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Ethics of Care Leadership Expressions During a High-Strength Event: A Gendered Analysis of Combative Versus Constructive Policy Suggestions During the Israel– Hamas War

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The Israel– Hamas war is a protracted high-strength event, marked by peaks of conflict and sustained tension, that tests how leaders function in a context with competing national interests, moral strain, and wide-reaching human and political consequences. Guided by event system theory and ethics of care leadership (ECL), we track how members of the Israeli Knesset express their leadership during this conflict. We analyze 5.2 million words spoken by 152 legislators across 140 Knesset plenary sessions over 16 months. Using natural language processing, we score and classify 4,143 discursive policy suggestions as constructive (repair oriented) or combative (zero sum). We find that (a) expression of ECL is associated with a higher likelihood of constructive suggestions, (b) women express more ECL than men, and (c) men’s care expression rises during peak-strength months, narrowing—but not eliminating—the gender gap in ECL. These findings position ECL expression as both a stable orientation and a context-responsive discursive behavior, clarifying who is most likely to express ECL and when constructive suggestions are likely to emerge as event strength fluctuates. Results advance event system theory by specifying a morally grounded ECL response in high-strength contexts, and they inform practice by identifying care-led discourse as a lever for constructive policy during volatile times.

Keywords: ethics-of-care leadership, event system theory, gender and leadership, high-strength events, constructive policy suggestions

War is an extremely high-strength event, imposing considerable demands on nations and their leaders (Kissinger, 1994). Leadership research, however, has typically relied on simulations or static designs carried out in comparatively stable and low-stakes settings (Riggio & Newstead, 2023; Wu et al., 2021). Although prior work has advanced theory, it leaves open the question of how leadership adapts during peaks and lulls of a protracted social crisis (Howard-Grenville, 2020; Liu et al., 2023). Riggio and Newstead (2023, p. 202) noted that “there is likely no situation where leadership is more important than during a time of crisis.” Drawing on 16 months of legislative discourse in the Israeli Knesset during the Israel– Hamas

war, we examine whether expressions of ethics of care leadership (ECL)—a care-based approach that balances traditional duties with concern for those affected by decisions (K. Stajkovic & Stajkovic, 2024)—relate to policy suggestions legislators make, who express ECL, and if this shifts as event strength fluctuates.

According to event system theory (EST; Morgeson et al., 2015), event strength reflects an additive combination of novelty (unexpectedness), disruption (upheaval), and criticality (ripple effects). High-strength events destabilize routines, magnify consequences, and demand moral discernment, posing extraordinary challenges for leaders (Liu et al., 2023). Most leadership theories, however, were

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Alexander D. Stajkovic played a lead role in conceptualization, investigation, resources, supervision, and writing—review and editing, a supporting role in methodology, validation, and visualization, and an equal role in writing—original draft. Kayla S. Stajkovic played a lead role in data curation, formal analysis, methodology, software, and visualization, a supporting role in conceptualization and writing—review and editing, and an equal role in investigation and writing—original draft. Jenny M. Hoobler played a supporting role in conceptualization, methodology, writing—original draft, and writing—review and editing. Frederick P. Morgeson played a supporting role in conceptualization, methodology, and writing—review and editing.

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developed in routine settings (Dinh et al., 2014; Lord et al., 2017). As such, they can fall short when situational demands escalate beyond daily managerial activities to encompass existential consequences and moral dilemmas, particularly when decisions carry social weight and visibility (Grant, 2007; Howard-Grenville et al., 2019).

Research in applied psychology has begun to examine care-based leadership during social crises (Sergeant & Stajkovic, 2020; K. Stajkovic & Stajkovic, 2024), suggesting that leaders who express care may be more effective than those who do not. However, this work has treated crises as static, one-time disruptions. By contrast, high-strength events like wars unfold in waves, often with fluctuating intensities over time (Campbell et al., 2010; Kissinger, 1994). As event strength ebbs and flows (Morgeson et al., 2025), so too might the expressions of care-based leadership. Accordingly, we integrate EST with ECL (Ciulla, 2009; Noddings, 2015; K. Stajkovic & Stajkovic, 2024) to test whether leaders who express ECL are more likely to offer constructive (repair, inclusion oriented) rather than combative (zero-sum, punitive) policy suggestions and examine how these relationships vary by gender and fluctuations in event strength.¹

The context for this study is the Israel–Hamas war.² This conflict lays bare large-scale dilemmas as “the world cries out for repair” (Walsh et al., 2003, p. 268), yet meaningful repair in wartime is fraught with paradoxes (Kriesberg, 2015). One central dilemma is the need for leaders to balance strategic national interests (Yammarino et al., 2010) with a moral imperative to minimize human suffering (Kingsley & Wong, 2024). This balancing act is more difficult amid emotions and social polarization stirred by war (Alpaslan & Mitroff, 2021; Bauman, 2011).

We assembled a data set of legislative discourse in the Israeli Knesset from October 2023 to January 2025. It comprises ~5.2 million words spoken by 152 members across 140 plenary sessions. In leadership research, language is a key mechanism of influence, whether to signal intent, convey vision, or provide feedback (Charteris-Black, 2006; Clifton et al., 2019; Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014; Montefiore, 2021; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Carton (2022, p. 70) argued that “language is the most direct and pragmatic way to establish a common purpose,” echoing classical treatments of rhetoric as a powerful tool for influencing action (e.g., Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, Cicero’s *De Oratore*, Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, Socratic method). Anthropologists likewise view language as a primary tool of human influence (Harari, 2014).

We examine ECL as expressed through communicative, institutional discourse. In parliaments, like Knesset, leadership authority is diffuse and exercised through verbal discourse rather than direct command (Bäck et al., 2014; Döring, 1995; Finlayson, 2014). In such settings, discursive expression is a key mechanism through which leaders operate. Political science research shows that parliamentary rhetoric reveals priorities, guides debate, and sways institutional trajectories (Clifford et al., 2015; Proksch & Slapin, 2012; Saalfeld, 2014). Applied psychology similarly reveals that in dispersed authority contexts—where leaders cannot unilaterally direct developments—verbal expressions map onto behavior (Bligh et al., 2004a, 2004b; Carton et al., 2014; Choi & Schnurr, 2014). van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) further argued that measuring specific verbal acts versus broad behaviors reduces confounding of leadership conduct with outcomes. In this tradition, we conceptualize ECL in our context as a discursive expression of care-based morals, made visible via leaders’ rhetoric.

We analyze Knesset members’ words spoken to examine how the expression of ECL relates to policy suggestions, which leaders are more likely to express ECL, and how these relationships fluctuate over peak and sustained event-strength periods. Using both rule-based and machine learning (ML) methods, we identify 4,143 discrete policy suggestions and classify each as constructive (repair oriented) or combative (escalation bound). Guided by EST, we code each month of the conflict as peak or sustained high-strength and estimate mixed-effects models to test how gender, ECL, and event strength relate to policy suggestions over 16 months of the war.

The contribution of this research is threefold. First, by focusing on a high-strength event marked by cascading humanitarian concerns and intermittent surges of violence (Al-Mughrabi & Farge, 2025; Swords of Iron: Real Time Tracker, 2025), we address a context deficit in leadership research (Johns, 2024, p. 1). Second, by tracking an unfolding event over 16 months, we move beyond static crisis models to capture how ECL expression unfolds dynamically while accounting for gender differences and event-strength volatility. Third, we answer calls to engage leadership research with social, grand challenge issues (George et al., 2016; Grant, 2007; Howard-Grenville, 2021; Howard-Grenville et al., 2019; Walsh et al., 2003).

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

The Israel–Hamas War as a High-Strength Event and Its Leadership Implications

High-strength events differ from routine settings (Morgeson, 2005; Morgeson et al., 2015), presenting leaders with out-of-the-ordinary challenges and moral tradeoffs (Morgeson & DeRue, 2006; Morgeson et al., 2025). Wars are an extreme version of these events as they end lives, disrupt societies, and reshape global dynamics (Kissinger, 1994). The Israel–Hamas war was sparked by Hamas’s October 7, 2023, attack on Israeli civilians, killing 1,200 people and taking 240 hostages (Institute for National Security Studies, 2024). As of December 2025, Palestinian authorities report ~72,000 deaths from subsequent Israeli military operations in Gaza (Al-Mughrabi & Farge, 2025; PBS News, 2025).

We characterize the Israel–Hamas war using EST’s core dimensions: novelty, disruption, and criticality, which jointly define event strength (Morgeson et al., 2015, 2025). This conflict is novel because it is the most intense escalation between Israel and Hamas to date (Estrin, 2025). It is disruptive, generating large humanitarian crisis and infrastructure destruction (Alfonseca et al., 2024), and is critical for millions of lives, regional stability, and international alignments (e.g., divergent recognitions of Palestinian statehood among traditional allies; Berman, 2025). The war has produced mass casualties, displacement, and property damage (Swords of Iron: Real Time Tracker, 2025). It has become a focal point for debates on human rights, sovereignty, humanitarian aid (Livermore, 2024; Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025), and

¹ Throughout the article, we use the term “suggestions” to reflect policy intent. We observed similar terms (“I suggest . . .,” “I propose . . .,” “I would like to respond . . .”) in transcripts of leader communications. Our intent in using one term—suggestions—is to reduce ambiguity and not to oversimplify the variation in how policy intent is expressed.

² We use terms “crisis” and “war” interchangeably, but they are not identical. All wars are a crisis, but not all crises are armed conflict. This war is an encapsulating context for testing leadership dynamics as defined by EST.

volatile interactions of state and nonstate actors (Benn, 2024; Bouri & Roy, 2024; Wright, 2023). Thus, we conceptualize the Israel–Hamas war as a high-strength event, and we use it as the contextual frame for examining ECL.³

High-strength events can vary by reach, duration, temporal evolution, and level of origin (Morgeson & DeRue, 2006; Morgeson et al., 2015). Because the Israel–Hamas war is marked by changes in intensity over time, we assembled longitudinal data to examine event-strength fluctuations, enabling a dynamic view of leadership consistent with EST’s emphasis on shifting event strength (Kiefer et al., 2025). We focus on peak versus sustained high-strength periods within the conflict event. Peaks heighten novelty, disruption, and criticality and alter crisis trajectories, whereas sustained periods maintain intensity without marked shifts (Liu et al., 2023; Morgeson & DeRue, 2006; Morgeson et al., 2015). Examining variation in event strength extends research that has treated crisis strength as uniform (e.g., K. Stajkovic & Stajkovic, 2024).

Ethics of Care Philosophy as a Foundation of ECL

“No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.”

—Theodore Roosevelt, 26th president of the United States

ECL draws from ethics of care philosophy, traced to Gilligan’s (1982) work on moral development (critiquing and building on Kohlberg, 1981).⁴ Gilligan (1993) defined care as “a moral perspective that can organize both thinking and feelings and empower the self to take different kinds of action in public as well as private life” (p. 209). The ethics of care framework has informed research on human rights (Held, 2015a, 2015b), social safety nets (Engster, 2015), migration (Abu-Laban, 2012; Sevenhuijsen, 1998), peacekeeping (Tronto, 2007), urban planning (Barrett et al., 2016), and building caring economies (Eisler, 2007; Mahon & Robinson, 2011; Tronto, 2013). It has also been used as a conceptual basis for rethinking international relations (Gouws & Van Zyl, 2015), fighting global poverty (Held, 2018), and addressing human rights (Held, 2011). Likewise, ethics of care has been applied to sustainably governing common resources such as water and energy (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019). This literature treats care as a moral virtue with the potential to transform individuals and societies (Barnes, 2012; Glenn, 2000).

ECL has two key components. First, it denotes public expression of care-based moral orientation. That is, leaders might privately value care as a philosophy yet feel constrained by their roles or expectations to voice it (Noddings, 2015). Thus, ECL is expressed by those who publicly articulate a care-based value and integrate it with traditional leadership duties (K. Stajkovic & Stajkovic, 2024). Ciulla (2009) crystallized the link between leadership and care, arguing that “the job of the leader includes caring for others” (p. 3). Echoing classic sources (Seneca’s, 1953, emphasis on leaders’ “capacity to care,” p. 2), she argued that technical skill is teachable, but care must be felt. This integration aligns with Noddings’ (2015) call for building caring organizations wherein business imperatives are infused with care.

For example, recent applied psychology research revealed an association between ECL and urban revitalization outcomes. ECL was operationalized through a composite measure of racial inclusion in cities, with a logic that mayors who express ECL would prioritize inclusion in ways that manifest city-level indicators. Mayors scoring

higher on ECL presided over cities with stronger subsequent economic outcomes (K. Stajkovic & Stajkovic, 2024). These leaders did not abandon core responsibilities; instead, they coupled budgeting and infrastructure with elevating marginalized voices, linking social inclusion to economic growth. Hence, ECL does not supplant conventional leadership—it integrates leadership with care as a moral value.

