer the research question. Next, literature related to each mechanism will be discussed.

Figure 2. Conceptual model by Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995)



3.2 Literature review

Availability of work

Countless scholars argue that demand for female work depends on economic development. Goldin (1995) is one of these scholars. According to Goldin (1995), the relationship between female labour participation and economic growth is U-shaped. The U-shaped curve therefore represents economic development. "With the introduction of new technologies and the expansion of markets family income rises so the rate of female participation in the labour market declines while their domestic activities increase" (Mujahid and Zafar, 2012: 566).

Thus, developing countries move toward the bottom of the U-shaped curve during industrialisation, which means that female labour supply decreases. Meanwhile, developed countries continue to move up the U-shaped, as demand for female labour increases due to the fact that more women are highly educated (Mujahid and Zafar, 2012). Job openings for women increase female labour supply as a result.

Nevertheless, Steel (1978) points out that developing countries do not always move toward the bottom of the U-shaped curve. Instead, industrialisation can lead to an increase in female labour demand. Moreover, Durand (1975) and Standing (1978) claim that the relationship between female employment and economic growth is more complex than described above.

Following the latest economic crisis, more scholars started discussing demand for female labour in times of economic downturn. Blanton et al. (2019) claim that female workers in

particular bear the brunt of financial crises when overall demand for labour is low. Many women are made redundant during financial crises as "financial crises are likely to undermine women's status during the crisis years as well as several years following the end of the crisis" (Blanton et al., 2019: 965).

Kushi and McManus (2016) also argue that women often experience higher unemployment rates than men during economic crises. In particular, women experience significantly higher unemployment rates than men during economic crises when welfare regimes find it difficult to maintain gender equality in employment. Their main takeaway is that welfare states can be divided into separate groups based on the extent to which a welfare state can "maintain employment equality between men and women" through social policy (Kushi and McManus, 2016: 456).

Furthermore, Seguino (2010: 182) writes that demand for female labour during an economic crisis depends "on whether more jobs are lost in female- or male-dominated industries". Hoynes et al. (2012), however, take an intersectional approach and highlight that White women experienced lower unemployment rates compared to Black and Hispanic women during the global financial crisis of 2007-2009. Hence, it is important to look beyond gender only.

Rather than firing women during an economic downturn, some employers choose to lower labour costs by moving female workers from full-time into part-time employment (Insarauto, 2021). This increases involuntary part-time employment among female workers as a result. Nonetheless, most scholars focus on employment vs. unemployment among female workers during economic downturns.

Policies

Many scholars have written about the relationship between policies and female employment behaviour. Ferragina (2019) analysed the effect of family policies on the employment behaviour of women and concludes that childcare support as well as parental- and maternal leave affect female labour supply. Datta Gupta et al. (2008) also confirm this relationship. The length of leave and/or the amount of financial support help determine whether a positive or negative relationship exists between, for example, maternity leave and female labour supply (Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2017). Consequently, family policy-

models have been identified that "distinguish four regimes on the basis of the different characteristics of family policy packages" (Ferragina, 2019: 67).

Olivetti and Petrongolo (2017), however, compare childcare subsidy and maternity- and parental leave, and conclude that childcare subsidy has a larger positive effect on female labour supply. They are more in favour of childcare subsidy since it makes it easier for mothers to turn directly into working mothers (Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2017). Although maternity leave is meant to increase female labour supply, the reality is that the opposite happens when women do not work for an extended period of time after childbirth (Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2017). Specifically, Del Rey et al. (2021) find that female labour force participation declines after 30 weeks of maternity leave. Nevertheless, Yamaguchi (2017) argues that extensive maternity leave does not affect female labour supply in the long run. It only postpones mothers' return to work.

Unlike studies regarding maternity leave, not all scholars agree with the argument that family transfer payments affect female employment behaviour. Guner et al. (2020) identify a positive relationship between conditional family transfer payments and female labour supply. Here, families only receive transfer payments when the parents are employed. This has a positive impact on women with low education levels in particular. Yet, this positive relationship declines when family transfer payments turn unconditional (Guner at al., 2020). On the contrary, Del Boca et al. (2021) find that conditional household transfers are likely to increase work among fathers only.

Besides family policies, tax policies also affect female employment behaviour. Tax credits increase the labour supply of mothers (Blundell et al., 2016; Bastian, 2020). But Blundell et al. (2016) explain that tax credits only increase the labour supply of lone mothers. Furthermore, Colonna and Marcassa (2015) find that a negative relationship exists between joint taxation and female labour force participation.

Nonetheless, Ferragina (2019) acknowledges that female employment behaviour is not only affected by family policies. Instead, it depends on the interaction between policy and culture. The next section of this chapter therefore turns to cultural norms.

Broader political and ideological context

The literature discusses cultural norms extensively, which relates to the broader ideological context in particular. Although researchers disagree on how norms are developed and internalized (Oxoby, 2004; Bénabou and Tirole, 2006; Akerlof and Kranton, 2010), they all argue that attitudes dictate how women should behave and this in turn affects female employment behaviour.

While Alwin et al. (1992) highlight normative differences between countries through the identification of attitudes toward female part-time and full-time employment in different stages of life, most literature calls attention to specific gender role attitudes such as 'A man should earn more than his wife' which focuses on the importance of paid work for women and 'A child suffers if the mother works' which focuses on the impact of female employment on the family (Fortin, 2005; Pfau-Effinger, 2012; Tolciu and Zierahn, 2012; Bertrand et al., 2015; Stam et al., 2013; Codazzi et al., 2017). Some authors identify that multiple gender role attitudes make up a cultural norm that affects female labour supply (Fortin, 2005; Tolciu and Zierahn, 2012; Stam et al., 2013) while others find that one particular attitude affects female labour supply (Pfau-Effinger, 2012; Bertrand et al., 2015).

Pfau-Effinger (2012: 532) analysed the cultural context of female employment through an attitude that focuses on the impact of female employment on the development of a child and identifies three cultural family models due to the "cross-national differences in the degree to which this idea is still popular". Each country has a dominant family model that most women adhere to.

Nevertheless, most research on cultural norms is conducted on the national level. Some researchers use a strategy first adopted elsewhere (Eriksson and Stenberg, 2015; Wieber and Holst, 2015; Codazzi et al., 2017; Zinovyeva and Tverdostup, 2018; Doumbia and Goussé, 2021; Sprengholz et al., 2020). However, this weakens the argument that cultural norms around gender roles affect female working hours since the strategy first adopted in one particular country (Bertrand et al., 2015) does not always hold in another country (Hederos Eriksson and Stenberg, 2015). Using the cultural argument to explain cross-national differences in female employment behaviour becomes less relevant as a result.

Nevertheless, Pfau-Effinger (2021) argues that policies have not always led to desired policy outcomes, which means that the institutional context does not fully explain why female employment behaviour differs from one country to another. This is caused by the neoclassical school of thought, which influences economic policies and assumes that individuals are rational (Tolciu and Zierahn, 2012). Consequently, Pfau-Effinger (2012) writes that the cultural context is important explaining cross-national differences in female employment.

