

# Leaders Who Care



## How does care for family increase caring leadership?

### Research Team

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# Who are we and what are we investigating?

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ForGenderCare is a Bavarian research association consisting of twelve subprojects. These seek to examine the relationship between gender and care. The present pamphlet illustrates key findings gathered in our subproject titled „Does care for family members increase caring leadership?“

Our findings are based on data from an online survey and two field experiments. Here, our goal was to address the following research questions (RQ):

- 🔍 How does leaders' caretaking (i.e., parental leave) affect subordinates' perceptions of leadership behaviour?
- 🔍 Is this effect different for female and male leaders?
- 🔍 How does care-oriented leadership influence employee well-being?

## Why is it important?

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Given current demographic trends such as projected aging or dual-career couples, an increasing number of employees is facing the challenge of balancing work and caregiving responsibilities (e.g., childcare, caring for elderly relatives).

Keeping this balance is energy-consuming. When the psychological strain imposed by caregiving responsibilities is too high, employee capacity for work becomes impaired. To counteract this, employers need to offer career paths and accommodative benefits (e.g., telecommuting, job sharing) that are more compatible with their employees' life paths.

Caregiving experiences spill over from home to work and, in turn, influence behaviour in the workplace. Does becoming a parent make you a different leader? Can persons who worked with supervisors before and after they were parents notice a change in their leadership behaviour?

## Care-oriented leadership

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is characterized by a care-oriented understanding of leadership. This includes leaders'

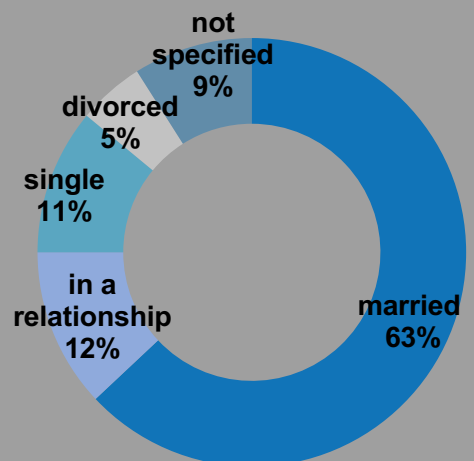
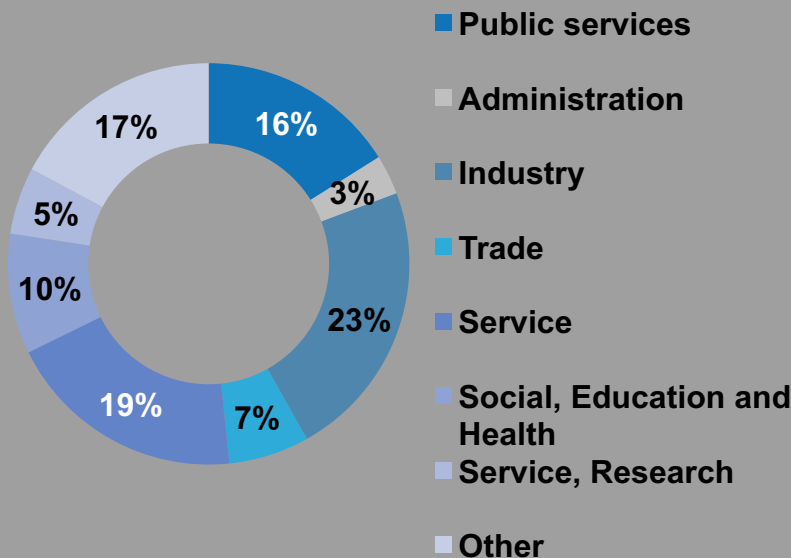
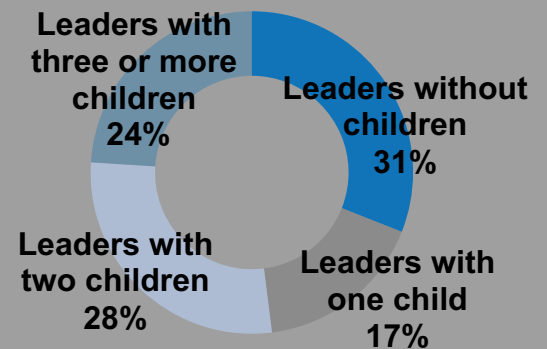
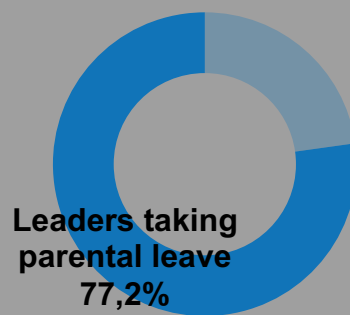
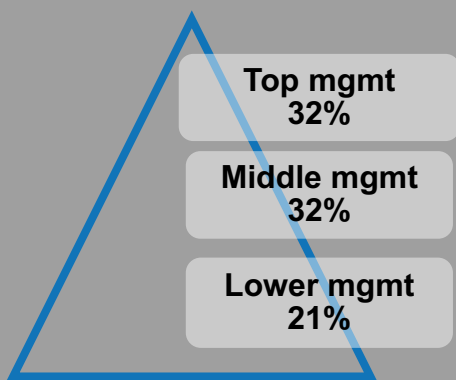
- sincere interest in and care for their employees' concerns,
- moral values underlying their leadership behaviour,
- function as a role model to his/her employees.