Second, ethics of care becomes ECL through lived discourse. Manifestations of it range from expressions of “different voices” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 1; Held, 2006; E. E. A. Skoe, 2014; E. E. Skoe et al., 1996) to “the practice of attentiveness toward others, responsiveness to their needs, and cultivating caring relationships” (K. Stajkovic & Stajkovic, 2024, p. 700). In organizations, ethics of care has often been viewed as “dialogical in nature” and defined as the “ways in which organizational members communicate with, listen to, and tell stories” (Lawrence & Maitlis, 2012, p. 646). The relative salience of channels through which ECL manifests varies by context. In legislatures—where leaders do not directly implement policy—verbal persuasion constitutes a primary mode of leadership through which influence is publicly exerted. Thus, verbal expressions represent a theory-guided and contextually grounded indicator of institutional reality of parliamentary leadership, that is, of how ECL is expressed in this particular context.

Expressions of ECL as a Predictor of Constructive Policy Suggestions

We argue that greater expression of ECL is associated with constructive (vs. combative) policy suggestions. Public policy research (Howlett, 2018, 2023) defines constructive policy as emphasizing cooperation, inclusion, and long-term problem solving, whereas combative suggestions rely on exclusion, blame, and escalation (Feldman et al., 2006; Ingram et al., 2007; Mayer, 2004, 2012). Expanding (constructive) policy alternatives broadens the solution space and enriches deliberative quality (Bouri & Roy, 2024; Kissinger, 1994), which are also key arguments for the value of gender-diverse leadership (Eagly & Heilman, 2016). Although polarization is acute during war, ECL leaders remain attuned to the social costs of adversarial policymaking (Baron, 2001; Tronto, 2013). Though a combative policy might extract short-term compliance, it deepens conflict (Atkinson, 2017; Coleman, 2012). ECL orients leaders toward suggestions that align with the moral value of caring for others and attempt to reduce suffering.

Hypothesis 1: Higher expression of ECL is associated with a greater likelihood of making constructive (vs. combative) policy suggestions.

³ Consistent with EST, we conceptualize event strength as the aggregate impact of an event, which reflects the confluence of three core characteristics: novelty, disruption, and criticality (Morgeson et al., 2015).

⁴ While working with Lawrence Kohlberg on the taxonomy of moral stages (Kohlberg, 1981), Gilligan observed that his research was based on all-male samples. Consequently, when women’s moral reasoning was different, it was labeled as underdeveloped (Blum, 1988). Gilligan (1982) challenged this and called for listening to women’s voices about their moral values; when they did, care for others emerged as a central moral value (Gilligan, 1993).

Expressions of ECL as a Mediator of Gender Effects on Constructive Policy Suggestions

A long interdisciplinary tradition indicates that women, on average, express higher levels of care for others than men (Barnes, 2012; Hanen & Nielsen, 1987; Held, 2006, 2015a; Kittay & Meyers, 1987; Larrabee, 1993; Pettersen, 2008; E. E. Skoe et al., 1996; Vosman et al., 2020). Scholars largely agree on a definition of care as “an activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible” (Tronto, 2013, p. 19).

Whether care is a moral value or a biological necessity, however, has been debated (Baier, 1994; MacIntyre, 1999; Pincoffs, 1986). Critics, drawing on a Kantian categorical test of moral worth (i.e., an act pursued for its own sake rather than as a means to an end; Kant, 1785/1964), argue that care cannot qualify as a moral virtue because it is necessary for survival rather than freely chosen (cf. Held, 2020). Accordingly, Pincoffs (1986) excluded care from list of virtues, and MacIntyre (1999), despite recognizing dependency on care, dismissed care as a virtue.

By contrast, feminist philosophers contend that though care may be a biological necessity, many women choose to care for others as a moral commitment (Blum, 1988; Brabeck, 1983; S. Collins, 2015; Gilligan, 1982, 1993; Glenn, 2012; Held, 2020; Kittay, 1995; Kittay & Meyers, 1987; Noddings, 2015; Walker, 1989). This view coheres with treatments of care in philosophy (Aristotle, 1955; Confucius, 1991; Plato, ca. 375 BCE/2007; Seneca, 1953),⁵ existentialism theories (Kierkegaard, 1958), and moral psychology research (Haidt, 2012). Together, these literatures portray care as a volitional moral value that can be socially transformative, find it more frequently expressed by women than men, and suggest that care warrants inclusion in broader epistemologies of moral theories (Haidt, 2007; Held, 2015a; Pettersen, 2008; Walker, 1989).

Whether a moral commitment to care translates into ECL (Ciulla, 2009) is beginning to be examined in applied psychology (Callahan et al., 2024; K. Stajkovic & Stajkovic, 2024, 2025). In organizations, valuing care does not guarantee its expression in leadership as work norms and power structures can redirect leaders' moral orientations, regardless of personal convictions (Margolis & Molinsky, 2008; Noddings, 2015; Peus, 2011). In high-strength events, however, salience of harm and human cost increases, decision visibility is amplified, and routine scripts fail (Liu et al., 2023; Morgeson et al., 2015). These moments may activate deeply held morals like care (Haidt, 2012). Because women, on average, are well-attuned to care (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Gilligan, 1982), they may be especially likely to voice care when suffering is salient. They also face fewer penalties for expressing care than men, who encounter social norms against overt care displays (Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Thus, because a care-based moral orientation does not automatically translate into ECL expression, women leaders may be more likely than men to balance strategic responsibilities with moral concern for others' welfare in high-strength events.

Hypothesis 2: Women leaders express higher levels of ECL than men during a high-strength event.

Expressing ECL is not only about communicating care—we expect it will shape the policy suggestions leaders advance because ECL emphasizes repair and cooperation, which map onto

constructive rather than combative suggestions. In this way, gender differences in ECL may carry downstream implications for policy suggestions. Rather than assuming that women leaders directly generate more constructive suggestions because of their gender, which risks essentializing gender differences in leadership (see Hoobler et al., 2018), we theorize the expression of ECL as a mediating path linking gender to policy suggestions.

Hypothesis 3: Gender relates indirectly to the likelihood of suggesting constructive (vs. combative) policy via expression of ECL (women → higher ECL → more constructive suggestions).

ECL Responsiveness to Variations in Event Strength During a High-Strength Event

EST holds that event strength varies not only between events but also within an event over time (Morgeson et al., 2015, 2025). Increases in novelty, disruption, and criticality create heightened periods that elicit more intensified responses even within an already high-strength event (Liu et al., 2023; A. D. Stajkovic & Stajkovic, 2025). We operationalize this variation as peak-strength periods and expect expressions of ECL to increase during peaks as visible suffering can heighten moral concern (Haidt, 2007; Kiefer et al., 2025). During peak periods leaders encounter conditions that can both heighten the psychological activation of care values and reduce the plausibility of relying on scripts. Thus, peaks amplify situational triggers for ECL expression.

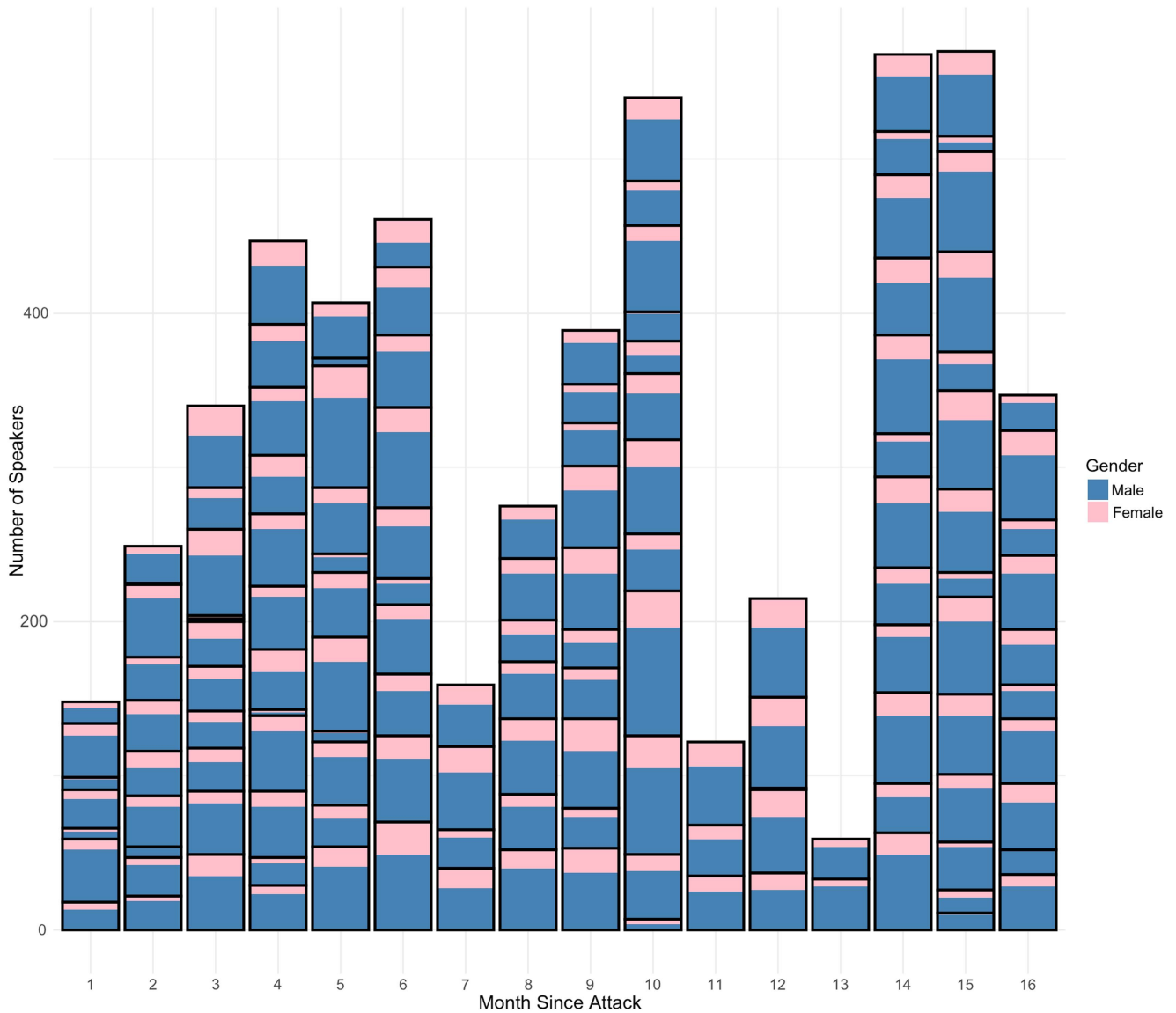
Hypothesis 4: Expressions of ECL increase during peak high-strength event months in comparison to sustained high-strength event months.

Precarious Manhood and Contextual Licensing of ECL Expressions

Cultural norms associate masculinity with agency and emotional restraint (Bakan, 1966; Koenig et al., 2011), discouraging men from behaviors ascribed as feminine (Eagly, 1987; Moss-Racusin, 2014). Precarious manhood theory posits that manhood is socially conferred, requiring ongoing public displays and validation (Vandello & Bosson, 2013; Vandello et al., 2008). This dynamic creates normative pressure for men to conform to masculine ideals, except in conditions that license deviation (Vandello et al., 2008). As explained by Vandello et al. (2008), the “male gendered role is highly responsive to situational cues [as] momentary contextual features can temporarily heighten or quell men's concerns about appearing manly” (p. 10). Peak periods, marked by acute suffering and public scrutiny, may provide such license for men to express care without status penalties. This is because men adopt more stereotypically feminine acts when they are cued as valued or necessary (Berdahl et al., 2018; Stanaland et al., 2023) and pose less threat to masculinity norms. Thus, we expect men's ECL expression to increase more in peak periods.

Hypothesis 5: The increase in expression of ECL from sustained to peak months is greater among men than among women leaders.

⁵ Contemporary years for historic cites represent years of translation/edition.

Figure 1*Monthly Gender Composition of Knesset Plenum Speakers by Session Over Time*

Note. This figure presents the number of males and females who spoke during each plenum session, aggregated by month since the onset of the Israel–Hamas war. Each bar represents a month, with stacked segments corresponding to individual plenum sessions (separated by black lines) that occurred within a given month. Within each session, the ratio of male (blue) to female (pink) speakers is shown, providing a visual breakdown of gender representation in participation. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Moderated Mediation by Event Strength

If men's expression of ECL rises more during peaks, then gender differences in ECL will be more pronounced during sustained periods. Consequently, the indirect link of gender to policy constructiveness should be stronger during sustained periods and attenuated during peak months.

