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Reconcile Job and Family as a
Father – Implications for
Human Resource Management

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Content

List of Figures.....	III
List of Tables.....	IV
List of Abbreviations.....	V
Introduction.....	1
Reconciling Job and Family – Theoretical Framework.....	2
Theoretical Context.....	2
Reconciling Job and Family as Part of Diversity Management.....	2
Reconciling Job and Family as Part of Gender Mainstreaming.....	2
Reconciling Job and Family as Part of Work-Life-Balance.....	3
Measures to Reconcile Job and Family.....	3
Working Time.....	4
Working Place.....	5
Care Support.....	6
Financial Incentives.....	7
Additional Services for Families.....	7
Internal Communication.....	8
Political Framework.....	8
Challenges of Demographic Change.....	10
Method and Results.....	12
Research Assumptions.....	13
Guided Interview.....	15
Face-to-Face Interview.....	15
Telephone Interview.....	16
Developing the Interview Guidelines.....	18
Sample.....	19
Results.....	20
Demands of the Fathers.....	22
Climate within the Enterprise from the View of the Employees.....	22
Challenges for the Fathers.....	23
Corporate Perception of Family-Friendliness.....	23
Climate within the Enterprise from the View of the Expert.....	23
Challenges for the Company.....	24

Communication	24
Discussion	25
Discussion of Assumption 1	25
Discussion of Assumption 2	28
Discussion of Assumption 3	30
Information and Communication	33
Further Steps	36
Problems and Limitations	38
Conclusion	39
Literature	40

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Research Process, Source: Doing Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences: An Integrated Approach to Research Design, Measurements and Statistics, London, Sage Publications (Black, Thomas R., 1999).....	12
Figure 2: Category Relation, Source: Own Creation, in accordance with, Moralisches Handeln von Unternehmen: Eine Weiterentwicklung des neuen St. Galler Management Modells und der ökonomischen Ethik, dissertation Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen., Wiesbaden, GWV Fachverlage GmbH, p. 51 (Schwelger, Regina, 2008).....	21
Figure 3: Economical Effects of a family-friendly Personnel Policy, Source: http://www.beruf-und-familie.de/system/cms/data/dl_data/7a9ba6c5421b083be7c6ca513f206d1c/Factsheet_BWL_Effekte_081105.pdf , p.5 (Forschungszentrum Familienbewusste Personalpolitik, 2008).....	26
Figure 4: Role Models of the “good Father” in Sinus Milieus, Source: http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Broschuerenstelle/Pdf-Anlagen/vaterschaft-und-elternzeit-endbericht,property=pdf,bereich=bmfsfj,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf , Wertorientierungen zu Vaterschaft in verschiedenen Milieus, in Fegert JM, Liebhardt H et al., Expertise „Elternzeit und Vaterschaft“, Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, p. 12, (Merkle, Tanja, 2011).....	29
Figure 5: Evaluation of Change in Law for Parenting Benefit, Source: http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Abteilung2/Pdf-Anlagen/beeg-evaluation-endbericht,property=pdf,bereich=bmfsfj,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf , Evaluation des Gesetzes zum Elterngeld und zur Elternzeit, p. 12 (Enderbericht 2008)	31
Figure 6: Lack of Communication prohibits the Creation of Father-friendliness as Organizational Culture, Source: Own Creation, in accordance with: Moralisches Handeln von Unternehmen: Eine Weiterentwicklung des neuen St. Galler Management Modells und der ökonomischen Ethik, dissertation Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen., Wiesbaden, GWV Fachverlage GmbH, p. 51 (Schwelger, Regina, 2008).....	34
Figure 7: Leveraging Work-Life Integration on behalf of the Organizational and the Individual Level, Source: Creating Balance?: International Perspectives on the Work-Life Integration, Heidelberg, Springer Verlag, p.18(Kaiser, Stefan et al., 2011)	36

List of Tables

Table 1: Advantages and Disadvantages of using Interviews, Source: Using Research Instruments: A Toolkit for Researchers, London, Routledge Falmer, p.64 (Wilkinson, David/ Birmingham, Peter, 2003).....	14
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List of Abbreviations

AG:	Arbeitsgemeinschaft
BEEG:	Bundeselterngeld- und Elternzeitgesetz
BMFSFJ:	Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend
f:	following
Cp.:	Compare
DM:	Deutsche Mark
e.g.:	for example
eG:	eingetragene Genossenschaft
FFPs:	Family-friendly policies
GmbH:	Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung
HR:	Human Resource
Plnowa:	Arbeitslebensphasensensibles Personalmanagement als Innovationstreiber im demografischen Wandel
US:	United States [of America]
ICT:	Information and communications technology
UK:	United Kingdom
IHK:	Industrie- und Handelskammer

Introduction

Reconciling job and family – a challenge that has been discussed almost exclusively as a problem of working mothers in the past. Meanwhile men more and more tend to live an active fatherhood. Companies therefore are well-advised to make use of this development by supporting working fathers with family-friendly benefits. These measures can have different approaches like working time, working place, financial or general organizational support. Essential for successfully implementing a father-friendly corporate culture are internal and external communication. Family-friendly companies support working fathers and mothers by providing as much flexibility as possible for enabling them to balance professional and private duties. This strategy can be a real factor of success not only for employed parents but also for the companies as it strengthens their attractiveness for potential applicants. Family-friendliness is one important factor in the “war for talents” meaning skills shortage that more and more intensifies the struggle for qualified personnel. Therefore companies have to consider new ways to stay competitive.¹

Fathers growingly pay attention to a family-friendly corporate culture when looking for a new employer. But nevertheless they are still very often viewed in the role of the breadwinner - although Germany is experiencing an upheaval that moves politicians and managers to realize new parental roles and integrate them into family policy and corporate strategies at the moment. In this paper an exemplary company is being evaluated with regard to its father-friendliness. The potential and the backlog demands of the enterprise are being carved out and recommendations for father-friendly implementations are given on the basis of interpreting qualitative interviews with male employees and a representative of the management.

¹ Hay Group, 2011

Reconciling Job and Family – Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Context

Balancing job and family has been discussed across the European Union for more than 30 years. The awareness for the topic rose and today the issue is very highly ranked by EU authorities. Reconciling work and family is a need that is important for both, men and women in different age groups.² From the internal perspective of employees working in an organization the most significant precondition for enabling them to reconcile job and family is the employer's family-aware corporate culture. Krell et al. (2011) subordinate the issue under two different theoretical approaches of Human Resource Management.

Reconciling Job and Family as Part of Diversity Management

The concept of Diversity Management has the aim to utilize the variety among people working in a company. The idea has its origin in the US and has been discussed since the beginning of the 1990.³ By implementing the diversity approach companies make use of different strategies, programs and measures that help to use these differences as productive and efficient as possible. Variety among employees in this context means for example "gender, nationality, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual identity and orientation, living conditions, class, education, values, behavioral patterns".⁴ Diversity Management includes very different aspects of life and therefore cannot be broken down to single characteristics. According to Krell et al. (2007) the complexity of the topic can be reduced by concentrating on the so-called "big8". This term summarizes the following eight dimensions:⁵ "race, gender, ethnicity/ nationality, organizational role/ function, age, sexual orientation, mental/ physical ability, religion".⁶ Balancing job and family is one cornerstone for successfully implementing equality policy by establishing equal opportunities for women and men.⁷

Reconciling Job and Family as Part of Gender Mainstreaming

Very closely linked to the approach of Diversity Management is the second theory. It is the concept of Gender Mainstreaming.

"Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is

² Cp. Demetriades, Meixner, Barry, 2006, p.2

³ Cp. Aretz, Hansen, 2002, p.8

⁴ Own Translation from Krell, Riedmüller, Sieben, Vinz, 2007, p.9

⁵ Cp. Krell, Riedmüller, Sieben, Vinz, 2007, p.9

⁶ Krell, Riedmüller, Sieben, Vinz, 2007, p.9

⁷ Cp. Krell, Ortlieb, Sieben, 2011, p.4f

*incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making.*⁸

Gender Mainstreaming has initially been mentioned in context of development aid. In this context it focused on the role of women on continents like Africa, Asia and South America more than 30 years ago. Today Gender Mainstreaming is being understood as a strategy to support men and women to be politically, socially and economically equal by law.⁹ Therefore the approach can be described as a tool to abolish gender-specific discrimination. The difference is that Diversity Management does not only consider gender as distinguishing aspect. Both concepts can prevent problems like discrimination as soon as they are part of a corporate culture. While Gender Mainstreaming stands for equal opportunities for working men and women, in this context respectively fathers and mothers,¹⁰ whereas Diversity Management is based on a much more complex approach.¹¹

Reconciling Job and Family as Part of Work-Life-Balance

In addition Work-Family-Balance can be classified as one aspect of Work-Life Balance. This idea is dealing with the challenge of balancing job and private life in general.¹² So the idea of Work-Life-Balance does not exclusively relate to family commitments and professional life for male and female employees.¹³ Work-Life-Balance also includes balancing job and hobbies, sports or friendships e.g.¹⁴ Companies or other organizations often treat Work-Life-Balance as one aspect of Diversity Management.¹⁵ In this paper the topic of balancing work and family is seen as a part of Diversity Management as found in most of the literature.

Measures to Reconcile Job and Family

In this context the Fraport AG is one example for an outstanding organization that has been awarded as most family-friendly German company by the former minister for family affairs Ursula von der Leyen. Fraport has started to establish a family-friendly corporate policy already in 1987. As one of the first benefits for a better balance of work and family, it has introduced flexible working times. Just recently the company has implemented a preferred duty plan, which enables employees to choose their appreciated working schedule six weeks in advance. Another current achievement is a child care service which is available from 6 am

⁸ Council of Europe, Human Rights and Rule of Law, no date

⁹ Cp. Bothfeld, Gronbach, Riedmüller, 2002, p.7

¹⁰ Cp. Krull, Stepanek, 2003, p.36f

¹¹ Cp. Schwarz-Wölzl, Maad, 2004, p.4f

¹² Cp. Kruse, 2009, p.18

¹³ Cp. Clutterbuck, 2008, p.18

¹⁴ Cp. Kaiser, Ringlstetter, 2010, p.2

¹⁵ Cp. Thomas, no date, p.5

to 10 pm daily. The company is also making efforts to stay in contact with mothers and fathers during parental leave to support them to plan their career with family.¹⁶ Enabling employees to balance job and family means that companies have to provide a certain flexibility that changes their relation to the employees. According to the Beruf und Familie GmbH, a research institution of the German Hertie-Stiftung, family-friendly-measures can be subdivided into eight different fields: Working time, working organization, workplace, information and communication, leadership, staff development, benefit-in-kind and services for families.¹⁷ But there are different definitions of categories for family-friendly programs. To give an overview, the following own categorization is created out of different sources on the basis of measures frequently appearing in literature:

Working Time

“The traditional worker is typically classified as full-time employee who works for the same company for life and whose working time can be described as ‘9-5’, with 35-40 hours per week being the normal working time. Business environments are increasingly being volatile markets, the personal preferences of employees and the widespread diffusion of information and communication technology (ICT) play a major role in the shift from this traditional model of working towards one which involves more flexible work patterns.”¹⁸

The information and communication technology (ICT) as mentioned in the quotation gives companies the opportunity to create a more flexible working environment. To meet parents' needs, employers can introduce different working-time models (Hellert et al.).¹⁹ The first support that companies can give concerning working-time is to respond positively to fathers' wishes to take a break directly after birth and assist them by planning parental leave. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions proposes additional options to reduce working-time for balancing job and family which are the following: *“part-time working... flexitime... compressed working week... [or] ... job sharing.”²⁰* Part-time work can have different approaches. Besides the models of working either in the morning or in the afternoon, part-time work can also mean working three days a week full-time²¹ or working “alternate weeks”²². MacDonald (2005) supplements the forms of family-friendly working-times mentioned above with the so-called term-time work. When working this kind of part-time, mothers or fathers have contracted not to work during school holidays. Flexitime enables employees to

