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Mapping gender-based needs through academic narratives under right-wing populist governance in Hungary

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Over the last 15 years, anti-gender discourses, the politicization of gender, and political attacks on gender studies have intensified in Hungary. Yet, limited research has examined how these factors have shaped the field of gender scholarship. To date, no review of the Hungarian academic literature on gender and gender-based needs has been conducted during the right-wing populist political era. This paper aims to fill this gap by addressing the following research question: How have academic narratives conceptualized gender and gender-based needs in Hungary under the governance of the right-wing populist party coalition since 2010? Based on a purposive sampling procedure combined with expert selection, we analyzed 67 articles published between 2010 and 2023 to represent the main theoretical approaches and empirical investigations on the multifaceted nature of gender-related research in Hungary. The findings indicate that the Hungarian academic literature on gender and gender-based needs has evolved significantly despite the adverse political climate. While most articles implicitly understand gender in its classical binary form as the roles of men and women and gender is predominantly understood through a constructivist lens in Hungary, the academic narratives continue to encompass a wide range of topics and approaches related to critical gender-based needs. The paper identifies both more traditional sex- and gender-based needs (such as those related to motherhood, fatherhood, the distribution of household chores, work-life balance issues, and combating labor market discrimination), in addition to more contemporary and politics-driven gender-based needs such as empowering women through civil society organizations, policies and practices for LGBTQ+ individuals, and the effects of anti-gender rhetoric. The paper concludes that policymakers should pay more attention to social science research, as scholars are actively mapping gender-based needs in the Hungarian context.

KEYWORDS

gender-based needs, gender, Hungary, right-wing populist party (RWPP), literature review, academic narratives, anti-gender discourse, constructivist approach

Introduction

In Hungary, academic engagement with the concept of gender, including the understanding of gender-based needs, began in the 1990s following the political system change in 1989. As a country aspiring to join the European Union (EU), Hungary had to demonstrate compliance with EU norms on equality between women and men, among other requirements, and promote relevant policy concepts, particularly those related to gender and gender mainstreaming. The process of accession to the EU and gaining full membership in 2004

reinforced research on gender, gender inequality, and gender-based needs; however, the translation and adoption of these concepts presented a challenge. In the Hungarian language, the term '*nem*' is used for both sex and gender, and a term equivalent to 'gender' did not exist originally in Hungarian. As the primary meaning of '*nem*' refers to the biological nature of human beings (i.e., sex), in gender studies scholarship, the term 'social' was added to '*nem*,' thus constructing the Hungarian version of gender as '*társadalmi nem*' (social sex). However, the broader meaning of gender as 'social sex' did not permeate the wider public. While researchers in the field of gender studies clearly understood the differences in the meanings of gender as a concept, to a significant extent research on gender and gender-based needs utilized the traditional binary approach embedded in Hungarian society as opposed to including sexual orientation, gender identity and gender fluidity. Furthermore, there were no public debates about the definition of gender, and as a result, an explicit definition of gender is rarely found in publications related to gender-based needs. Thus, researchers' preferences related to the concept of gender have often remained implicit or hidden in academic narratives as well ("Definition of gender" subsection).

In 2010, the right-wing populist government of the Fidesz-KDNP party coalition, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, ascended to power at a time when the ambiguities surrounding the concept of gender and gender-based needs were implicit in both academic narratives and public discourse. Meanwhile, the concept of gender had not yet been politicized by political actors at that time, though anti-gender sentiments and narratives existed within segments of the population. Encounters with the ambiguity of gender could not be delayed for more than a few years (Gregor, 2023). In 2011, the new constitution, called the 'Fundamental Law,' defined marriage as the union between a man and a woman, thus excluding same-sex couples from family recognition. Traditional roles for women have been promoted through pro-natalist family policies that provide financial incentives for women's childbearing. In public discourse, the term 'family policy' has replaced 'gender equality'. The recognition that gender does not have the same meaning for everyone became inevitable, particularly in light of developments related to the Istanbul Convention (Drinóczi and Balogh, 2022), which Hungary signed in 2014 but the Hungarian Parliament formally rejected to ratify in 2020, referring to its promotion of 'gender ideology' and gender identity and fluidity (Krizsán and Roggeband, 2021). By that time, the very concept of gender had become strongly politicized by right-wing populist actors (Kováts, 2022). Starting from 2014, as part of the anti-gender politicization process (Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017), right-wing pro-government media attacks started against researchers working on gender-related research topics. In 2018, following the enactment of new legislation, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee removed gender studies from the list of accredited master's programs in Hungary. From 2020 onwards, anti-gender actions mainly targeted the LGBTQ+ community by banning gender transition and consciously conflating homosexuality with pedophilia in the so-called Child Protection Action, thus legitimizing discriminatory action against LGBTQ+ people. However, as Eszter Kováts (2022) argues, the claims of the transgender rights movement may represent an additional factor contributing to the rise of anti-gender politics internationally, a point that is also relevant in the Hungarian context.

While anti-gender discourses, the politicization of gender and political attacks on researchers in the field of gender studies have heightened in the last 15 years in Hungary, we do not have sufficient knowledge about how gender research evolved during right-wing populist party (RWPP) governance as no review on the breadth and depth of the academic literature on gender and gender-based needs has been conducted in the country related to this political era. To bridge this research gap, this paper aims to provide a structured overview and analysis of the most representative theoretical discussions and empirical research results regarding gender and gender-based needs in the academic literature on Hungary from 2010 to 2023—the period coinciding with the governance of a RWPP coalition. The research question this paper aims to answer is: How have academic narratives conceptualized gender and gender-based needs in Hungary under the governance of the right-wing populist party coalition since 2010? We developed a purposive sampling procedure for collecting and selecting gender-related articles. The final sample included 67 articles consistently representing the main theoretical approaches and empirical investigations into the multifaceted nature of gender-related research in Hungary.

In our paper, first we describe the conceptual framework of our research, then we review the historical background of feminist scholarship in Hungary for three historical periods: before the political system change in 1989, during the post-change years between 1990 and 2009, and after 2010. Second, we outline the methodology used for collecting academic articles on gender-related topics and describe how the final sample was compiled. In the third part of the paper, we analyze the academic approaches to gender and gender concepts as depicted in the sample for the 2010–2023 period, followed by the main themes on which gender-related research has been conducted. Then, in the discussion chapter, we address the specific sex- and gender-based needs that emerge from the literature. Finally, we revisit our research question in the conclusions.

The concept of gender-based needs

The concept of gender-based needs originates from feminist development theory, where it was introduced to distinguish between different levels of gender-related demands within the context of social inequalities. Molyneux (1985) first differentiated between practical and strategic gender interests: the former address women's immediate, material conditions (such as access to food, housing, or childcare), while the latter aim at structural change and empowerment (for example, equal rights and decision-making power). Building on this distinction, Moser (1989) reformulated these ideas as practical and strategic gender needs, providing a framework that links gender analysis to policy planning and implementation.