Hypothesis 6: Event strength moderates a mediation of gender on policy constructiveness via expression of ECL: Mediation is present during sustained periods but absent during peak periods.

Method

Data Sources

We assembled Knesset plenum transcripts from October 7, 2023, to January 25, 2025.⁶ They comprised 5,296 speaker observations, from 152 legislators (22% women), across 140 sessions, totaling ~5.2 million words.⁷ Each session had $M = 37.5$ speakers

⁶ <https://www.knesset.gov.il/maintenance-page-geo>.

⁷ We excluded the Knesset chairperson from analysis, as their speech primarily involves procedural tasks of administrative nature (e.g., calling on speakers, overseeing votes) rather than policy rhetoric.

Table 1*Event-Strength Classification by Month (October 2023 to January 2025)*

Month	Event-strength classification	Rationale
October 2023	Peak high strength	Onset of war (October 7 attack), mass civilian casualties, hostage abductions
November 2023	Peak high strength	Ceasefire negotiations, hostage videos, partial releases
December 2023	Peak high strength	Renewed escalation, “bloody new phase of war”
January 2024	Sustained high strength	Continued fighting without new escalation
February 2024	Sustained high strength	Ongoing humanitarian challenges, no novel shifts
March 2024	Sustained high strength	Conflict stabilizes into ongoing operations.
April 2024	Sustained high strength	Sustained conflict with no critical turning points
May 2024	Peak high strength	Iran’s missile/drone attack, International Criminal Court arrest warrants, public unrest
June 2024	Peak high strength	Escalation, war cabinet resignation, growing international pressure
July 2024	Sustained high strength	Ongoing operations without new disruptions
August 2024	Sustained high strength	No novel developments or regional shifts
September 2024	Sustained high strength	Continued fighting without event-strength escalation
October 2024	Sustained high strength	Operational continuation
November 2024	Sustained high strength	Status quo operations, no critical novelty
December 2024	Sustained high strength	Conflict plateaus in intensity
January 2025	Peak high strength	Ceasefire reached after U.S. presidential inauguration; renewed hostage releases.

Note. Event-strength classification based on EST criteria of novelty, disruption, and criticality (Morgeson et al., 2015). EST = event system theory.

($SD = 17.94$) and 37,326 words ($SD = 24.23$). Figure 1 illustrates gender distribution. From this set, we derived a policy suggestion subset. Following prior research (Fraser, 1999; Iliev et al., 2016; Wodak, 2006), we used rule-based patterns, clause-level parsing, and sentence segmentation to extract policy suggestions. This procedure yielded 4,143 distinct, self-contained clause-level units.

Measures

Gender

Gender was identified from the Knesset’s official list of women members. We center coded gender (women = +0.5, men = −0.5). In total, women spoke 1.38 million words (26.34% of the corpus) and offered 1,095 policy suggestions (26.43%).

Expressions of Ethics of Care

We measured ethics of care with the *Moral Foundations Dictionary for Linguistic Analyses 2.0* (MFD 2.0). This theory-driven text dictionary captures moral values in speech (Haidt, 2012), including care (Graham et al., 2009), and has been used to assess rhetoric in the U.S. congress (Garten et al., 2018; Wang & Inbar, 2021). Using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) 2022 software (Boyd et al., 2022), we computed ECL for each speaker/session, yielding 5,296 scores. We performed a content validation using transcripts from published studies with ethics of care interviews (ECIs; Gilligan, 1982, 1993; E. E. A. Skoe, 2014; see Appendix A).

Peak and Sustained High-Strength Events

Guided by EST, we classified 6 months (37.5%) as peak strength and the other 10 months as sustained strength. Classification relied on Reuters’ “Israel-Gaza War: A Timeline of Key Events” (2025), corroborated by Drummond (2025). It was guided by EST criteria of novelty, disruption, and criticality (Morgeson et al., 2015). Table 1 lists the coding by month.⁸

Constructive and Combative Policy Suggestions

Two research assistants, blind to the hypotheses, hand coded a random subset of 240 policy suggestions (5.7%) as constructive (collaboration, rehabilitation, social inclusion, long-term investment) or combative (blame, punishment, adversarial escalation) drawing on policy-rhetoric research (Atkinson, 2017; Mallin & Anderson, 2000; Tuler, 2000). Interrater reliability was substantial ($\kappa = .76$), and discrepancies were resolved by discussion to reach a consensus.

We then trained a ML classifier on the human-coded subset to categorize the remaining suggestions.⁹ Preprocessing of text included tokenization, term frequency-inverse document frequency weighting, and sentiment scoring (using the *syuzhet* R package). A random forest classifier trained on a balanced data set achieved strong performance on a held-out sample (accuracy = 89.5%, $\kappa = .78$, balanced accuracy = .89), outperforming sentiment-only and word-frequency baselines. To further validate the classifier, human coders independently labeled an additional 200 policy suggestions. Classifier predictions showed high agreement with the human judgments ($\kappa = .82$), supporting model reliability. We applied the trained classifier model to all 4,143 suggestions to generate constructive or combative labels. Table 2 provides examples of each type of label.

Analyses

To test Hypothesis 1 (ECL à constructive policy suggestions), we used a generalized linear mixed-effects model (GLMM) with a logit

⁸ The Israel–Hamas war period is a high-strength event in its duration, consistent with EST (Morgeson et al., 2015). Our coding of “peak strength” reflects variation within an already high-intensity context, identifying months with additional escalation, novelty, or disruption relative to other periods of sustained conflict.

⁹ Because ECL and policy type were measured from the same linguistic source, we used an independent method to classify policy suggestions to avoid measurement confounds. To ensure there was no overlap in linguistic features measuring these constructs, we verified that the vocabulary used to train the ML classifier was entirely distinct from MFD 2.0 care dictionary. A comparison of token vocabularies confirmed zero overlap (Appendix B).

Table 2

Examples/Quotes From Our Data Set of Constructive and Combative Policy Suggestions Identified by the Supervised Machine Learning Model

Constructive	Combative
“We must say in a clear voice that it is time to end the campaign in Gaza, for the sake of the hostages, for the sake of our soldiers, for our ability to focus on urgent national priorities, and also for the sake of Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip, whose lives and deaths must be taken into account by us.” “We must take care of everyone’s mental health, but certainly and most certainly the first circles among the families of the kidnapped, among the returnees, the wounded, the soldiers, the families of the bereaved and the displaced.” “Despite the intense pain we are experiencing, we must remember as a country: the reaction is not, it should come from a place of emotion, but from a deep and courageous thought towards a safe future” “To all government agencies, public figures, citizens—wake up and oppose this whole issue of violence, aggression, disaster, because in the end, the only solution for all of us is not violence, it is not occupation, it is not wars ... the solution is a political solution, and we must all strive for it.” “Just as they established a war cabinet, a socio-economic cabinet, we should establish a cabinet or a kind of media committee, allocate resources and staff the committee with representatives from the Knesset from the right and the left.” “We must understand that the war on terrorism cannot be limited only to military means, intelligence gathering, advanced technologies or military operations; The war on terrorism should first of all start at the root of the problem: in the education system, with the children.” “We must do everything in our power to change the discourse around mental distress, raise awareness of the issue, and make emotional and medical treatments as accessible as possible at an effective and early stage as possible.” “We must act actively to upgrade the health systems in the periphery; We must increase investments in the health infrastructure in the periphery, create incentives for veteran medical professionals to work in these areas, establish new medical centers; We must ensure that every child, teenager and adult can receive fast and quality medical care, regardless of where they live.”	“We must rain fire and brimstone on Gaza” “We need to destroy the heathens, kill the rebels, kill the terrorists” “We need to control the Strip not only in terms of security, but also in terms of civility, to pay the economic price, to pay the price in manpower, to pay the price, whatever it may be ... because there is no resurrection except by us exercising absolute rule, both military and civilian, including settlement within the Gaza Strip.” “We need to exert much more power; We need to exhaust all our options; At the same time in the negotiations, we need to drastically increase the military pressure, in order to bring these damned people to a situation where they have no choice—that they have no choice—that they want to return the abducted, because the alternative is much worse.” “I want to say that the government of failure and neglect abandons the residents time and time again, and this is why it is necessary to finance the continued evacuation.” “It is not just a matter of terrorism, we must fight terrorism with a strong hand, but the internal terrorism that strikes each and every one in the State of Israel ... this national failure, this minister, must also fight against this.” “We need to quickly kill all the dogs, as if we know who the dogs are from Gaza or who the dogs are who have been here for many years.” “I urge everyone to protest this thing and do everything possible to stop once and for all, this shocking thing, which is called brutal police violence.”

link function, predicting the binary outcome of policy suggestion type (1 = constructive, 0 = combative). Random intercepts were included for speaker, session, and political affiliation. To examine Hypothesis 2 (gender $\rightarrow$ ECL), Hypothesis 4 (event strength $\rightarrow$ ECL), and Hypothesis 5 (Event Strength $\times$ Gender $\rightarrow$ ECL), we used linear mixed-effects models (LMEMs) with random intercepts for speaker, session, and political affiliation. This model specification accounts for repeated observations, contextual heterogeneity, and group-level effects. We included a covariate for month since the initial attack to control for temporal trends. The LMEMs were estimated with the restricted maximum likelihood lmer function using the lme4 package in R.¹⁰ Hypothesis 3 mediation (gender $\rightarrow$ ECL $\rightarrow$ policy suggestion) tested if gender is indirectly related to policy type via ECL. The indirect link was estimated with a nonparametric bootstrap, with 1,000 resamples to generate bias-corrected confidence intervals. To test Hypothesis 6, we added event strength as a moderator within the mediational path from gender to ECL to policy suggestion.

We conducted robustness tests to assess the reliability of findings by rerunning models with alternate specifications. Results were substantively unchanged. Exploratory analyses using a person-centered

approach with k -means clustering to identify leadership profiles based on average ECL scores evaluated whether ECL reflects a stable leadership orientation or a context-responsive approach. It revealed three profiles for which we assessed temporal stability, links with gender, and responsiveness to peak high-strength periods. We also examined whether ECL profiles moderated the likelihood of making constructive policy suggestions under peak event strength. These exploratory findings complement the main results of hypothesis testing.

Transparency and Openness

The data used in this study were compiled from publicly available sources, including official Knesset plenum transcripts, as described in the Data Sources section. This study relied exclusively on publicly available archival data and did not involve interaction with human participants; therefore, institutional review board approval was not required. We described our sampling plan and all measures in

¹⁰ Model assumptions were checked via histograms, Q-Q plots, and residual diagnostics, with no violations detected.

the study, and we adhered to the *Journal of Applied Psychology* methodological checklist. Because the data set consists of aggregated information that can be independently obtained from the original public sources, we do not provide the compiled data set. Researchers may reproduce the data set by following the procedures described in the Method section, including details regarding data collection, coding, and analytic decisions. This study was not preregistered. *R* Version 4.4.3 (2024-02-28) was used for the analyses.

Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are reported in Table 3. On average, leaders spoke 986 words per session ($SD = 890$), and the mean ECL score was 0.48 ($SD = 0.54$). Being a woman was positively correlated with ECL ($r = .09, p < .001$), whereas time since the attack was negatively correlated with ECL ($r = -.06, p < .001$), indicating a temporal decline. Word count was uncorrelated with ECL, that is, variation in ECL was not driven by verbosity.

Of the 4,143 extracted policy suggestions, 1,213 (29.3%) were classified by the ML algorithm as constructive and 2,930 (70.7%) as combative. Average ECL across all policy suggestions was .49 ($SD = 0.46$). Constructive suggestions were associated with higher ECL ($M = 0.55, SD = 0.53$) than combative ones ($M = 0.47, SD = 0.43$), a pattern consistent with Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: Ethics of Care à Constructive Policy Suggestions

Higher expression of ECL was associated with greater odds that policy suggestions were constructive (GLMM logit: $b = 0.36, p < .001$; Figure 2), supporting Hypothesis 1. Interpreted as an odds ratio, a one-unit increase in ECL raised the odds of a constructive suggestion by 43% (i.e., $OR \sim 1.43$). Results were robust across alternative model specifications, including trimming outliers, varying time controls, and fixed-effects models. A time-lagged model showed that ECL in session t predicted constructiveness in session $t + 1$ ($b = 0.15, p = .05, OR \sim 1.16$), lending support to a directional interpretation.