¹⁶ Cp. Unternehmensnetzwerk, Erfolgsfaktor Familie in Magazin für Soziales, Familie und Bildung, Magazin der Bundesregierung, 2008, p.10

¹⁷ Cp. Beruf und Familie, no date, p.8f

¹⁸ Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardei, 2003, p.5

¹⁹ Cp. Hellert, Grzesik, Tegtmeier, 2011, p.9

²⁰ Demetriades, Meixner, Barry, 2006, p.2

²¹ Cp. MacDonald, 2005, p.64

²² MacDonald, 2005, p.64

work a certain amount of hours during a determined time-period.²³ Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardi (2003) also remark working during parental leave (in Germany parents are able to work up to 30 hours a week during parental leave according to Bundeselterngeld- und Elternzeitgesetz, § 15, Absatz 4²⁴) and additional unpaid days off during school holidays as opportunities to facilitate parents' daily challenges.²⁵

Working Place

Besides several options for employee-flexibility with regard to working time, the initiative "Erfolgsfaktor Familie" of the Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend proposes teleworking as a further possibility to harmonize the requirements of job and family.²⁶ Cullen et al. (2003) describe different kinds of teleworking. Generally "Multi-site-teleworking"²⁷ enables employees to handle their work duties at several locations. Employers usually give only managers and well-qualified personnel the opportunity to work flexibly from different places. Mostly these employees combine working on-site at the company office and working from home.²⁸ The official term for regularly switching between working from home and in the office is "*alternating telework*" like described by Korte, Wynne (1996).²⁹ Generally both, men and women utilize teleworking but predominantly male professionals operate with this flexible working opportunity.³⁰ "*Telehomeworking*"³¹ according to Cullen et al. (2003) on the contrary often is related to simple work mainly carried out by less qualified personnel, like manufacturing tasks eg. Primarily women are making demands of this kind of working at home. Telehomeworkers perform just for one employer whereas the group of freelance teleworkers is fulfilling jobs for different clients. Men and women equally are working as freelance teleworkers. When belonging to this group one can work from almost anywhere in the world, depending of course on the necessity of showing presence at the clients' offices and the infrastructure provided at the location. In the past only the sales employees were the ones who worked on that extremely mobile basis. Today this group of so-called mobile teleworkers has increased a lot. Modern communication technology has made telework possible for people working in different professions. The challenge is combining this kind of work with childcare and family. This is quite difficult due to the fact that working hours are not always foreseeable. Another different form of telework is working in a remote back office. During the last years this sector has been growing a lot. The

²³ Cp. Cullen et al., 2005, p.64

²⁴ Cp. Dejure, Bundeselterngeld- und Elternzeitgesetz, § 15, Absatz 4

²⁵ Cp. Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardei, 2003, p.12

²⁶ Cp. Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, no date, Erfolgsfaktor Familie, Onlineleitfaden „Initiative Familienbewusste Arbeitszeiten“

²⁷ Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardei 2003, p.9

²⁸ Cp. Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardei, 2003, p.9

²⁹ Cp. Korte, Wynne, 1996, p.64

³⁰ Cp. Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardei, 2003, p.9

³¹ Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardei, 2003, p.9

field of work embraces “*telephone banking, airline booking, customer service*”³²
Many women are working in these jobs which can be categorized as low-paid.³³

Working from home generally means saving time and money for commuting. In many cases these employees also have more freedom to organize their working time. Having this kind of flexibility also means a good time management is required as unpaid family-commitments and a paid job have to be reconciled. Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardi (2003) additionally address the problem of mothers working from home who are often stuck in their role of a housewife just because of the fact that they are at home during the day.³⁴ But on the other hand studies show that the children profit from their parents opportunity to work from home. As the freedom of scheduling by teleworkers is often used for having breakfast with children or taking some time for them in the afternoon and work can be skipped –if possible- to times when children are at school or in bed.³⁵ Even if some employers provide child-care-services or activities for children during holidays, parents still might have hours or even days when they have to work without having anyone who cares for the children. And this may possibly not only be the case during holiday-times. For times like these some companies provide their employees to bring their infants and growing children to the office. The so-called parent-child-office gives mothers and fathers the possibility to bring their children to their working-place if they don't have the opportunity to work from home. This should only be an option for emergency situations and can solely be realized for people doing desk work. Therefore the company has to provide a child-friendly room which can also serve as a working place for the parents. The challenge is to take care of the child and work productively at the same time. But otherwise if the mother or father would have to stay at home without the parent-child-office, this option probably is the lesser of the evils for the employer as he has the workforce of the parent available. Another notable factor is the effect of the parent-child-office as a signal for the family-friendliness of the company.³⁶

Care Support

As the public care system in Germany generally doesn't meet the demands of working fathers and mothers, the job perspectives for parents are not as good as they could be with sufficient nursery places. Only a few on-site care-projects of companies supplement the public offers. This kind of employee-support mostly is created by bigger companies with more than 250 employees. Other examples are monetary benefits for childcare institutions, collaborations with local hospital for establishing a care system for sick children during working days³⁷, the offer to

³² Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardi, 2003, p.9

³³ Cp. Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardi, 2003, p.10

³⁴ Cp. Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardi, 2003, p.12

³⁵ Cp. Cullen, Kordey, Schmidt, Gaboardi, 2003, p.14

³⁶ Cp. Kienle, 2011, p.1f

³⁷ Cp. Sims, 2007, p.477

arrange day care services³⁸ or the development of leisure time programs by cooperating with local schools³⁹. These features are all predominantly established within companies of a certain size. In a survey conducted by Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln (2009) half of the responding German companies indicated to provide their employees further days off when having to care for sick children – in addition to the legally defined ten days of special leaves per year.⁴⁰

Financial Incentives

With the birth of a child, parents have to handle additional financial investments. Therefore child-birth grants and child allowance paid by the employer also belong to family-friendly incentives for mothers and fathers.⁴¹ Other ways of financial support can be payment of salary in advance in special demand situations or additional advantages like discounts either on the company's own products or in cooperation with other enterprises or organizations. Additional measures to financially support families are for example scholarships for employee-children, the take-over of expenditures for child-care or the financing of services like household assistance or leisure-time activities or other services.⁴² Furthermore monetary support for employees with children can be for example guarantees for loans and retirement provisions⁴³ or the payment of financial benefits to mothers and fathers during parental leave in addition to legal benefits.⁴⁴

Additional Services for Families

As the study of the Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln shows only a minority of the companies is offering family-friendly incentives in addition to the examples mentioned before. Further measures include support for housework like for example shopping-service or assistance for laundry and ironing or the coordination of child care. In addition these services can also include information and advice on legal issues regarding working parents' interests. This category also includes access to canteen food for employees' children and offers for leisure time activities for families. Family services like these are not very widespread. Only 4.9 percent of the companies participating in the study of Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln provide features of this category.⁴⁵

³⁸ Cp. Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2010, p.16

³⁹ Sims, 2007, p.477

⁴⁰ Cp. Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend/ Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft, Köln, 2010, p.16

⁴¹ Cp. Schmitz, Markus, 2006, p.81

⁴² Cp. Madeja-Stieren, 2011, p.167f

⁴³ Cp. Hüttner, 2008, p.11

⁴⁴ Cp. Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend/ Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln, 2010, p.29

⁴⁵ Cp. Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend/ Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln, 2010, p.17

Internal Communication

“There are some factors that require special attention to ensure the success of family-friendly measures. Communication, consultation and commitment have to be present throughout the process of development and implementation...”⁴⁶

The successful implementation of family-friendly measures in a company can only be achieved by informing employees about these benefits.⁴⁷ Unawareness of new family-friendly instruments can easily lead to their failure. Hein (2005) advises against communicating the introduction of innovations in Human Resources Management via e-mail. The promotion of the new benefits can best be communicated through proven channels like *“...presentations and workshops, staff meetings, human resource handbooks, intranets, emails and newsletters.”*⁴⁸ These ways of communication should be additionally supported by discussing the individual demand in employee interviews, supporting internal top-down awareness for the subject⁴⁹ and appointing a contact person who can give further information. As soon as employees apply for or wish to be informed about parental leave it is important to let them know that they get the company’s support. For keeping the parents’ loyalty it is recommendable for the employer to stay in contact with them during their parental leave. It is advisable to keep them informed about current events, enable them to take part in qualification workshops and give them the chance to work up to 30 hours a week or to care for single projects during that time. The return into the job and the future perspective should be discussed early as possible by taking into account an appropriate family-friendly working-time model.⁵⁰

Political Framework

The family and its needs on the one hand, the company and its demands on the other hand - for both men and women reconciling job and family often turns out to be a big challenge. Especially in a hindered economic situation it is also for the companies a balancing act to have to fulfill the requirements of the customers and at the same time care for employees’ needs.⁵¹ This is how Dieter Hundt, president of the German Arbeitgeberverband, estimates the situation of German companies with regard to the growing demand for family-friendliness. He points out that companies caught between two stools. On the one hand they have to meet the family-job-balancing needs of their employees and on the other hand they have to

⁴⁶ Hein, 2005, p.71

⁴⁷ Cp. Hein, 2005, p.69

⁴⁸ Hein, 2005, p.72

⁴⁹ Cp. Hein, 2005, p.72

⁵⁰ Cp. Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2011, p.7

⁵¹ Cp. Hundt, 2004, p.64

satisfy their customers' needs who become more and more demanding.⁵² Parasuraman and Greenhaus (1999) are citing a former audit manager at Ernst and Young who said "*When clients say jump, we have to say 'how high?' You can't say, 'I'd like to jump six feet today, but I can only jump three because of my kids.' They'll just go next door and find someone else.*"⁵³ And they give additional aspects of today's growing pressure regarding working-conditions that can impede the implementation of a family-friendly policy.⁵⁴ Growingly volatile conditions, technical development as well as time and cost pressure⁵⁵ make family-friendliness fade into the background as all these aspects expect growing involvement and dedication of employees and sharpen the pressure of cost-effectiveness to stay competitive.⁵⁶ Furthermore there is this growing number of mothers and fathers who ask for balancing job and family-opportunities and who are not willing to fully dedicate their time and energy only for the job. Employers have to forgo employees' skills, knowledge and workforce as soon as they are on parental leave. This is a big challenge for the companies who have to coordinate the tasks and look for someone to substitute the mother or father. But they should seek of how to take advantage of the potential that the new generation of fathers brings into their business.

