

# Leadership Excellence and Gender in Organizations

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## The RETAIN parental leave transition coaching model: A pilot study putting theory into practice

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The parental leave transition is arguably the most complex work and life transition that employees will face during their career lifecycle; however, traditionally employer support throughout this transition has been scarce. Recent demographic shifts (e.g., increased number of women in the workforce, dual-income families) and evolving cultural gender norms have encouraged organizations to recognize the value of supporting working parents throughout this complex time. In response, a specialized field of executive coaching, termed 'Maternity Coaching' or 'Paternity Coaching' has emerged. The current study addresses the need for an evidence-based framework from which to understand and better support this transition. Specifically, we draw on related research streams (i.e., transition theory, executive coaching, role/identity formation and work-life interface), to develop an integrated model of parental leave coaching (i.e., RETAIN Parental Leave Transition Coaching Model), and present preliminary data from a pilot intervention carried out with 23 senior leaders across a large retail company in Australia. Data were collected from participants and their direct leaders at the onset of the intervention, and again in February 2016, midway through the intervention. Initial findings provide insight into common resources indicated for a successful parental leave transition, as well as preliminary support for the efficacy of the customized coaching model. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed, including next steps for future research and practice.