Notably, the thesaurus of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE, the European Union's agency for gender equality) offers a circular definition of a similar term, the *gender needs of women*: 'Types of needs usually identified in a given society, namely practical gender needs and strategic gender needs.' EIGE, in the provided definition of gender-based needs relied on the European Union's Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation (European Union, 2004). This definition appears to paraphrase Molyneux's above presented distinction between practical and strategic gender interests (Molyneux, 1985).

In this paper, the concept of gender-based needs is applied in a domestic context. It refers to citizens' needs that are shaped by the dynamics of gender relations in society and by gender roles extending beyond biological determinants. Such needs can be addressed through

interventions by the state, including policymaking, resource allocation, or legislative measures. This conceptual framework builds on the Horizon Europe project UNTWIST, which approaches gender through the lens of 'gender-based needs' (GBNs). The perspective emphasizes the analysis of structural gender inequalities and context-specific needs and uses GBNs as an umbrella term. More specifically, Rothermel et al. (2025, p. 4) define gender-based needs "as political, social, economic, and symbolic demands for change discussed and understood as arising from a particular gender-based position within society."

Recent studies show that RWPPs weave gender issues into their rhetoric in a way that emphasizes traditional family roles while denouncing feminist and equality-related demands. For example, Serdar et al. (2023) argue that RWPPs discursively construct 'the people' (in contrast to the so-called 'elites') in explicitly gendered terms and that the precise gender agenda varies depending on religion and secular context. In practice, certain RWPPs, such as Poland's Law and Justice (PiS), claim that the fight for women's rights is no longer on the table, suggesting that gender equality goals have already been met (Gwiazda, 2021). Similarly, Spain's Vox systematically works to dismantle pre-existing gender-equality laws, effectively eroding the legal framework for women's rights (Alonso and Espinosa-Fajardo, 2021). A recent comparative analysis of Poland and Turkey likewise shows that both PiS and Turkey's AKP leverage anti-gender narratives (labeling 'gender ideology' a threat) to justify conservative family policies. In other words, they reinforce traditional family structures as part of their populist appeal (Doğan, 2025). In sum, RWPPs address gender-based needs typically by offering selective family-welfare support (e.g., child benefit or maternal pensions), claiming to 'defend' women's interests, while rejecting progressive gender demands. The eligibility criteria of these family-welfare support are particularly selective in Hungary (Cook et al., 2023), RWPPs instrumentalize gender issues through nationalist, anti-elitist discourse—opposing feminist and LGBTQ+ claims as foreign or elitist 'gender ideologies'—to mobilize voters around a traditionalist view of women's roles (Alonso and Espinosa-Fajardo, 2021; Gwiazda, 2021; Serdar et al., 2023; Doğan, 2025).

Historical background on gender and gender-based needs research in Hungary

To provide context for understanding how gender-based needs are expressed in contemporary Hungarian society and the relevant literature, we briefly recall some key aspects of the history of women's emancipation and the emerging field of gender studies in recent decades.

Pre-political system change period: before 1990

Although a significant feminist movement emerged in Hungary at the beginning of the 20th century, its significance and events were omitted from historical writing and, consequently, from public consciousness for political reasons during the decades of state socialism. While the one-party system established after 1948 ensured formal gender equality in the constitution, its policies on women's issues followed the Stalinist model. As a result, women's full employment did not necessarily lead to their liberation and social equality. Men's privileges and the old traditional gender stereotypes prevailed (Acsády, 2023). Regarding the scholarship and literature on women's issues in this period, Adamik (2012, p. 158) observes that: "a series of 'women in this and that' type studies were carried out, focusing on the situation of women working in various sectors of the national economy, their earnings, and, increasingly, on the 'efficiency of women's work'" (Adamik, 2012, p. 158).

The emergence of feminist scholarship, women's and gender studies in Hungary followed a different path in Western democracies. Whereas the first programs in women's and gender studies in the United States and Western European countries took shape as part of the feminist activism of the 1970s, this was not the case in Hungary—one of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries of the former Soviet bloc. During the decades of state socialism until the political system change in the 1990s, the ideas and movements associated with second-wave feminism did not penetrate the centrally controlled public life and culture, with the exception of the former Yugoslavia, where both feminist activism and the establishment of women's and gender studies began in the 1970s. In Hungary, civil society and women's groups were able to organize only after the 1990s, as there was no legal framework for freedom of assembly under the communist regime prior to that time.

After the political system change: from 1990 to 2009

The years following the political system change led to an opening up of political ideas and academic trends, and the first gender studies initiatives emerged. The first feminist courses were typically introduced in departments of English and American studies, as well as linguistics, where the literature of feminist literary theory or philosophy was available and acknowledged—for example, at the University of Szeged (Daskalova et al., 2010, p. 198). The first accredited gender studies programs were hosted at that time at the Department of Gender Studies at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest and the Center for Gender and Cultural Studies at Corvinus University in Budapest. Meanwhile, courses on gender studies at universities were offered by various departments, including those of sociology, social policy, literature, linguistics, history, and economics, among others. A growing interest in women's history and the history of feminism also arose in the mid-1990s. Therefore, those socio-historical studies that reveal the historical roots of feminism in Hungary and bring the examples of earlier movements (the first wave and, to some extent, the second wave) to the attention of both the public and the academic community are of particular significance (Acsády, 2022). At the beginning of the 1990s, scholars in the emerging field of gender studies began to establish interdisciplinary networks. However, the institutionalization of women's and gender studies programs faced significant challenges (Pető, 2006, p. 10), and their establishment remained incomplete in many respects (Horváth, 2014, p. 5). Several scholars have connected the field at the time to pre-existing programs, such as minority studies (Némenyi, 2006; Takács, 2006).

Engagement with feminist theory or activism among scholars was rare (Daskalova et al., 2010, p. 201). There still seems to be no evidence of theoretical consensus among scholars in the field of gender studies regarding the implications of a feminist approach. The establishment of women's and gender studies as an academic discipline or research theme was not based on a consensus about the feminist approach. It seems that, in many ways, the academic field is still rather reluctant to embrace feminism explicitly. The establishment of these new academic fields was more successful in the neighboring ex-Soviet bloc countries, where the establishment of departments was more efficient (Daskalova et al., 2010).

