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**THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE AND JOB-CREATING  
ROLE OF THE FAMILY DAY CARE AND THE EFFECT OF ALL  
THESE ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT**

Theses of the Ph.D. Dissertation

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## **Justification of the topic**

In Europe, in countries following the traditional family model and where little is spent on children's institutional day care, the number of births has been drastically decreasing, while it has had a relatively favourable development in those countries which take great care and spend a lot on coordinating parents' family and work obligations. **Birth rates are high in places where women's employment is also significant** (NGM, 2012), especially **women's atypical employment** (Pongrácz, 2011; Szalai, 2012). Looking through the international and national literature it has become clear that, that Western European and American literature understands **early employment** differently than Hungarian mothers: while in the former case research is directed towards the effect of employment in the first year, in our country the first three years count as almost taboo from the point of view of employment: according to KSH's data Hungarian mothers stay home on average for 4,7 years (Cseres-Gergely, 2008). National research has shown that mothers believe that they should stay home till the child reaches the age of (not 3 but) 6 (Cseres-Gergely, 2008; Blaskó, 2008; Blaskó, 2011). This is a multi-factor problem: first of all, **an extremely conservative role-perception** – that is not modulated even if the family needs the income of both parents for their maintenance. This is strengthened by the existence of mother's monetary aid – that in many cases constitutes almost the sole or at least one of the stable incomes of the family. In addition, it is a real problem that those who would like to work after giving birth in many cases really has to choose: **family or carrier**. Those who are looking for day care for their children, face a public day care that is

overcrowded, inflexible, that costs the state a lot but relatively cheap for the family, or private day care that is flexible and works in small groups, but is not (or barely) financed by the state and thus often meaning substantial additional costs for the family. Neither have part time work, telework, distributed jobs spread – these **atypical employment forms** that are not known therefore are not preferred either, even though they would mean real solutions exactly to employees with small children. And even with these solutions there is real need for a flexible day care system (Kocsisné, 2013).

According to KSH data (2012) **one quarter of women would work if they had someone to leave their child with, or if they had jobs**. This is also sustained by Blaskó (2009, 2011): the majority of women (appr. 40%) work illegally during “GYED/GYES”. International and national research has made it clear that **restructuring family aid related to child birth** would contribute to increasing women's employment and through this to the improvement of the Hungarian economy's competitiveness. The essence of the restructuring would consist in regrouping part of the financial aid for home childcare for the financing of day care supporting the mothers' employment (Reszkető-Scharle-Váradi, 2011). In my opinion this **regrouping should be enhanced by making both systems more flexible**: beyond the strong preference for atypical employment forms there is serious demand for a multi-stakeholder child care system that is more comfortable, more flexible (and cheaper) than the present one (smaller groups, flexible opening hours, care adapted to the needs of the family).

The official alternative of the nursery, kindergarten, of school day care is the **family day care**<sup>1</sup>. This day care form that in our country has a history of almost 20 years constitutes a singularity only in our country (and surrounding post-socialist

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<sup>1</sup> The Child Protection Act defines day care for children between the ages of 0 and 3 as taking place in nursery, family day care or family care.

