



Empathy and leadership in an organizational environment

Trabajo de grado

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Glossary

Empathy: It's the multidimensional ability which allows people to: Comprehend the ideas and perspective of others (cognitive empathy), relate to other feelings (affective empathy), and do decision taking that decrease suffering (compassionate empathy). This emotion is the core of human centered decision making, good communication, and trust in organizational contexts (Davis,1983).

Empathetic Leadership: A style of leadership where managers apply empathy into: decision making, communication, and interpersonal interactions. An empathetic leader is known for carefully listen, identify emotions, and apply his knowledge to: encourage their work force, treating others fairly, and offering constructive feedback. It can be described as a strategic approach that improves performance, creativity, moral behavior, and team cohesion (Gentry, Weber, & Sadri, 2016).

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB): Employees' efforts that go above/beyond their obligations and support the organization's operations, things like: Assisting coworkers, imparting expertise, or safeguarding company assets. OCB usually happen on environments where leaders exhibit: empathy, justice, and interpersonal attention. This encourages a sense of reciprocity. (buscar concepto tecnico) (Boyatzis, Smith, & Beveridge, 2017).

Psychological Safety: The sensation that there is a safe space for interpersonal risk taking this means people can: ask questions, make mistakes, or suggest new ideas without worrying about being ridiculed, punished, or excluded. Workers are more open to: communicate honestly, work together, and take part honestly, work together, and take part in

learning/innovation processes when they feel valued and understood (Edmondson, 1999).

Resumen

La empatía puede ser descrita como un concepto central de las teorías contemporáneas de liderazgo, mostrando el cambio en los modelos basados en la autoridad que ahora tienen enfoques más relacionales y centrados en las personas. Este estudio examina el papel del “liderazgo empático” como la capacidad que integra: La toma de perspectiva cognitiva, la resonancia afectiva y la acción compasiva. Con los hallazgos provenientes de la neurociencia, la inteligencia emocional y el comportamiento organizacional, esta investigación sostiene que la empatía no constituye solo una habilidad interpersonal, sino un impulsor del desempeño organizacional. Mediante una revisión integradora de estudios empíricos en diversos sectores el artículo analiza cómo el liderazgo empático fortalece la calidad de las relaciones dentro de su organización, mejora la seguridad psicológica y fomenta climas para el aprendizaje y la colaboración.

Palabras Claves

Empatía, Liderazgo, Sostenibilidad, Líder empático

Abstract

Empathy can be described as the main concept on contemporary leadership theories reflecting the shift from authority based models to more relational and people centered approaches. This study examines the “empathic leadership” as a manager with the capacity to integrate its cognitive perspective taking, affective resonance, and compassionate action. Learning from findings from neuroscience, emotional intelligence, and organizational behavior, this research argues why empathy is not merely an interpersonal skill but a main aspect of organizational performance. Through an integrative review of multiple studies across various sectors the article analyzes how empathetic leadership strengthens the quality of relationships within an organization, enhances psychological safety, and fosters climates conducive to learning and collaboration.

Key Words

Empathy, Leadership, Sustainable, Empathetic leadership

1. Introduction

During the 21 centuries, leadership has come across a deep transformation. The organizational image of the leader as a source of authority (someone who directs, supervises and evaluates performance from the distance). In the present it gradually became a more relational and participatory concept, this because of modern organizations (changed by globalization, digitalization, and social interdependence). Thus, to allow this change leaders needed not only to be able to create efficient systems but also being able to understand human dynamics. There are many skills needed for allowing this change upon a leader, but “empathy” has been identified as one if not the most decisive and complex of this set of skills (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017; Kim, 2020; Riess, 2017). Not only seen as an emotional disposition towards your peers, but empathy also start to be understood as core of the leadership effectiveness, by supporting innovation, collaboration, ethics and organizational resilience.

We can describe empathy as the ability to understand and perceive perspectives, needs and emotions in others and it also allows us to respond in way that respects those feelings. It works as a *cognitive process* (interpreting and predicting others) and as an *affective process* (resonating emotionally with other feelings). When both empathy types combine with the will of act, it becomes “*compassionate empathy*”, the component which transforms perception into a supportive behavior (Goetz et al., 2010). Based on Decety and Jackson (2006), the 3 forms of empathy (cognitive, affective, and compassionate) form the multidimensional structure of empathy. Nowadays its recognize that an effective leader should have all the 3 types. If you as a leader can feel deeply but without analysis, you’ll probably would be overwhelmed but if you make cold analyzes of others it might be understood as manipulative. It’s the task of the leader to find

balance between: Thought, emotion and ethics in our actions.

If we go deeper into neuroscientific terms, being empathic is a task which involves ours. Bottom up and top down processes:

- **Bottom up:** Is a mechanism driven by what is called “emotional contagion”. This allows an individual to resonate with their peers’ feelings.
- **Top down:** Regulated by the prefrontal regions of the brain it allows to take others perspective and regulate our emotions. (Decety & Meyer, 2008; Shamay Tsory, 2011)

By integrating both this supports emotional stability and moral reasoning, which are basic characteristics for leadership. Therefore, empathy it’s not only a quality needed for the creation of interpersonal relationships but also to self regulate or judged, making leaders trustworthy even under pressure.

It’s interesting how nowadays when the academic literature has become more interested in empathy the leadership theory is still evolving. Some theories such as the “Trait” and “Behavioral” theories are more focused on authority, productivity and control. On the other hand, we have more contemporary approaches like “transformational leadership” and “emotional intelligence” which place human connection as their core (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Cherniss, 2010; Goleman, 1995). The so called “Transformational leaders” are known for inspiring their co workers firstly by consider each one as an individual with his own traits, problems, and aspirations. What we called “emotional intelligence” includes empathy as one of the main parts of relationship management (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). This allows that empathy works as

mechanism which transform managing goals into collective interest. It's the glue that keeps teams together, assuring good communication between manager and employee.