But supporting employees to balance their job and family duties is not only a task of the companies. As they are only able to act within the legal, social and political framework of the country they are operating in. In Germany fathers actually can officially take parental leave since 1986. At that time the government under Chancellor Helmut Kohl passed the law for the "Erziehungsgeld"-regulation. This parenting benefit precept was the first to enable both, mothers and fathers to apply for parental leave. At that time the benefit was a lump sum of 600 DM per month. Shortly after the implementation of the law the former minister for family affairs, Rita Süßmuth, stated that the integration of fathers into the new legal regulation was only window-dressing to her mind, especially with regard to the financial aspect. It took further 20 years of rethinking until the Elterngeld was introduced which provides a more attractive monetary support. The new financial and organizational structure of this law makes it much more attractive for men to participate in childcare – at least in the first year of their kids' life.⁵⁷ Lately the German family policy went through a process of change. New and modern views have been integrated for changing public conscience. Measures like monetary support for families and the expansion of childcare institutions gain a growing significance.⁵⁸ But there are not yet enough places for infants available. Other

⁵² Cp. Hundt, 2004, p.64

⁵³ Parasuraman, Greenhaus, 1999, p.25

⁵⁴ Cp. Parasuraman, Greenhaus, 1999, p.26

⁵⁵ Cp. Parasuraman, Greenhaus, 1999, p.26

⁵⁶ Cp. Parasuraman, Greenhaus, 1999, p.26

⁵⁷ Cp. Baronsky, Gerlach, Schneider, 2012, p.2

⁵⁸ Cp. FaFo FamilienForschung Baden-Württemberg, 2010, p.14

criticisms are for example the questioning of the Elterngeld's benefit on the German birthrate⁵⁹ and the ongoing discussion about the introduction of care benefits for parents who take over childcare by staying at home.⁶⁰ But overall the father-friendly policy seems to have paid off at least when regarding the increasing claims for parental leave by fathers.⁶¹ But nevertheless there are several examples of employers who have already implemented a family-friendly strategy into their corporate culture. The Robert Bosch GmbH is one example for a company that has successfully managed to develop strategies that enable employees, especially in leadership positions to reconcile work and family. The international technology group which employs about 119,000 people in Germany has been awarded by the Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend as one of the most family-friendly companies. Bosch has already considered the employees' needs for balancing job and family for about 15 years. In 2011 the company has started a project called "Move". Within this project 100 managers work part-time for a certain period. The leisure time they win by reducing work schedule is meant to be spent with their families. This project has two main goals: To raise awareness among the managers for the needs of employees who have to reconcile job and family, and to win the part-time-working managers as role-models for the staff to present flexible and family-friendly working-times. The employees who make use of family-friendly offers are seen as an enrichment for the company due to the skills they could develop while caring for children or nursing other family members. They can utilize this experience as enrichment for their career. Today every fourth female manager is working part-time at Bosch.⁶²

Challenges of Demographic Change

A family-friendly corporate culture like Bosch has implemented is a very important instrument for companies to face the problem of demographic change.⁶³ McKinsey (2011) for example assesses a family-oriented company policy as an important measure against skills shortage.⁶⁴ The core problem of this development is that the decreasing number of child-births in Europe has already reached a critical level. Following the European population continually is getting older.⁶⁵ The problem of an ageing population causes big recruiting challenges for many organizations. A company's most important resources, if not even the most important, is its manpower but the availability of this resource constantly declines.

⁵⁹ Cp. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 2012

⁶⁰ Cp. Nohn, 2012

⁶¹ Baronsky, Gerlach, Schneider, 2012, p.4

⁶² Erfolgsfaktor Familie, 2012

⁶³ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend/ Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln/ Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2010, p.9

⁶⁴ Cp. Suder, Kilius, 2011, p.26

⁶⁵ Cp. Mühling, Rost, 2009, p.34

Therefore companies have to adopt working conditions to the demands of their employees. Strategies for attracting well-qualified employees and staff loyalty hence are gaining higher importance.⁶⁶

If employers don't react on the new demands, they risk lagging behind other competitors with regard to recruiting qualified personnel. So the current development is becoming a growing challenge for companies.⁶⁷ Wuttke (2008) values family-friendliness as a responsibility of society which is increasingly becoming an economical duty. A decreasing birth-rate and less skilled workers imply that the social product per capita is going to decline in the future. Family-friendliness should following not be underestimated as an important economical factor.⁶⁸ The consulting company McKinsey has recognized this development of growing skills shortage already in the year 1997. They called it "*War for talent*".⁶⁹ Scase (2007) describes the problem as follows:

*"That war is now raging, and is set to get even bloodier as global demographics work to Asia's advantage. By 2020, the proportion of people over 60 will be 25 per cent in Europe, about the same in the UK, and 22 per cent in the United States. In the same year, China and India will have comparative figures of 17 and 10 per cent respectively, meaning they'll be less burdened by the elderly..."*⁷⁰

McKinsey (2012) anticipates the international skills shortage of highly qualified workforce in affected countries to grow up to 40 million people until 2020.⁷¹ Several studies predict different numbers for German skills shortage reaching from 2 to 4.1 million missing qualified workers until 2020.⁷² Germany is one of the countries that are most concerned and is even said to have the second oldest population world-wide already today.⁷³ This explains the high sensitivity of the topic of demographic change in Germany. An increasing family-orientation of fathers that has been not sufficiently recognized by many employers so far but the growing global "war for talents" starts to trigger the alarm bells of companies on a global scale but especially in Germany. "*Rohstoffe hat Deutschland kaum, das Kapital sind die Fachkräfte.*"⁷⁴ Family-friendliness is one competitive factor that can counteract the immanent loss of competitiveness of German companies.⁷⁵

⁶⁶ Cp. Middeldorf, 2011, p.1

⁶⁷ Cp. Schmitz, 2006, p.14

⁶⁸ Cp. Wuttke, 2008, p.15

⁶⁹ Cp. McKinsey, 2001, p.1

⁷⁰ Scase, 2007, p.31

⁷¹ McKinsey Global Institute, 2012, p.iii

⁷² Cp. McKinsey Deutschland, 2011, p.,12

⁷³ Cp. Die Welt, 2012

⁷⁴ Braun, Michael, 2012, own translation: "Raw materials in Germany are scarce. Therefore skilled people are its capital."

⁷⁵ Cp. Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2010a, p.2

Method and Results

The aim of this paper is to evaluate the father-friendliness of an exemplary company. The demands of fathers working in the company and the solutions that the management provides for them are in focus of this research. Therefore qualitative interviews are conducted with a group of male employees to analyse their needs and wishes concerning work-family-balance and to get an impression of how they value the company's support and offers. Figure 1 shows different stages of a research process and serves as an approximate reference for the investigation. In contrast to the point "*selecting statistical test for resolving hypothesis*" the researcher selects the appropriate method of qualitative data collection for this thesis. The interviews are evaluated by the help of a category scheme according to Mayer (2009).⁷⁶ Additionally an expert interview with a company representative gives evidence on the management's point of view. The data gained from this interview provides insights on the internal view of the challenges of reconciling work and family, experiences with that topic, strategies that have already been implemented and an outlook to what is planned to be realized. This interview is being investigated by the help of a category scheme as well. The view of the manager and the responses of the working fathers are then compared and discussed. In the conclusion this paper will give recommendations to the company as an outcome of the discussed results. The interviews are conducted and examined based on several assumptions.

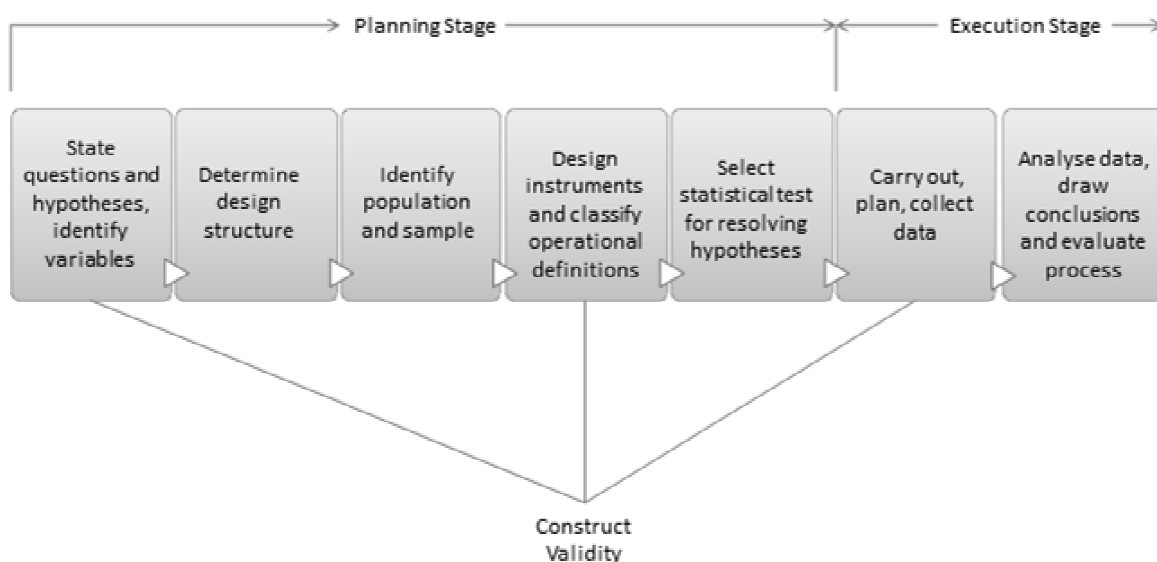


Figure 1: The Research Process, Source: *Doing Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences: An Integrated Approach to Research Design, Measurements and Statistics*, London, Sage Publications (Black, Thomas R., 1999)

⁷⁶ Cp. Mayer, 2009, p.49

Research Assumptions

The family-friendliness of the exemplary company in this paper and the demands of its male employees concerning work-family-balance are the main topics in focus of this research. The following investigation therefore is based on these assumptions:

- Assumption 1: Measures that help working fathers to balance job and family increase the competitiveness of a company. But the exemplary company does not (yet) fully exploit this advantage.
- Assumption 2: Many fathers working at the company belong to the new generation of active fathers but they feel like not being sufficiently supported in their demand for reconciling work and family.
- Assumption 3: Especially the financial aspect hinders fathers from taking parental leave or demanding more time for their children.

These assumptions derive from company information, secondary data given in the introductory chapter and observations made during the research phase for the thesis.

To analyse the validity of the three assumptions, this investigation will use the methodology of qualitative research. Lately qualitative research has been gaining significance in social science.⁷⁷ The methods of qualitative examinations are quite numerous and most of the time more or less vary in their approach to different subjects.⁷⁸ Therefore giving a standard definition on this very complex topic is quite hard. Merriam (2009) is citing John Van Maanen, a professor for Management and Organization Studies,⁷⁹ who has coined the following description on qualitative research:

“Qualitative research is ‘an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world.’⁸⁰

Qualitative research is being used for analyzing natural situations via data collection by conducting interviews, observations e.g.⁸¹ Generally the approach is used to explore ideas⁸² while quantitative research tests anonymously by the help of numbers. The results of a quantitative research can be calculated for a bigger group of people which is not possible for qualitative research.⁸³ The interview partners can only represent a small group of people in their individual situations.

⁷⁷ Cp. Marshall, Rossman, 2011, p.1

⁷⁸ Cp. Helfferich, 2009, p.9

⁷⁹ Cp. Sloan School of Management, not date

⁸⁰ VanMaanen in “Qualitative Methodology”, 1979, as cited by Merriam, 2009, p.13

⁸¹ Cp. Taylor, 2005, p.4

⁸² Cp. Zikmund, Babin, Carr, Griffin, 2010, p.136

⁸³ Cp. Taylor, Trumbull, 2005, p.235

Interaction between interviewer and interviewee is essential for this research method. Feelings and experiences are being taken into account when collecting the interview data. Qualitative research is taking place in a natural environment. Quantitative research on the contrary needs a sterile environment.⁸⁴ Table 1 summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of the qualitative research model. Many scientists argue about the validity of the qualitative methods and the better way to achieve reliable results but this depends on the research task. In many research projects it is even advisable to choose both methods in a way that they supplement each other according to Zikmund et al. (2010).⁸⁵ The results of qualitative and quantitative differ to that extent that qualitative results are often described as not being objective as the way of interpreting the data is up to the researcher. When conducting a quantitative research the results are numeric and therefore every other researcher investigating the same topic is going to draw more or less identical conclusions. Zikmund et al. (2010) state that qualitative research is more suitable for discovering new theories while quantitative research is more adequate to test the validity of these ideas.⁸⁶ Many scientists contradict that the two approaches can only be differentiated in such a simple way. Bryman (2012) makes a critical statement on this distinction and gives an example of a qualitative research that was conducted deductively.⁸⁷

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Because of your indirect involvement as a researcher, you can achieve a 100 per cent response rate for your questions.◆ You can decide on follow-up questions (considering whether they are appropriate, or if you can glean any further useful information by asking them).◆ You 'hear' far more than just what the participant 'tells' you. You can observe body language and interpret the tone of a response to a question.◆ Participants often see interviews as opportunities to voice opinions and 'let off steam' about subjects.◆ In most cases, they provide vast amounts of rich and useful data for further analysis. <p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ A good interviewer requires considerable training in interview techniques.◆ Interviews are time-consuming and costly to conduct. As a rule of thumb, you should allow two days' transcription time for one full day of interviewing.
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Table 1: Advantages and Disadvantages of using Interviews, Source: Using Research Instruments: A Toolkit for Researchers, London, Routledge Falmer, p.64 (Wilkinson, David/ Birmingham, Peter, 2003)

⁸⁴ Cp. Taylor, Trumbull, 2005, p.236f

⁸⁵ Cp. Zikmund, Babin, Carr, Griffin, 2010, p.134

⁸⁶ Cp. Zikmund, Babin, Carr, Griffin, 2010, p.135f

⁸⁷ Cp. Bryman, 2012, p.36f

Deductive research means that a hypothesis or, like in this case, different assumptions underlie the research process and the aim is to test their validity, whereas inductive research intends to have a hypothesis as a research result in the end.⁸⁸

Also Mayring (2003) supports the utilization of qualitative research methods for proving causal connections especially for reformulating or further developing of hypothesis or assumptions.⁸⁹ Therefore the qualitative approach was chosen as a method. The advantage of an interview situation is the personal contact to the respondents. The dialogue, interpretation and the opportunity for follow-up questions in this context is essential to get a holistic contextual picture of the situation. The results are also dependent on the chemistry between the researcher and the respondent.⁹⁰ For this thesis secondary and primary data are being collected for testing the assumptions. The general facts that are needed to prove the theories on a national or even global scale are being incorporated from already existing studies by secondary data research.