However, in Hungary during this period, a significant step was made in the field of publishing. Several scholarly journals devoted special issues to feminism, feminist theory, or women's studies, which often contained translations of Western postmodern or prominent theoretical articles. Translations of second-wave feminism and related trends in feminist theory that were missing at the time were published during these years. Book series were established in Hungarian language, for example, *Feminism and History* (Feminizmus és történelem) by the publishing house Balassi Kiadó. Also, in eastern Hungary, in the university town of Debrecen, the local publishing house, Csokonai Kiadó, published a feminist scholarship series in the 1990s called *Artemis Books* (*Artemisz könyvek*), edited by Beáta Nagy and Nóra Séllei. Among other works, they published translations of Elisabeth Badinter's works in 1999 and Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* in the same year. Volumes of Hungarian social science studies entitled *Role Changes* were published between 1997 and 2011 by the TÁRKI Social Research Institute and the Ministry of Labor. The volumes reported on the social and economic situation of women in Hungary in the period after the political system change and provided a description of the social fragmentation and the system of inequality. Moreover, the publications examined the roles of men and women, as well as adults and children, in various stages of family life, public life, and the labor market.

Although these publications appeared to adopt explicit feminist approaches, they were relatively exceptional in public life, and they did not present compelling argumentation in terms of gender inequalities and related issues. This may have contributed to the negative reception of the issues connected to gender that has been witnessed recently.

Right-wing populist governance: from 2010 to 2025

Anti-gender movements are on the rise globally and the situation in Hungary is no exception. However, the particularity of the Hungarian context is that the anti-gender movement was not a bottom-up phenomenon, but a discourse amplified by the governing RWPP. Nevertheless, the politicization of gender evolved gradually during the governance of the Fidesz-KDNP coalition. Adamik (2018) argues, from the theoretical perspective of constructivism and postmodern feminism, that the term *gender* has been misinterpreted and misused, even abused, in both public life and academic discourse in Hungary recently. As a result, "Gender became simply a linguistic ornament in the academic discourse. […] The concept of gender ([which] is not understood)—has fallen prey to unexpected political and symbolic hijackings of meaning, especially by new right-wing movements" (Adamik, 2018, p. 23). In Barát's identification of a discourse of hate within Hungary, the author says: "*The articulation and circulation of the meaning of the concept 'gender' is at the center of this rhetoric of fear. […] It is the government that plays a central role in mobilizing the population through a strategic discrediting of gender, the key category of critical analysis in feminist scholarship by calling it an 'ideology'.*" (Barát, 2022).

It is also important to reflect on the term *anti-gender*, which has been used as an adjective to describe certain social movements, political discourses, and policy initiatives that emerged from the 2000s onwards (Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017). Scholars often refer to the phenomenon as a 'backlash', suggesting that these trends generally challenge the principle of equal rights for men and women (Ebeturk, 2018). This understanding was formally recognized within the EU framework by the European Parliament's *Resolution on experiencing a backlash in women's rights and gender equality in the EU* (European Parliament, 2019). Notably, a study from 2017 sought to provide a deeper understanding of these dynamics by introducing the metaphor of *gender as symbolic glue*, aiming to illustrate how gender functions as a buzzword that can be linked to a wide range of contentious issues—from abortion to same-sex marriage and euthanasia—thus connecting diverse political actors (Grzebalska et al., 2017). While there is a trend in international scholarship to frame this process as a 'gender equality backlash,' this may not accurately describe the situation in Hungary, as the phenomenon of equality between women and men may have never been seriously addressed since the country's political transition to democracy (1989–1990)—for example, at the level of constitutional jurisprudence (Drinóczi and Balogh, 2023). However, attacks on the LGBTQ+ community in past years, disguised as so-called *child protection measures*, have caused community members serious distress by targeting them with discriminatory anti-gender rhetoric and initiatives.

As a result of putting family policy (based on marriage between a man and a woman, with children) at the center of political initiatives since the 2010s, the state has explicitly been adopting the approach of 'family mainstreaming' instead of gender mainstreaming, which involves pronatalist policies that leave the unequal division of labor within households unchanged (Glass and Fodor, 2022), with a tendency to 'sentimentalize' women's care work (Fodor, 2022). Feminist political theorists, such as Susan Moller Okin (1989), have long criticized mainstream liberal thinkers for ignoring the deeply gendered nature of the family. Therefore, we can assert that the failure to recognize the unequal division of labor within the family is not exclusive to so-called *illiberal regimes*. Instead, the entire post-war social science discourse has relied on a rational, self-interested, and individualistic conception of the human, framing the political sphere as the domain of justice while overlooking inequalities in private relationships—particularly within the family, the site of both social and biological reproduction.

Methods

The investigation of academic narratives on gender and gender-based needs inherently necessitates conducting a literature review as the principal method of data collection. We adopted a purposive sampling procedure coupled with expert decision-making to finalize the sample. To collect relevant sources, we followed several steps in order to ensure an appropriate coverage of academic narratives on the

broad topic of gender and gender-based needs published between 2010 and 2023. Thus, we triangulated our results across the different channels.

First, we identified several key locations where gender-based needs have been addressed and included in Hungarian scientific publications. These are the following: (1) Central European University (CEU), (2) the Center for Social Sciences (CSS), (3) Corvinus University of Budapest (Corvinus), (4) Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), and (5) the University of Szeged (SZTE). For each institution, we identified researchers who have published on gender-related issues and searched for the respective publications between 2010 and 2023.

Second, we searched for 'outlets'—spaces for related academic thought in the form of journals, books, or scientific repositories. As a result, (a) we compiled a list of all the publications from the entire collection of *Társadalmi Nemek Tudománya Interdiszciplináris eFolyóirat* (*TNTeF*), (the Interdisciplinary eJournal of Gender Studies), which is the sole Hungarian 'gender studies' journal. TNTeF is a peer-reviewed electronic journal founded in 2011. The journal published a total of 208 articles during the identified research period. Additionally, (b) we also identified nine gender studies Special Issues published between 2010 and 2023 in Hungary. A total of 74 articles were collected from these nine issues (See detailed list of Special Issues in the Supplementary Material Table 1).

Third, we expanded our search strategy by looking for journal articles that addressed gender-related topics, which could include gender-based needs. Based on our scholarly knowledge, we identified the following 14 topics to search for: (1) labor market, (2) wages, (3) household responsibilities, division of labor, (4) prostitution/sex work, (5) Roma women, (6) care responsibilities (e.g., elder care, baby-sitting), (7) sexist representations in the media, (8) women's organizations/NGOs, (9) feminist discourse in the arts, (10) maternity care, (11) reproductive rights, (12) gender identity/sexual orientation (LGBTQIA+ identities), (13) women's political participation, and (14) intersectionality.

For the search, we primarily relied on the Magyar Tudományos Művek Tára (MTMT; Hungarian Scientific Publications Database), a database to which all researchers in Hungary are obliged to upload their publications. On MTMT, we could conduct searches for researchers, multiple keywords (e.g.. women and the labor market, wages, women and care work, etc.), periods of time (2010–2023), and institutions. While the MTMT database represented an excellent source for our search activity, we encountered some difficulties due to the rapidly changing institutional contexts in the country. Thus, for some authors, it was sometimes difficult to identify publications under the corresponding institutional names for specific periods. Therefore, for some institutions (Corvinus and CEU), we primarily aggregated the findings for authors affiliated with specific institutions. Moreover, CEU scholars did not necessarily upload all their publications to the MTMT database; therefore, Harzing's Publish or Perish software or Google Scholar had to be used as well. Table 1 summarizes the number of sources found in institutions, as well as in the gender studies journal and special issues, and relevant topics in Hungary from 2010 to 2023.