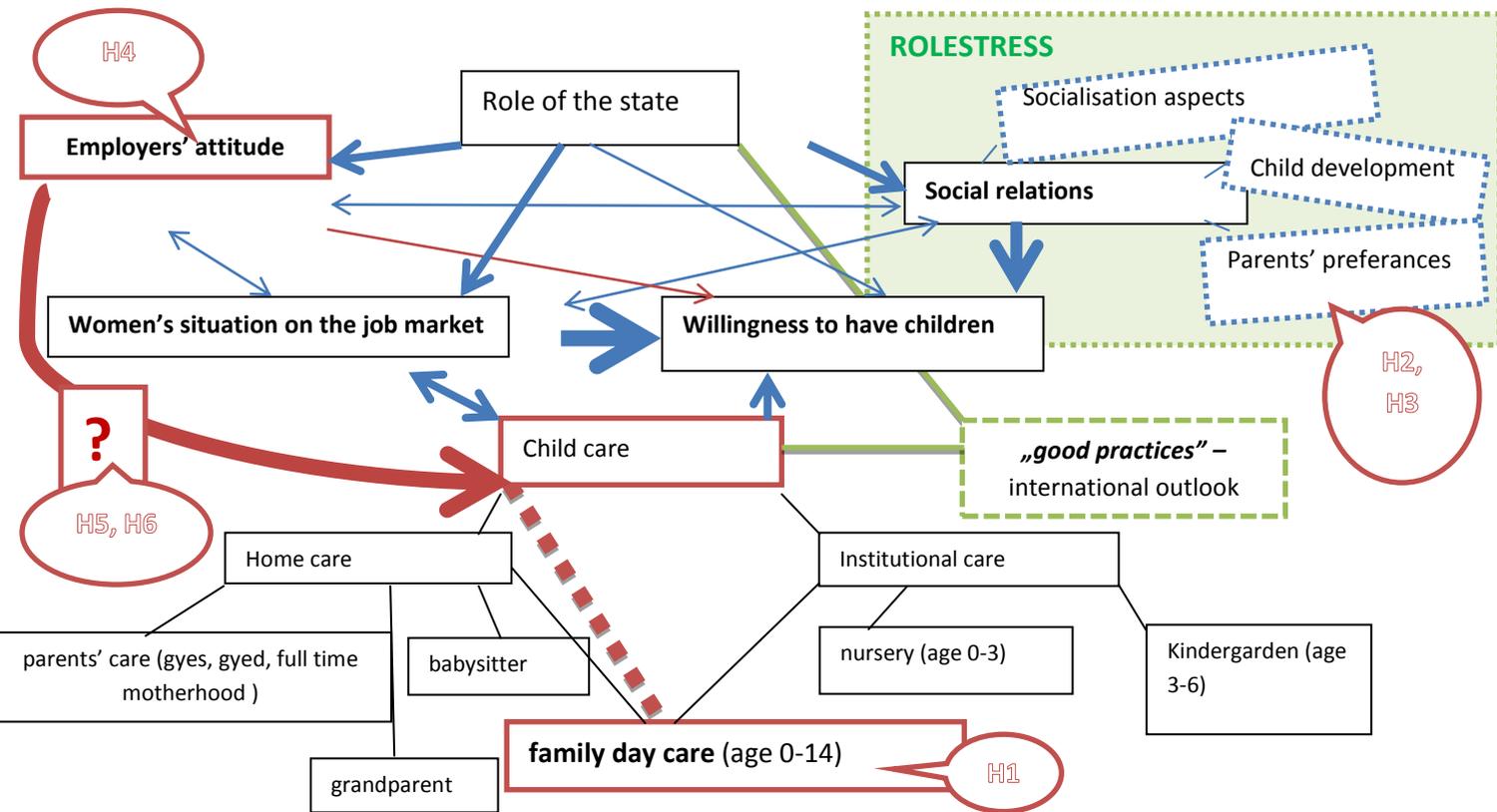
countries). In most places in Europe, America and Australia this is the main method of child day care (Reszkető, Váradi, 2009). Its **advantage** consists in the fact that due to the small number of children it is flexible, it can be set up easily and with little costs, it creates official jobs for those working there, and it can adapt flexibly to the needs of those using its services (Reszkető-Scharle-Váradi, 2011). As in our country the only method of providing day care that has spread is the nursery, and unfortunately when creating the conditions of family day care we did not managed to push off from the institutional framework<sup>2</sup>, thus it is understandable that (due to its low financing) parents have perceived family day care as part of the category of „**extremely expensive private kindergarten, private nursery**”.

Based on the above we can hypothesise that if we eliminate the day care's above negative elements (**eliminating overcrowdedness in the existing state institutions, as well as improving access to non-state day cares through restructuring the financing system**), we may change the mothers' negative attitude towards day care for small children. This issue is important because *mothers may wish to work (maybe they are occasionally, non-officially working already), but they consider staying home a smaller evil than taking their child to nursery*. If these mothers go back to work with their opinion unchanged (that is, if they consider a bad decision to provide care for their children in such a manner), they will experience **role-stress** (Ross, 1983) that causes further psychic damages to both parents and child. Through improving the day care system and the intensive communication of this fact presumably we may prevent the further spillover of the above problem.

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<sup>2</sup> Which is understandable as in setting up the system participated only professionals from nurseries.

# Theoretic research model



The model of my theoretic research has been set up along the lines of the following concepts:

**Willingness to bear children is affected** by women's position on the job market as well as existing social relations. When studying social relations I focused on the correlations among socialisation aspects, mothers' employment and child development and on presenting parents' preferences. I studied the above questions from the perspective of **role-stress** (Ross, 1983) given the fact that if a mother experiences role-confusion in relation to bearing a child and placing a child, the birth of these wished children is less likely to happen. The mother's and the child's wellbeing cannot be dissociated given that if the mother is not comfortable with her child's care, she will either not go back to work or she will experience role-confusion while working. My dissertation focuses on that social group where the mother wishes to return to the labour market after having a child. An overview of the pertinent literature can be found in the second chapter. My second and third hypotheses are related to parents' preferences regarding day care.

