

Leadership competence – learning by Family

Report 3/10 Survey “Parenting skills & work“, 02.04.2018

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“Parenting skills & work“ - Report 3/10

By Joachim E. Lask & Dr. Nina M. Junker

“Structure and delegation of the tasks – daily; view for what is really important – during planning/strategy, meetings etc.; empathy – daily; not venting your bad mood on somebody – especially regarding employees; humanity (reduction of the Ego) – daily; creativity. Children are super creative. They try out things, adults would never try out, because it would not work out anyway. Strange, for children the impossible still works. This is very precious and from my point of view, especially when it is about employee management and employee development it is extremely precious.”

Mother of a one year old child, working as a supervisor in human resources consulting, answering the question through which parenting skills she is becoming a better leader.

Background¹

Previous research of managing family and work often focused on conflicts between these roles. Within these conflicts in terms of time, work load or behavior, parents are caught between two fronts: family and work. Results from this tradition of research focus on the negative side of combining family and work, including less job satisfaction, higher intentions to leave and more vulnerability to burnout (cf. Greenhaus et al., 2006).

In contrast (see Report 2/10) parents can experience gains because of the roles they have: parenthood and employment. This is what we call work-family enrichment. For example, skills learned at home can be beneficial at work.

Here are some selected results regarding factors which foster enrichment of work and family which parents in managerial roles:

- Supporting your spouse turned out to be a key factor for the success of women in their leadership positions and their parenthood (Heikkinen et al., 2014). This support concerns (1) psychosocial support like encouraging or respecting your partner; (2) hands-on support like generating free periods of time or taking care of the children; (3) supporting the career like networking or cooperative compromises relating to the career.

¹ For more details: Junker, M. N., (2018): Children and career: A multidimensional role fit theory to predict work-family effectiveness. In preparation.

- The influence of the boss or the team members to employees' work-family enrichment has been often investigated and demonstrated. For example, Allen (2001), has noted that it is crucial to work-family balance that supervisors and team members acknowledge care obligations. Kossek et al. (2011) confirmed the importance of supportive supervision using meta-analytic procedures.
- Furthermore, supervisors can be supportive if they are role models in successfully managing multiple roles (Thompson et al., 1999). That means if they lead the way in being a positive example.
- Moreover, they are first indicators that employees evaluate the leadership qualities of a leader with parental responsibilities more positive than those of a leader without parental responsibilities.

In the current analysis of our study "parental skills & work" we are interested in how supervisors themselves experience positive relations between their role as a parent and as a leader in respect to their competences. In other words: To what extent do parents experience the (further) development of their parenting skills and how do they expect to benefit from their leadership role in the workplace?

We also investigate whether parents' gender and age, the number of children, the age of the youngest child and the level of employment influence the results.

Finally, we would like to know whether the parental skills are related to the leadership competencies described in the Full-Range Model of Leadership by Bass et al. (1994). Essentially this model differentiates two domains of leadership styles:

(1) Transactional Leadership (more rational) as the negotiated giving and taking between employer and employee ("transaction"), for example:

- Performance/duties according to the working contract.
- Preparing of tasks/organizing work to optimize and avoid errors.
- Interventions of leader after mistakes occurred.

(2) Transformational Leadership (more emotional). Leader motivates employees to personal development and extraordinary performance. Motivation takes place through:

- Individual consideration and promotion, e.g., specific further training and development, empowerment.
- Intellectual stimulation, e.g., suggestions to think creatively and independently, solution orientation, continuous improvement.
- Inspiring motivation, e.g., creation of meaning, appreciation, specific praise, team spirit
- Idealized influence, e.g., being a role model, value orientation, authenticity of the leader

The Survey

So far, 235 employed parents participated in our online survey. 212 of them had leadership roles, 121 were mothers (mean age: 43,71) and 91 fathers (mean age: 46,69). On average, participants had 2,37 children and their youngest child was, on average, 10,05 years old. The employment average was 88,43 percent. Their work-related position in the company was as the following table shows:

Table I: Work-related position of the employed parents with leadership roles.