Guided Interview

Primary data collection can be conducted via *“interviews, questionnaires and observation”*.⁹¹ In this research the interviewer predominantly wants to find out the personal opinions and impressions of the respondents. This is why guided interviews are the preferred data collection method. The guideline, that the interviewer prepares in advance, is serving for structuring the conversation and reminding of important aspects. Additionally the interviewee then can very freely respond to the questions. The interview guideline is based on secondary data research and considerations about how to receive the information necessary for testing the assumptions.⁹² The structure of the guideline primarily serves as an orientation for the researcher and eases the comparability of data collected.⁹³

Face-to-Face Interview

For getting an impression of the company as a whole a face-to-face interview with the HR- manager was conducted at the company site. This is considered to be the best choice for an interview location as Gläser, Laudel (2009) recommend that the interviewee should have as little effort as possible with the appointment. The

⁸⁸ Cp. Bryman, 2012, p.24

⁸⁹ Cp. Mayring, 2003, p.22

⁹⁰ Cp. Marshall, Rossman, 2011, p.145

⁹¹ Wilson, 2010, p. 134

⁹² Cp. Mayer, 2009, p.43

⁹³ Cp. Mayer, 2009, p.37

respondent should feel comfortable and disruptive factors should be avoided during the interview. Therefore the manager's office is a suitable place if the phone is being turned off for the time of the conversation.⁹⁴ One important point that makes face-to-face interviews advantageous is that a personal meeting enables the researcher also to take also non-verbal communication into account which makes it easier to interpret the answers. In a face-to-face communication respondents react immediately and thus the interviewer doesn't have to wait for the results of the investigation. Another big advantage is that a face-to-face-interview can easily be recorded. Hence the information permanently is accessible for the researcher. He doesn't have to rely on written notes which make it difficult to recall certain contexts after a while.⁹⁵ Additionally it is disturbing for the conversation if the researcher permanently is making notes.⁹⁶

But the method of a face-to-face interview also holds several crucial points. For example when it comes to critical questions that make the interviewee feel uncomfortable. Another disadvantage is the rework of a face-to-face interview. The transcription and the examination of the interviews take a lot of time.⁹⁷ For this investigation the face-to-face method is chosen to interview the Human Resources Manager of the company. Therefore not his own personal situation is relevant for the research but his knowledge as a representative of the company. In an expert interview the role of the respondent is a purely factual one. Expert interviews need a stricter guidance than others. One of the most important tasks of the researcher before the actual interview is a good preparation.⁹⁸ The biggest challenge of an expert interview for the researcher is to keep the questions as open as possible without suggesting any direction for the answer and at the same time to stick with the topics that are important for the analysis. The researcher therefore should keep in mind that an influence on the respondent's reaction can already happen by the interviewer's emphasis on certain words while asking a question.⁹⁹

Telephone Interview

The interviews with the male employees in this research project are conducted via telephone. A telephone interview is not a typical research method for qualitative research but it also can be used for collecting quantitative data.¹⁰⁰ There are again some controversial opinions about the quality of data collected through a telephone interview. Some researchers value a telephone interview only as a last

⁹⁴ Cp. Gläser, Laudel, 2009, p.165

⁹⁵ Cp. Wilson, 2010, p. 138

⁹⁶ Cp. Gläser, Laudel, 2009, p.158

⁹⁷ Cp. Wilson, 2010, p. 140

⁹⁸ Cp. Mayer, 2009, p.38

⁹⁹ Cp. Gläser, Laudel, 2009, p.136

¹⁰⁰ Cp. Wilson, 2010, p. 142

option for their investigations. But according to Nigel, Horrocks (2010) an interview conducted via phone can indeed provide insightful data if the interviewer keeps in mind the characteristics of this kind of conversation and if he continually focusses on the essentials of the research during the interview.¹⁰¹ Apart from that in preparation and conduction telephone interviews do not differ very much from face-to-face interviews.¹⁰² Big advantages of this kind of investigation are the time-saving aspect and that the research calls are uncomplicatedly possible also over long distances.¹⁰³ A problematic point concerning qualitative interviews in this context is that the interviewer is collecting personal data of the employees. To avoid that single participants can be identified, only details necessary for the research should be addressed.¹⁰⁴ Another problem of an interview via telephone might be that the participants misunderstand the purpose of the investigation as they could think that the interview is exclusively aiming at factual data from them. So a short explanation of the research-mode is helpful. Furthermore King, Horrocks (2010) identify three factors that should be taken into account when planning to make qualitative telephone interviews. Time is the first important point. The interviewee should be informed about the approximate duration right before the start of the interview. Secondly the respondent should stay in a comfortable environment for the time of the interview. Finally the appointment for the interview should be made in advance and set for a time when the interviewee is not under time pressure. During the interview the researcher needs to keep in mind the characteristics of the medium and therefore should listen carefully and give selective keywords.¹⁰⁵ In this case the interviews with the employees could be considered as problem-oriented or focused interviews.¹⁰⁶ For both, the expert interview and the interview-calls with employees, a semi-standardized interview process is chosen.¹⁰⁷ As in comparison to the other opportunities of non-standardized and standardized interviews, the semi-standardized style helps to keep the interview close to the research question but also allows the participants to open up new thematic fields which were not taken into consideration in advance. Therefore it allows the respondent to talk about side-aspects that the interviewer possibly didn't know or think of while preparing the interview. On the other hand the interview does not give the impression of a read questionnaire and so it can be conducted more like a natural conversation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Cp. King, Horrocks, 2010, p.82

¹⁰² Cp. King, Horrocks, 2010, p.81

¹⁰³ Cp. Wilson, 2010, p.142

¹⁰⁴ Cp. Flick, 2009, p. 42

¹⁰⁵ Cp. King, Horrocks, 2010, p.82f

¹⁰⁶ Cp. Mayring, 2002, p.67

¹⁰⁷ Cp. Schmidt, 2005

¹⁰⁸ Cp. Nagy Hesse-Biber, Leavy, 2011p.102

Developing the Interview Guidelines

The guidelines developed for this research are created by using vertical as well as horizontal dimensions according to Mayer (2009). The horizontal dimension contains the thematic patterns whereas the vertical dimension covers direct and follow-up questions and additional keywords that can help to get deeper into the subject depending on the course of the conversation.¹⁰⁹

Categories for the expert interview are:

- Implementation of family-friendliness at the company:
This point targets the company's own view of its family-friendly programs. The management is asked to reflect its openness towards the needs and problems of today's fathers. Important aspects in this context are their flexibility options concerning working time, reaction in emergency cases and the communication of these measures.
- Experiences in the company:
In this dimension the researcher can inquire the company's representative on what kind of experience the company has made so far with family-work-balancing and where they see their room for improvement. In this context the communication of the measures and their assumed success are a main focus of the discussion.
- Father-related aspects:
With this category in the guideline the interviewer finds out about gender-specific aspects and how the company perceives the requirements of fathers and their understanding of parenting roles.

Categories for the interviews with the employees:

- Parental leave:
This point is highly relevant for this research to get an impression of the company-climate and to notice the attitude of the respondent towards active fatherhood. Furthermore this point is important regarding barriers and motives that have an impact to the decision for or against parental leave of the fathers.
- Role as a father:
In this category the respondent is directly asked about his role as a father and his general understanding of gender roles. Furthermore it has to be questioned if he is being prevented to a certain point from living his preferred role as an active father by working conditions or if he possibly intrinsically has chosen to live a traditional role model.

¹⁰⁹ Cp. Mayer, 2009, p.44f

- Job and Family:
With this point the researcher in the first place aims to find out about the internal communication of the company's support offers to balance family and work.
- Job and family/ working time:
This category has been established to ask the respondents to give their own view on the relation of working time and family time in their every-day-life.
- Job and family/ reactions:
The questions that fell in this category concern the way the company handles fathers' demands. One key question in this context is the fear consequences when fathers demand family-friendly measures.

To be able to structure the statements by the help of these categories the interviews are recorded, transcribed and thematically arranged according to Flick (1998).¹¹⁰ The statements then are being paraphrased and classified under the different categories.

Sample

For this research the father-friendliness of one company is being examined. To evaluate the management's view, an expert interview with an HR-manager is conducted. For gaining information of the counterpart a sample group consisting of six fathers working in the company is chosen for qualitative interviews. Therefore the company provided a list of employees willing to take part in this research. Concerning the employee-interviews a judgment sampling is chosen,¹¹¹ which means "*elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher*".¹¹² One precondition for the sample of fathers in this research is that one of their children was born after the year 2007. This was the year of the introduction of the new parenting benefit allowance in Germany that made it more attractive for men to take parental leave. So fathers of children who were born after this date can explain why they have made the decision to apply for parental leave or not. The time when they had to deal with this topic is not long ago, so they can recall the influence factors which were crucial for their choices much better. The second reason for setting the date of birth as criteria is that the fathers' demands for reconciling job and family should be a current topic for them. For the qualitative interviews the researcher chose to select five employees from the list provided by the HR department. Two of these five employees should have experience with taking parental leave, at least one of them should work in a

¹¹⁰ Cp. Flick 1998, as cited in Pfrengle, 2004, p.41

¹¹¹ Cp. Black, 2012, p.232

¹¹² Black, 2012, p.232

leadership position and the sample group should have a different number of children. The company operating in a manufacturing industry predominantly employs men and is situated in Germany in an area concerned by demographic change. Its HR department records a significant decline in applicants especially for technical jobs. After the change of the parenting benefit law in 2007 a fourth of the fathers working at the company have applied for parental leave; one father has taken it for a period of 12 months.¹¹³

This company was chosen for this study due to its cooperation with the project "Plnowa". The aim of the "Plnowa"- study is to find solutions for companies who need to rethink and restructure their personnel policy as the critical developments of an ageing population and impending shortage of skilled workforce intensifies the competition for employees. In focus of the "Plnowa"-research are the variety of employees and their abilities in different stages of life. The aim of the sub-project of iap – Institut für Arbeit & Personal FOM Hochschule is to develop a „Diversitätsförderliches Personalrecruitment in kleinen und mittelständischen Innovationsstrukturen“¹¹⁴ which means to establish recruiting strategies that foster diversity in small and medium-sized companies. In this context it is also to be clarified if a diversity-oriented recruiting of lateral entrants like female or older applicants will probably ease the problem of skills shortage.¹¹⁵