Hypothesis 2: Gender à ECL

Women expressed higher ECL than men, $F(1, 127.22) = 5.49, p = .021$, supporting Hypothesis 2 (Figure 3). ECL expression

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Key Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. ECL expression	0.48	0.58	—			
2. Gender ^a	−0.24	0.44	.09***	—		
3. Month ^b	8.91	4.60	−.06***	−.01	—	
4. Word Count	986.73	890.08	−.02	.01	.16***	—

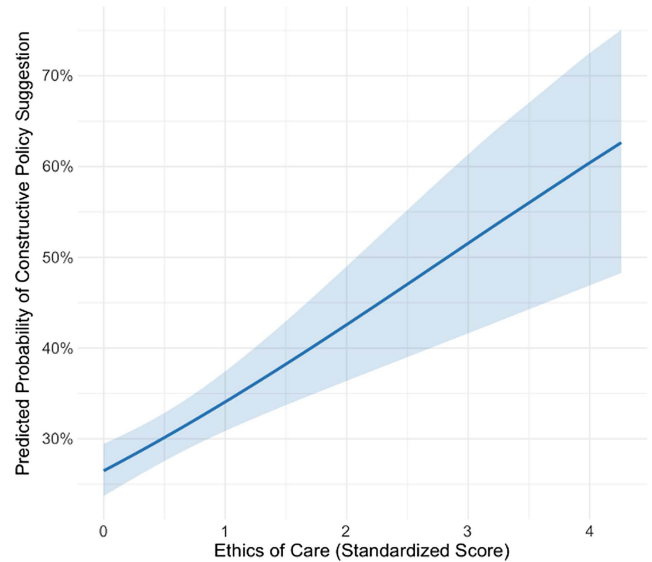
Note. ECL = ethics of care leadership.

^a Female (.5); male (−.5). ^b Numerically coded such that October 2023 = 1, November 2023 = 2, ... January 2025 = 16.

*** $p < .001$.

Figure 2

Predicted Probability of Constructive Policy Suggestion by Ethics of Care Expression



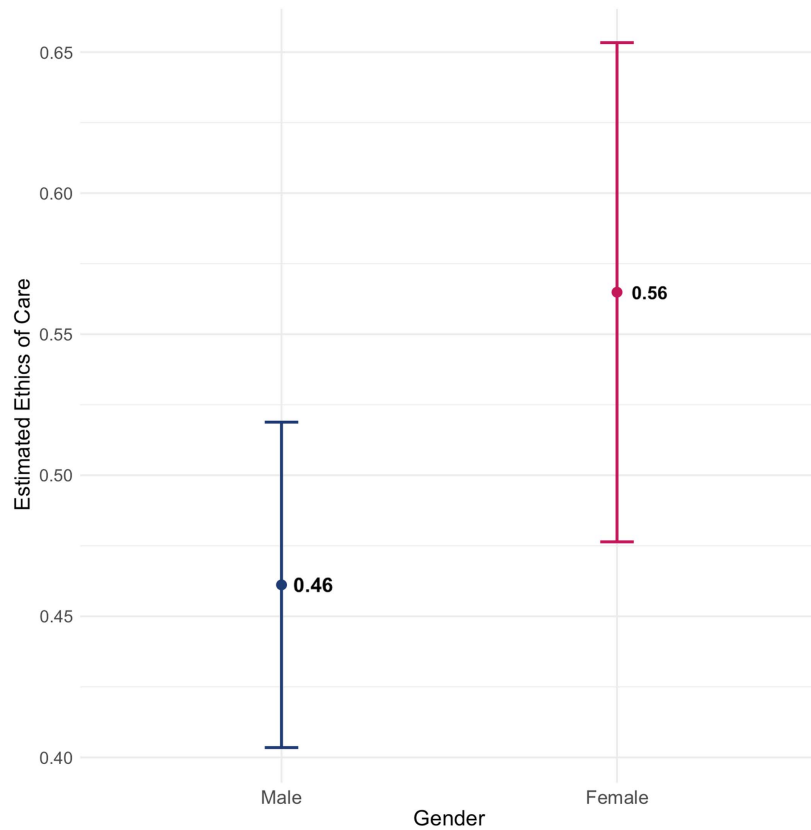
Note. Predicted probability of making a constructive policy suggestion as a function of ethics of care expression. Probabilities are based on a generalized linear mixed-effects model controlling for month since the onset of war and accounting for random variation across speaker identity, session, and political affiliation. Higher values on the x-axis indicate greater expression of ethics of care, while higher values on the y-axis indicate greater probability of making a constructive suggestion. Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals. Data reflect 4,143 policy suggestions extracted from Knesset plenum transcripts between October 2023 and January 2025. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

declined over time for both genders, $F(1, 142.52) = 11.10, p = .001$; however, women maintained higher ECL over the 16 months ($M_W = 0.56, SD = 0.57$; $M_M = 0.45, SD = 0.53$).¹¹ Sensitivity tests with trimming the top 1% of ECL values, modeling time nonlinearly (categorical specification and spline transformation), and estimating fixed-effects models (controlling for speaker, session, political party) confirmed that the gender effect was directionally consistent and statistically significant across specifications.

Hypothesis 3: Gender à Ethics of Care à Constructive Policy Suggestions

Within the policy subset, women again expressed higher ECL ($b = 0.143, p = .006$). When both gender and ECL were included as predictors, gender was not significant ($b = 0.113, p = .316$), consistent with full mediation. A nonparametric bootstrap (1,000 resamples; Figure 4) yielded a significant indirect link between gender and policy suggestions via ECL ($b = -0.047, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.078, -0.023]$), supporting Hypothesis 3. A time-lagged mediation model (gender → ECL_{*t*} → policy_{*t* + 1}) replicated this pattern; gender

¹¹ We explored if decline of ECL over time varied by gender using an LMED with interaction term for Gender × Month. The interaction was not significant. Women maintained consistently higher ECL compared with men.

Figure 3*Estimated Marginal Means of Ethics of Care Expression by Leader Gender*

Note. This figure presents the estimated marginal means of ethics of care expression (as scored by the *Moral Foundations Dictionary for Linguistic Analyses 2.0*) by leader gender, derived from a linear mixed-effects model adjusting for time (month) and including random intercepts for speaker, session, and party affiliation. Points represent model-estimated means, and the error bars reflect the 95% confidence intervals. Values presented in bold indicate the point estimated means. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

predicted ECL_t ($p < .006$), ECL_t predicted $policy_{t+1}$ ($p = .004$), and the indirect effect remained significant (indirect = -0.0311 , 95% CI [$-0.0506, -0.0103$]). Mixed model mediation (*mediate* package) also showed a significant average mediated effect ($p < .001$). Across alternative model specifications for a and b paths, results remained significant.

Hypotheses 4 and 5: Event Strength $\times$ Gender $\rightarrow$ Ethics of Care

Supporting Hypothesis 4, a separate LMEM testing the effect of peak event strength and its interaction with gender revealed a main effect of peak strength ($b = .05$, $p = .015$), indicating that ECL increased during peak-strength months, supporting Hypothesis 4. The main effect of gender remained significant ($b = .13$, $p = .004$), continuing to support Hypothesis 2. Supporting Hypothesis 5, the interaction between gender and peak strength was significant ($b = -0.074$, $p = .027$); men, compared with women, showed a greater increase in ECL during peaks. As shown in Figure 5, women maintained higher overall ECL during both peak and sustained strength months. Additional robustness tests yielded convergent results.

Hypothesis 6: Moderated Mediation

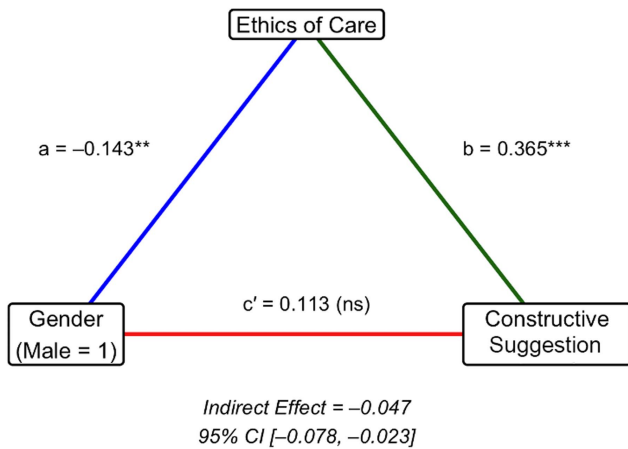
Adding peak strength as a moderator to the mediation model supported Hypothesis 6. The indirect relationship between gender on constructive policy suggestions via ECL was significant during sustained high-strength months ($b = -0.075$, 95% CI [$-0.111, -0.041$]), but not during peaks ($b = -0.035$, 95% CI [$-0.078, 0.006$]), indicating attenuation. A lagged variant replicated this pattern (sustained months: indirect = -0.031 , 95% CI [$-0.081, -0.020$]; peak months: *ns*). Additional robustness tests yielded convergent results.

Person-Centered Leadership Profile Analysis

Because leadership styles can vary (Anderson & Sun, 2017; Fischer & Sitkin, 2023), and following calls for person-centered approaches to understand heterogeneity in leader behavior (Bigelow et al., 2024), we applied k -means clustering to average expressions of ECL (R 4.4.3; k -means function). K -means clustering, an unsupervised ML algorithm, identifies groupings based on average ECL scores over 16 months and detects discrete profiles in the expression of ECL, offering an alternative approach to variable-centered models that assume a

Figure 4

Mediation Model: Gender Effects on Constructive Policy Suggestions via Ethics of Care Leadership Expression



Note. Path coefficients are based on mixed-effects models controlling for speaker name, session, and affiliation. Male speakers expressed significantly lower levels of ethics of care expression ($a = -0.143$, $p = .006$), and higher care scores predicted a greater likelihood of making a constructive policy suggestion ($b = 0.365$, $p < .001$). The direct effect of gender on policy type was nonsignificant when controlling for care ($c' = 0.113$, $p = .316$). The indirect effect was statistically significant (-0.047 , 95% CI $[-0.078, -0.023]$). ns = not significant; CI = confidence interval. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

continuous distribution. We evaluated solutions for $k = 2$ through $k = 6$ using the elbow method. Theory guidance, the elbow method (Anderson & Sun, 2017; E. E. Skoe et al., 1996), and between-cluster variance favored a three-profile solution (Figure 6). To assess the temporal stability of the three ECL profiles, we reassigned leaders to profiles monthly and created transition matrices. No leadership profile switches were observed across months, indicating profile stability.

Non-ECL Profile (Cluster 1, Red)

Leaders in this profile expressed minimal levels of ECL during the high-strength event and showed little change in care expression by fluctuations in strength. This suggests disengagement from care considerations, even as conditions escalated.

Stable ECL (Cluster 2, Green)

Leaders in this profile expressed a moderate, relatively steady level of ECL across 16 months. Their consistent pattern of ECL expressions resembles a traitlike style, suggesting that these leaders appear anchored in a moderate ethic of care, expressing it consistently but without necessarily adjusting rhetoric in response to heightened suffering.

Event-Responsive ECL Profile (Cluster 3, Blue)

These leaders expressed the highest absolute levels of ECL and showed the most variability in response to fluctuations in event strength. This suggests that these leaders integrate care as a central

moral orientation while flexibly adjusting its expression in response to changes in event strength. This result aligns with EST suggesting that strong events necessitate or can trigger varying leadership responses.

This typology indicates that ECL can operate either as a stable orientation or as a context-responsive adaptation to high-strength events. Based on this, we next explore gender differences in leadership profiles, test if event strength moderates ECL within profiles, and examine if profiles relate to the likelihood of offering constructive policy suggestions.

Gender Differences

Gender and leadership profile were significantly associated, $\chi^2(2, N = 5,270) = 180.24$, $p < .001$. Women were more likely to be in the stable and event-responsive profiles, and men were over-represented in the non-ECL profile (see Figure 7). Within profiles, gender differences were negligible in non-ECL and stable ECL, but in the event-responsive ECL profile, women consistently expressed more care than men in that same profile (see Figure 8).

Peak Months

A three-way model (Gender $\times$ Profile $\times$ Peak) replicated the continuous-variable results: ECL increased in peaks, $F(1, 291.1) = 5.56$, $p = .019$, and the increase was larger for men, $F(1, 5,149) = 4.89$, $p = .027$. We also observed a Profile $\times$ Peak interaction, $F(2, 5,175.1) = 4.33$, $p = .013$ (Figure 9). The steeper rise among men was concentrated in the event-responsive profile and appeared driven by men's lower baseline ECL during sustained months.

Constructive Policy Suggestions

A GLMM revealed a significant Profile $\times$ Peak interaction for the probability of a constructive policy suggestion ($p = .018$; see Figure 10). Specifically, leaders with stable ECL were more likely to offer constructive suggestions during peaks, whereas non-ECL leaders showed a marginal decline, and the difference-in-differences was significant ($p = .018$). Event-responsive leaders showed no reliable change. This suggests that a stable ECL orientation might buffer against declines in constructive policymaking during peaks.