Position	Frequency
Specialist	13
Leader/Manager	84
Group/Departement manager	38
Senior head of departement / Divisional manager	27
Management/Executive board	30
Self-employed/freelancer/other	20

First of all, we asked parents to give their estimations about how well they were able to develop certain competences in parenthood. We then asked them to indicate to which extent they expected to become a better leader through these developed competencies.

Here are the results: More than four out of five employed parents with leadership responsibilities indicated that they had developed interdisciplinary competences because of their tasks in their family. The question whether these parenting skills made them better leaders was rated with “strongly agree“ by 75.83 percent of the participants. Only 1.90 percent of the parents did not expect a spillover effect from their parenting skills to the workplace (see figure 1). The correlation between developed parenting skills and the spillover expectation turns out to be highly significant with a strong effect ($r = 0.55, p < 0.0001$).

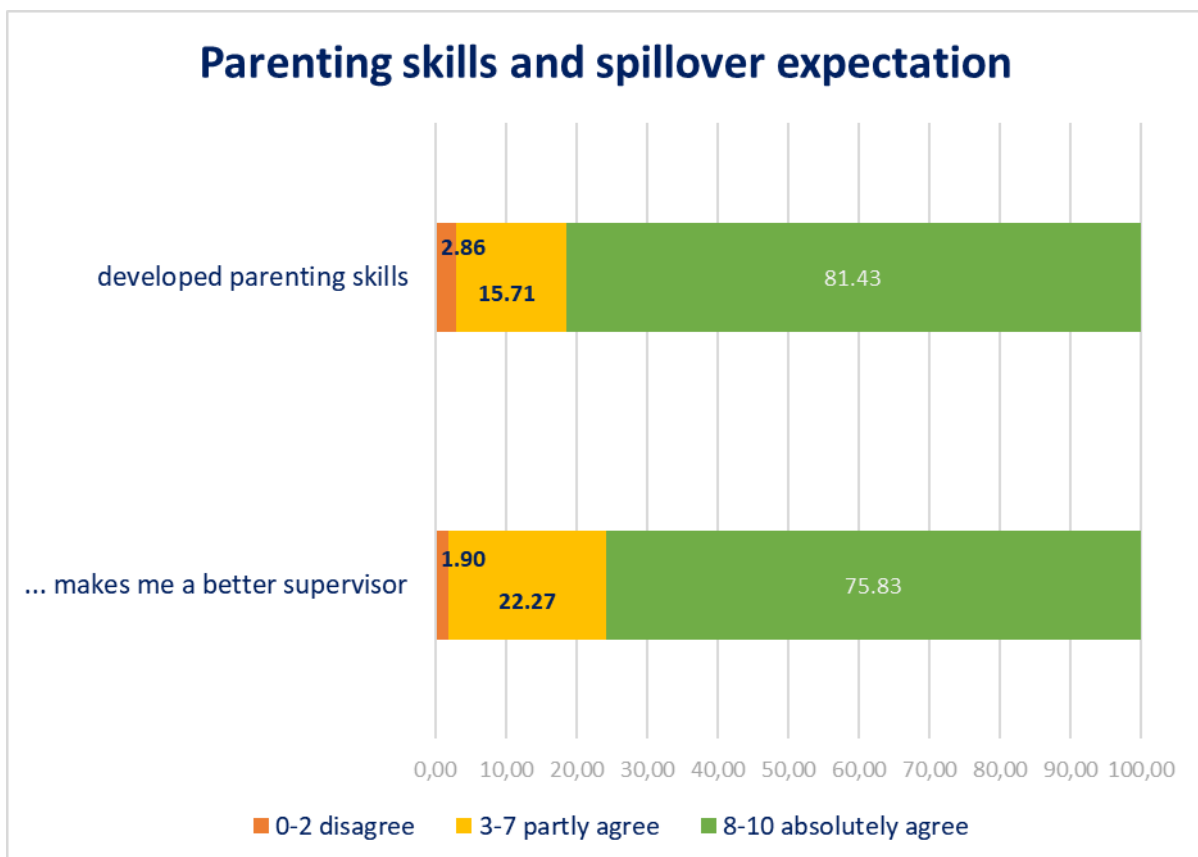


Figure 1: Parenting skills and spillover expectation. Participants' estimation to their specially developed parenting skills and to which extent they make them a better leader.