To narrow the 4,123 items, first we deleted the redundancies in each channel, then we utilized several rounds of expert decision-making. In the first round, each team member reviewed the list of sources thus compiled and applied the VENN approach (Venn, 1880) using a triple set of criteria to select relevant literature: (A) item addresses availability of gender-based needs, (B) focuses on the country context, (C) is related to feminist/masculinity studies, or applies gender concepts, not sex as a demographic variable. This 'pre-selection' sample included 234 sources. Even within this filtered 'pre-selection' sample, we found a high number of duplicates, indicating that the same items had been included through multiple channels. After further rounds of expert discussions, we narrowed the items down to a final sample of 67 in a way to balance representation of authors, institutions and topics in the field of gender studies (Full list of sources available in Supplementary Materials). The methods applied for our research have been coordinated by the University of Bern within the Horizon Europe project of UNTWIST (Amacker et al., 2024; Rothermel et al., 2025).

TABLE 1 Number of items identified according to institution, the gender studies journal, special issues, and relevant topics between 2010 and 2023 in Hungary.

Sources of selected literature	Number of items
Institutions, of which	1,273
CEU	520
CSS	276
Corvinus	280
ELTE	66
SZTE	131
Interdisciplinary eJournal of Gender Studies (TNTeF)	208
Gender Studies Special Issues (9 Special Issues)	74
Specific topics (14 topics) and gender	2,568
Total	4,123

Concerning sample composition, 70% of items are journal articles, 24% book sections, 3% books, and 3% 'reports' considered 'gray literature.' Moreover, the majority (55%) of the selected sources were published in English language, 43% in Hungarian, and 2% were bilingual in English and Hungarian. Examining the distribution of the sample based on the year of publication, grouped according to the parliamentary election periods, we note that nearly half (43.3%) of the publications date to between 2018 and 2021, the third period of the Fidesz-KDNP government. In the first period of government (when publications may have covered issues/data relevant to the period prior to the rule of the RWPP), no more than 13.4% were identified. Thus, we ascertained that the vast majority of the publications in the sample were written during the period when the RWPP was in power (Table 2).

Finally, a questionnaire was completed for each item that could be evaluated in both qualitative and quantitative terms. As the data collection formed part of a Horizon Europe research project, the aim of which was to compare six countries and create an integrated typology of literature on gender-based needs, therefore gender concepts, gender approaches and theoretical perspectives, and the domains of gender-based needs were identified in the questionnaire for each item. Inter-rater reliability for coding within the Horizon Europe project was ensured by a detailed manual provided by the University of Bern. The database was analyzed using SPSS statistical software.

Results

First, we examine how Hungarian publications defined the term *gender* between 2010 and 2023. Thereafter, we analyze the gender

approaches and theoretical perspectives of the literature. Finally, we evaluate the publications according to the 14 most relevant themes identified during the sampling procedure.

Definition of gender

Almost no publication reflected on 'gender' as a word, concept, or theoretical point, nor was it associated with any definition. One article explained why the Equal Treatment Authority of Hungary (an independent entity that ceased to operate as of 1 January 2021) uses sex as the basis of the analysis for discrimination (Sipos, 2018). It may be that gender is widely understood by those in the academic field, thus, no explanation is required. Another reason may be that gender is understood in many different ways, so authors leave it up to the reader to decode the specific text's understanding of gender. We found a lively and non-conclusive debate within feminist/queer studies scholars on the concept of gender in relation to cis and trans women. Nevertheless, other concepts related to gender appear in the literature, too, such as hegemonic masculinity, gender roles, sexism, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and sociosexuality (Kozma and Kocsor, 2018) and concepts related to broader theoretical approaches, such as the polypore state (Pető, 2020).

Gender approaches

Gender was primarily understood as a constructivist, sociological concept, with analyses focusing on the social dynamics defined by the category of gender, rather than as a postmodern philosophical concept that challenges established categories. The constructivist approach was clearly evident in articles dealing with prostitution: *'These hierarchically constructed roles in sex, as constructed by capitalist patriarchy, appear not only in the specific sexual act, but in all areas of life, including the objectification of women, through which women are often treated as sexual objects in public spaces, at work, and in their private lives.'* (Dés, 2020, p. 131).

The survey results of the investigated literature clearly confirm this trend (Table 3). However, within academia, there are also proponents of queer theory (Barát, 2023).

The majority of articles using the constructivist approach embedded their research into the theoretical approach of feminism, but in some cases used other theoretical framework, such as the Human rights theory or the Life course theory. Meanwhile, they often apply even broader co-frameworks/theories, such as the critiques of late capitalism, postsocialism, neoliberalism, class inequalities, familism. Nearly half of the selected items explicitly applied feminist theory or masculinity studies in their papers. However, it was more typical for items to employ theoretically driven gender concepts, and we made our selection decision primarily based on the presence of these concepts, rather than the feminist theoretical approach (Table 4).

In terms of the specific feminist approach, constructivist feminism was the most frequently applied analytical lens (23.9%), followed by postmodern feminism (4.5%), radical feminism (4.5%), socialist feminism (3.0%), and liberal feminism (1.5%). Hence, the occurrence of the different streams of feminist theoretical approaches taken together did not approach the frequency of those that apply constructivist feminism.

TABLE 2 Distribution of publications according to the year of publication (%).

Period	Frequency	Percent
2010–2013	9	13.4
2014–2017	15	22.4
2018–2021	29	43.3
2022–2023	14	20.9
Total	67	100.0

TABLE 3 Frequency of occurrence of the gender approach identified in the selected sources (%).

Gender approach	Percent
Constructivist	46
Poststructuralist/relational	6
Authors do not explicitly define the gender approach that is adopted	36
Other	12
Total	100 *N* = 67

TABLE 4 Frequency of occurrence of the theoretical approach identified in the selected sources (%).

Theoretical approach	Percent
Feminism	40
Men and (critical) Masculinity studies	4.5
Queer Theory	1.5
Authors do not explicitly mention the theoretical tradition in which the publication is situated	37
Other, do not know	17
Total	100 *N* = 67

Gender concepts

Based on the questionnaires that were completed, we identified a total of 124 gender concepts across the 67 sources in the sample. We coded these, creating 23 broader categories and themes. The gender concept categories that occurred most frequently, with more than 10 occurrences, were '*gender roles*,' '*sexuality*,' '*gender norms and values*,' '*family*, *motherhood*, *fatherhood*,' and finally, '*family roles and careers*.' These findings follow logically from the dominantly constructivist gender approach in Hungary. Among the moderately frequently applied categories associated with the gender concept (5–9 occurrences), we identified *'discrimination,' 'sexism,' 'anti-gender movement,' 'employment,' and 'division of labor within the household.'* Finally, the categories with 1–4 occurrences were the following: *'caring responsibilities,' 'gender inequality,' 'gender wage gap,' 'work-life balance,' 'attitudes towards gender,' 'feminist movement and women's organizations,' 'human rights,' 'welfare,' 'childbearing,' 'gender-based-violence,' 'intersectionality,'* and *'masculinity'* (Figure 1). See detailed coding of gender concepts in Appendix Table 6.