Results

The qualitative data gained from the interviews with employees and the manager has been structured by the help of a category scheme. Figure 2 demonstrates the relation between the evaluation categories from the view of the researcher. After having worked with the data, a first impression concerning its content and interrelations is noticeable. It was created in accordance to Schwelger (2008) who describes the system theory, coined by Niklas Luhmann and others,¹¹⁶ with regard to systems within a company.¹¹⁷ The figure shows two main systems meeting in the middle. The system on the right symbolizes the company's management, its interests, challenges and perception, while the system on the left stands for the employees and their demands and challenges. Where both systems meet - in the company - they influence and are influenced by each other by communication.¹¹⁸ It is not visible in this figure that the systems also have multiple influence factors from the outside, which could be families, customer demands, legal issues or side jobs for example. Schwelger (2008) divides them into horizontal, vertical and

¹¹³ Info given by the company

¹¹⁴ Cp. FOM, no date

¹¹⁵ Cp. FOM, no date

¹¹⁶ Cp. Lindemann, 2008

¹¹⁷ Cp. Schwelger, 2008, p.51

¹¹⁸ Cp. Pfister, 2009, p.132f

lateral outer relations.¹¹⁹ Figure 2 can be interpreted as a conceptualization of content relations within the interview data. The paraphrased statements that are subsumed under these categories partially can be assigned to several categories. According to Meuser, Nagel (1991) at the stage of conceptualization common patterns and topics of the interviews are being identified and connected.¹²⁰ The results are expected to be very different and in parts contradictory. The main reason for that is the heterogeneous group of interview-partners including employees in production and in leadership positions and an HR-manager.

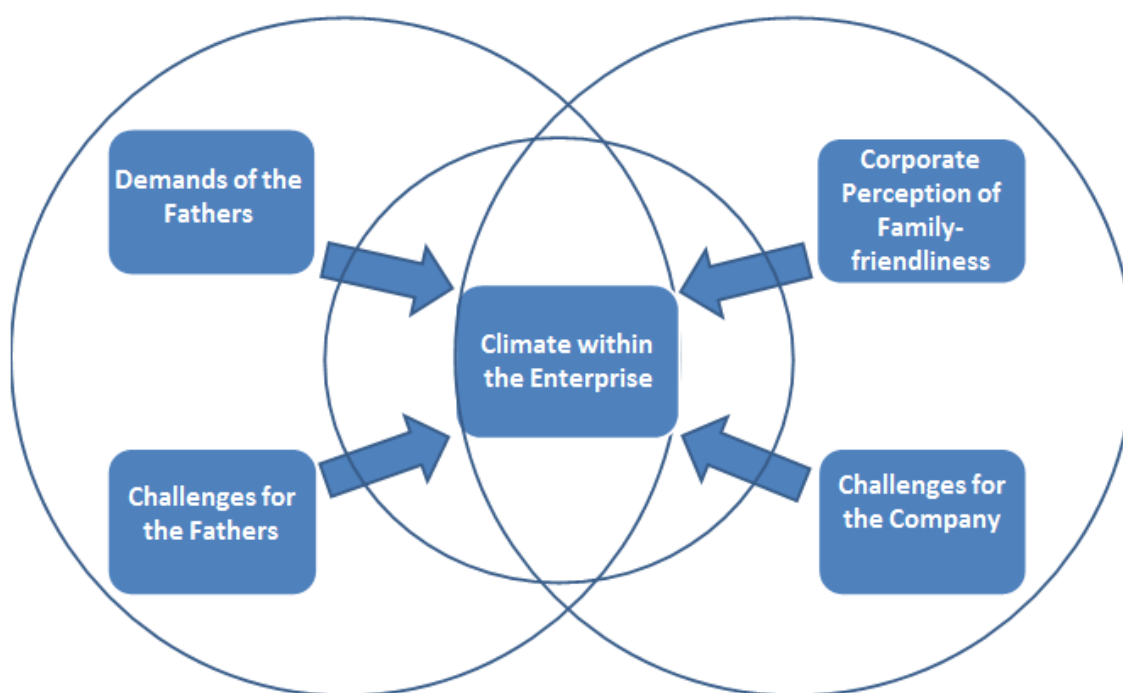


Figure 2: Category Relation, Source: Own Creation, in accordance with, *Moralisches Handeln von Unternehmen: Eine Weiterentwicklung des neuen St. Galler Management Modells und der ökonomischen Ethik*, dissertation Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen., Wiesbaden, GWV Fachverlage GmbH, p. 51 (Schwelger, Regina, 2008)

The results generalize the tendencies and different aspects that were mentioned in the interviews. Therefore the quantity of topics or statements with a similar content in this case cannot be left completely out of the analysis. One of the first impressions of the researcher when conducting and transcribing the interviews with the employees was that almost every of them seemed to be inhibited to a certain extend as far as open communication with their employer is concerned. Some talked about their fear of losing their job due to dismissals in recent past. Therefore it is not comprehensible how open the men talked about their demands,

¹¹⁹ Cp. Schwelger, 2008, p.48

¹²⁰ Cp. Meuser, Nagel 1991, p.463f

impressions and problems during the interviews but altogether they draw a certain picture of the situation within the company.

Demands of the Fathers

It is particularly striking that a majority of the employees doesn't know any benefits offered by the company concerning family-friendliness. This can mean that the company doesn't offer measures that every father can implement. But it can also indicate that the company doesn't communicate its offers properly or the fathers are not really interested in or do not have the need to benefit from support for balancing job and family duties. Recently the company has established a new shift system. But some of the fathers state that this change in their working times even worsens the ability to reconcile work and family. Some employees would welcome the establishment of a corporate child care system but others don't think that this is necessary. In most cases the men appreciate that the company reacts very cooperating when it comes to emergency situations. When asking about parental leave and the motivation why the fathers working in the company decided for or against utilizing it, it turns out that the financial aspect is a very determining topic. A majority of the fathers declares to have the need for additional financial support. In this regard some respondents indicate that they would appreciate to receive monetary support for childcare, school materials or benefits like free entrance to leisure parks for their families from the company. Besides financial requirements the men denote to have the desire for more leisure time with their families or special leave arrangements for medical consultation with their children or short-term family commitments. Several fathers seem to be intimidated by a current wave of layoffs in the company. Therefore they seem to not really dare to communicate their needs or ask for support. Another point concerning the demands of the respondents is their role as a father. All men indicate that family and family-friendliness within the company are important issues for them. They report to take over educational tasks for their children but in most cases the mothers and wives are the ones who are predominantly in charge of the childcare as most of the fathers are single-earners or main-earners.

Climate within the Enterprise from the View of the Employees

The respondents have already experienced positive reactions from their supervisors or the management in general when having family-related concerns. But there are also reports about negative reactions of colleagues especially of those who don't have children when it comes to topics like parental leave or going home early because of family duties. Some men even can recall situations when they were mocked by colleagues for taking parental leave. Some trace this attitude back to the common role understanding in their environment as in the region the traditional role allocations of mothers and fathers seem to prevail. The respondents partly even fear negative consequences on their jobs if they cut back their professional life for dedicating more time to their children and families.

Challenges for the Fathers

The main challenge for the fathers from their point of view is financing the family. Some of the men indicate that they have side jobs to generate additional income. The financial aspect is frequently referred to be the reason that prevents the employees from applying for parental leave. Some of the fathers report that therefore that they decided not to apply for parental leave or did not take more than two months of baby break. Also the current layoffs in the company cause worries among the respondents.

Corporate Perception of Family-Friendliness

The company provides the opportunity to work in flexible working times. The HR manager has the impression that the employees have been more satisfied since the introduction of this family-friendly practice. He furthermore states that the company is open to think about every possible model that helps balancing job and family. According to the expert this has already been communicated to the female employees in the company. He is conscious about the trend to active fatherhood. Production employees can flexibly change shifts in their personal responsibility only by informing the supervisors. The company also provides telework but not for each employee. The company estimates the demand for a corporate child care institution to be very low. According to the manager this was the result of an employee survey. He explains this result with the fact that there are enough available places in childcare institutions in the rural area. The HR manager evaluates the company to be an open contact partner for emergency cases. He admits that the management underestimated the fathers' demand to make use of the new parenting benefit and parental leave opportunities in Germany. The manager even suspects that the topic family-friendliness for fathers generally is underestimated within the company. He reports that the company intends to intensify its support for fathers who want to apply for parental leave. But he also mentions the organizational challenges that the company has to face when it has to replace employees for longer periods. One point that the expert emphasizes on is that the company does not aim at establishing a catalogue with measures for reconciling job and family commitments. The company rather wants to go on concentrating on individual solutions for particular demands. On one hand the manager assesses that family duties are predominantly a female topic in the region but on the other hand he realizes that children and family become a more important topic for the fathers in the company.

Climate within the Enterprise from the View of the Expert

From the experts point of view family always takes priority over work. This is counting for cases when children are sick and other emergency situations. The company then enables fathers and mothers to go home immediately. In his perception the attitude among the employees towards father-friendliness and parental leave of men is quite double-edged. The manager presumes that the

reactions are also depending on the educational level of the employees. He is aware that the atmosphere within the company is not the best at the moment. The wave of layoffs in his opinion has created uncertainty among the personnel and was one reason that caused the raise of the sickness rate.

Challenges for the Company

This development also is one of the biggest challenges for the company. As the expert reports the company lately went through a process of cutting costs. Some employees were dismissed; others had to accept wage reductions. The HR manager expects another challenge for the company with regard to the growing demand of fathers to take parental leave. The company furthermore is concerned about the effects of the demographic development.

Communication

This category was not planned to be implemented from the beginning of this research. It has been added during the analysis process when the researcher realized that communication probably is one significant issue for both parties. The indications on whether the topic of father-friendliness is part of appraisals interviews are responded contradictory among the fathers as well as the responses to the question if a contact person for problems regarding this topic is known among the staff. The HR manager states that the management consciously does not communicate the cases in which they could successfully help fathers balancing job and family as these cases are often related to emergencies or strokes of fate. In 2007 the company did not see the need to inform about the legal change in the "Elternzeit" and "Elterngeld"- regulation in Germany. The majority of the respondents doesn't know any measures that support reconciling work and family duties or in one case even the opportunity to apply for parental leave as a father is unknown. According to the respondents' experience information only is provided on demand. That is why some employees see the need for being informed about parental leave or other offerings for fathers by the company. In this regard they named different demands like for example more information to reach less prejudices among colleagues or providing data about the financial situation during parental leave. Some don't see the necessity or are content with the communication policy. The company on the other hand reports that supervisors and leaders recommend their employees to take parental leave. The HR manager underlines that the company has proposed to young female employees to talk about possible models as soon as they have the need for changes to balance job and family.

Discussion

In the discussion the qualitative data gained from the interviews is confronted to the assumptions that have been presented. In this context some statements can refer to different assumptions at the same time which leads to the same data being used to illustrate or prove several research points in some cases although they may be only associated to one topic in the category scheme. In the end the discussion is intended to deliver a complete picture of the company's situation concerning family-friendliness and give recommendations for the aspects that turn out to have potential for improvement. As a first step more information is needed on the situation of the company which helps to draw a holistic picture of the circumstances.

At the moment the company has to go through a challenging time. A cost-cutting program due to a loss in earnings in the first quarter of 2012 and an uncertainty about the future of the economic development within the industry were dominant issues that the company had to face in the recent past.

Discussion of Assumption 1

“Measures that help working fathers to balance job and family increase the competitiveness of a company. But the exemplary company does not (yet) fully exploit this advantage.”