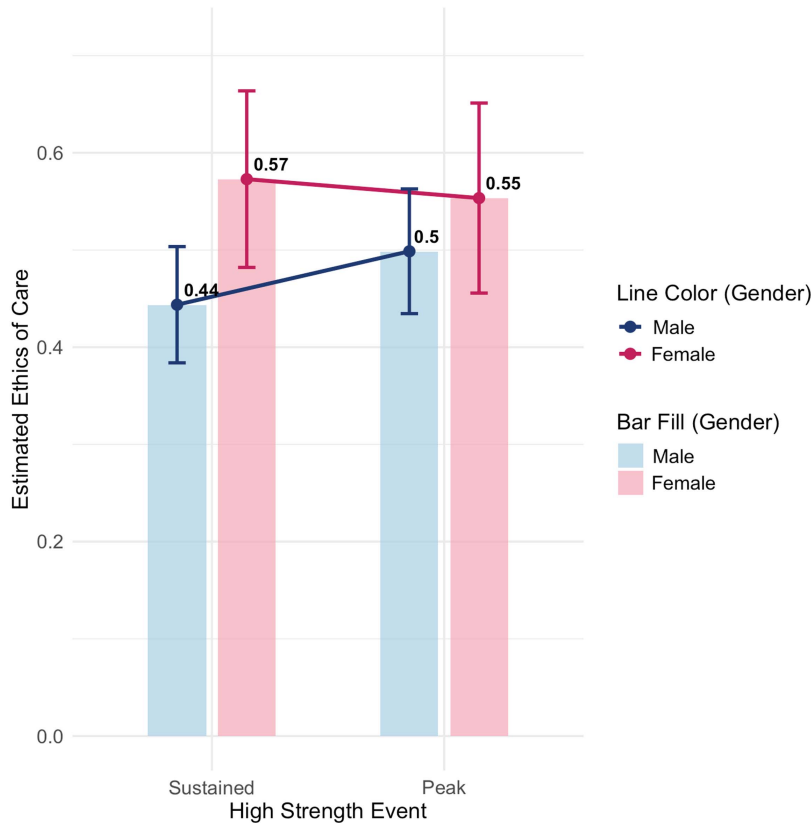
Discussion

Most leadership frameworks (Dinh et al., 2014; Lord et al., 2017) apply to relatively calm seas because "many theories of leadership conceptualize leadership under normal and stable conditions" (Riggio & Newstead, 2023, p. 202). However, leadership in long-duration crises is more like "traversing a storm" (M. D. Collins et al., 2023, p. 601) because context shifts, decisions carry considerable weight, and the clarity of choices is obscured (Howard-Grenville et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2023; Morgeson et al., 2015). Navigating such storms is often "a matter of life and death" (Hällgren et al., 2018, p. 111). Reviews suggest that leadership theory remains underdeveloped regarding how leadership unfolds amid evolving adversity (Dinh et al., 2014; Johns, 2024; Lord et al., 2017; Riggio & Newstead, 2023). We addressed this issue by analyzing real-time parliamentary language in the Israeli Knesset across 16 months of war.

Our findings position ECL expression as a morally grounded, discourse-based leadership approach in a high-strength event context. We showed what ECL expression predicts, who is more likely to express it,

Figure 5

Interaction of Leader Gender and Event Strength Predicting Ethics of Care Expression



Note. Bar heights represent estimated marginal means of ethics of care expression by gender across sustained and peak high-strength event months. Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals. Line overlays illustrate the interaction trend to illustrate that while female leaders expressed more ethics of care than men on average, this gap narrows during peak high-strength months driven by increased ethics of care expression among male leaders. Values presented in bold indicate the point estimates of the marginal means. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

and how it fluctuates with shifts in event strength. ECL predicted constructiveness of policy suggestions, as leaders who spoke with greater care suggested more constructive policies (Hypothesis 1). Women expressed higher ECL than men (Hypothesis 2), and higher ECL indirectly explained women's greater likelihood of making constructive suggestions (Hypothesis 3). Context also mattered (Hypotheses 4–6): ECL rose during peak months, and men's ECL rose more sharply than women's in peak periods, narrowing—but not eliminating—a gender gap in ECL expression. Consequently, the indirect pathway from gender to constructive suggestions via ECL present in sustained months became nonsignificant during peaks. Person-centered analyses revealed three profiles (Figure 11). Follow-up tests indicated that stable ECL profile leaders were most likely to remain constructive during peaks, suggesting a stabilizing role in high seas.

Implications for Theory

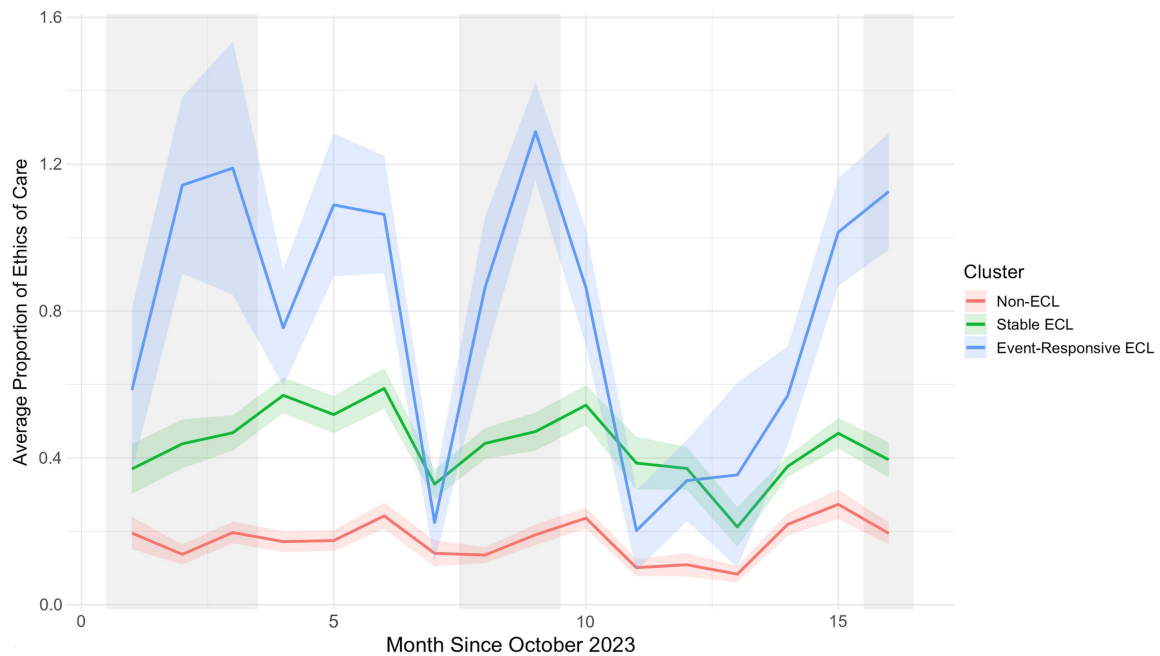
First, we extend EST by specifying a moral mechanism linking event strength to leaders' verbal responses. EST delineates when

contexts become high strength and calls for nonroutine responses (Liu et al., 2023; Morgeson et al., 2015), but it has been less specific about the form leadership responses might take. We identify ECL expression as one such response—a care-based, discursive orientation associated with more constructive policy suggestions in this context. Integrating EST with ECL advances both theories—highlighting how contextual triggers and moral values can jointly shape leaders' public expressions in a crisis.

Second, we reframe care as more than a gendered expectation by positioning ECL expression as a crisis-relevant leadership approach with concrete implications. Our findings show that leaders who expressed ECL were more likely to advance constructive rather than combative policy suggestions, indicating that moral values can shape leadership approaches in high-stakes contexts. ECL expression and policy suggestion type were conceptually and operationally distinct, captured via separate moral language and policy coding procedures.

Third, in this setting, ECL expression was shaped by context and leader gender. Women expressed higher ECL across the wartime period examined, whereas men's expression of ECL was more

Figure 6
Longitudinal Clustering of ECL Profiles Over 16 Months



Note. This figure displays average monthly ethics of care expression scores for three clusters of Knesset leaders based on their longitudinal patterns of ethics of care over the 16-month period. Cluster 1, the non-ECL profile (red), reflects consistently low levels of care expression; Cluster 2, the stable EC profile (green), represents moderate, relatively stable ethics of care expression; and Cluster 3, the event responsive ECL profile (blue), captures a group of leaders who exhibited elevated and responsive care rhetoric, particularly around peak-strength periods. Shaded areas around the lines represent ± 1 standard error around the mean. Gray shaded areas depict the months coded as peak high strength. ECL = ethics of care leadership; EC = ethics of care. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

situationally cued, rising in peak months. This pattern aligns with precarious manhood theory (Vandello & Bosson, 2013; Vandello et al., 2008), suggesting that men may require a contextual license to express care without costs to social status. These results suggest that peak event strength may provide such license, underscoring the importance of Person $\times$ Situation dynamics in crisis leadership. Relatedly, men's sharper ECL increase in peaks invites further inquiry into when care becomes socially sanctioned for men and how durable expressions of ECL are once the licensing context fades. For example, care may be socially sanctioned for male leaders in some peak high-strength events like natural disasters but criticized in others, for example, product recalls. Integrating EST and ECL with social role theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) may help explain when leader gender-differentiated care expression emerges across event types.

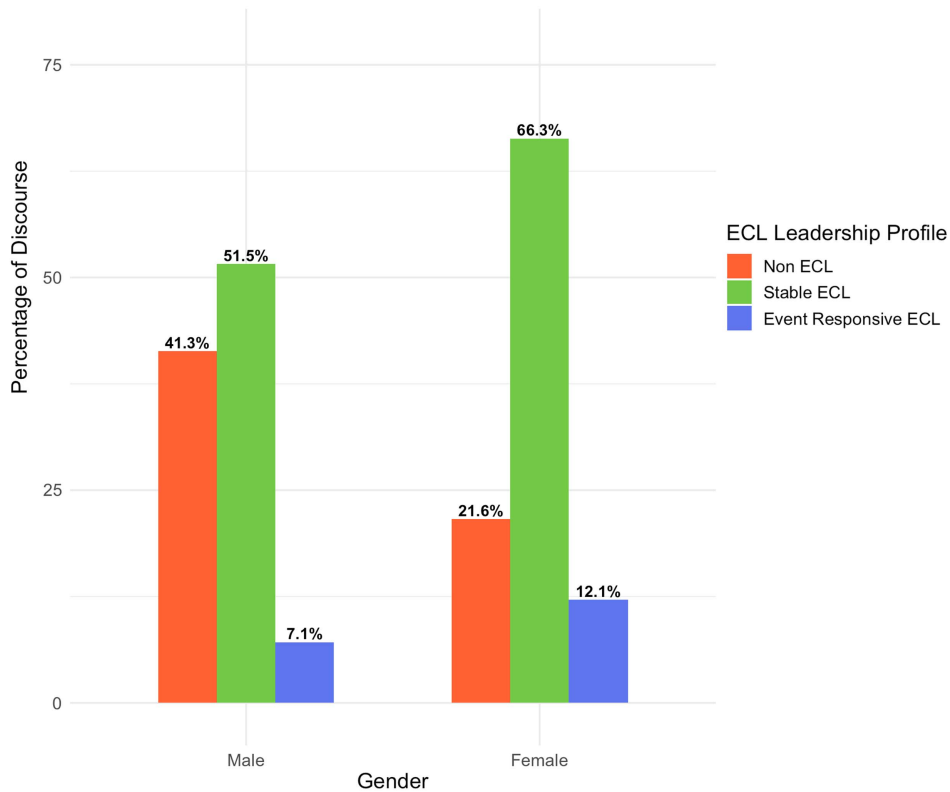
Implications for Practice

High-strength events may demand leaders who can pair competence with care. Although this study's setting is wartime, the features that make war a high-strength event (heightened novelty, disruption, and criticality) also characterize other crises wherein human welfare is at stake. This suggests potential relevance for domains such as disaster response, humanitarian aid, trauma teams,

and public policymaking. Under these conditions, care-based expressions may shape both responder effectiveness and the experience of those in distress (Campbell et al., 2010; Patel et al., 2020; Yun et al., 2005). In parliaments and other diffuse systems, language becomes a lever. Care-laden language can keep policy suggestions oriented toward repair when polarization tempts escalation. As Harvey et al. (2010) noted, advancing constructive responses is one of the most difficult, yet essential, challenges facing humanitarian efforts.