In the first '*gender roles*' category, in addition to referring directly to 'gender roles,' some concepts alluded to the breadwinner/financial provider role, or male dominance, traditional versus egalitarian gender roles, or competitive gender differentiation. '*Sexuality*' turned out to be an equally important gender concept that is addressed in the literature. More specifically, the category included heteronormativity, heterosexuality and hostile heterosexuality, on the one hand, and the gendered body and objectification of women, on the other hand. Other sexuality-related concepts include anti-social queerness, asexuality, being/coming out, culture of death, female subjectivity, radical passivity, and sociosexuality. Within the category of '*gender norms and values,*' gender concepts such as (conservative) patriarchy, paternalism, (strategic) essentialism, gender norms, gender order, gender stereotypes, doing gender, gender performativity, and gender order were the most prominent. Related to the category of '*family, motherhood, fatherhood*,' different types of families were examined, such as heterosexual households, rainbow or LGBTQ families, childless women and men. In terms of motherhood, young mothers were the focus, while for fatherhood, intimate and involved fathering was emphasized. Additionally, the topic of marriage and kinship networks also appeared in the analysis. For '*family roles and careers,*' we identified various gender concepts, including the dual-career couple or the dual-earner model, power couple versus non-power couple, the gender yo-yo effect, gendered family roles and norms, and gender inequalities within families and relationships.

The most relevant themes in the literature on gender and women

Labor market and the gender wage gap

Gender-based discrimination is one of the most frequent grounds for discrimination on the labor market, showing persistent stability in the last decade (Amnesty International, 2020). Labor market reintegration is a real challenge for young mothers after their maternity leave, and young mothers are one of the groups most at risk of discrimination (Bencsik and Juhasz, 2010). Gender-based discrimination and gender norms exercise great pressure on women to stay away from work until their youngest child reaches the age of three. Conversely, this contributes to the lower employment rate of women on the labor market (Vajda, 2014). Furthermore, employers do not necessarily provide family-friendly workplace policies (Tardos, 2014), and approaches to those in part-time work may easily lead to their marginalized status in the workplace (Geambaşu, 2014). Moreover, the motherhood penalty can be observed not only in relation to the employment prospects of women but also in the gender wage gap (Cukrowska-Torzewska and Lovasz, 2020).

Gender/family roles and work-life balance

Following the political system change in 1989, in parallel with the rapid economic and social transformations, a re-familization process began in the country. Though there were initiatives aimed at enhancing work-life balance, they strengthened already traditional gender and family norms (Nagy et al., 2016). There was a shift away from the idea that women could 'have it all,' and soon after this transition, research began to emphasize the pressure on women to choose between work and family.

Deeper investigations into the issue of work-life balance and gender role research only started 10–15 years after the political system change. At the end of the 2000s, researchers' attention shifted to work-life balance and gender and family roles. The easier access to huge, comparative international databases also boosted quantitative research (Takács, 2008). Family roles and the share of household chores were usually approached from demographic perspectives by demographers (Murinkó, 2014), often lacking not just a sociological approach but a gender lens. The long-standing tradition of an extended maternity leave period in Hungary enjoys such strong social support that it has never been significantly modified by governments. Nevertheless, it was altered due to the economic crisis in 2008 (it was first shortened, then soon re-extended), which, along with other social policy measures (public expenditure on childcare institutions was reduced, care-related and full-time motherhood benefits were introduced) and the increased risk of unemployment, all encouraged research on work-life balance and the share of household work.

Over the last decade, research on work-life balance, gender, and family roles has also shifted slightly in its focus. *First*, it often reflects on pro-natalist measures launched by the RWPP governments in Hungary from 2014 onwards. These selective policies (Szikra, 2020) tend to support traditional, upper-middle-class families; however, the significant lack of sufficient childcare services and part-time work opportunities is again reinforcing traditional family and gender norms (Glass and Fodor, 2022), which has inspired several studies. For example, empirical research on egalitarian gender culture, work-family arrangements, and work–family conflicts (Neményi and Takács, 2016), on the barriers to motherhood and career advancement of female researchers and the delay in childbearing (Paksi et al., 2022); and a theoretical work and thematic issue were published on work-life balance and the gender regime after the transition to market economy (Nagy et al., 2016). *Second*, work-life balance and gender/family role research has more recently turned toward new issues that have already been discussed in Western literature, such as masculinity and the role of fathers (Geszler, 2016); voluntary and involuntary childlessness (Szalma and Takács, 2015); parental custody and the contact maintenance of separating Hungarian parents (Szalma and Rékai, 2019); intensive mothering intersecting with class (Kutrovátz and Geszler, 2022); the identities of top female academics (Takács, 2020); and the work-life balance of lower educated people (Gregor and Kováts, 2019). *Finally*, work-life balance and gender/family role research also rapidly reflected on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, touching upon issues such as the gender division of childcare (Fodor et al., 2021) and gender inequality between home-working couples (Nagy et al., 2023).

The EU accession and the introduction of the law against discrimination (2003), albeit slowly, promoted a shift to the examination of the representation of women in different segments of society, mainly in the higher education system and the labor market, which also fostered investigations into the work-life balance of female managers and academics, as well as care work (Acsády et al., 2012). Research on the work-life balance of highly educated women opened the way to the examination of why there are so few women in science (Paksi, 2014), which attracted more attention and research when, in 2016, not a single female professor was elected as a correspondent member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