The first part of the assumption has a more general approach and can only be evaluated by researching secondary data. In their study Bourhis, Mekkaoui (2010) examined the impact of different measures of family-friendly measures on the attractiveness of a company from employees' point of view. Therefore they tested how respondents as potential applicants value the different offers of¹²¹ *“on-site child care; generous personal leaves; flexible scheduling; and teleworking”*.¹²² According to their findings, all of these benefits had a positive influence on the respondents' impression of potential employers. But especially flexible working time and *“generous personal leave”*¹²³ make a company an attractive employer for potential applicants. Therefore Bourhis, Mekkaoui (2010) advice enterprises that don't have the budget to provide various family-friendly measures to at least implement those two. The researchers point out that even if they have conducted their study in Canada it can be transferred to other countries as well.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Cp. Bourhis, Mekkaoui (2010), p.98

¹²² Bourhis, Mekkaoui (2010), p.98

¹²³ Bourhis, Mekkaoui (2010), p.111

¹²⁴ Cp. Bourhis, Mekkaoui (2010), p.111

"For example, in Europe, corporate implantation of FFPs may vary depending on the welfare state system. However, studies indicate that more and more European companies are implementing FFPs in order to encourage women's participation in the workforce, especially in management positions."¹²⁵

In Germany the Forschungszentrum Familienbewusste Personalpolitik (2008) comes to a similar conclusion.

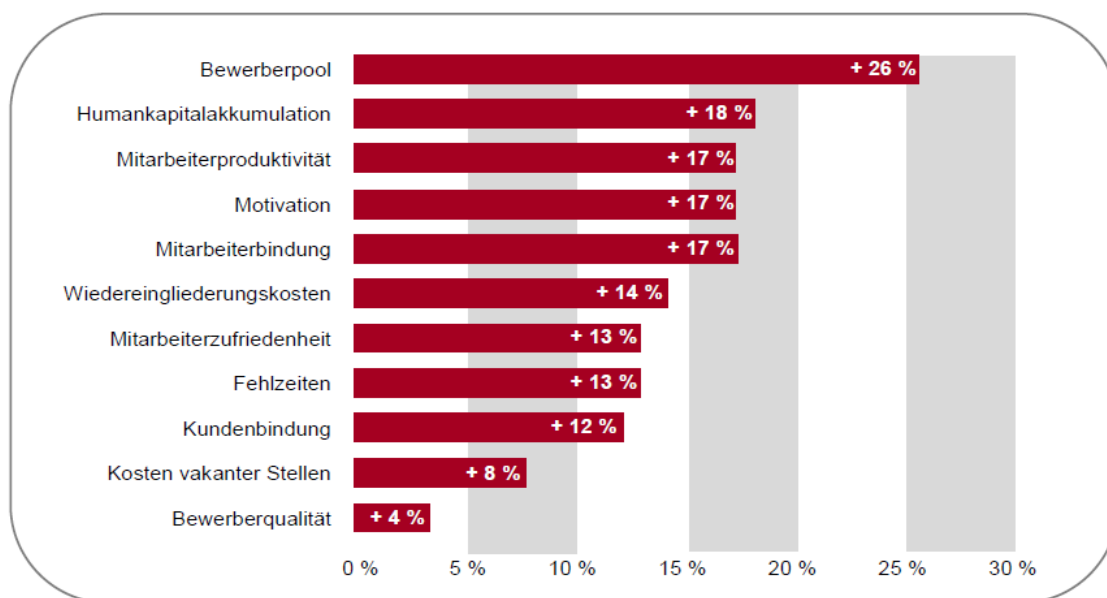


Figure 3: Economical Effects of a family-friendly Personnel Policy, Source: http://www.beruf-und-familie.de/system/cms/data/dl_data/7a9ba6c5421b083be7c6ca513f206d1c/Factsheet_BWL_Effekte_081105.pdf, p.5 (Forschungszentrum Familienbewusste Personalpolitik, 2008)

As Figure 3 demonstrates their investigation more precisely indicates which kind of effects an enterprise can expect from investments into a family-friendly staff policy. The investigation was evaluated by conducting a survey among German companies. With its effect on the company-image the implementation of family-friendly measures helped to increase the number of applications in the enterprises by 26 percent.

The productivity of employees according to the study has grown by 17 percent. The Forschungszentrum Familienbewusste Personalpolitik (2008) even found out that in family friendly companies the average rate of absenteeism is by 16 percent less than in not family friendly enterprises.¹²⁶

Moreover the study shows that there is a direct relation of the implementation of family-friendliness in companies and the positive development of several factors

¹²⁵ Bourhis, Mekkaoui, 2010, p.111

¹²⁶ Forschungszentrum Familienbewusste Personalpolitik , 2008, p.5

that are important for the success of a company. Family-friendly companies *“achieve a stronger identification and value up their image... reduce their costs... increase flexibility... and grow in productivity...”*¹²⁷

Therefore the Agentur für Arbeit (2010) values family-friendliness as a big chance for companies to prevail in the challenge of skills shortage as discussed previously.

The company examined in this study already is affected by the challenge of skills shortage and therefore it can be expected that the company at least partly has implemented the topic into its strategy. Flexible working time that belongs to the most attractive benefits for potential applicants according to Bourhis, Mekkaoui (2010)¹²⁸ has been installed at the sample company about ten years ago. The initiative came from the HR manager himself back then and he realizes an increase in employee satisfaction since the introduction. It turns out during the conversation that there is also the possibility of telework, but only for a limited group of employees, due to the concern that employees should have a certain distance to work in their leisure time. Predominantly employees in leadership positions are using telework. Furthermore the company provides individual solutions for problematic cases. However the majority of the employees that have been interviewed weren't able to name any family-friendly offer.

As the HR manager reports in the interview it has been communicated to female employees that every model to balance job and family can be discussed with the management. The topic has obviously not been communicated sufficiently to the male employees so far as the manager admits that there is not yet the openness in the company that would be needed to talk about the subject of family-friendliness with the fathers.

The researcher started the interview with the expert requesting to name all family-friendly offers that the company is implementing at the moment. After listing flexible working time and the opportunity for parental leave, the expert ceases. This ceasing is very obtrusive and therefore is mentioned even if non-verbal signs were not meant to be taken into account in this investigation. It gives the impression that family-friendliness is treated very much as an inferior topic in the company. In the further course of the conversation this perception is being approved. The HR manager admits that the enterprise does not really have an idea of what kind of benefits could be needed by the fathers working in the company and that the topic of Work–Family–Balance in the region still is seen as a woman's issue and therefore hasn't been taken into account by the company so far.

¹²⁷ Translated from Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2011, p.10

¹²⁸ Cp. Bourhis, Mekkaoui (2010), p.98

Parental leave, which has also been mentioned by the expert, is the second most important benefit for the respondents in the study of Bourhis, Mekkaoui (2010).¹²⁹ But in Germany it is a statutory claim anyway and therefore can't be construed as being part of the company's family-friendly benefits.¹³⁰ According to the HR manager employees always have the opportunity to discuss their special needs for balancing job and family with the HR department that is open to find individual solutions. He doesn't think that a package of measurements provided to the whole staff would be an appropriate solution for the company though. The interview shows that on the one hand the company realizes that the fathers are increasingly interested in active fatherhood as they more and more apply for parental leave. The expert is aware that it is going to be one management challenge in the future to find solutions that make longer periods of absence possible. But on the other hand the company is unconscious about its employees' further demands to balance work and family and seems to not have a consistent position towards family-friendliness or at least doesn't label its benefits as being family-friendly. The expert states that the HR department indeed is very open towards this topic and he is aware that the demands of fathers have changed as he is a father himself but the enterprise doesn't seem to have started yet to think about a change towards a family-friendly policy. It was the expert who initiated the change in working time ten years ago. Now it is up to the company to take the next step, probably on the initiative of the HR manager again.

Discussion of Assumption 2

"Many fathers working at the company belong to the new generation of active fathers but they feel like not being sufficiently supported in their demand for reconciling work and family."

The respondents of the interviews all indicate that they undertake tasks in childcare and education and being single or main-earner in the family at the same time. But only a few of them have applied for parental leave. One reason for that is that the men can be classified as different father figures. Figure 4 shows different father roles structured in Sinus Milieus by von Briesinski, Walter (2011). They regard the father roles in relation to social situation and orientation. As von Briesinski, Walter (2011) state the orientation of traditional values that embraces the group of traditionally rooted fathers, the conservative fathers and the DDR-nostalgics now are in an age in which they don't have to consider engaging in education anymore. So the orientation groups of modernization and reorientation are in focus.¹³¹ The employees can be allocated to and in-between the following

¹²⁹ Cp. Bourhis, Mekkaoui (2010), p.111

¹³⁰ Cp. Rambach, 2010, p.73

¹³¹ Cp. Merkle, 2011, p.12

three of the categories: Consumption materialists, bourgeois middle and post-materialists. Most of the fathers working at the company are probably located in the bourgeois middle and the consumption materialists, depending on their position in the company.

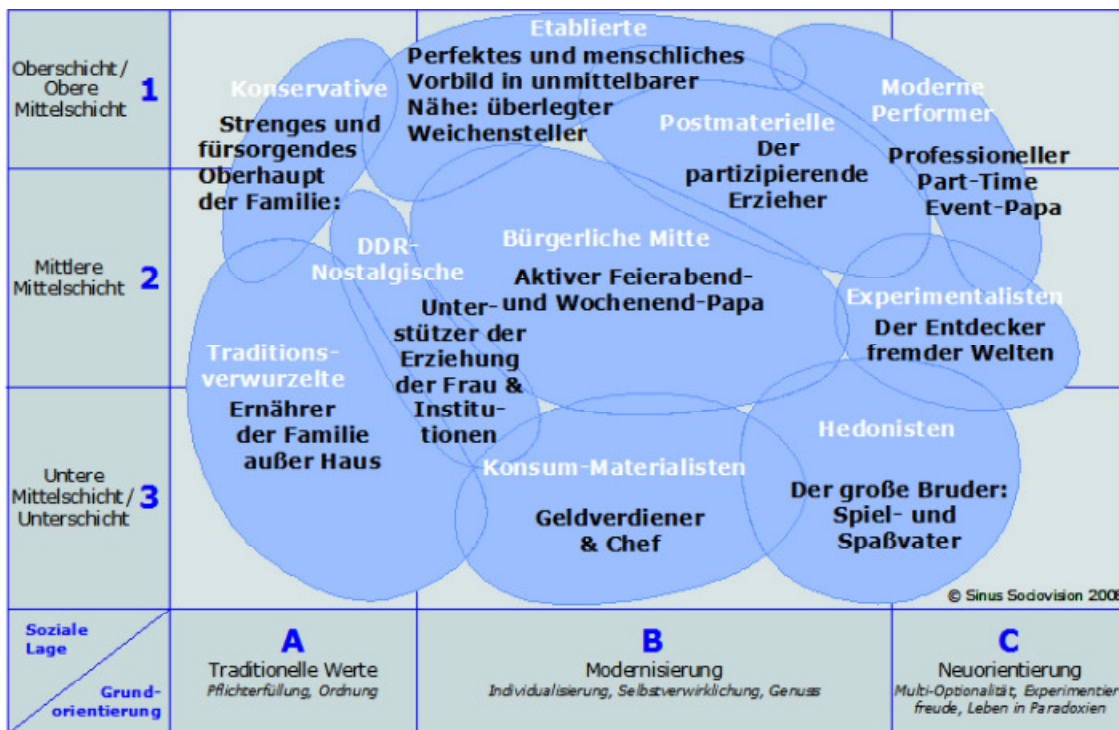


Figure 4: Role Models of the “good Father” in Sinus Milieus, Source: <http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Broschuerenstelle/Pdf-Anlagen/vaterschaft-und-elternzeit-endbericht,property=pdf,bereich=bmfsfj,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf>, Wertorientierungen zu Vaterschaft in verschiedenen Milieus, in Fegert JM, Liebhardt H et al., Expertise „Elternzeit und Vaterschaft“, Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, p. 12, (Merkle, Tanja, 2011)

Two of the three types of fathers that were mentioned to be important for this investigation are considered as “active fathers”: The bourgeois middleclass father and the post-materialist father. The bourgeois middle-father typically interacts with his children after work and on the weekends. While the mother generally is the one who is managing every-day life with the kids the father predominantly is spending his leisure time with them on the weekends by doing sports for example. The consumption materialist is characterized by a hierarchical understanding of male and female roles.

