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Father-Friendly Workplaces: Possibilities and Barriers for Balancing Male Work and Involvement in the Care of Children

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Distributed Paper

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This paper studies workplaces that facilitate their male employees' involvement in caring for their children. We draw on data from three focus groups and six case studies of businesses officially recognized as promoting work-life balance and gender equality in Spain. We analyze the interactional and institutional levels: the interactions between employees, involved fathers, and their supervisors, and the organizational culture and norms of the businesses that ease work-life balance.

Research on this topic shows that more and more men identify themselves as care providers and want to act as involved fathers, but policies, gender ideology and even practices hinder it. We analyze the factors, barriers and opportunities that fathers find at their workplaces when they want to get involved in care. There are also tensions between conditions theoretically thought to promote work-life balance and practices that make it difficult.

We focus on the business-specific and external factors from a retrospective perspective to understand the changes within businesses leading to father-friendly organizational cultures over time. Taking into account the businesses' position on the goods and services markets, we are interested in how some of them used their degrees of freedom to innovate work schedules and the management of human resources by offering flextime, leaves of absence, reduced work hours and telework. We also take advantage of the comparison between occupation, professional categories and hierarchical levels within a business to understand why some work-life measures are not offered to some occupations or are less used by them.

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