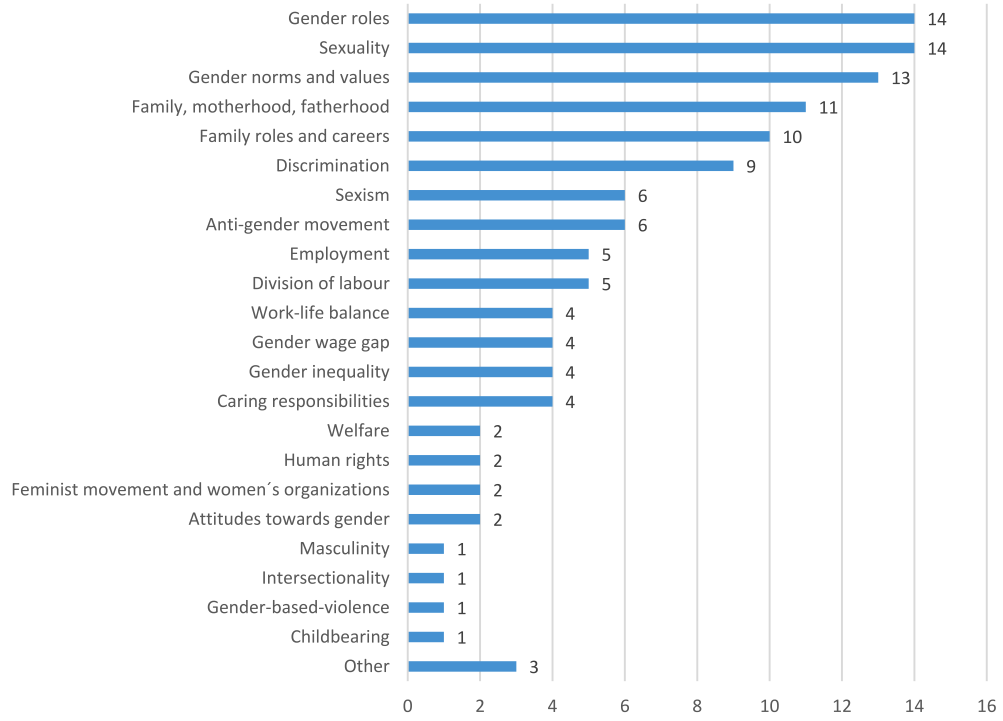

FIGURE 1
Occurrence of categorized gender concepts.

Civil society and women's NGOs

The field of civil society women's NGOs is divided along political preferences and values. It seems that the government's recent policies mainly support and strengthen organizations that represent conservative values concerning the family (Fejős and Neményi, 2020). In the first decade of the political system change, however, there were issues regarding which the newly formed women's organizations did cooperate and achieve success—for example, through petitioning, public campaigns, and trials. The issues concerned the retirement age of women, violence in general, and particularly sexist representations of the female body on media platforms and advertisements, according to a study based on fieldwork among activists (Fábián, 2009).

Health care and obstetrics

Further serious problems are caused by the lack of reflection on women's subordinate position. In health care and more particularly in gynecology and obstetrics, the overwhelming majority of practitioners are male, and this leads to the disregard of women's particular needs, for example, in the ways mothers are treated during childbirth in hospitals (birth is fully institutionalized in Hungary; there is little space left for alternative midwifery and gentle birth without medical intervention).

As women do not have the confidence to assert control of their bodies or the freedom to choose how they want to give birth, they accept male obstetricians' authority, the latter who typically do not even guarantee the possibility of informed consent for women about medical interventions. The medical environment and the strict rules of hierarchical hospital protocol do not allow for the creation of intimacy. Thus, compassion and empathy disappear and mothers become objectified. Medicalized childbirth depersonalizes, desexualizes, and controls the process of childbirth. It attempts to control and regulate nature through the woman's body (Székely and Csabai, 2017).

Social work and care

The practice of institutionalized care is also biased and reflects structural gender inequality. The majority of social workers in Hungary are women. Their work enjoys very low prestige and is underpaid. A feminist analysis of the latter's motivations and self-concept of their profession highlights that there is an alternative approach among care workers (both men and women) that does interpret care as a universal category, regardless of gendered stereotyping (as understood in relation to Held's ethics of care; Held, 2005).

The aspect of demand and supply is also considered in relation to international care work migration, primarily involving women (Katona and Zacharenko, 2021), which has implications for gender relations within the affected Hungarian families as well (Németh and Váradi, 2018).

Women and politics

The literature on women in politics is predominantly descriptive, in the sense that it rarely suggests explicit practical solutions to the identified socio-political problem in question. The literature is probably too narrow to allow for clear debates and contradictory scientific positions to emerge.

The articles primarily discuss broad structural and occasionally political reasons for gender inequality, as well as the gender gap in political parties and government, and other topics, such as gendered migration (Gábriel, 2023). Broad structural factors underlie gender roles in families, family values in general, the vulnerability of women

in family relations, work-life balance, and gendered labor, particularly in relation to care work, such as migrant care work or the 'care drain' (Bartha and Zentai, 2020). The political reasons for gender inequalities can be attributed to the anti-gender discourse of the Orbán government, which began in 2010 and is most evident in articles focusing on the discursive aspect of gender politics (Félix, 2015; Kövér-Van Til, 2018). The chapter on Hungary by Anikó Félix in the book edited by Kováts and Põim (2015) *connects to the idea that the concept of gender is used in public political discourse as 'symbolic glue.'*

The two most important changes in the literature in the past decade are the recognition of different conceptualizations of gender in politics and the shift in focus away from more general interpretations, such as the general underrepresentation of women in politics in East-Central Europe and especially Hungary—for example, the left–right division of political parties (that is, the fact that female politicians have always been represented in larger numbers in left-wing parties than right-wing ones; Koncz, 2011; Várnagy and Ilonszki, 2012). In addition, literature shows that before 2010, some so-called left-liberal politicians advocated for feminist issues; however, since 2010, the environment has become more hostile in this regard (Nógrádi, 2023), for reasons more directly related to the Orbán regime's governmental discourse and policymaking.

Gender-based violence

Regarding specific policy fields, intimate partner violence is a particularly under-researched area, in which the state has shown reluctance to adopt a gender-based approach (Tóth, 2018). Meanwhile, civil society activists aim to highlight the power dynamics inherent in violence against women, even in its 'public' manifestations (Betlen, 2017).

Sex trade and prostitution

Developments in the study of the sex trade are of particular importance, given the significance of the latter in the Hungarian context and its economic implications (Betlen, 2013). Unsurprisingly, due to Hungary's role in supplying the international sex-trade-related demand, a prominent and explicit radical feminist and abolitionist approach may be identified in the scholarship (Dés, 2020), although the liberal ('sex work') perspective has also been addressed (Katona, 2016). Notably, research has been conducted on the exploitative nature of the 'sexcam' (online sexual service provision) business behind the scenes (Barna and Katona, 2020).

Intersectional groups of women

When it comes to addressing the issues faced by Roma women, it is important to clarify that Roma people in Hungary are citizens, live settled lifestyles, and the majority speak Hungarian as their mother tongue. However, the use of intersectionality as an analytical tool—i.e., taking into account the intersecting factors of gender, ethnicity, and class—is considered highly relevant in understanding their situation (Kóczé, 2010) and applies to both public policies and social movements (Balogh, 2018). However, it is noteworthy that other groups of women affected by intersecting inequalities are hardly represented in the literature.

Discussion

The aim of our paper was to introduce how academic narratives conceptualize gender and gender-based needs in Hungary under the governance of the RWPP coalition (Fidesz-KDNP) from 2010 onwards. We conducted an extensive literature review to identify relevant publications (more than 4,000), assuming that the primary purpose of scholars is to reveal unequal gender power relations and promote gender equality. Our sample consisted of 67 academic publications between 2010 and 2023.