In a more traditional way, these fathers are the breadwinners and tend to present themselves as family patriarchs. In contrast the post-materialists stand for an equal role understanding. They want to educate their children with the conscience that the time for classical role division is over. They are the ones who most of all

three types experience the balancing act to reconcile job and family as a challenge.¹³²

There are different factors that the individual father figure is based on which are for example lifestyle, value-systems and social background. Additionally the role of the fathers depends on expectation and perspectives for the future¹³³ and the so-called “cultural capital”.¹³⁴ Parental leave and benefit-regulations therefore are being accepted very differently among a heterogeneous group of fathers.¹³⁵ The respondents generally regard the employer as helpful and understanding in emergency situations. But the employees identify several lacks concerning the company’s father-friendliness. Some shift workers complain that it is not easy for them to get a day off with short notice. A part of the respondents also would welcome to get more information and would appreciate to attend a family day at the company. A corporate childcare institution and the need for holiday-care opportunities are seen controversial among the fathers.

In summary assumption 3 predominantly can be evaluated to apply for the company. The researcher interprets the interviews the way that most of the respondents belong to the group of active fathers. For those who work in the production neither the flexible working time system nor telework can be applied and to the rest of the staff these benefits are obviously not being sufficiently communicated as family-friendly measures. The men also address their financial needs having worsened by a recent cut in wages. One employee states he would value the implementation of father-friendly benefits as a sign of personal appreciation by the management.

Discussion of Assumption 3

“Especially the financial aspect hinders fathers from taking parental leave or demanding more time for their children.”

It has turned out that the financial aspect de facto is one key issue for the fathers working at the company. Some report that they have to earn additional money in a side job and many see the cut in salaries as a huge problem for financing their families. Therefore the fathers are observing the decrease in wages and especially the dismissals very worried as on the other hand they have to face increasing costs. They specify their concerns regarding particularly high prices for childcare institutions and growing costs for fuel. It is also reported in the interviews that people working in the company had the reputation to be fairly well earning and to

¹³² Cp. Merkle, 2011, p.12

¹³³ Cp. Merkle, 2011, p.13

¹³⁴ Merkle, 2011, p.13

¹³⁵ Cp. Merkle, 2011, p.13

not have to worry about money or their job in the past but this picture has changed. Some respondents very openly admit that the financial aspect has a direct influence on their decision for or against parental leave. In summary money is the most dominant aspect that the men mentioned in this context. But at this point the researcher has to take into account that financial problems are a critical aspect concerning validity of the respondents' replies. Kropp (2001) bears in mind that respondents do not always give impartial answers on interview questions. Especially if the interview or survey is about the employer, respondents sometimes have in mind what the management possibly wants to hear or what kind of statements might cause discussions or a change in the company-atmosphere afterwards. Answers on topics relating to money or salary often serve to detour conflicts that originally have another cause. Criticism of leadership style, working conditions or disputes with colleagues sometimes tends not to be addressed directly. The complaint rather is being expressed by referring to an insufficient payment as this very easily can be communicated and is likely to be accepted by the interviewer without going deeper into the subject.¹³⁶ This may be true for some of the interviews in this investigation as well but there are additional indicators that support the theory of money impeding men from the decision for parental leave. Some employees reported that childcare and parental leave were up to their wives as the men concentrated on the role of the breadwinner. The reasons for this traditional role division can be very various. On the one hand it is possible that the parents just have a very conservative perspective and keep the values that they have been socialized with. On the other hand the cause can be the problem of Gender Pay Gap which means women are earning less and therefore the role division after the birth of the child is unquestionable.

Gründe für Nichtbeantragung von EG durch den Vater	
Reduktion der Arbeitszeit nicht möglich	68
darin: wegen beruflichen/betrieblichen Gründen	35
darin: wegen finanziellen Gründe	48
Besser soll sich Partnerin ganz um das Kind kümmern	20
Kein Anspruch wegen Aufenthaltsstatus	1
Sonstige Gründe	6
Keine Gründe genannt	14

Anmerkungen: Mehrfachnennungen möglich. Angaben in Prozent.

Quelle: Befragung Junge Familie (I)

Figure 5: Evaluation of Change in Law for Parenting Benefit, Source: <http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Abteilung2/Pdf-Anlagen/beeg-evaluation-endbericht.property=pdf,bereich=bmfsfj,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf>, Evaluation des Gesetzes zum Elterngeld und zur Elternzeit, p. 12 (Rheinisch-Westfälisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, Endbericht 2008)

¹³⁶ Cp. Kropp, 2001, p.529

As mentioned, a study of the Hans-Böckler Stiftung (2012) initially was the basis on which the assumption has been formulated. The study gives the following reasons for the short duration of fathers' parental leave: 68 percent of the respondents who did not take parental leave answered that they didn't have any opportunity to reduce working time and almost 50 percent replied that they financially didn't see any chance to take more time off. Following active fathers can only take a longer period of parental leave if they have the monetary opportunity to do so and if they have a supporting employer.¹³⁷

Figure 5 shows the results of another study of the Rheinisch-Westfälisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung that aimed to evaluate the new German Elterngeld-/Elternzeitgesetz¹³⁸. It comes to a very similar result as the examination of the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung.¹³⁹ Both studies substantiate the clear statements of the fathers. But the financial aspect is not a problem that is manageable by the company. The main influence factor for this development is the traditional German role model of the father as breadwinner which for a long time was and to a certain extent still is the basis for family policy in the country.¹⁴⁰ Kühn (2005) has conducted a study for the Prognos AG that compares German and Swedish family policy. It has to be taken into account that this investigation has been examined before the introduction of the new Elterngeld-, Elternzeit-regulation but part of the core message still seems contemporary as childcare and places in childcare institutions are currently widely-discussed topics. The study indicates that the Swedish model succeeds in giving assistances that not directly concerns the financial situation of the families. A flexible labor market, a facilitated return into the old job and an uncomplicated access to childcare institutions help to decrease the opportunity costs for the parents whereas Germany concentrates predominantly on direct financial incentives like e.g. an increase in child benefit.¹⁴¹ In Sweden women's role and the attitude towards families have changed. The current legal model has already been implemented 30 years ago but still causes discussions whereas Sweden is quite a liberal country compared to Germany. Hence Kühn (2005) doubts that a change of the regulation can lead to a quick conversion in German policy.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Cp. Böckler Impuls, 2012

¹³⁸ Own translation: Parenting benefit and parental leave law

¹³⁹ Cp. Tamm, Kluge, 2008, p.12

¹⁴⁰ Cp. Kühn, Palmke, 2005, p.2

¹⁴¹ Cp. Kühn, Palmke, 2005, p.4

¹⁴² Cp. Kühn, Palmke, 2005, p.6

Information and Communication

“Communication is the complex and continuous process through which organizational members create, maintain, and change the organization.”¹⁴³

Pfister (2009) chose this quotation from Keyton (2005) as an explanation of communication being the creational procedure for organizational culture.¹⁴⁴ He refers this citation to the system theories of Luhman (1984)¹⁴⁵ and Willke (2001).¹⁴⁶ According to them social systems are based on communications as their core elements.

One example for a system is organizational culture within a company which is created of communications.¹⁴⁷ According to Pfister (2009) the constituting elements of organizational culture can only be communications and not the employees themselves because if they leave the company their professional communications still remain as a part of the system.¹⁴⁸ This theoretical background referring to company culture as a system corresponds with Figure 2 which was created to demonstrate the contextual relation of categories discovered for the evaluation of the qualitative interviews in this research. It turned out during the investigation that the core element of communication which is essential for the organizational culture may be disturbed to a certain extend at least concerning the topic of work-family balancing (demonstrated in Figure 6). Due to a lack of sufficient communication on the topic a company culture with regard to father-friendliness can't be established. This lack probably is caused by the employees' inhibition and cautiousness to talk about their needs and demands due to the recent layoff wave and cut in wages. On the other hand the management likely didn't see the necessity to pick out family-friendliness as a central topic. Family has so far been assessed as a women's issue and therefore has been valued as not being relevant for the male-dominated company. The benefits like flexible working time and telework obviously are not clearly communicated as family-friendly measures.

¹⁴³ Keyton, 2005, p.3

¹⁴⁴ Cp. Pfister, 2009, p.129

¹⁴⁵ Cp. Luhmann 1984

¹⁴⁶ Cp. Willke, 2001

¹⁴⁷ Cp. Pfister, 2009, p.129

¹⁴⁸ Cp. Pfister, 2009, p.130

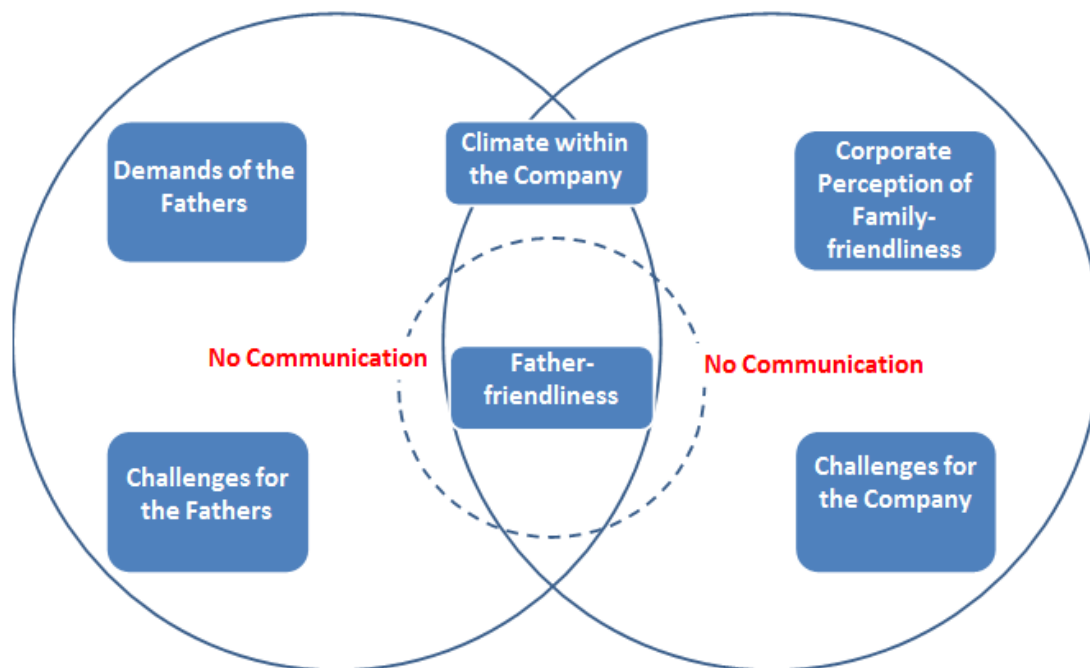


Figure 6: Lack of Communication prohibits the Creation of Father-friendliness as Organizational Culture, Source: Own Creation, in accordance with: *Moralisches Handeln von Unternehmen: Eine Weiterentwicklung des neuen St. Galler Management Modells und der ökonomischen Ethik*, dissertation Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen., Wiesbaden, GWV Fachverlage GmbH, p. 51 (Schwelger, Regina, 2008)