Problem of overgeneralization: To facilitate information processing, each person is automatically assigned to one of the two main social categories, that is, "woman" or "man". S/he is then expected to show category-specific attributes (e.g., financial success, nurturing, for men and women respectively). In this line, family caregiving corresponds to women (but not men) specific attributes.

Once these normative expectations are violated, women (but not men) are negatively evaluated. Yet, little is known about how leaders' caretaking (i.e., parental leave) influence subordinates' perceptions of leaders' behaviour. Do men benefit more from caregiving in terms of subordinate positive evaluation than their female counterparts?

# Who were our study participants?

There were 403 working adults (40% male) who participated in our online survey. We recruited them via professional social networking sites. We replicated the study results in two field experiments with 145 (41% male) students and 233 working adults (54% male).



mgmt = management

## What are our key findings?

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RQ1 & RQ2: How does leaders' caretaking (i.e., parental leave) affect subordinates' perceptions of leadership behaviour? Is this effect different for female and male leaders?

Q Our results indicate that leaders who take parental leave are seen as showing more communal traits (e.g., other oriented, good listener). This, in turn, is positively related to subordinates' perceptions of increased care-oriented leadership behavior (i.e., transformational and servant leadership).

Q We do not find these tendencies to be different for male and female leaders.

Leader who take  
parental leave

... are ascribed  
communal traits  
(e.g., other-  
oriented, good  
listener)

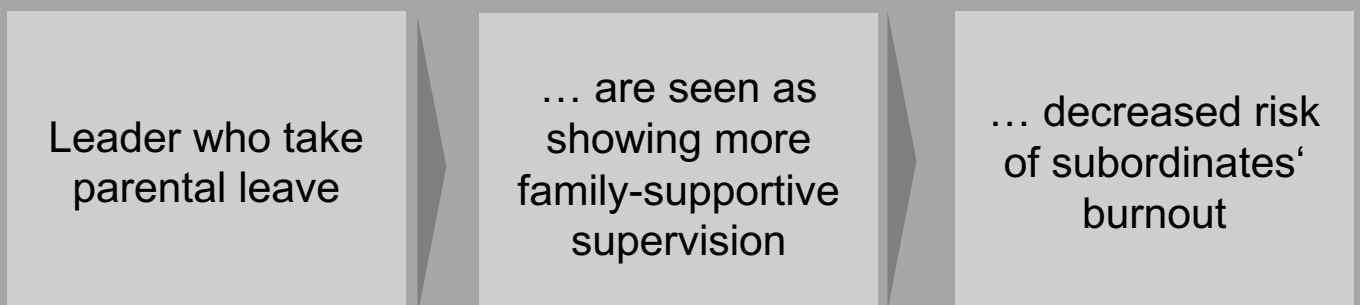
... are seen as  
showing care-  
oriented  
leadership  
behaviour

## What are our key findings?

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RQ3: How does care-oriented leadership influence employee well-being?

- 🔍 Our results indicate that leaders who take parental leave are seen as showing more family supportive supervision. This, in turn, is related to a decreased risk of subordinates' burnout.



- 🔍 We find male leaders with a strong conflict between work and family life to be more likely to experience greater support from their subordinates. Concretely, their subordinates tend to show more leader-directed extra-effort in the workplace as compared to subordinates of female leaders with a comparably high work-life conflict.

## What does it imply for business practice?

Employer

Nurture a „**care culture**“,  
acknowledge the care needs,  
provide an accommodative  
work environment  
(telecommuting, job sharing)



Acknowledge and support the  
**leadership enrichment**  
through private caregiving

Survey employees on how  
they view care benefits

Monitor utilization rates

Customize accommodative  
benefits (e.g., job sharing)

Leader-subordinate dyad



## Project team

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