The distribution of articles over time shows that their number has steadily increased during the period of right-wing populist governance. It is a striking result that the selected articles hardly address the definition of the word 'gender'—similar to the literature produced before or immediately after the political system change. Although the Hungarian language still lacks an equivalent term for gender (only sex), this terminological difficulty may have been overcome in the decades that have passed. However, academics still seem to be avoiding the trap of attempting to define the word 'gender'. These results are likely a legacy of the socialist era, insofar as second-wave feminism scarcely filtered through the Iron Curtain.

The main criterion for inclusion of the literature included in our sample was that it should (a) address gender-based needs, (b) focus on the country context, (c) be related to feminist/masculinity studies, or apply gender concepts. Almost half of the publications align with the constructivist paradigm and utilize feminist or masculinity studies as theoretical frameworks. Here again, due to the absence of second-wave feminism and the late institutionalization of women/gender studies, even the adoption of feminist approaches in scientific discourse has been relatively exceptional in public life. Gender inequalities and related issues were not a focus of state or public attention, and did not represent an effective form of argumentation (Daskalova et al., 2010, p. 201). This may have contributed to the hostile reception of gender-related issues in recent times. Our results indicate that much of the existing literature has not effectively integrated gender-related research findings into a theoretical framework. This might suggest that the later start of gender research in Hungary compared to in Western countries is still having an impact in terms of theoretical embeddedness.

Returning to gender concepts, several priority areas were identified in the selected academic publications that can be defined as related to gender-based needs within the Hungarian context. Our experience is that scholarly publications tend to address relevant, practical gender-based needs and offer strategic gender-based needs for addressing them (Molyneux, 1985) through practical and policy suggestions for decision makers. This clearly reflects the less advanced situation of gender equality in the country. Thus, the academic research largely focuses on only immediate and acute gender-based conditions, rather than investigating the effects of earlier well-considered strategic macro-level decisions concerning gender-based needs. The most commonly used gender concepts are 'gender roles,' 'sexuality,' 'gender norms and values,' 'family, motherhood, fatherhood,' and finally, 'family roles and careers.' One might think that the research directions that have emerged in association with these concepts would be less confrontational in relation to traditional understandings of gender. However, the analytical focus of many has gone beyond the traditional understanding of gender. There is evident recognition of the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as the need for inclusive policies and practices. At the same time, among the least researched topics were 'welfare, human rights, feminist movements, masculinity, intersectionality, and gender-based violence,' which are indeed sensitive issues in Hungarian society,

whether we think of the still unratified Istanbul Convention or the situation of ethnic minorities (Roma). Gender-based violence is a highly sensitive and under-researched topic in Hungary (Tóth, 2018). Moreover, the application of 'gender inequality' as a gender concept within the sample publications was manifested relatively infrequently. Therefore, the effective implementation of mandatory gender equality or diversity plans in larger organizations may be seen as a priority in this political context for reinforcing gender equality efforts at the meso level (Tardos et al., 2025).

Further analysis of the articles shows that discrimination is a cross-cutting problem in relation to a range of gender-related needs. Discrimination based on sex, gender, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation remains a significant concern in academic research (Neményi et al., 2019). The literature highlights the need to address various forms of sex- and gender-based discrimination and inequality, especially in the field of the labor market, including but not limited to issues such as pay gaps, access to opportunities, and biases in different domains. These needs are reflected in the statistics, among others in the high gender pay-gap or the precarious employment conditions (Bencsik and Juhasz, 2010; Cukrowska-Torzewska and Lovasz, 2020; Amnesty International, 2020). The literature continues to highlight the need for efforts to address and eliminate discriminatory practices and attitudes in the labor market by encompassing micro- (interpersonal), meso- (company level), and macro-level initiatives.

Extended maternity leave has a long tradition in Hungary. No government has dared to change this significantly, except during the 2008 economic crisis, and this was later reversed. Practical gender-based needs, particularly based on selective pronatalist policies (Glass and Fodor, 2022), are more likely to be addressed than strategic ones (for example, the increased number of adequate childcare institutions). The presence of women in the labor market served political purposes during the socialist period, although even the second wave of feminism was unable to affect centrally controlled public life and culture. Research on the double burden, on work-life balance, and on discrimination against women in the labor market, obviously received a huge boost after the political system change ending state socialism, and this momentum is still felt today (Nagy et al., 2016; Gregor and Kováts, 2019). The literature continues to address the challenges faced by individuals in managing their work and family responsibilities, especially the gender roles and expectations associated with them. New discourses now encompass a broader understanding of relationship and family dynamics, as well as caregiving responsibilities. The literature continues to explore strategies and policies that support individuals in balancing their work and personal lives. It also aims to develop a deeper understanding of how certain types of couples and/or families operate within the framework of gender roles and norms, as well as within the legal framework provided in Hungary. Thus, there is a need for addressing work-life balance as a gendered phenomenon and as a societal, organizational responsibility; for examining and emphasizing the positive effects of work-life balance on the micro- and meso-level; for more research on masculinity and the changing roles of fathers; as well as on the career and work-life balance of female leaders. Additionally, there is a need for a more thorough examination of the share of household chores, including from a sociological perspective (beyond the demographic approach), and for embedding this within gender concepts.

The gendered nature of caregiver work is strong not only in the context of motherhood in Hungary but also in social work and the field of formal care (Acsády et al., 2012). The extreme underfinancing of the latter, as well as the related migration, are major challenges, especially for women, but neither practical nor strategic gender-based needs are taken into account at the policy level (Katona and Zacharenko, 2021).

We underline the importance of women's empowerment in Hungary. It is an important task to revive women's organizations. Hence, a more effective defense of women's self-interest, along with increased information and activism, is necessary to support gender equality. Moreover, normalizing the vulnerability of women in many social spheres and obstetric violence, in particular, prevents women from exercising self-determination over their bodies. The marginalization of women's control over their bodies and their needs in the context of childbirth is relatively frequently discussed in the literature. The reasons for this can be traced back to events of the last decade. On the one hand, the rate of cesarean sections has increased, and the tragic outcome of some home births has received a great deal of media attention as well. Though the 'prostitution vs. sex work' debate is on the agenda, very few studies address this issue (Katona, 2016).

The academic literature highlights the vulnerability of women whose social positions are shaped by intersecting factors such as class, ethnicity, and disability in the labor market. Consequently, raising awareness about the more vulnerable labor market situation of young mothers, expectant mothers, and older women, particularly in cases of intersectionality, is needed. Likewise, the recognition of intersectional disadvantages, arising from the intersections of gender and ethnicity (as in the case of Roma women), gender and class (low-income women), and gender and disability, should also become part of the political discourse, including discussion of the implications of the caring responsibilities in each case (Kóczé, 2010; Balogh, 2018).