**Women's position on the labour market is affected** by the employer's attitude towards employees with families (is he/she willing to employ a parent with small children, does he/she support the care of his/her employee's child). Both the employer's attitude and women's employment are strongly affected by the role the state takes on: if the state supports parents' staying home, both the family and the employer have conflicting interests with employment. The second chapter of my dissertation presents the literature background as well as international good practices. My aim in presenting international practices is to illustrate eventual „good practices” and not comparison with our national system. My fifth and sixth hypotheses study the fundamental question phrased in the research question.

Through presenting **child day care** I wish to illustrate present realities. International good practices are presented with the aim of provoking thought and not with the aim of comparison. My first hypothesis I study providers of family day care.

The **role of the state** constitutes a key issue, thus I present the current regulations in the domain of both family aid and day care. A couple of international examples are presented as good practice.

Through my **research question** I am looking for an answer to the issue **whether through systematically developing family day care women's employment may be increased**. According to my hypothesis phrased on the basis of the model the state's role may affect employers' behaviour that on its turn affects women's employment. If employers support working parents in finding day care for their children that is to their liking, on the one hand, they will decrease the role-stress experienced by working mothers, while on the other hand, they increase in direct and indirect manner women's employment: women working in day cares take care of working mothers' children. I illustrate why from the existing day care forms I suggest the development of family day care: I study the issue from the perspective of child development, from the perspective of mothers' role-confusion, as well as from the perspective of economic (setting up, maintenance) aspects.

## **Aim and hypotheses of the research**

**Under no conditions do I aim to prove that employment while having a small child is suitable for everybody.** I believe that there are mothers who – feeling fulfilled by their motherhood – are able and willing to actively care for and educate their children 24 hours a day for years. There are women who can renew themselves in this while their families enjoy the maximum advantages of the mother's useful and indispensable background activities. I believe that there are families that function properly in this manner. I think that if this is the conscious choice of that given family, they need to be strengthened in this respect and there need to be found other solutions for their other problems.

**However, there are also families, women, life situations, constraints and motivations when all the above is not enough, there is need for the mother's employment as well.** I am studying this problem, with respect to the formerly described family model. I am looking for solutions for those families where parents desire to correlate work and family obligations together so as to satisfy every stakeholder: children, parents, employers and the state.

As I wish to lay the foundations of a research required for quality assurance in family day care, this study also **focuses on the professional background of family day care** (employees' educational level, their motifs and motivation), as the most frequent professional charge against family day care consists in their „unprofessionalism” as compared to institutions. I agree with the fact that the state, the families and employers to be involved are right to expect the highest possible level of

professional care. For this, however, the minimum and optimal personal and material conditions need to be defined, as well as professional standards. I do not consider the elaboration of these indicators to be the task of the present paper; still it lays the foundations of a later work in this regard.

As I believe that the involvement of the employers in the day care of their employees' children constitutes one of the conditions of improving access, **I study the employers' attitudes, present and wished possible solutions available to them.** My aim is to assess whether aiding their employees with families, participating in the proper care of their employees' children is a real need of the employers. I wish to make suggestions towards the government with reference to solving this problem through **elaborating an optimal financing model.**

I assume that **under current regulation the fastest, the most cost-efficient and most flexible solution to the problem is the creation of family day care.** This would **disencumber** the presently extremely overcrowded care system, it would **create direct jobs** for professionals working in the family day care and it **would also create indirect jobs** for those parents (in their majority mothers) who under the current regulations are unable to legally return to the labour market in such a manner as to manage to comply with both family and work obligations. As European Union funds can be used freely for the enlargement of the care system, from the perspective of cost-efficiency we should consider hastening the creation of family day care.

### **First hypothesis (H1)**

The majority of family day care managers have higher education than the 8 classes required by law as the necessary and sufficient condition of the 40-hour training. Among family day care managers we find professional teachers.

### **Second hypothesis (H2)**

Through the parents' preference-system, parents decide when and among what conditions the time of returning to work arrives, and on this basis they also decide what kind of place they consider suitable for their child.