Although this study does not fully disagree, Muldoon (2018) highlights that policymakers increasingly turn to behaviourally informed policies to achieve better policy outcomes, including the desired female employment behaviour. Hence, it is likely that the shift toward behaviourally informed policies would lead to an increase in desired policy outcomes.

4. Empirical analysis

According to Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995: 114), a number of country-level variables are associated with female part-time employment (vs. full-time employment). As previously mentioned, these variables can be divided into three factors – "(1) availability of part-time work […]; (2) the costs, advantages, and accommodations to women's work […]; and (3) the broader political and ideological context." – that may help answer the following question: 'Why is part-time employment among female workers higher in the Netherlands compared to Sweden?'

4.1 Availability of work

This study aims to analyse whether male unemployment, horizontal segregation and the share of women employed in the public sector help in answering the research question. It includes the following hypotheses:

1) Male unemployment is higher in the Netherlands compared to Sweden;
2) Horizontal segregation is more extensive in the Netherlands compared to Sweden;
3) The share of women employed in the public sector is larger in the Netherlands compared to Sweden.

I argue that this first factor does not help explain why part-time employment among female workers is higher in the Netherlands compared to Sweden. Accordingly, hypotheses 1 through 3 are not supported. This is because male unemployment has, for the most part, been lower in the Netherlands compared to Sweden. Even during the European debt crisis, the Netherlands barely surpassed Sweden's male unemployment rate. Moreover, the EHW sector tends to meet part-time demands of female workers in particular, which means that this female-dominated sector can cause high levels of part-time employment. Nevertheless, the EHW sector of the Netherlands and Sweden were equally segregated in 2019. In order to get a more holistic picture of horizontal segregation in each country, future research can bring the outdated IP Index up-to-date and do calculations on horizontal segregation in sectors or occupations that are less dominated by women or men. Lastly, the share of women employed in the public sector is smaller in the Netherlands due to a smaller public sector when compared to Sweden. Responsiveness to employee demands helps to explain why the public sector of the Netherlands includes more part-time jobs instead. Detailed explanations of these main findings are as follows.

Before discussing male unemployment, it is important to point out that Rosenfeld and Birkelund's (1995) argument that high overall demand for labour increases female part-time employment no longer holds in the 21st century. During the 20th century, this argument would hold because Sweden and the Netherlands in particular experienced lower female employment rates (Nientker and Alessie, 2019). Hence, many women were able to move into employment through part-time work. Nevertheless, it is likely that a high demand for labour would decrease part-time employment in the 21st century, as female part-time workers may be asked to increase their working hours to full-time employment in order to overcome workforce shortages. De Kruif and Jonker (2019) highlight that Dutch women are already being asked to do so. Fewer women can now move into employment due to the already high employment rates in the Netherlands and Sweden. The argument by Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995) is therefore no longer relevant to the context of both countries and will not be used to assess why part-time employment is higher among female workers in the Netherlands compared to Sweden.

Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995) explain that demand for part-time employment among women is high when **male unemployment** is high/demand for male labour is low. Male unemployment refers to men "of working age who are without work, are available to work, and have taken specific steps to find work" (OECD, 2022). Overall, male unemployment has been higher in Sweden compared to the Netherlands (Eurostat, 2022).

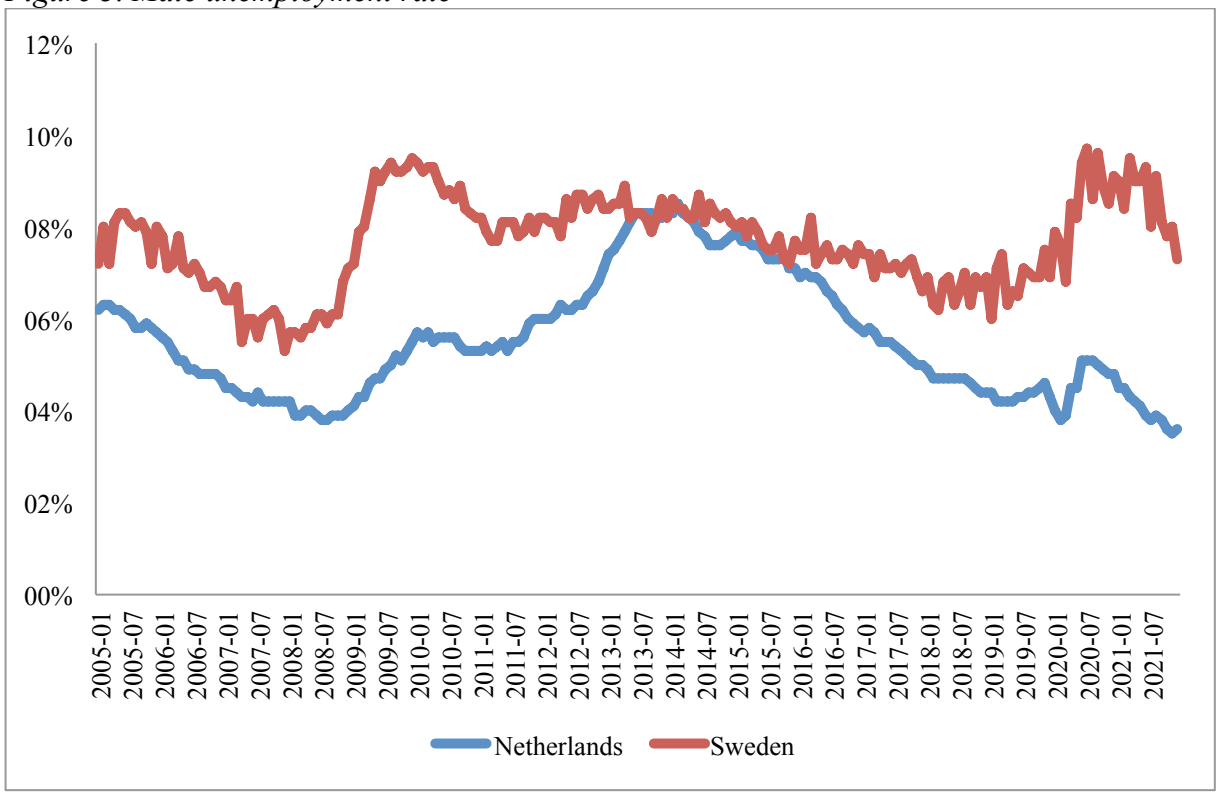
In December 2021, 3.6 percent of men were unemployed in the Netherlands while in Sweden 7.4 percent of men were unemployed (Figure 3) (Eurostat, 2022). During that same time, Europe experienced a male unemployment rate of 6.8 percent, which means that Sweden was above Europe's male unemployment rate while the Netherlands was below Europe's male unemployment rate (Eurostat, 2022). Nevertheless, it is particularly important to pay close attention to economic downturns since demand for male labour tends to decrease during such times (Castillo, 2009).