On the topic of 'women and politics,' there has been a shift from the problem of women's under-representation in politics to the experience that women tend to pursue political careers in left- or rightwing parties. Despite the hostile environment concerning feminist issues in the governing right-wing populist parties (Nógrádi, 2023), the present government has begun to support the careers of some women politicians. Unfortunately, the case of the resignation of the President of the Republic may halt women's political ambitions for a while.

Notably, there has been a significant strengthening of the anti-gender movement in the examined period. This movement may represent a 'backlash' against the progressive gender discourse and has sparked debate and discussion within the literature. Scholars have aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how these movements operate and how they can potentially influence policies related to sex and gender-based needs, as well as the needs themselves.

One limitation of our study is that we were unable to quantify gender-based needs due to the qualitative review method. However, the intensive search yielded a broad base of peer-reviewed literature, providing a good representation of gender research over the past 15 years in Hungary. A follow-up study could be based on a systematic review that also explores the practical and policy implications suggested by academics. The examined literature further suggests addressing the new challenges by COVID-19, digitalization, AI, and migration, as well as the attitudes of the young generation toward gender equality.

Conclusion

Most articles associated with the broader area of gender implicitly understand gender in its 'classical' form, referring to the traditional gender roles of men and women. The only exceptions are studies of Hungarian feminist movements that reflect on how the meaning of gender has changed in recent decades. This type of approach shows how novel understandings of gender (i.e., gender as identity) have emerged in the discourse of some political actors and feminist organizations. However, only a few authors have described gender in its more inclusive form (i.e., as transgender or non-binary categories). Therefore, clarifying gender concepts in public life and academic discourse is now an essential task, as is promoting discussion among women's organizations to nurture solidarity and raise awareness of the issues of gender inequality in general, as well as the concerns of civil society.

Gendered structures in Hungary still predominantly reflect patriarchal values and traditionalism. The overarching strategy of most of the literature is to presuppose gender differences, inequalities between the sexes, or the underrepresentation of women, and demonstrate how these factors affect a particular policy field or area of social and political life. As the literature showed, the anti-gender and anti-feminist discourse in the government's communication and its family policy measures has intensified in the last decade (Ilonszki and Vajda, 2019; Bartha and Zentai, 2020). The lack of explicitly mentioning theoretical frameworks in the articles raise the awareness that more education and information on gender approaches and theoretical frameworks would support the development of academic research on gender. However, there is no guarantee that gender studies publications will flourish again in the current political environment.

In terms of scholarly approaches to gender, we did not detect significant shifts in the literature after the RWPP coalition obtained a majority in the Hungarian government. The main gender approach in the reviewed literature remains the constructivist paradigm. Nevertheless, there have been some minor shifts, such as the emerging—or, more precisely, re-emerging—debate in relation to cis and trans women; the importance of caretaking responsibilities in the private sphere; and the anti-gender movements that may further shift the approaches of scholars in response. The academic narratives continue to encompass diverse approaches, although to different degrees, including feminist theory, queer theory, postcolonial and global perspectives, and critical men and masculinities studies. These approaches remain relevant and contribute to the understanding of gender dynamics and inequalities.

We are aware that the focus of academic research is largely determined and limited by the research funding systems that significantly influence the choices of researchers. While domestic funding for research in Hungary has declined significantly, the EU's recent gender equality strategy has provided a particular boost to gender research. On the one hand, gender-research broadened; on the other hand, it is not clear how long this process will continue due to the significant social changes of recent years, such as the strengthening of anti-gender rhetoric (Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017), the political saturation and commodification of the word 'gender' (Adamik, 2018), and the legislative changes regarding gender (Barát, 2022). In current political situation, under right-wing populist governance, gender research has started to be promoted by the right-wing populist ruling party coalition along binary gender dimensions, with claims that they are 'defending' women's interests. At the same time, the latter reject progressive gender demands, as is the case with other right-wing populist parties in Europe (Alonso and Espinosa-Fajardo, 2021; Doğan, 2025). Moreover, due to the intensification of pronatalist ideologies and policies (Herke, 2025), even the study of women's paid work, work-life balance, and the unequal division of labor may be marginalized.

Furthermore, EU funding is no longer a guarantee of unrestrained research on gender, as universities whose ownership and maintenance have been transferred from the state to public interest foundations (trust funds) closely controlled by the government are not eligible for EU funding in Hungary (Tardos and Paksi, 2024). The supply of researchers is also hampered, as students are also not eligible to join Western European research networks through Erasmus scholarships. Recent separation of the research network based on the two main scientific fields (STEM vs. SSH), without consultation with stakeholders, has put the former in a position that suggests that social science research, including gender studies, will be further marginalized.

It remains a question whether this all will result in a tangible 'gender equality backlash' in Hungary in the future. In the current political situation, the importance of women's needs is rarely mentioned in political campaigns. However, no political agenda has yet been formulated by either the RWPP government or the mainstream political parties to significantly combat gender inequality.

Overall, it can be concluded that academic research considerably developed since the end of state socialism to the present day in terms of addressing gender-based needs. It happened despite the fact that society still largely thinks in terms of traditional gender and family roles, which the last 15 years of RWPP government has also sought to reinforce. The definition of gender seems to be constrained in the last half century: initially due to linguistic difficulties, and now probably due to the unfavorable political context. The fact that one-third of the examined literature do not apply any gender approach, in part, may also be traced to these contexts. Furthermore, after the political system change in 1990, the formerly marginalized issue of inequalities between women and men could freely evolve. During the examined period, it had reached the level (as a late reflection on the further waves of feminism) to focus on gender issues in more depths, such as prostitution, gender-based violence or intersectionality, and the gender plus approach. However, current social trends may halt these developments - the time factor is a key issue, hence the impact will only become apparent in academic literature many years later. Nevertheless, it is suggested that policymakers pay attention to social science research, as it clearly mapped gender-based needs in recent decades which help policy planning and implementation.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent from the

participants was not required to participate in this study in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

Author contributions

KT: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. JA: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. LB: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. VP: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. AS: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. AU: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declared that the HUN-REN Center for Social Sciences became integrated into ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest as of August 1st, 2025. The Center remained an independent legal body. The research presented in this work was conducted as part of the HUN-REN Center for Social Sciences' activities. Due to this change, the reviewer AKVT came to nominally share an affiliation with the authors during review. The handling editor and Specialty Chief Editor assessed and guaranteed the integrity of the review process.

Generative AI statement

The author(s) declared that Generative AI was not used in the creation of this manuscript.

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Supplementary material

The Supplementary material for this article can be found online at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpos.2025.1627274/full#supplementary-material

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLE 1
List of 67 articles.

SUPPLEMENTARY DATA SHEET 1
List of Gender Studies Special Issues and Coding of gender concepts.

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