Applied psychology has increasingly emphasized the importance of leadership that promotes human welfare (Howard-Grenville, 2021; Howard-Grenville et al., 2019; Post et al., 2022). Developing ECL capacities through training and moral reflection might be one way to begin social repair in distressed social contexts (Wilson, 2024) and in organizations in general. For example, in the wake of the September 2025 assassination of a prominent political figure, a U.S. governor framed a response as a choice between escalation and finding an off-ramp (Rev, 2025). Against the backdrop of political violence—a crisis in its own right—this care-inflected rhetoric modeled how leaders can interrupt cycles of retaliation by redirecting public discourse toward repair. In particular, contemporary organizations have witnessed growing workplace incivility (Cortina et al., 2013), aggression (Robinson et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2013), and disloyalty (Chung et al., 2015). These trends may be mitigated by organizations that promote care for one another.

Figure 7
Distribution of Ethics of Care Leadership Profiles by Gender



Note. This figure shows the distribution of discourse across ethics of care leadership profiles within each leader gender group. Percentages reflect the proportion of each gender's discourse that fall into the non-ECL, stable ECL, and event-responsive ECL profiles. Values presented in bold indicate the percentage of proportion of each gender's discourse that falls into each profile. ECL = ethics of care leadership. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Training programs might use scenario-based exercises, guided moral reflection (see Rawls, 1971), and feedback to cultivate ECL—especially among leaders who might need contextual permission to express it. In particular, because stable-ECL leaders showed less decline in constructive suggestions during peaks, organizations might pair these leaders with event-responsive colleagues to combine ballast and agility. In the absence of time for training, screening for a history of demonstrated care toward vulnerable groups when selecting leaders to manage crises, alongside conventional metrics of competence, might be considered.

Limitations and Future Research

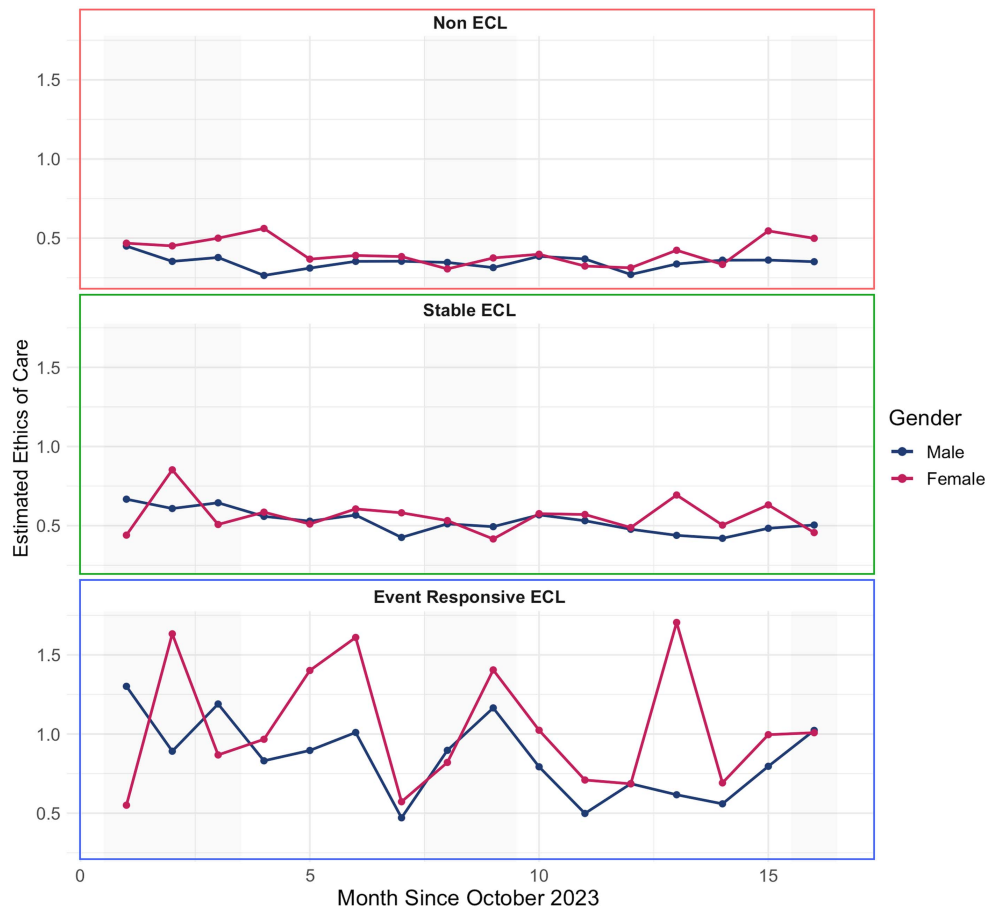
First, this study leverages observational, real-time discourse, so it cannot make causal claims. We mitigated this limitation with temporal models, independent outcome coding, and robustness checks because experiments/controlled manipulations are not feasible in war settings.

Second, the generalizability of leadership results is context dependent (Johns, 2024; Osborn et al., 2002). Our claims relate best to similar high-strength events rather than routine contexts. That is, we do not claim representativeness to all political leaders but suggest transportability of findings across comparable events

(see Cook & Campbell, 1979). For instance, care-based patterns might emerge among political leaders in the U.S. Congress during 9/11 or in the U.K. Parliament during Brexit, when identity threat and high stakes are salient.

Third, our outcome captures what leaders suggested, combative versus constructive alternatives. Though prior work indicates constructive suggestions are more likely to be adopted and implemented in polarized contexts (Atkinson, 2017; Mallin & Anderson, 2000), we do not claim that suggestions are equivalent to policy adoption or other downstream outcomes. Rather, suggestions represent an early point at which leaders' moral orientations become observable in collective deliberation. This leader-level manifestation might indicate moral commitment to care more faithfully than the legislative end-game—roll-call votes—which are dominated by party and political constraints in coalition-dependent parliamentary systems.¹²

¹² Unlike U.S. system, a parliamentary one fuses the executive and legislature. Elected representatives to parliament form a majority party coalition (in Israel's 120-seat Knesset, at least 61 seats) that selects a prime minister. Because a government can fall by a no-confidence vote whenever it loses majority, parties enforce strong voting discipline. Thus, roll-call votes often reflect coalition bargaining more than individual conviction. In this setting, prevote rhetoric is ostensibly clearer window into moral commitments than vote, which is shaped by coalition maintenance.

Figure 8*Trajectories of ECL Expression by Gender and Leadership Profile*

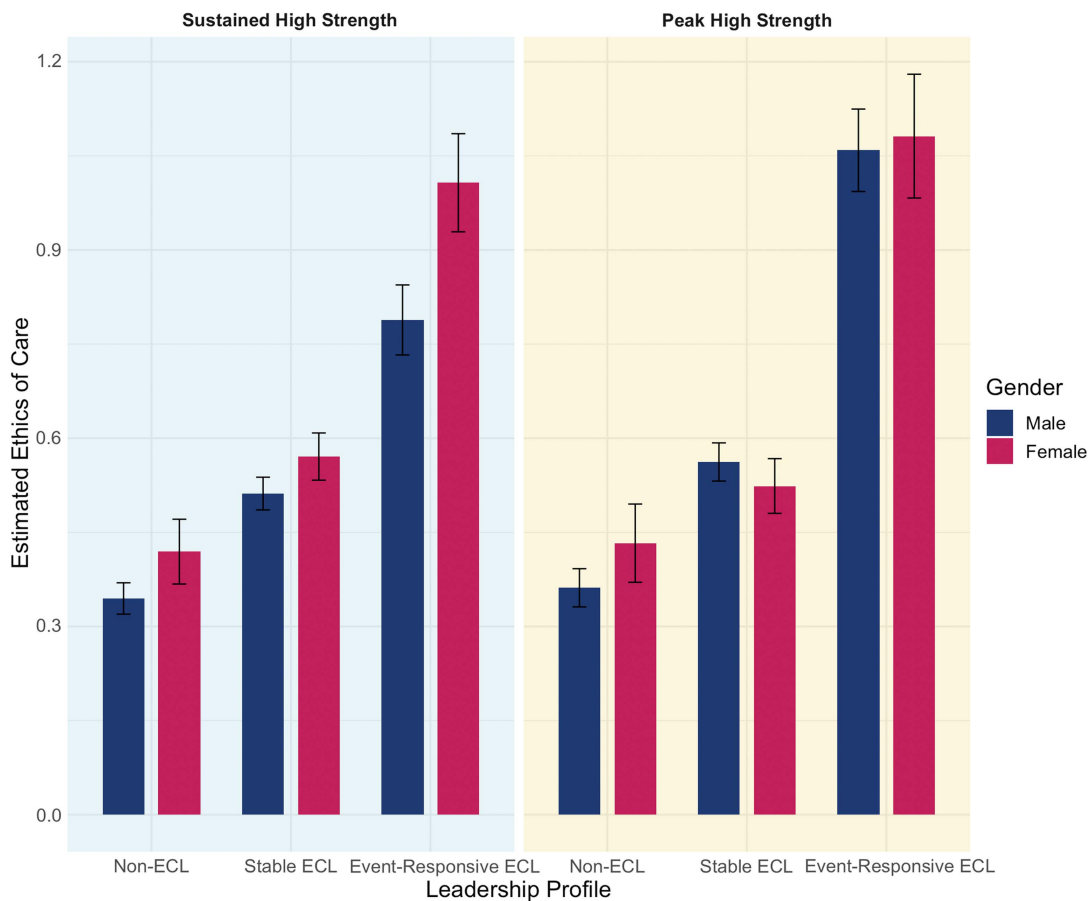
Note. This figure shows the model-estimated use of ethics of care expression over time by gender within each leadership profile. Shaded gray areas represent peak high-strength event months. ECL = ethics of care leadership. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

As an illustrative (post hoc) check, we examined rhetoric preceding several laws passed by the Knesset during the study period to assess if verbal discourse foreshadowed legislative outcomes.¹³ The victim's compensation law was passed by the Knesset on March 12, 2024, and it allowed victims of terrorism and their families to sue for financial damages from parties claiming responsibility for acts of terrorism—arguably, a reparative (constructive) policy. In the preceding week, constructive suggestions often invoked rehabilitation and family support (e.g., “We should strive for a system where the relatives ... are supported properly”—Erez Malol, Mar 6). A combative law was passed on October 29, 2024—prohibition on United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East activity—banning the United Nations from delivering humanitarian aid in Israeli-controlled territory. In preceding Knesset sessions, combative rhetoric portrayed United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East as complicit with terrorism and a threat to national security. As constructive suggestions were almost absent (~14% constructive that week), combative ones dominated, calling for prioritizing security escalation. The language of blame and exclusion appears to have ostensibly translated into punitive lawmaking. These examples,

though exploratory in nature, highlight paths from rhetoric to policy, illustrating that language—whether constructive or combative—can help frame legislative policy outcomes.

Fourth, original transcripts were in Hebrew and translated into English using Google Translate. To evaluate translation accuracy, we conducted a back-translation validation using a stratified random sample of plenum sessions. Each sampled English excerpt was back-translated into Hebrew and compared with the original Hebrew. Levenshtein similarity yielded a mean of 0.798 ($SD = 0.097$), indicating strong textual alignment. To assess semantic retention, we computed cosine similarity between the original and back-translated Hebrew, which produced a high mean score of .76, suggesting that the English translations reliably preserved the intended meaning of the original speech. To further bolster translation fidelity, a bilingual coder spot-checked a random sample of 50 speeches. Translations preserved meaning completely in 86% (accurate), mostly preserved meaning in 12% (mostly accurate) and did not preserve meaning in

¹³ Laws passed were sourced from “the Knesset’s News” published on their website at <https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/News/PressReleases/Pages/default.aspx>.

Figure 9*Estimated Ethics of Care Expression by Leadership Profile, Event Strength, and Gender*

Note. This figure shows model-estimated ethics of care expression across leadership profiles, split by gender and event strength. During sustained high-strength months (left panel), female leaders in the event-responsive profile expressed substantially more care than males. During peak high-strength events (right panel), care expressions converged at high levels for both genders in the stable ECL and event-responsive ECL profiles. Bars represent estimated marginal means; error bars show ± 1 SE. ECL = ethics of care leadership; SE = standard error. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

2% (inaccurate). Collapsing accurate and mostly accurate versus inaccurate yielded 98% agreement (which translates to κ statistic of .82), indicating substantial translation interrater reliability.