During the global financial crisis of 2007-2009, male unemployment increased in both the Netherlands and Sweden, but the Netherlands never surpassed Sweden's male unemployment rate (Eurostat, 2022). Following the global financial crisis, the European debt crisis had a big impact on male unemployment in the Netherlands since it belongs to the Eurozone and Sweden does not. Male unemployment increased in the Netherlands while Sweden's male

unemployment rate remained rather stable. The Netherlands, however, never surpassed Sweden's male unemployment rate by more than 0.4 percent (September 2013) (Eurostat 2022).

Moreover, Tijdens et al. (2015) highlight that the Netherlands experienced a larger increase in part-time employment among men than women between 2008 and 2013. Swedish men followed a similar pattern during the global financial crisis; full-time employment decreased and part-time employment increased (Anxo and Ericson, 2015).

Figure 3. Male unemployment rate



Source: author's elaboration from OECD data (OECD, 2022)

Second, Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995) explain that that extensive **horizontal segregation** can cause a high level of part-time employment among women. Horizontal segregation "is understood as under- or overrepresentation of women or men in occupations or sectors" (EIGE, n.d.). One may expect horizontal segregation to be less extensive in Sweden, "as it has been widely noted for being at the forefront of gender egalitarianism" (Hudstad et al., 2020: 2). Hudstad et al. (2020), however, recognise that horizontal segregation continues to be a

problem in Sweden. This study aims to identify to what extent this continues to be a problem in Sweden. There are a variety of ways in which one can evaluate horizontal segregation.

The IP Index looks at "the share of the employed population that would need to change occupation (sector) in order to bring about an even distribution of men and women among occupations and sectors" (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2009: 31). In 2007, Sweden scored 27 on the IP Index and the Netherlands scored 25.2 on the same index (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2009). This indicates that a larger share of the Swedish employed population would need to change occupation than the Netherlands in order to reach an equal distribution. Nevertheless, Ellingsæter (2013) and Gonäs et al. (2019) highlight that Sweden has shown a trend toward desegregation. Thus, more up-to-date information is necessary.

The Gender Inequality Index provides an alternative way of evaluating horizontal segregation; it looks at the percentage of men and women employed in the 1) EHW ("education, health and welfare") sector, and 2) STEM ("science, technology, engineering and mathematics") sector (EIGE, 2018). The EHW sector is female-dominated while the STEM sector is male-dominated (EIGE, 2017). Hence, it is important to pay close attention to these sectors when analysing horizontal segregation.

Table 1 includes the share of employed Dutch and Swedish women and men who work in the EHW- and STEM sector. In 2019, above three and a half times more women than men worked in the EHW sector of both the Netherlands and Sweden (EIGE, 2019; EIGE, 2019). During that same year, however, three and a half times more men than women worked in Sweden's STEM sector while seven times more men than women worked in the STEM sector of the Netherlands (EIGE, 2019; EIGE, 2019). Clearly, both countries experience horizontal segregation, but Sweden is now less segregated due to the STEM sector.

It is, however, unlikely that this sector would help to explain why part-time employment among female workers is higher in the Netherlands compared to Sweden, as the STEM sector remains male-dominated and tends to meet the demands of male workers. Since male workers mostly demand full-time rather than part-time jobs, this study argues that the STEM sector is unlikely to cause high levels of part-time employment among women.

Table 1. Share of employed men and women working in EHM sector and STEM sector

	EHW sector		***STEM sector***	
	2017	*2019*	*2017*	*2019*
Swedish female	43%	43%	7%	8%
Swedish male	12%	12%	36%	36%
Dutch female	37%	36%	3%	4%
Dutch male	10%	10%	28%	28%

Source: EIGE, 2018; EIGE 2018; EIGE, 2019, EIGE 2019

Third, a large **share of female employment in the public sector** can result in high levels of female part-time employment, as Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995) claim that the public sector tends to offer part-time jobs due to work intensity.

Wagner (2005) highlights that the growth of the Swedish welfare state has resulted in a large public sector. This was "developed by means of high taxation with a high proportion of public employment" (Wagner, 2005: 109). Swedish women make up a large proportion of public employment, namely the share of Swedish women employed in the public sector was 71 percent in 2017 (OECD, 2019). In the Netherlands, the share of Dutch women employed in the public sector was 41 percent in 2017 (OECD, 2019). Thus, the share of women employed in the public sector is larger in Sweden. Although most European countries have quite large public sectors, Smith (2005) points that Sweden's public sector is particularly large. Hence, a smaller public sector in the Netherlands helps to explain why a smaller share of Dutch women is employed in the public sector.

Responsiveness to employee demands provides a better explanation as to why the public sector of the Netherlands experiences more part-time employment than Sweden's public sector, namely Dutch organisations are more "responsive to workers' demand for reduced hours in their jobs" than Swedish organisations (Tijdens, 2002: 76). Demanding a part-time job can have a variety of reasons. Dutch workers in the public health sector experience intense work pressure (Van Osch and Van Poll, 2022). Consequently, some employees demand part-time employment to be able to deal with stress at work (RTL Nieuws, 2019). Allaart and Bellmann (2007) also acknowledge that public sector employers in the Netherlands are accommodating to the preferences of workers with regard to their employment status.

4.2 Policies

This study aims to analyse whether decommodification, childcare, maternity leave and family transfer payments help in answering the research question. It includes the following hypotheses:

4) Availability of social benefits regardless of employment status is higher in the Netherlands compared to Sweden;
5) Childcare is less extensive in the Netherlands compared to Sweden;
6) Maternity leave is more extensive in the Netherlands compared to Sweden;
7) Families in the Netherlands receive a higher level of family transfer payments compared to families in Sweden.

I argue that this second factor helps to explain why part-time employment among female workers is higher in the Netherlands compared to Sweden. This is due to childcare and maternity leave. Accordingly, hypothesis 5 and 6 are supported. Childcare is less extensive in the Netherlands since the childcare is less affordable and availability is limited. Some Dutch families choose for the mother to stay at home half of the week to take care of the child since it would leave families with more money at the end of the month. Others are left with no other option than to work part-time due to long waiting lists. On the contrary, maternity leave is more extensive in the Netherlands because of longer compulsory maternity leave and the unequal availability of leave for mothers and fathers, which means that Dutch mothers are made more responsible for unpaid care work. Unlike Sweden, there is still little opportunity for an equal distribution of caring responsibilities between Dutch mothers and fathers. Consequently, Dutch mothers continue to refrain from full-time employment. Nevertheless, hypothesis 4 and 7 are not supported. Social benefits apply equally to part-time and full-time workers in both the Netherlands and Sweden. Furthermore, the difference in guaranteed family transfer payments between these two countries is very small. Future research should therefore analyse the total value of family transfer payments to be able to identify whether a relationship exists between family transfer payments and female part-time employment. Detailed explanations of these main findings are as follows.

First, Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995) state that the cost of part-time work relative to full-time work is low when there is a high **availability of social benefits regardless of employment status** (also referred to as **decommodification**). A high availability of these benefits therefore keeps women in part-time employment. It is important to identify whether the Netherlands

and Sweden make social benefits as available to part-time workers as to full-time workers. Social benefits include pensions, vacations, leaves, insurances, and so on.