It is important to gain a better understanding which competences generate parents' spillover expectations. We therefore asked participants to write down the competencies they thought they had learned at home. In the following we present some answers of the parents as examples. In this respect, we would like to invite you to a small exercise. Try to match these answers with your preferred leadership concept. You can also use the Full-Range-Model of Leadership that we just presented above.

Mother of five children, youngest child 19 years old, supervisor in ecclesial level and refugee work

Flexibility, tolerance, giving and enforcing clear lines, view at others' talents and the capability to initiate and help to develop these. I am using these competences in my ecclesiastic intercultural projects and as cultural mediator in the refugee work.

Father of two children, youngest child 6 years old, supervisor in public service

Praising or constructive feedback during performance reviews and also during my everyday life and therefore more appreciation for the employees

Mother of two children, youngest child 6 years old, supervisor in public service

Keeping and bearing everybody in mind (and knowing that everybody is different and needs different things), important for leading a heterogeneous team;
"Logistics": what has to be done and when to make a certain step happen (and what is plan B?), important for the management of several projects and processes.

Mother of two children, youngest child 2 years old, supervisor in retail sector

Awareness of members' needs in all situations. Prevention of crisis/ Seeking to talk to others earlier. Own fault tolerance/humbleness/ability to apologize. More pragmatism leading. Questioning the own claim relating to the situation/available competences of the team, adapting your persistence to the situation and compare them to realistic goals

Mother of two children, youngest child 18 years old, supervisor in public service

I was able to extend the competence of networking with the children. This is very important for my work because synergies with other institutions and network partners relieve and enrich work.

Father of six children, youngest child 1 year old, supervisor in architectural and engineering office

To focus yourself and others on the essence of things. Within project management and meetings.

Father of two children, youngest child 3 years old, supervisor in architectural sector

Organization: Leading teams and interdisciplinary projects. Calmness. Assertiveness: management of meetings and negotiations.

Father of two children, youngest child 2 years, supervisor in media sector

Changes of perspectives help within performance reviews to develop understanding and accepted solutions. Calmness helps to handle stressful situations. Thinking ahead and long-term planning result in having possible problems on the agenda earlier on and preventing them.

Mother of two children, youngest child 2 years old, supervisor in HR sector

Including several perspectives. Taking and communicating decisions promptly and clearly. Being binding and reliable. Giving appreciations. Delegation/ Hand over responsibility.

Mother of three children, youngest child 13 years old, supervisor in online trading

Being emphatic towards employees, listening to employees accurately. Being consequent in terms of errors/ deficient work. Organization of company events, press days etc. Time management, there is always more work than time. And much more.

Mother of two children, youngest child 21 years old, supervisor in charitable organization

Patience and forbearance with my boss and employees in terms of different opinions. Bigger intellectual leeway for weighing certain situations. Assertiveness in things in which my professional competences gave me foresight. Reconciling and moderating a lot of voices; more accurate listening. Mindfulness. Appreciating the counterpart and perceiving his/her needs.

Which of these 11 statements match with leadership competences? Which do not? To which conclusion do you come? In a first analysis we were able to probe the answers of 177 parents to their leadership competences. We are impressed by the clear link, which the parents were able to identify between their leadership roles in family and work. For sure the conditions differ between family and work. Leaders are not parents and employees are not children. Employees and employers are able to quit, children and parents cannot. But successful management behavior at home and at work seem to have much in common. In short: With the challenges in your family you can learn a lot about your leadership competences.

What kind of other relations do exist for parents' high spillover expectations being a better leader due to their parenting skills?

First, we found weak, but significant positive correlations between the number of written statements about their estimated parenting skills and the number of competences the parents mentioned to justify their spillover expectation. In short: The more employed parents were able to express their parenting skills and also their included leadership competences, the higher was their expectation to be a better leader due to their competences.

This result is comparable with a wine connoisseur: For the estimation of a quality wine s/he is able to use a lot of terms and thereby s/he has got a great differentiation ability concerning the quality of a wine. Somebody who does not know all these terms is still able to drink the wine but may only experience a little about its quality. Transferred to our topic: parents who have a greater ability to describe their parenting skills have a greater awareness to actually use them in their leadership role.