Finally, ECL differs from adjacent human-centered approaches. Our review (Appendix C, Part I) indicates substantial conceptual and measurement overlap across labels in this space, calling for sharper delineations. That is, in 19 definitions of communal leadership, descriptors cluster around positively valenced signifiers as kind, helpful, friendly, sensitive, and understanding, among others. ECL, by contrast, centers on a moral obligation to care—what leaders ought to do—even when actions are unpopular (Held, 2006; Pettersen, 2008; Rawls, 1971; Vosman et al., 2020). ECL and communal qualities can co-occur, but they are not interchangeable.¹⁴

Care as a moral (internal) impetus for action also distinguishes ECL from ethical leadership, which concerns compliance with externally defined professional codes of ethics. “The term ethics is often used to refer to a set of standards established by a particular group and imposed on members of that group as a means of regulating and setting limits on their behavior” (Boss, 2014, p. 5). These standards

vary by profession, where, for example, attorney–client privilege (safeguard client’s privacy) is paramount in law, but the opposite is the goal in auditing (reveal client mistakes).¹⁵ Ethical leadership construct has been criticized for conceptual ambiguity (Appendix C, Part IV). Banks et al. (2021) called for “concept clean-up” (p. 1), and van Gils and Van Quaquebeke (2022) argued that “most of the scales reflect a hodgepodge of desirable leader behaviors, attitudes, and relational outcomes” (p. 5). Den Hartog (2015, p. 416) noted that “correlations with related scales are relatively high [e.g., .76, .78, .82],” underscoring need for discriminant validity.¹⁶ Meta-analyses (Bedi et al., 2016; Ng & Feldman, 2015) reveal “minimal to nonexistent

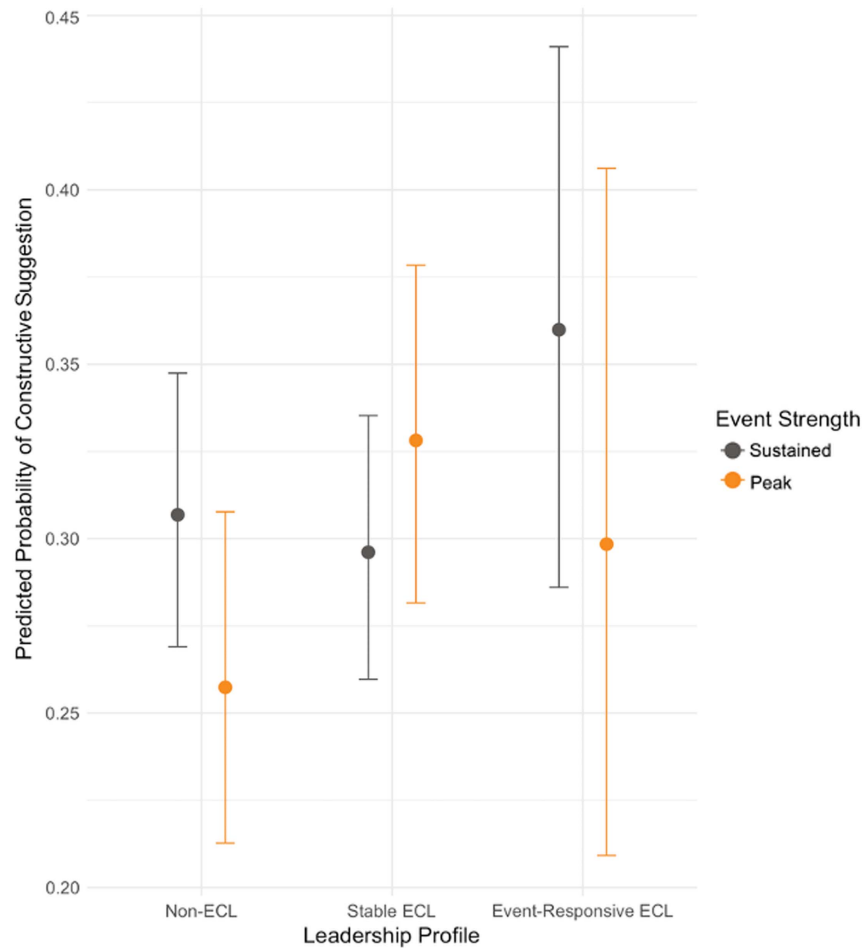
¹⁴ To empirically validate the distinction between communal qualities and ECL, we conducted a lexical comparison of two published text dictionaries. See Appendix A, Part II.

¹⁵ American Bar Association: <https://www.americanbar.org>; American Accounting Association; SEC.

¹⁶ To empirically validate the distinction between ethical leadership and ethics of care leadership, we compared ECL with ethical leadership language operationalized via LIWC’s ethics dictionary. See Appendix A, Part III.

Figure 10

Predicted Probability of Constructive Policy Suggestions by Leadership Profile and Event Strength



Note. Predicted probability of proposing constructive policy suggestions by leadership profile and variation in high event strength. Bars represent estimated marginal means and standard errors from a generalized linear mixed-effects model. Within-profile differences across high-strength event conditions were not statistically significant, likely due to wide confidence intervals stemming from greater variability within leadership profile groups. ECL = ethics of care leadership. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

incremental value of current operationalization of ethical leadership beyond other leadership concepts” (van Gils & Van Quaquebeke, 2022, p. 1). Notably, “care ... element is not often found in measures of ethical leadership” (Den Hartog, 2015, p. 414) that ECL addresses.

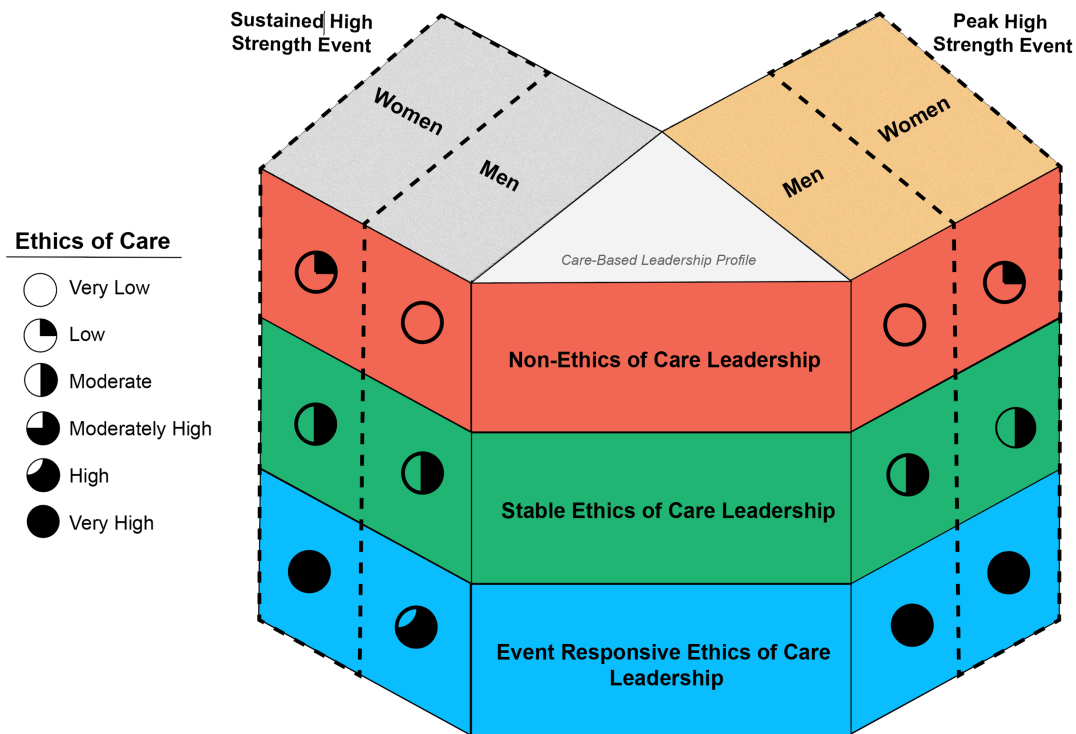
Conclusion

Answering the call of this special issue and broader appeals in applied psychology to address societal challenges, this study examined leadership during a prolonged, high-strength event. Analyzing discourse from Knesset members during the Israel–Hamas

war, we found that expression of ECL predicted a greater likelihood of constructive policy suggestions. Female leaders expressed consistently higher ECL throughout 16 months of the study, whereas men’s ECL expression fluctuated, increasing during peak-strength months when care-oriented language faced reduced social costs. Taken together, these findings highlight ECL expression as a meaningful form of leadership in high-strength event contexts, helping explain variation in leaders’ responses and pointing toward paths of repair. In doing so, this study underscores the promise of ECL as both a theoretical lens and a practical resource for navigating crises where human welfare is at stake.

Figure 11

Summary of Ethics of Care Expression by Leadership Profile, Gender, and Event Strength



Note. This conceptual figure illustrates ethics of care leadership (ECL) profiles by gender and event strength. It visualizes average levels of ethics of care expressions as a function of leadership profile (non-ECL, stable ECL, and event-responsive ECL), gender (men, women), and high-strength variation (sustained vs. peak). Each cell contains a shaded icon representing average ethics of care expression (ranging from very low to very high), based on hypothesis test findings. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

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Appendix A

Construct Validation of *Moral Foundations Dictionary for Linguistic Analyses 2.0* as Ethics of Care Measure

We conducted a validation analysis of the *Moral Foundations Dictionary for Linguistic Analyses 2.0* (MFD 2.0) care dictionary as a measure of ethics of care expression because although the MFD has been widely used to capture moral content, its capacity to specifically reflect care ethics has not been systematically established. To benchmark its performance, we used published responses to the ECI—an established tool for assessing moral reasoning through an ethics of care (E. E. A. Skoe, 2014; E. E. Skoe & Gooden, 1993; E. E. Skoe et al., 1996). The ECI prompts participants to reflect on moral dilemmas, which are then rated by trained coders on the extent to which they reflect the core tenets of care ethics. While the ECI is a validated approach to measuring ethics of care, its reliance on semistructured interviews and expert raters makes it impractical for large-scale textual data sets (e.g., 5.2 million words across 5,296 observations).

To test whether the MFD 2.0 care dictionary captures the same construct, we compiled 54 ECI responses from prior studies, each scored using the standard ECI rubric (values 1–3 in 0.5-point increments). Following prior validation work (e.g., E. E. A. Skoe, 2014), we grouped responses rated 1.0 or 1.5 as *low care* and those

rated 2.0–3.0 as *high care*. This binning created a dichotomous outcome suitable for classification. We then applied the MFD 2.0 care dictionary to the 54 transcripts and estimated a logistic regression model predicting high versus low care, with MFD care scores as the focal predictor, controlling for word count and lexical complexity. To mitigate class imbalance and enhance generalizability, we created a balanced training set ($n = 32$; 16 high, 16 low). On the held-out test set ($n = 22$), the model achieved 90% overall accuracy and a balanced accuracy of 92.9%. It demonstrated strong sensitivity (85.7%) and perfect specificity (100%) for detecting high ethics of care responses, with a precision (positive predictive value) of 100% and a negative predictive value of 75%. The model's area under the curve was .90, indicating strong discriminatory ability, and Cohen's κ was .78, reflecting substantial agreement beyond chance. For context, similar efforts to classify moral constructs from natural language (e.g., Garten et al., 2018; Schwartz et al., 2013) typically achieve 70%–80% accuracy, which is considered robust when benchmarked against human-coded psychological ratings. By exceeding these thresholds, our results provide strong evidence that the MFD 2.0 care dictionary validly captures the ethics of care in natural language.

(Appendices continue)

Appendix B

Linguistic Inputs for Ethics of Care Measurement and Policy Classification Models

Feature	Ethics of care measure	Constructive/combative classifier
Method	Dictionary-based (<i>MFD 2.0</i>)	Supervised machine learning (random forest with TF-IDF + sentiment)
Tool	LIWC 2022 with <i>MFD 2.0</i>	Custom classifier using syuzhet sentiment + TF-IDF
Linguistic features	Predefined words related to care (e.g., nurture, protect, compassion, empathy)	Automatically weighted <i>n</i> grams, sentiment valence (e.g., rebuild, escalate, punish, collaborate)
Source	Moral foundations theory (Graham et al., 2009)	Hand-labeled sample of 240 policy proposals
Outcome	Continuous ethics of care score per speaker session	Binary label: Constructive or combative policy proposal
Overlap	None	Binary label: Constructive or combative policy proposal

Note. This table highlights the methodological and linguistic distinction between the ethics of care expression score and the constructive/combative policy classifier. These measures were derived from separate algorithms, with no overlapping dictionaries or keyword sets. This separation strengthens the inference that observed effects are not artifacts of shared language features. *MFD 2.0* = *Moral Foundations Dictionary for Linguistic Analyses 2.0*; TF-IDF = term frequency-inverse document frequency; LIWC = Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count.

Appendix C

Defining and Distinguishing Communal, Ethical, and Ethical Care Leadership

Part I: Definitions of Communal and Communal Leadership

To illustrate the conceptual overlap among human-centered leadership approaches, we report 19 definitions of communal and communal leadership (see Table C1). Communal (Bakan, 1966; Eagly & Karau, 2002) emphasizes warmth, social connectivity, and participation in shared activities and is often linked to the instrumental benefits of relationships such as support, feedback, and opportunity (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). As Table C1 shows, communal has been variously defined as traits (e.g., kind, sensitive), behaviors (e.g., participatory decision making), ethical qualities (e.g., fairness), and even emotional dispositions (e.g., sensitivity). This definitional breadth demonstrates overlap with—but conceptual distinction from—ethics of care leadership (ECL), which centers specifically on care as a moral obligation, independent of whether leaders seek connection, harmony, or reciprocal exchange.