Thirty years ago, Sundström (1992) already recognised that these social benefits applied equally to part-time and full-time workers in both the Netherlands and Sweden. Meanwhile, many other countries, including the United States and Belgium, were still struggling to apply social benefits equally to part-time and full-time workers (Sundström, 1992). Hence, the Netherland and Sweden can be considered frontrunners. Part-time employment "does not necessarily mean a marginalised labour position, often not covered by social benefit" (Fagan, 2004 in Fahlén and Oláh, 2013: 29) in either country.

Social benefits are pro rate to hours and income in both countries. For example, an individual who works 50 percent (part-time) should receive 12,5 days of paid holidays a year and no less when an individual who works 100 percent (full-time) receives 25 days of paid holiday a year. Otherwise, a part-time worker would be discriminated against. Thus, "part-time employees receive unemployment benefits for the same period of time and under the same conditions as a full-time employee" (Visser et al., 2004: 16). This also counts for disability benefits, special leave, and so on.

Second, extensive **childcare** "makes it easier for women with small children to take jobs outside the home" and "could encourage women to choose full-time over part-time employment" (Rosenfeld and Birkelund, 1995: 118). Extensiveness of childcare can be measured through the affordability and availability of childcare.

Dutch parents spend at least 4 percent of their gross family income on childcare for the first child (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). This percentage counts for low-income families in particular. When a child in the Netherlands attends childcare 5 days a week, the average cost of childcare is EUR 1.800 a month and 40 to 60 percent of this amount is covered through childcare subsidy on average (Emery, 2020). Childcare for the second child and up is cheaper (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Nevertheless, parents receive childcare subsidy for a monthly maximum of 230 hours of childcare and receive no childcare subsidy at all if the hourly rate set by the private childcare company exceeds the maximum hourly rate set by the government (Rijksoverheid, n.d.).

The Netherlands experienced a rapid increase in private companies providing childcare services as a result of the 2005 Childcare act (Bettendorf et al., 2015). “The 2005 act prohibited municipalities from providing childcare directly and eliminated subsidies from municipalities and employers” (Knijn and Lewis, 2007 in Emery, 2020: 516). Hence, the cost of childcare is determined by supply and demand. As demand for childcare currently exceeds supply, private companies can set high prices. As a result, some argue that childcare is too expensive (Het Parool, 2018; AD, 2021). Some parents may even risk losing their subsidy due to the maximum hourly rate set by the Dutch government.

On the contrary, Swedish parents spend a maximum of 3 percent of their gross income on childcare for the first child, a maximum of 2 percent for the second child and a maximum of 1 percent for the third child (Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, 2021). Furthermore, Swedish parents never pay more than SEK 1382 (EUR 132) a month for the first child, SEK 922 (EUR 88) for the second child and SEK 451 (EUR 43) for the third child (fourth child and up is free of charge) (Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, 2021). Swedish law sets childcare costs and municipalities provide childcare (Sweden, n.d.; Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, 2021). Moreover, every Swede receives 525 hours of free childcare annually after turning three years old (European Commission, 2021). Hence, Swedish parents deal with low and stable childcare costs (Ferguson, 2014) while most Dutch parents do not (Het Parool, 2018; AD, 2021).

In the Netherlands, limited places for childcare are available and parents have to enter long waiting lists (Aan de Wiel, 2021; Rijksoverheid, 2021). This forces some parents to take on part-time employment (Visser, 2021). Available places are also distributed unequally, since the 2005 Childcare act caused a decrease of childcare in rural areas but an increase of childcare in urban areas (Noailly et al., 2007). Furthermore, little flexibility in opening hours is offered in the Netherlands, as childcare facilities have fixed opening hours from 7.30 am to 6.30 pm (Emery, 2020).

In Sweden, however, each child is entitled to childcare after his/her first birthday. Therefore, each child has a guaranteed place for which must be applied (Stockholms stad, 2021). Each child can be placed on a waiting list for a maximum of four months (Solna Stad, 2022). Moreover, opening hours are more flexible, as many childcare facilities are open between 6 am and 6.30 pm (Göteborgs Stad, n.d.; Stockholms stad, 2020; Malmö Stad, 2021). Some

facilities also offer childcare services for parents who have to work at night (Göteborgs Stad, n.d.; Stockholmds stad, 2020; Malmö Stad, 2021).

Third, extensive **maternity leave** is a "general effort to accommodate women's roles within and outside the home" and could lead to women choosing part-time over full-time employment (Rosenfeld and Birkelund, 1995: 118). Extensiveness of maternity leave can be measured through the length of paid maternity leave, but it is also important to recognise the unequal availability of leave for mothers and fathers.

In the Netherlands, pregnancy- and maternity leave together must be a minimum of 16 weeks during which women receive 100 percent of their income up to the maximum daily pay set by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (European Commission, n.d.). Maternity leave alone is a minimum of 10 weeks (European Commission, n.d.). Paternity leave is less extensive; fathers receive 5 days of paternity leave right after childbirth and are entitled to an additional 5 weeks during the first 6 months after childbirth (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). During these 5 weeks, fathers receive 70 percent of their income up to the maximum daily pay set by the above-mentioned ministry (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Additionally, parents also have the right to 26 weeks of unpaid parental leave before the child turns 8 years old.

Compulsory maternity leave is shorter in Sweden. Mothers must go on 2 weeks of maternity leave before or after childbirth and fathers must go on 10 days of paternity leave (Duvander and Löfgren, 2021). During this time, parents can opt for paid leave through parental benefit (Duvander and Löfgren, 2021). Parental benefit was first introduced in 1974 and now offers a total of 480 days of paid leave for one child (Table 2) (Bartova and Keizer, 2020; Försäkringskassen, 2021). It includes a generous compensation calculated based on income as well as a standard compensation of SEK 180 (EUR 17) per day (Försäkringskassen, 2021). Each parent must go on a minimum of 45 days of parental leave when applied for parental benefit (Försäkringskassen, 2021). More importantly, each parent receives a total of 240 days of parental benefit if they choose to take out full parental benefit and split it equally. Part of the benefit is, however, transferrable meaning that a parent can choose to transfer a total of 150 days to the other parent (Försäkringskassen, 2021).

It could be argued that maternity leave is more extensive in the Netherlands because Dutch mothers are obligated to go on 10 weeks of maternity leave while Swedish mothers are

obligated to go on 2 weeks of unpaid leave or 45 days of paid leave. Others may, however, argue that leave is more extensive in Sweden due to parental benefit. Swedish mothers could receive between 195 and 300 days of paid leave when taking out full parental benefit (excluding leave days with standard compensation). A mother receives 300 days of paid leave when the father transfers all his transferrable days onto the mother. This is likely because many fathers hold onto workplace norms that discourage leave-taking (Haas and Hwang, 2019). Overall gender roles and the gender pay gap may also discourage the leave-taking of fathers (Duvander, 2014). As a result, Swedish parents may not share parental benefit equally. In this case, Swedish mothers may receive more guaranteed leave than Dutch mothers.

Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995), however, overlook the unequal availability of leave for mothers and fathers. Mothers in particular are made responsible for care work when maternity leave is much longer than paternity leave. This leads to an unequal distribution of caring responsibilities and increases the likelihood that women take on part-time work (Ferrant, Pesando and Nowacka, 2014).