Further, we investigated the influence of parents' gender and age, the number of children, the age of the youngest child and the degree of employment.

The development of parenting skills and the expectation to be a better leader due to these skills are neither related to parents' gender and age nor to the age of the youngest child. This means that parenting skills can already be developed after a few weeks/months after childbirth and used as a spillover in leadership tasks. This is not very surprising insofar as significant changes in workplace behavior are commonly desired after three to five days of

vocational training. Parenthood – insofar as parents accept to be challenged by this role – offers long-term training possibilities to develop lasting competences.

Finally, our analyses show a significant positive – even though weak– correlation between spillover expectations and the number of children. The more children parents have, the more parents expect „... to be a better leader“. This could be explained through a higher complexity of the educational task. Another positive effect was shown between the employment and the estimation for the development of the parenting skills.

With respect to the development of leaders the informal educational learning environment “family” rarely receives any attention. However, our analyses show that intensive education and coaching is possible within the competence center family – especially for leaders. Especially if one considers the development towards the industry 4.0, in which the role of parenthood and employment – cues such as home office and mobile work – are increasingly overlapping, there is a need to use the educational learning environment family to effectively and sustainably develop leaders. For this purpose, the leadership-monitor 2017 by DIW (Holst et al., 2017) is getting to the heart of an imbalance. More than two out of three leaders are living without children! Thereby an essential possibility to develop leadership competences is lost. Extensive desolate consequences due to this imbalance are also reaching the work together with employed parents. For example, when measures for compatibilities count as a cost factor or when interdisciplinary competences of parents are just smiled at. To this, the Gallup survey 2016 is giving German leaders a bad certificate. Almost every fifth employee thought about quitting during the last 12 months. And that was because of his/her direct leader, who did not show interest for his/her employees, did not point out any perspective for development, did not explain the meaning of work and did save praises – as it is shown in the Gallup-Survey. “Is it really so difficult?”

Conclusion:

We see following conclusions for employed parents with supervisory responsibilities and companies:

1. As an employer, manager or head of department you should use parents' high spillover expectations of being a better leader. Compared to further trainings, the competence center family offers a permanent possibility for training and development.
2. Provide parents in supervisory roles with the opportunity to apply their developed leadership competences in your company/team. In the course of an external coaching you can comply with privacy concerns. The respective supervisors will, for sure, be more committed.
3. As a parent, observe your leadership competences that you train within your family. Mention them by using the leadership vocabulary, e.g. by the Full-Range Model of Leadership.
4. Think about which leadership competences you want to develop and how these competences can give an edge to the company. Talk about this with your supervisor.
5. Do also use your knowledge in the opposite direction: How can your leadership competences be helpful for your daily family life?
6. Thereby describe your developed competences and address this to your own leader. If you want to get support for it, take part in the Webinar KompetenzExpert, which is free of charge. www.kompetenzexpert.de

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Joachim E. Lask, graduate psychologist, founder and manager of the WorkFamily-Institut. Since 2004, he works with the enrichment concept for balancing work and family. Development of instruments for the spillover effect for human resources development. Summarized presentation in „Gute Eltern sind bessere Mitarbeiter“ (“Good parents are the better employees“, Springer-Verlag, 2017).



Dr. Nina Mareen Junker studied psychology at the Universität Mannheim and wrote her PhD at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main about implicit leadership and followership theories. Since 2016 she has been employed in the department of social psychology at the Goethe-Universität. Her current focus of research is on managing work and family roles, group processes and the development of burnout. Further, she has been working as a coach and consultant within the field of occupational health management for several years.

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Following Reports are in preparation and will be published soon

- Report 4/10: How do leaders perceive parenting skills?
- Report 5/10: Parenting skills under discussion with the leader
- Report 6/10: Effective advantages of parenting skills at the work place
- Report 7/10: Importance of the parents networking within the company for the integration of parenting skills in the employee development
- Report 8/10: Fathers use the „competence center family“ differently – mothers as well!
- Report 9/10: What do leaders need for the systematical application of the parenting skills in the employee development?
- Report 10/10: The top 20 parenting skills and their benefit for the company

Special Reports in preparation

- Leadership - Learning by Family
- Development of resilience through parenthood
- Internal role models of parents and leaders about parenthood and personnel

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