Leaders high in ECL may or may not engage in relationship building yet still act to protect and support others because they see care as the right thing to do. For example, leaders might voice concern for civilians affected by war without any intention of cultivating relational closeness, or advocates for the homeless may act out of moral conviction rather than social affiliation. In high-strength crisis contexts such as the present research, this distinction becomes particularly salient: Leaders' influence derives not from their social skills or communal ties but from enacting a moral compass of care.

Part II: Distinction Between Communal Qualities and ECL

The communal behavior dictionary (Pietraszkiewicz et al., 2019) includes terms like friendly, polite, fair, and loyal—language centered on social cohesion. The ethics of care moral virtue dictionary (Frimer et al., 2019) includes words like alleviate, nurture, rescue, safeguard, protect, and comforted—words that emphasize caregiving, healing, and responsive moral action. Notably, all 49 words in the communal dictionary were included in the ethics of care dictionary; however, communal words accounted for only 27% of the ethics of

care dictionary. The overlap captures a common prosocial concern, but the ethics of care dictionary included 140 words not in the communal behavior dictionary, demonstrating it is a broader, separate construct.

Part III: Distinction Between Ethical Leadership and ECL

The two constructs were orthogonal ($r \approx 0$, $p = .999$). When modeled separately, both predicted greater odds of constructive policy suggestions, though the effect of ECL was stronger (ECL $OR = 1.19$, $p < .001$; EL $OR = 1.10$, $p = .003$). When included simultaneously, both were significant, but adding ECL to an EL-only model improved fit more strongly ($\Delta\chi^2 = 21.9$, $p < .001$) than adding EL to an ECL-only model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 9.0$, $p = .003$). These results indicate that ECL is not reducible to generic ethical rhetoric but captures a distinct, morally grounded mechanism of leadership.

Part IV: Definitions of Ethical Leadership

To illustrate conceptual overlap among human-centered leadership approaches, Part II synthesizes definitions of ethical leadership, drawing on existing authoritative reviews (e.g., Den Hartog, 2015). One of the most highly cited articles on ethical leadership by Brown et al. (2005) defines it as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.” The authors go on to state that “ethical leaders model conduct that followers consider to be normatively appropriate.” Brown et al. (2005) acknowledged that “normatively appropriate” is deliberately vague because it is context dependent, which has contributed to definitional flexibility in the literature. This vagueness contrasts with ECL, though, where the guiding principle—care for others—is more specific and morally grounded. Moreover, this definition highlights two other contrasts with ECL. First, ethical leadership locates ethics in the eyes of followers, whereas ECL centers on a leader's own moral obligation to care. Second, ethical

(Appendices continue)

Table C1
Definitions of Communion/Communality Relating to Leadership Styles or Leader Behaviors

Source	Conceptualized	Operationalized
Eagly & Johnson (1990)	"...selfless and concerned with others (e.g., kind, helpful, understanding, warm, sympathetic, aware of other's feelings)" (p. 236)	"...behave democratically and allow subordinates to participate in decision making" (p. 236)
Moskowitz et al. (1994)	"Communion would be expressed in strivings for intimacy, union and solidarity with a social or spiritual entity, and communality would be partly reflected in frequent agreeable behaviors and infrequent quarrelsome behaviors" (p. 753)	"Quarrelsomeness was subtracted from agreeableness to create the communion variable" (p. 756)
Rudman & Glick (2001)	"kind, thoughtful, and sensitive to others' feelings" (p. 744)	"Five communal traits (communal, cooperative, supportive, kinship-oriented, and connected)" (p. 751)
Eagly and Karau (2002)	"Communal characteristics...describe primarily a concern with the welfare of other people—for example, affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant, and gentle." (p. 574)... "....a style that was friendly, considerate, and supportive..." (p. 584)	N/A – Not an empirical article
Scott & Brown (2006)	"...the female communal/expressive stereotype refers to an interpersonally sensitive orientation in which the individual is both concerned for the welfare of others and their connection to others... helpful, kind, and sympathetic, as well as motivated by stronger needs for nurturance, affiliation, and succorance" (p. 232).	From Appendix A: "Caring, always shows concern for the well-being of the team, goes beyond self-interest for the good of the employees. Sensitive. Even when the employees do not communicate that they're upset, it is still perceived. Is responsive to the feelings of employees at work. Honest, always makes sure that credit is not taken for employees' good ideas. Is always upfront with subordinates. Understanding. Encourages employees to approach if a problem arises. Listens when subordinates are having a personal conflict. Compassionate. Extends employee deadlines when they have important family commitments. In a personal crisis gives time off to employees. Sympathetic. Is accommodating when family emergencies arise. Expresses concern with subordinates that are going through difficult times" (p. 240-241)
Abele & Wojciszke (2007)	"...primarily related to the interests of others...cover striving to integrate the self in a larger social unit through caring... respect the interests of this observing other and should be benevolent, trustworthy, friendly, and empathetic...other-profitability." (p. 752)...	"...we included traits considered most typical for communion... For example, the instructions for communion read: Communion means an orientation to people, focus on interpersonal contacts and relationships, striving for being included into a community, and for remaining a member of this community" (p. 754)
Heilman & Okimoto (2007)	"...exhibiting nurturing and socially sensitive attributes that demonstrate concern for others, such as being kind, sympathetic, and understanding." (p. 81)	Vignette that described the communal manager as "an involved manager who is caring and sensitive to their needs. She emphasizes the importance of having a supportive work environment and has been commended for her efforts to promote a positive community." (p. 83) The other communal condition stated: "someone is tough, yet understanding and concerned about others. She is known to encourage cooperation and helpful behavior, and has worked hard to increase her employees' sense of belonging."
Rosette & Tost (2010)	"Communal leadership behaviors and approaches, such as individualized consideration and inspirational motivation ... kind, helpful, concerned, and sympathetic to others' needs," (p. 222)	"In assessing communal characteristics, participants were asked to evaluate the CEO on a number of relational dimensions, including warmth, good nature, friendliness, consideration, caring, and understanding" (p. 225)
Koenig et al., (2011)	"...communal qualities (e.g., nice, compassionate)" (p. 616)	"...participants rated leaders (or managers) on two multi-item scales, typically the masculine and feminine scales of the Bem Sex Role Inventory.... Communal personality traits, such as affectionate, compassionate, warm, and gentle."
Heilman (2012)	"...denote concern for others (e.g., kind, caring, considerate, affiliative tendencies (e.g., warm, friendly, collaborate, reference (e.g., obedient, respectful, self-effacing) and emotional sensitivity (e.g., perceptive, intuitive, understanding)" (p. 115)	N/A – not an empirical paper

(table continues)

Table C1 (continued)

Source	Conceptualized	Operationalized
Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2014)	"Communal behaviors involve actions that are friendly , other-oriented and emotionally expressive . They tend to foster social relationships, nurture others' growth and development, and promote others' welfare." (p. 7)	"Communal leadership behaviors encompass democratic/participative ; intellectual stimulation ; relationship-oriented behaviors, including relational behavior, consideration , idealized influence , and individualized consideration ; and ethical leadership , including moral leadership ." (p. 7)
Brosi et al. (2016)	"Communitality is associated with concern for others , for example, being understanding , supportive , and sensitive " (p. 1320)...."	"...participants were asked to describe what they thought the target was like on a series of 9-point bipolar adjectives scales. Perceived communality (understanding , supportive , sensitive)."
Braun et al. (2018)	"Communal attributes... e.g., being helpful , kind , sensitive , gentle...) (p. 130)	"We suggest that all four dimensions of authentic leadership are communal in nature." (p. 133)..." Appendix A indicated trait words for communal in Study 5: " sensitive , communicative , reliable , considerate , understanding , caring , supportive , warm ,"
Pietraszkiewicz et al. (2019)	"Communion refers to a person's striving to be a part of a community , to establish close relationship with others, and to subordinate individuals needs to the common good... communion-oriented individuals experience fulfillment through their relationships with others and their sense of belonging....adjectives such as helpful , understanding , reliable , likable , empathetic , friendly ." (p. 5)	Identified adjectives: " accommodate , aid , appreciate , assist , ally , buddy , caring , chat , civil , courteous , compassion , converse , cooperate , discuss , educate , empathy , family , forgive , generous , help , honest , hospitality , impartial , kind , lawful , polite , love , open-minded , participate , relationship , sacrifice , selfless , share , support , teach , together , trust , unity "
Cucchi et al., (2021)	"communal characteristics (i.e., relationship skills , care and hospitality)" (p. 3) ...	"Participants rated three adjectives each for the communality dimension (honest , sensible , empathetic)" (p. 5)
Anglin et al. (2022)	" nurturing , friendliness ... trustworthiness ... displaying sensitivity to followers' needs ..." (p. 17)	N/A – not an empirical paper
Tremmel & Wahl, (2023)	"...affectionate, helpful , kind , sympathetic , interpersonally sensitive, nurturant , and gentle" (p. 2)	Adjectives from Peabody (1985) "National characteristics." Not described which adjectives were considered communal, except " empathy ." (p. 11)
Heilman et al. (2024)	"Communion, a set of attributes.... encompasses kindness and concern for others sociable , relationship oriented , helpful , sensitive , nurturing , affectionate , and sympathetic (communal)" (p. 167)	N/A – not an empirical paper
Ponce de Leon & Bailey, (2025)	"Communitality refers to an interpersonal orientation defined by concern for others and includes traits such as trustworthiness , fairness , and open-mindedness[communitality] relates to largely other-focused traits that emphasize social cohesion , interpersonal connection and warmth " (p. 2)	Used the communion text dictionary from Pietraszkiewicz et al. (2019) in Study 1, 86 communal adjectives for Study 2, including " accepting , affectionate , agreeable , altruistic, attached, belonging, benevolent, care-taking, caring , cheerful, civil, close, communal, communicative , compassionate , compromising , connected, conscientious, considerate, cooperative , dependable, dependent, dutiful, easygoing, enthusiastic, equal , fair , far-minding, faithful, family-oriented, flexible, forgiving , friendly , generous, gentle, good, good-natured, goodhearted, gracious, harmonious, helpful , honest , hospitable , humble, influential , interdependent, interpersonal, just , kind , loving, loyal, loyalty, moral, nice, nurturing , obliging, open-minded, optimistic, patient, pleasant, polite, popular, reasonable, reliable, respectful, self-sacrificing, selfless, sensitive, sincere, sociable, social, supportive , sympathetic , talkative, team player, thoughtful, tolerant, trusting, trustworthy, truthful , understanding , universal, warm , welcoming , well-mannered, wise"... Study 5 presents highly communal as: "reasonable, understanding , and nurturing " and " compassionate , just , warm " (p. 10)

Note. Trait adjectives are highlighted in blue (personal descriptors), behaviors are highlighted in green (functional, observable actions), motivational needs/interpersonal drives are highlighted in bright blue, moral/ethical terms are highlighted in purple, emotional sensitivity terms are in red (flags emotional attachment dimension), words presented in bold words are common across many definitions, and ambiguous terms are highlighted in gray where meanings communality. N/A = not an empirical article. See the online article for the color version of this table.

leadership is inherently relative to normative standards that can shift across groups, cultures, and religions, while ECL rests on a consistent moral responsibility to protect and promote others' welfare.

This emphasis on normative comparison is even more explicit in Boss's (2014) definition of ethical leadership as "a set of standards established by a particular group and imposed on members ... to regulate and set limits on their behavior" (p. 5). By contrast, ECL is not contingent on group standards but enacted from a moral compass of care, even when doing so is unpopular or inconvenient.

Beyond these general definitions, Den Hartog's (2015) review highlighted how ethical leadership has been stretched across an expansive array of descriptors, spanning traits, behaviors, cognition, and decision processes. Indeed, the review catalogs terms are the following (pp. 411–414): "character/integrity," "ethical awareness," "community/people orientation," "motivating," "encouraging," "empowering," "managerial ethical accountability," "acting fairly and

honestly," "demonstrating consistency and integrity," "promoting ethical conduct in others," "allowing voice," "sharing power to be ethical leader behaviors," "rewarding ethical conduct" "role clarification," "obligation to do what is known to be right and truthful," "leader fairness," "setting ethical expectations," "principled decision making," "character," and "listening to follower ideas." This litany underscores the definitional sprawl of ethical leadership. Rather than anchoring on a single moral value, as ECL does with care, ethical leadership has come to encompass a broad set of positively valenced descriptors, diluting its construct clarity.

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