Swedish parents have the option of sharing paid leave equally whereas Dutch parents do not. The share of non-transferrable days in Sweden's parental benefit has also increased over the years (Försäkringskassen, 2021). Consequently, Swedish fathers have increased their share of paid leave (Chronholm, 2007; Duvander, 2014). This has led to the normalisation of caring responsibilities among Swedish fathers (Chronholm, 2007; Bartova and Keizer, 2020). Although paternity leave in the Netherlands is paid, trade union FNV finds it problematic that Dutch mothers receive 100 percent while Dutch fathers receive 70 percent of their income during the roughly 5 weeks of paternity leave (Boverhuis, 2020). It is therefore likely that many fathers refrain from going on paternity leave.

Table 2. Parental benefit in Sweden

	Parent 1	*Parent 2*
Transferrable days: compensation based on income	105	105
Non-transferrable days: compensation based on income	90	90
Transferable days: standard compensation of SEK 180	45	45
Total days of parental benefit	**480**	

Source: Försäkringskassen, 2021

Fourth, **family transfer payments** provide "an independent source of income" and "might make full-time employment less necessary for women" (Rosenfeld and Birkelund, 1995: 119).

All Dutch parents receive child benefit. They receive child benefit every 3 months and the amount depends on the age and amount of children (Kooreman, 2000). For each child, parents receive EUR 230,69 (0-5 years old), EUR 280,13 (6-11 years old), EUR 329,56 (12 to 17 years old) (Sociale Verzekeringsbank, n.d.). Some Dutch parents may also receive child budget but this only applies to low-income families. This amount is calculated based on income and savings and is paid out monthly (Sociale Verzekeringsbank, n.d.). The monthly budget increases when a child turns 12 and 16 years old but ends once the child has turned 18 years old (Belastingdienst, n.d.). Table 3 highlights the guaranteed amount of child benefit for the Netherlands.

In Sweden, all parents receive child allowance of SEK 1250 (EUR 119) monthly per child until the child turns 16 years old but extended allowance is provided when the child is between the ages of 16 and 20 and attends compulsory school or senior high school (European Commission, n.d.; Försäkringskassen, 2021). Additionally, parents with two or more children receive an additional large family supplement. This supplement can also be extended after the child turns 16 years old, but certain conditions must be met (Försäkringskassen, 2021). Table 4 highlights the guaranteed amount of child allowance for Sweden. Please note that these amounts are subject to change, as they will most likely be adjusted for inflation.

The average cost of raising a child is, however, not the same all across Europe. In 2020, the prices for consumer goods and services were higher in Sweden compared to the Netherlands (Eurostat, 2021). The cost of raising a child in Sweden is therefore also likely to be higher. Understandably, Swedish parents would need to receive a higher amount of child allowance as well, which makes the gap in family transfer payments between the Netherlands and Sweden even smaller.

Parents in both countries may receive more than the guaranteed amount described above; some Dutch families may receive double the amount of child benefit or receive child budget and some Swedish families may receive extended child allowance and/or the large family

supplement (Sociale Verzekeringsbank, n.d.; Försäkringskassen, 2021). Whether these additional payments have a big impact on the level of family transfer payments in each country is, however, outside of the scope of this study.

Bradshaw and Finch (2002) analysed the value of child support packages extensively and conclude that Sweden ranks higher than the Netherlands when it comes to the value of the child support package. However, the child support package analysed by Bradshaw and Finch (2002) included more than family transfer payments only. For now, it can be argued that the difference in guaranteed family transfer payments between the two countries is small.

Table 3. Total guaranteed child benefit per child in the Netherlands

EUR 230,69 * 4 quarters * 6 years of child benefit (0-5 years old)	EUR 5.536,56
EUR 280,13 * 4 quarters * 6 years of child benefit (6-11 years old)	EUR 6.723,12
EUR 329,56 * 4 quarters * 6 years of child benefit (12-17 years old)	EUR 7.909,44
Total	**EUR 20.169,12**

Source: author's elaboration from Sociale Verzekeringsbank (Sociale Verzekeringsbank, n.d.)

Table 4. Total guaranteed child allowance per child in Sweden

SEK 1250 * 12 months * 16 years of child allowance	**SEK 240 000 (EUR 22.924 converted on 5 June 2022)**

Source: author's elaboration from European Commission (European Commission, n.d.)

4.3 Broader political and ideological context

This study aims to analyse whether left-wing political control, corporatism, and gender gap in relative wages and jobs with supervisory authority help in answering the research question. It includes the following hypotheses:

8) Politics is less controlled by the left wing in the Netherlands compared to Sweden;
9) Corporatism is weaker in the Netherlands compared to Sweden;
10) Gender gap in relative wages is larger in the Netherlands compared to Sweden;
11) Gender gap in jobs with supervisory authority is larger in the Netherlands compared to Sweden.

I argue that this third factor helps to explain why part-time employment among female workers is higher in the Netherlands compared to Sweden. This is due to all four country-level variables. Accordingly, hypotheses 8 through 11 are supported. Firstly, Sweden is more controlled by left-wing politics, which has had positive effects on Swedish women's position in the public sphere; it has enabled many Swedish women to increase their labour supply to full-time employment. Furthermore, corporatism is weaker in the Netherlands due to lower trade union density. Trade unions can reduce the gender pay gap and improve the work-life balance through reduced working hours without a loss in earnings, which encourages full-time employment among female workers as a result. There is, however, more to corporatism than trade unions only. Future research should develop a more holistic perspective of corporatism in relation to female part-time employment by addressing other important actors, such as employer federations and national governments, and interaction and consultation between these actors. Finally, the gender gap in relative wages and jobs with supervisory authority is higher in the Netherlands. Sweden's Discrimination Act requires employers to identify gender pay gaps through surveys and to tackle these gaps with the help of an action plan while the Equal Treatment Act of the Netherlands does not require this. This could partly explain the difference in the adjusted gender pay gap between the Netherlands and Sweden. The Netherlands could be lagging behind Sweden with regard to improved gender balance in jobs with supervisory authority due to Sweden's earlier introduction of gender targets. This could partly explain the difference in the gender gap in jobs with supervisory authority between these two countries. It means that Dutch women are less incentivised to work full-time due to the higher gender gaps mentioned above. Detailed explanations of these main findings are as follows.

First, Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995) state that the left wing is in favour of government spending and supportive toward a large public sector. Moreover, it supports female labour force participation through policies that promote gender equality (Rosenfeld and Birkelund, 1992). **Left-wing political control** in turn encourages full-time employment among women.

According to Van Kersbergen and Becker (1988), the Netherlands can be considered a passive social democratic welfare state. Between 1964 and 1975, "a left culture […] gave a particularly strong impulse to the development of welfare state policies" (Van Kersbergen and Becker, 1988: 490). Nevertheless, the social democratic welfare state turned passive due to the economic crisis of 1973. During this time, the Christian Democrats and Conservative

Liberals challenged the expansion of the welfare state and reduced government spending instead (Van Kersbergen and Becker, 1988). The public sector of the Netherlands was unable to grow as a result.