Also the individual support for families in difficult situations as described by the expert has to be mentioned. He ceases to talk about these cases to other employees but in a father-friendly organizational culture this point can be communicated as one further option without having to give details on the existing cases. Regarding communication within the company the problem of skills shortage and the change in role of fathers require a rethinking. Becker (2009) gives several hints that help companies to keep family-friendly measures in crisis situations. These hints can give some evidence on how the company might be able to implement father-friendly benefits without huge monetary effort. One of the most appropriate hints considering the situation of the company especially in the context of communication is the recommendation to openly discuss the topic of reconciling job and family and to be willing to find solutions to possible problems and tensions.¹⁴⁹ Generally it can be concluded that open communication between staff and management concerning the research topic has only been taken place in single problem cases. This applies as well for the measures that have already been implemented. Baisch, Garde (2012) observe that communication is one of the most challenging aspects of father-friendliness. In this context companies also have to take into account that fathers in leadership positions who are utilizing benefits for living their active fatherhood can serve as role models for other

¹⁴⁹ Cp. Beruf und Familie, no date

employees. Leaders or managers therefore can demonstrate that fathers within the company are supported, don't have disadvantages and on the contrary can even profit from experiences like parental leave. According to Baisch, Garde (2012) the key to success is that the enterprise does not just label itself as being family-friendly. It has to communicate and honestly live it.¹⁵⁰ There are many different and uncomplicated ways of how the corporate management can internally communicate father-friendly implementations. The Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2009) proposes various methods like sending an info flyer as a supplement of the salary statement, workshops, family activities or information on the intranet, just to name some examples.¹⁵¹

*"The process of bringing about organizational change involves a number of stages including: clarification of terms, objectives and responsibilities, innovation and implementation, overcoming inevitable resistance to change, and evaluation."*¹⁵²

Furthermore Becker (2009) adds that work-family-balance should even be more in focus in situations when there is no other way to overcome a crisis but by dismissing employees. The employees remain in the company are then likely to have a higher workload. Family-friendly measures demonstrate the company's appreciation for its employees and strengthen their motivation.¹⁵³ But in this context also the external communication should not be neglected. Kaiser et al. (2011) see a big chance for companies who externally communicate their family-friendliness via audits or other programs.¹⁵⁴ This should be considered by the companies especially with regard to applicants' employer choice who increasingly emphasize on the family-friendliness of organizations.¹⁵⁵ Figure 7 demonstrates that the success of the balance between private and professional life is dependent on how well the gear wheels of the individual (employee-focused) and the organizational (employer-focused) levels are working together.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Cp. Baisch, Garde, 2012, p.74f

¹⁵¹ Cp. Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2009

¹⁵² Lewis, Lewis, 2003, p.3

¹⁵³ Cp. Beruf und Familie, no date

¹⁵⁴ Cp. Kaiser, Riglsetter, Eikhof, Pina e Cunha, 2011, p.15

¹⁵⁵ Cp. Kaiser, Riglsetter, Eikhof, Pina e Cunha, 2011, p.17

¹⁵⁶ Cp. Kaiser, Riglsetter, Eikhof, Pina e Cunha, 2011, p.17f

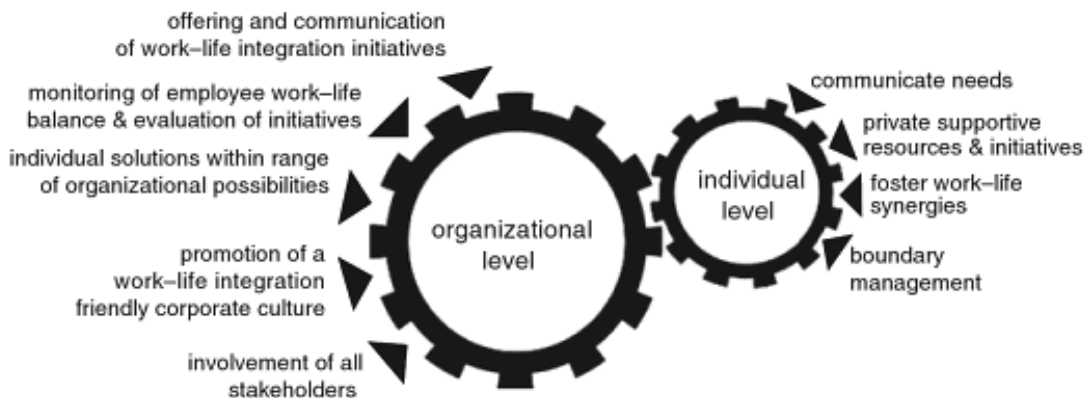


Figure 7: Leveraging Work-Life Integration on behalf of the Organizational and the Individual Level, Source: *Creating Balance?: International Perspectives on the Work-Life Integration*, Heidelberg, Springer Verlag, p.18 (Kaiser, Stefan et al., 2011)

Further Steps

When companies start introducing family-friendly measures, most of the time fathers firstly react quite skeptical. Therefore the management should take little steps and should avoid to set the goals and expectations too high. The first step of entering the field of father-friendliness is introducing family-friendly measures like flexible working time and working time accounts. Following the company has already created the first precondition but it appears that it didn't consequently go on working to establish itself as father-friendly organization. As according to Prognos (2005) measures concerning working time are just the starting point for further benefits to come. Generally companies should assume that men are always more reserved towards this topic than female employees. Therefore it is advisable in a male-dominated company to more intensively care for anchoring the topic in the corporate culture. A further recommendation for the company is to establish a parents-network. This service has been introduced by several companies already and helps fathers to find contact persons and talk to men that have already experienced parental leave for example. Furthermore a fathers' or parents' network helps the company to find out about the needs and wishes of the men.¹⁵⁷ Moreover the Alfred Kärcher GmbH & Co. KG for example uses the network also to stay in contact with employees during parental leave.¹⁵⁸ The Datev eG in Nürnberg also is keeping the contact to mothers and fathers during their absence. The IT-company offers a wide range of family-friendly measures for parents like for example an extra time for the family up to six months additionally to the statutory parental leave regulation. Datev has repeatedly been awarded for its work-family balancing offerings.¹⁵⁹ Besides a parents network the management

¹⁵⁷ Cp. Prognos AG, work& life, Forschung & Beratung, 2005, p.9ff

¹⁵⁸ Cp. Familienforschung Baden-Württemberg, no date

¹⁵⁹ Datev, no date

could think of introducing something similar to Datev's father-letter. In this letter the company congratulates the new fathers to the birth of their children and provides information as well as the offer to talk about work-family-balancing-arrangements following parental leave.¹⁶⁰ Datev's employees furthermore receive incentives like 500 Euros and two days of special leave with the letter. The company experienced very positive reactions with this father-letter. A disadvantage is that the HR department in many cases doesn't know before the birth of the child that a male employee is going to become a father. Therefore Datev eG is planning to extend its communication policy for being able to offer its support earlier and start timely with planning future working options together with the employee.¹⁶¹ An especially challenging aspect for many companies and also for the sample in this research is enabling shift-workers to participate in work-family-balancing programs. The Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2012a) declares that particularly in times of volatile order situations reconciling job and family becomes very challenging. For non-exceptional situations a work-family balance for shift workers can be achieved by enabling the employees to a certain degree more scope to arrange their schedules. Therefore the Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2012a) advises companies to consider further qualifying of employees for appointing them to work in different shift schedules. As far as possible the management should try to reduce night shifts to a minimum and work with temporary workers in cases of sick-leaves or increasing workload instead of calling employees at home and ask them to fill in for their colleagues.¹⁶² Leisure time on consecutive days, free weekends and evenings are important to give the fathers the opportunity to pursue social activities with the family.¹⁶³ Companies can also prove their commitment by supporting privately found parents' initiatives who for example organize childcare themselves. This support can contain financial assistance or the provision of rooms. The investment is also deductible of tax as business expenses of the company. A further example of how employers can support working fathers and their families is to give them the opportunity to take home food from the canteen for their kids. This offer saves time for the parents after work. The company can additionally monetarily subsidize this service.¹⁶⁴ The management of the exemplary company has already started to prepare the ground for becoming father-friendly. Now further steps are to be taken for this topic becoming an integral part of the corporate culture, even without huge financial effort.

¹⁶⁰ Beruf und Familie Bremen, 2009

¹⁶¹ Erfolgsfaktor Familie, no date, p.3

¹⁶² Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2012a

¹⁶³ Meissner, Stockfisch, 2012, p.13

¹⁶⁴ Cp. Braun, 2004, p.73f

Problems and Limitations

This investigation delivers a lot of qualitative data for testing the validity of the assumptions. But nevertheless the conclusions drawn cannot be valued as final results in this case. By interpreting the expert interview the researcher can find out about the attitude of and situation in the company and on the other hand by evaluating the data of the employee-interviews the results show whether they see problems, backlog demands or have distinct opinions concerning the company's father-friendliness. But in this investigation qualitative interviews with six fathers have been examined, which comes to about two percent of the 340 fathers working at the site investigated.¹⁶⁵ Therefore one could argue that there is a representativeness-problem of the results.¹⁶⁶ At this stage the investigation could be a further starting point for integrating quantitative research for example. Flick (2009) explains several research models that combine qualitative and quantitative methods. For the case of the exemplary company the so-called Triangulation approach could be an appropriate technique to gain additional insightful data. This method focusses on a single case in which researcher is interviewing the same sample group several times by using qualitative and quantitative tools. This way the two research approaches can complement each other.¹⁶⁷ One difficulty that appears in this research came up during the stage of data collection via telephone interviews. After the technical equipment consisting of a mobile phone and a dictation machine has been tested, it turned out that in a few interviews there were sound problems due to the interfering signal of the mobile phone. This problem appeared in several records but the responses were all understandable instead of some sentences in one interview of which a little amount of data got lost. Another problem of the investigation could be the validity of the responses. The financial aspect especially is a critical one as respondents are likely to distort associations of money and conflicts. A further topic which should be evaluated critically is the aspect of leisure time. Cascading it down to the interviews this means that probably no respondent would indicate to have enough money and leisure time¹⁶⁸ but the researcher can further examine the answers by asking follow-up questions. In this case it turned out that money really seems to be a serious issue for some of the men due to additional indicators that have been requested. But nevertheless subjective feelings influence qualitative results and Kropp (2001) advices to keep in mind that behind the responses there can lie subjective emotions like defiance for example.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Email HR Department, October 12th 2012

¹⁶⁶ Kropp, 2001, p.529

¹⁶⁷ Cp. Flick, 2009, p.26f

¹⁶⁸ Cp. Kropp, 2001, p.529

¹⁶⁹ Cp. Kropp, 2001, p.530

Conclusion

Corporations are more and more interested in family-friendly working conditions due to the need of excellent reputation in the modern competition of human asset. Some measures therefore do have different objectives, but generally they provide fathers and mothers more flexibility and control for a good reconciling of job and family.

Fathers appreciate a family-friendly corporate culture, because they like to participate in the daily family work and especially in the childcare. Family friendly working time like flexible working time or trust-based working time in combination with home office are important conditions at the companies to reconcile job and family. Role models in the management are essential for young fathers to overcome fears of potential negative consequences on their career.

During the research it turned out that in particular communication is a very important factor the company should focus on. A recommendation for the company is to establish a parents-network that can improve communication with men, experienced with parental leave for example. A fathers' or parents' network in the company can although help to analyse the needs and wishes for better reconciling of job and family.

There might be a change in Germany, that the problem of reconcile job and family influences not only mothers, but fathers too. This should cause a re-thinking about father-friendliness in organizations, because: *“men today, especially young men, are in a transition moment. They no longer want to live as their fathers did..... working long hours day after day, coming home to pat their kids on the head absentmindedly.”* (Rosin, 2012, p. 15)

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