**Third hypothesis (H3)**

When choosing a placement parents consider the relative wellbeing of the child more important than documented technical aspect characterising the care facility (physical conditions, environment, operating permit, teacher's education level, etc.).

**Fourth hypothesis (H4)**

In case of appropriate stimulants and state aid employers are willing to provide care for their employees' children.

**Fifth hypothesis (H5)**

Increasing the number of family day cares primarily women's employment rate would increase (direct and indirect jobs).

**Sixth hypothesis (H6)**

Family day cares as flexible child-care facilities contribute to the spreading of atypical employment that heightens women's employment rate (indirect jobs).

## **The structure of the dissertation and applied methods**

As my research led me to phrase hypotheses with reference to multiple agents in the day care system, I study these agents individually as well. I set up the following target-groups to be analysed:

- target-group 1: employees in family day care
- target-group 2: working parents
- target-group 3: employers
- target-group 4: state (government).

My research can be divided into milestones in 2009, 2012 and 2013. At these milestones I conducted the following studies:

2009

- Research among graduates of family day care training (data analysis)
- Survey among family day care managers (questionnaire)
- Survey among persons caring for children among the ages of 0 and 3 (questionnaire).

2012

- Research among graduates of family day care training (data analysis)
- Survey among family day care managers (questionnaire)
- Corporate day care from the perspective of employees (questionnaire)

- Drafting legislative statements.

2013

- Corporate day care roundtable (focus group)
- Employers' case studies (in-depth interview)

The **2009** and **2012 data analyses** consist in the evaluation of the data sheets of students enrolled in an accredited adult education family day care training. This data analysis supplied the **proof** for my **first and fifth hypotheses**. The adult education center organises trainings throughout the country, thus the sample can be considered national. As there function several such adult education centers, their data would be necessary for representativity; however, such data were not at my disposal. The Ministry in charge of the topic and the KSH do not possess exact data with reference to the education level of those working in family day care. Given the above data obtained through data analysis are not certain to be representative; despite this it is certain that they are national and currently singular in the given field.

**Questionnairing in 2009 and 2012** took place online among **family day care managers**. We have interviewed all the family day care managers present in the public national family day care databases. We also distributed the questionnaire on websites and Facebook profiles. The advantage of the online questionnaire consists in the ease of distribution and filling in, its disadvantage consisting in the fact that exactly due to this ease of filling in there was a very large number of respondents, thus we needed to make certain that people took the questionnaire seriously. The majority of respondents were family day care operators, thus the obtained data were not accurate with reference to employees as there were many operators with several family day cares and several employees who did (probably) not filled in the questionnaire. However, based on the above assumption the data may deviate in any

direction, as the given operator may work with professional or may not. This data analysis supplied proof for my **first and fifth hypotheses**. In evaluating the questionnaires I used the SPSS method.

The **2009 and 2012 parents' survey** I studied parents' attitudes. I wanted to learn what parents with small children considered important when looking for day care for their children. I again used online questionnaires, published on websites for mothers, on mother-child forums, Facebook profiles and served as proof for the **second and third hypotheses**. When evaluating the questionnaires I used the SPSS method.

The **2012 employer's survey** also took place through online questionnaires, obtaining data with reference to employers' attitudes towards the difficulties their employee's with small children face in placing their children in day care. The evaluation of the questionnaires happened through the use of the SPSS method.

The questionnaire established the foundation of the **2013 focus-group work (Corporate Day Care Roundtable)**. The focus-group discussed further the problems and questions of the questionnaire. The work method consisted in the following: following a short introductory presentation (with external moderator), in the framework of brainstorming with phrased such shared problems that were later debated by separate work-groups. The results of the work-group activities were presented at the closing forum of the event.

Using the results obtained with the focus-group, in **2013** I conducted **in-depth interviews** with the aim of exploring and phrasing real problems and difficulties. My paper presents these in-depth interviews as case studies.

The three surveys among employers (questionnaire, focus-group, in-depth interview) provided the evidence for my **fourth and fifth hypotheses**.