Importantly, the socialist ideas of the Labour Party never received a large number of votes due to the "religiously inspired voting of the working class" but the liberal challenge described above would not have been possible without religiously inspired voting (Van Kersbergen and Becker, 1988: 482). Although the Netherlands has become more secularised, the Conservative Liberals continue to emerge as the largest political party in Dutch elections and the Labour Party has lost support over time (Andeweg and Irwin, 2014). Hence, less emphasis has been put on policies promoting gender equality in the Netherlands compared to Sweden where "gender equality and woman's issues throughout recent decades have become gradually institutionalised and affirmed as political goals by successive governments" (Kjeldstad, 2001: 68).

Government control by the left wing is reflected through Sweden's policies that promote gender equality, large-scale government spending and a large public sector.

> "A fundamental shift occurred in the gender contract from essential difference to essential similarity of the sexes. In Sweden, these debates were introduced by the Liberal and Social Democratic parties. By the late 1960s, the Swedish Labour Party (SAP), had adopted a feminist platform of equality and was very influential in implementing many of the social policies that gender equality required" (Verlin Laatikainen, 2000: 145).

The introduction of extensively subsidized social care provisions, such as childcare and parental leave, meant that many activities that were traditionally the responsibility of women were now the responsibility of the state. This enabled women to increase their labour supply and eventually move into full-time employment (Nyberg, 2012). Consequently, Sweden's public sector grew exponentially (Vartiainen, 1998). Swedish women made this possible in particular, as their employment in local government grew between 1963 and 1993 while male employment in local government remained stable during this time (Rosen, 1996). Nevertheless, large-scale government spending was necessary to fund these provisions, which

was made possible through high rates of taxation. Today, reliance on high tax rates is still supported by Sweden's general public (Vartiainen, 1998).

Second, **corporatism** involves centralised bargaining and adjusts "the costs and benefits of part-time work" (Gornick and Jacobs, 1994 in Rosenfeld and Birkelund, 195: 120) in such a way that it encourages female full-time employment instead. "Corporatism is a structure of well-organized interaction and consultation between union federations, employer federations, and the national government on all issues of social economic policies, including labour legislation and social protection" (Hartog et al., 2002: 318).

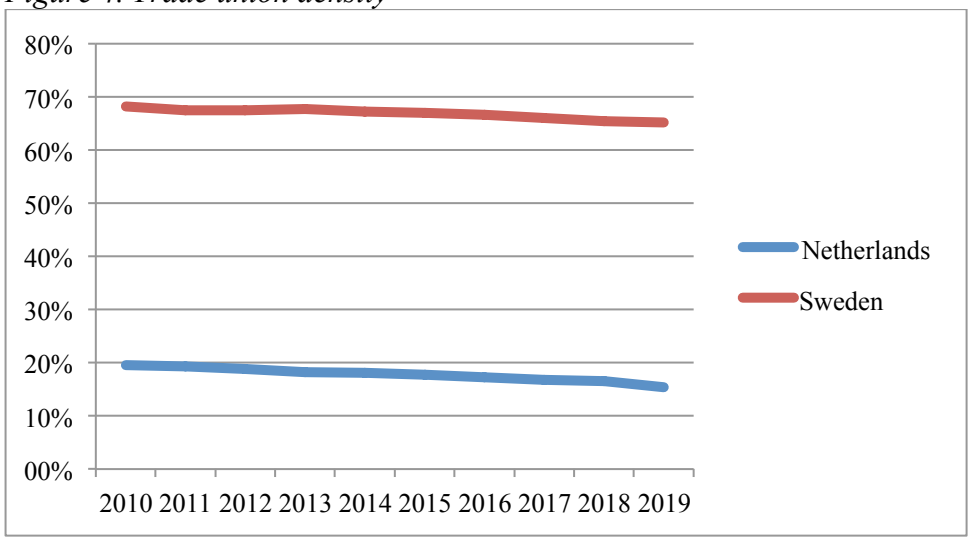
This study focuses on trade unions since they represent workers and aim to ensure that their members' needs are met (Tham and Kelly, 2021). It is likely that the needs (regarding fairer wages and improved work-life balance) of many workers will be met when a country experiences high trade union density. This can in turn increase full-time employment among female workers.

Trade unions can reduce the gender pay gap (GPG), i.e. the gross hourly wage is higher for men than for women (Elvira and Saporta, 2001). This is possible because of the collective bargaining agreement that is the same for women and men (Elvira and Saporta, 2001). Moreover, trade unions play an important role in setting wages regardless of occupation. Consequently, wage differences due to occupational gender segregation are reduced by trade unions (Elvira and Saporta, 2001). Trade unions also focus specifically on wage increases in occupations dominated by women (Elvira and Saporta, 2001). Thus, high trade union density can help in reducing the gender pay gap, which in turn encourages women to work full-time. This is also explained in greater detail in the section on the gender gap in relative wages.

Trade unions also care about workers' wellbeing and can improve the work-life balance of full-time workers through reduced working time without lower earnings (Booth and Schiantarelli, 1987; Keune, 2006). For example, Dutch trade union CNV aims for the workweek to be reduced to 30 hours (Van Eijndhoven, 2019). Women often choose part-time employment because part-time employment has a positive effect on work-life balance (Albertsen et al., 2008; Lyonette, 2015). Nevertheless, high trade union density can help to improve the work-life balance of all workers, including full-time workers, which in turn encourages female full-time employment.

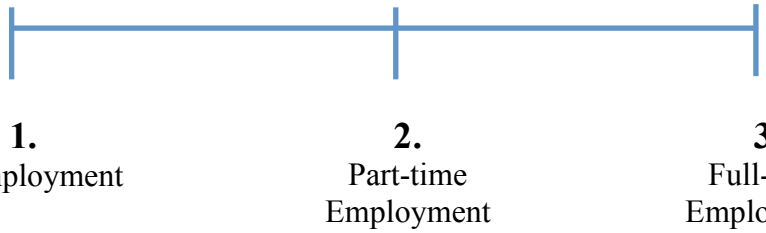
The OECD (2022) data shows that trade union density is higher in Sweden compared to the Netherlands (Figure 4). In 2019, 65 percent of employees in Sweden were members while in the Netherlands 15 percent of employees were members (OECD, 2022). Therefore, the needs of many Swedish workers regarding fairer wages/smaller gender pay gap and improved work-life balance are likely to be met. Due to low trade union density in the Netherlands, the needs of few Dutch workers are likely to be met. This means that few Dutch women are encouraged to work full-time.

Figure 4. Trade union density



Source: author's elaboration from OECD data (OECD, 2022)

Third, Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1992) consider wages to be an incentive. "And where the gap between men's and women's job rewards is smaller, women might be more likely to seek […] employment" (Rosenfeld and Birkelund, 1992: 120). Although a distinction is not made between part-time and full-time employment, one can rank employment status according to working hours:



When the gender gap in relative wages reduces, women lean more toward employment (the right). Hence, women are more likely to work full-time when the **gender gap in relative wages** is small. Anti-discrimination laws aim to ensure that men and women receive equal pay for equal work.

The Equal Treatment Act (ETA) includes the equal treatment of men and women in the Netherlands and the Equal Treatment Commission (ETC) is responsible for the enforcement of the ETA (Havinga, 2002). Although the ETC should investigate complaints, many do not know how to file complaints and are not aware of the ETC's existence/responsibilities (Hertogh, 2009). Moreover, Hertogh (2009: 223) points out that the rulings of the ETC "are not legally enforceable and the Commission cannot force the party who is found guilty of discrimination to comply with their ruling".

Unlike the Netherlands, Sweden's Discrimination Act (DA) requires employers to conduct a survey to identify unequal pay for equal work and draw up an action plan that explains how pay differences related to gender will be tackled (Freidenvall, 2018; Sweden, 2022). The Equality Ombudsman is responsible for the supervision of the DA. It is, however, unknown to what extent Sweden's general public is aware of the existence/responsibilities of the Equality Ombudsman.

Whether the ETC of the Netherlands and DA of Sweden have resulted in equal pay for equal work can be measured through the gender pay gap (GPG). Unadjusted GPG includes an explanatory and inexplanatory part whereby the explanatory part is associated with "different characteristics of men and women in the labour market" (Leythienne and Pérez-Julián, 2021: 16). Nonetheless, some differences cannot be explained meaning that "it may to some extent itself be an indication of gender inequality" (Magnusson, 2016: 54). Magnusson (2016), for example, highlights that a GPG exists in Sweden's field of medicine. In this case, Swedish men and women have the same or a similar educational background. The GPG continues to exist after adjusting for the choice of specialisation (Magnusson, 2016).

Therefore, it is important to pay close attention to the adjusted GPG since it adjusts for the "different characteristics of men and women in the labour market" (Leythienne and Pérez-Julián, 2021: 16). This gives a better indication of whether income discrimination exists. In 2018, the Netherlands experienced an adjusted GPG of 10.4 percent while Sweden

experienced an adjusted GPG of 7.6 percent (Leythienne and Pérez-Julián, 2021). Consequently, it may be argued that Sweden's DA has been more effective than the ETC of the Netherlands.

Fourth, Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995) also consider jobs with supervisory authority to be an incentive. Hence, women are likely to choose full-time employment when the **gender gap in jobs with supervisory authority** is small. According to EIGE (2016), "quotas can be applied in order to correct a previous gender imbalance in different areas and at different levels, including in political assemblies, decision-making positions in public, political life and economic life". Thus, gender quotas could reduce the gender gap in jobs with supervisory authority.

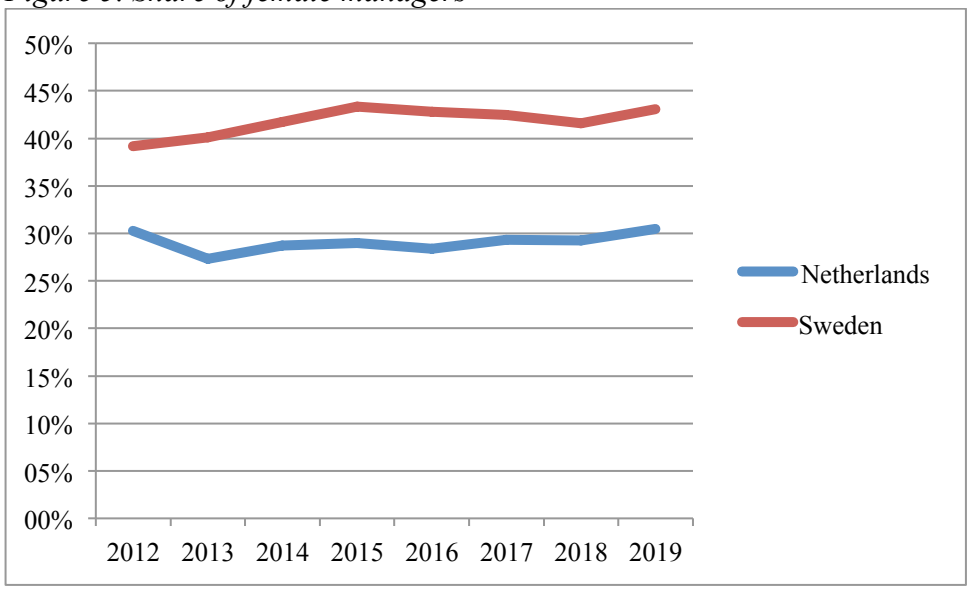
In the Netherlands, a legislated gender quota was introduced for corporate boards of large companies in 2013. It included a target of 30 percent women on corporate boards, but did not include sanctions for non-compliance (Kruisinga and Senden, 2017). Although the share of women on corporate boards increased, the results did not meet the expectations by 2016. Consequently, the target was extended by an additional four years while Minister Bussemaker threatened to introduce sanctions for non-compliance if the target was not reached (Kruisinga and Senden, 2017). The Corporate Governance Code of 2016 also included diversity provisions for the first time, which requires listed companies to comply with the target or to explain why the target has not been met in their annual report (Kruisinga and Senden, 2017). This is known as the 'comply or explain' principle.

In Sweden, targets rather than legislated gender quotas have contributed toward an increased share of women on company boards (Freidenvall, 2018). These targets were introduced a decade earlier when compared to the Netherlands. Although targets for greater gender balance on state-owner company boards also did not include sanction for non-compliance, a gender balance in these company boards was reached in 2003 and continues to be reached today (Freidenvall, 2018). The share of female board members also increased, as Minister Winberg threatened to introduce legislated gender quotas in 2002 if targets were not met (Freidenvall, 2018). Moreover, the Swedish Code of Corporate Governance of 2005 requires listed companies to adopt the same 'comply or explain' principle as the Netherlands (Freidenvall, 2018).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the gender quota in the Netherlands and gender targets in Sweden were not introduced for all jobs with supervisory authority. This study, however, argues that quotas and targets can still have knock-on effects on the gender balance in these jobs. Whether the legislated gender quota in the Netherlands and gender targets in Sweden have indirectly resulted in greater gender balance in any job with supervisory authority can be measured through the share of female managers, board members and executives (Figure 5 through 7). The closer the share of female managers, board members and executives are to 50 percent, the lower the gender gap in jobs with supervisory authority.