## **Main results of the dissertation**

1. **thesis:** Almost 2/3 (60,7%) of persons working in family day cares have higher education degrees, more than their half (53%) are teachers.
2. **thesis:** The majority of persons (93%) working in family day cares are women. Day cares for children provide assistance first of all to mothers as taking care of small children would fundamentally be their job. Thus family day care facilitates first of all women's employment.
3. **thesis:** Due to the conservative family model women are responsible for more housework than men. This is increased by the fixation of GYES-patterns. Family day cares as flexible child care facilities contribute to the spreading of atypical employment that increases women's employment rate.
4. **thesis:** When choosing a solution for the placement of their children parents find their child's wellbeing to be the most important perspective: free playing time, attachment to the caregiver, healthy food. Those parents who find assistance close to their home, prefer care centers close to the home, while those who have to solve this issue individually, choose solutions close to their workplace. The least important aspect for them is the institutional character when choosing a care center for their children.
5. **thesis:** Most employers are willing to assist their employee's in placing their children in day care, if for them the cost of this is lower than the incremental cost of losing, replacing or substituting in any way the employee. This may only be achieved if the government assists employers with state incentives. In

such a case in exchange the state would receive direct and indirect jobs and places in day cares through the workings of the non-state operator.

### **Corporate day care model**

As response to the questions phrased on the basis of the research model, using the results of the primary research, I have formulated the following model: I suppose that if we develop family day cares systematically, we assist women's employment. For such development we need to involve employers as they are the ones who can assist in the employment of women with small children. The **essence of the model** consists in the fact that through the involvement of employers and creation of corporate day cares working parents may be supported.

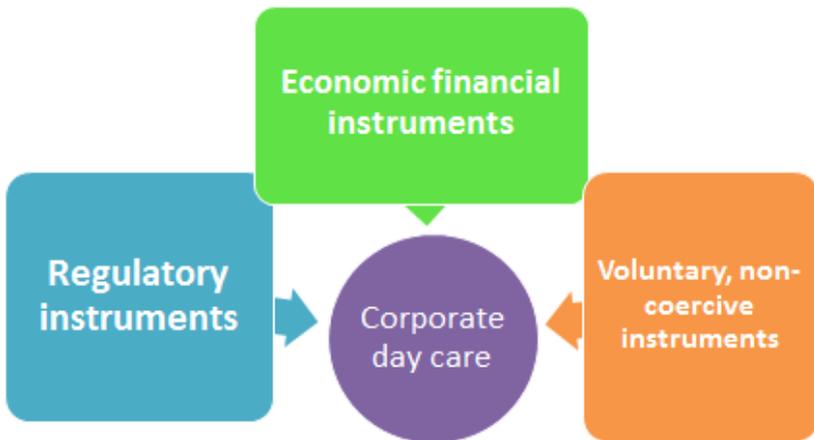
Elements of **systematic development** are:

1. **Regulatory instruments:** predictable legal background, unequivocal methodological assistance.
2. **Economic, financial instruments:** positive incentives (tax credits, tax relief) and limiters (for ex. exclusion from projects)
3. **Voluntary, non-coercive instruments:** setting up quality assurance systems (to which extra financing may be linked), agreements between the public and the private sectors (if it supplements lacking state institutional places, it should receive assistance from state funding).

The job-creating role of the suggested model consists in the following: day cares operated – even by external operators – at the workplace are capable of creating new jobs (caregiving teachers) while also facilitating the spreading of women's

atypical employment through flexible opening hours, flexible substantiation, rational operation.

## Corporate day care model



### **Explanation:**

- **Corporate day care:** all those flexible day care forms in the setting up or operation of which the employer, whose employee's children avail themselves of the care, takes on an active role. The operator of the day care may be the company or external state or non-state operator.

- **Regulatory instruments:** such coherent and transparent legislation, standards, methodological guide on the basis of which all aspects of setting up and operating day care centers are unequivocal.
- **Economic financial instruments:** such positive incentives and limiters that assist in the spreading of corporate day cares.
  - **Positive incentives:** tax relief at setting up and operating day cares, normative financing
  - **Limiters:** exclusion from certain projects (for ex. an obligatory condition of participating in the project family-friendly workplace should consist in the existence of some kind of day care).
- **Voluntary, non-coercive instruments:** making available quality assurance systems (when applying them further economic incentives), possibilities for agreements with the public sector (in case that they relieve of burden local administrations local business tax relief).

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### **Publications serving as the foundation of the dissertation**

#### **Accepted for publication:**

- Nagy Á.: A női foglalkoztatás hatása a demográfiára [The effect of women's employment on demography.], Munkaügyi Szemle, Budapest (2014)
- Nagy Á.: A 0-6 éves gyerekek napközbeni ellátása és a demográfiai folyamatok kapcsolata [Child care of 0-6 years old children and the linkage of demographic indicators ], Demográfia, Budapest (2013)

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