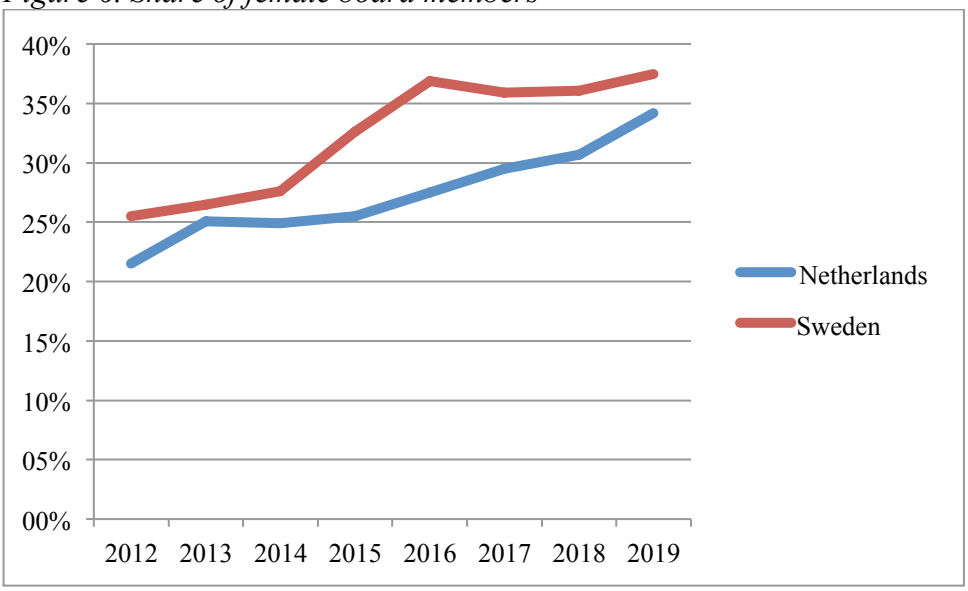
The share of female managers, board members and executives in Sweden are closer to 50 percent when compared to the Netherlands. This means that the gender gap in jobs with supervisory authority is larger in the Netherlands compared to Sweden. Hence, some would argue that Sweden's gender targets have been more effective compared to the legislated gender quota of the Netherlands.

Figure 5. Share of female managers



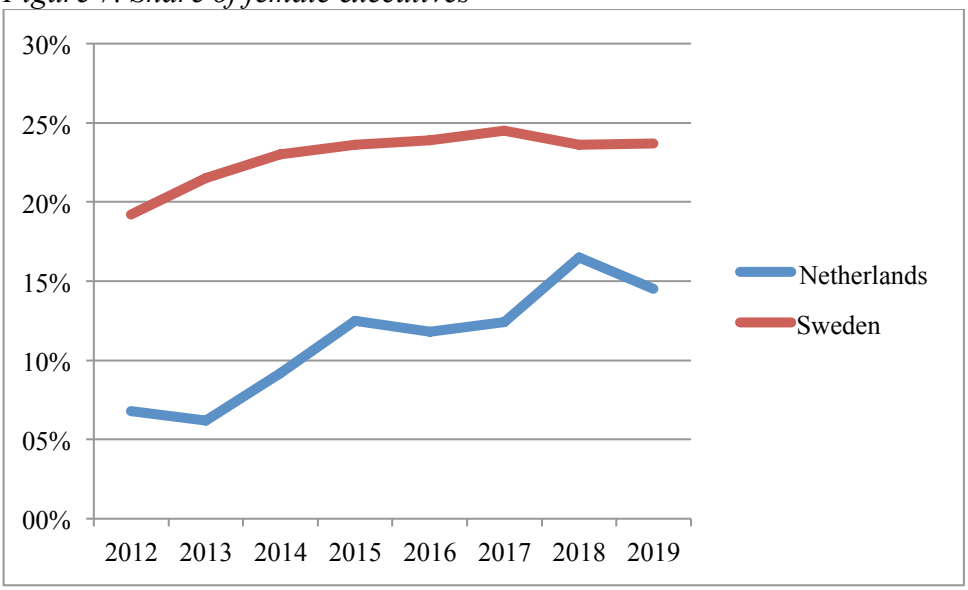
Source: author's elaboration from Eurostat data (Eurostat, 2022)

Figure 6. Share of female board members



Source: author's elaboration from Eurostat data (Eurostat, 2022)

Figure 7. Share of female executives



Source: author's elaboration from Eurostat data (Eurostat, 2022)

5. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the gap in part-time employment among female workers between countries, as this topic remains understudied despite its importance. This qualitative study included a cross-national comparison between the Netherlands and Sweden since data by the OECD (2022) shows that the Netherlands experiences a more unequal distribution of part-time employment between women and men when compared to Sweden. This is because Dutch women continue to dominate in part-time work while many Swedish women have moved from part-time into full-time employment. Gender inequalities are therefore reinforced in the Netherlands since many female workers experience the part-time employment penalty, i.e. fewer career advancement opportunities, and lower work benefits and wages compared to full-time workers (Landivar, 2015; OECD, 2019; Van Osch and Schaveling, 2020).

However, the Netherlands could promote gender equality by moving female workers from part-time into full-time employment. This way, fewer women would experience the part-time employment penalty. The unequal distribution in part-time employment between women and men would reduce as a result. Nevertheless, it is important to first identify why part-time employment is higher among female workers in the Netherlands compared to Sweden.

This study was able to answer the research question with the help of three factors identified by Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995): the availability of work, policies, and the broader political and ideological context. Each factor includes multiple country-level variables, some of which were able to explain the gap in part-time employment among female workers between the two countries while others were not.

Firstly, the availability of part-time work cannot help explain why part-time employment is higher among female workers in the Netherlands. This is because male unemployment has been lower in the Netherlands compared to Sweden. Furthermore, the EHW sector is equally segregated in both countries. This female-dominated sector could cause high levels of part-time employment because it tends to meet part-time demands of female workers in particular. In addition, the share of women employed in the public sector is smaller in the Netherlands since the public sector of the Netherlands is smaller than Sweden's public sector.

Secondly, policies can help explain why part-time employment is higher among female workers in the Netherlands through childcare and maternity leave. When compared to Sweden, childcare is less affordable and availability is more limited in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, maternity leave is more extensive in the Netherlands due to longer compulsory maternity leave as well as the unequal availability of leave for mothers and fathers, thereby making Dutch mothers more responsible for unpaid care work. This in turn discourages full-time employment among mothers. Nonetheless, Dutch and Swedish part-time- and full-time workers receive social benefits equally (pro rata to hours and income). Moreover, the difference in guaranteed family transfer payments is too small to explain a gap in female part-time employment between these two countries.

Thirdly, the broader political and ideological context can help explain why part-time employment is higher among female workers in the Netherlands through left-wing political control, corporatism, and the gender gap in relative wages and jobs with supervisory authority. The Netherlands is less controlled by left-wing politics than Sweden. Also, corporatism is weaker in the Netherlands due to lower trade union density. Trade unions can reduce the gender pay gap and improve work-life balance of workers through reduced working hours without a loss in earnings, which in turn encourages full-time employment among female workers. Finally, the Netherlands experiences a higher gender gap in relative wages and jobs with supervisory authority. This means that Sweden's Discrimination Act may have been more effective than the Equal Treatment Act of the Netherlands with regard to ensuring equal pay for equal work. The earlier introduction of gender targets in Sweden may also explain why the Netherlands is lagging behind Sweden concerning the reduction of the gender gap in jobs with supervisory authority.

This study updates the research by Rosenfeld and Birkelund (1995) and has also set the ground for future research. It would be desirable for the Netherlands to follow in Sweden's footsteps with regard to lower part-time employment among female workers. Therefore, this study could be used as a starting point toward advancing gender equality in the Netherlands.

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