We can also observe how empathy is able to give individuals a feel of “psychological safety”, the mutual feel of fear in social life situations, such as admitting a mistake, ask a question, or thinking challenging ideas (Edmondson, 1999). The lack of empathy has as consequence, employees who conceal mistakes and missing creativity. When a leader can respond in an empathic way, listening without ridicule, and showing interest in their employee's wellbeing, they perceive it's safe to speak in an honest matter and experiment in the work area. This feeling of safety is crucial for organizational learning, adaptability and innovation (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Empathy is no just a moral quality; it is a crucial one. It's the one factor which determinates the flow of information and emotions in an organization.

If we dig deeper, we can see how empirical research supports the correlation between empathy and effective leadership. Sadri et al. (2011) made a study across 38 countries and discover that empathy had a positive relationship with leadership performance, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Sadri et al. (2011) then demonstrated that leaders with high empathy obtain superior results in coaching, team building and communication. Kim (2020) made a meta analytic review for confirm that empathy is the explanation of a significant amount of the variance on leadership success. Both studies mentioned highlight empathy as a core trait, and it can be a quantifiable predictor of leadership effectiveness.

Ramachandran et al. (2023) discover that practices as “compassionate leadership”, are extensions of empathic practices on the organization. This reduces burnouts from their employees and assure their wellbeing. Wibowo and Paramita (2021) saw this apply in manufacturing companies, reducing turnover intentions, when employees feel respected and heard they end up

with a higher organizational commitment, creativity and resilience.

As we stated before, empathy is key for good communication flow in an organization. Not only for reducing conflict and strengthens ethics on the workspace, but also empathic leaders are also more likely to take transparent and fair decisions, thereby reinforcing perceptions of procedural justice (Cropanzano & Stein, 2009). This perception influence trust in our employees, consequently augmenting the organization retention rate. Empathy also encourages “*Organizational citizenship behaviors*” or OCB which are prosocial actions like: Helping your colleagues and sharing knowledge to maintain cooperation (Organ, 1998). But there are more measurable outcomes from empathy in organizations besides productivity or level of innovation. Some organizations consider empathy an individual virtue that is usually under valuating and denye as a strategic advantage. However, the evidence shows the opposite, due to empathy capacity to combine rational decision taking and operational effectiveness.

This helps managers to identify burnout signals in their employees, detect conflict and recognized opportunities of inclusion. As mentioned by Riess (2017), empathy is not a sign of softness, it’s a core trait for understanding human behavior.

Because of empathy multidimensional nature and their proven effects, this document aims to demonstrate how empathy has a positive correlation with organizational success. The document its divided in 4 main topics: Empathic leadership (how empathy shapes influence and motivation), Innovation and creativity (how empathy fosters safe and imaginative environments); Ethics, Prosociality and people centric styles (when empathy centers in moral and sustainable leadership); and Measurement approaches (how empathy as a trait can be measure in organizations).

Each of the sections will combine both theoretical and empirical findings to prove that empathy is not only a human virtue but also an organizational resource.

During this whole paper we will link the rational and emotional areas of management, to explain how with the combination of both leaders not only analyze their organization success with data or strategy. Instead, it can be measured with lived experience of our co-workers, making empathy the main source of trust, collaboration and an engine for innovation. In nowadays corporate world uncertainty and interdependence define success, but the ability to resonate and understand others is not an option anymore is a main feature in modern leadership.

2. Empathetic Leadership

The first concept we will study is “empathetic leadership”, it refers to the manager's capacity to perceive, interpret and respond to the emotional states of their peers. Thanks to the empathetic leadership the leader can promote trust, engagement, and shared meaning (Gentry, Weber, & Sadri, 2016). We can separate this type of leadership from “Transactional leadership” because this style of leadership focuses on control, compliance and extrinsic rewards. While empathetic leadership has a more relational focus, achieving commitment through the understanding of all the members of the team rather than authority. This style of leadership aims to change the paradigm of interpreting empathy as a passive feeling for a response to maintain dignity and motivation among employees. The theoretical background for empathetic leadership combines insights of transformational leadership and emotional intelligence. The transformational leadership style was created by Bass and Avolio (1994), it defines 4 dimensions: Idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (this dimension relies on

empathy). It's a need that leaders can recognize their employee's needs, strengths and aspirations to offer guidance and feedback tailored to every individual growth. We can say that empathy is the main mechanism which makes transformational leadership a reality, by allowing leaders to connect emotionally while inspiring change.

We can observe a similar relationship in the emotional intelligence framework made by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and popularized by Goleman (1995), both documents state empathy as key asset of social awareness and relationship management. Emotional intelligence (we will call it EI to summarize it) is based on self awareness, self regulation, social skills, and empathy, is correct to say empathy works as a bridge which combines intrapersonal with interpersonal intelligence. By being self aware of your own emotions your able to be sensitive towards your peers' feelings. Leaders which count empathy as one of their main skills are better equipped to communicate and manage conflict, being able to build more cohesive teams (Cherniss, 2010). On real world scenarios, empathy makes easier decision making by allowing leaders to evaluate not only the results of their team but also the human consequences.

Going on a more neuroscientific approach, evidence explain how empathy works in both cognitive and affective process. Decety and Meyer (2008) demonstrated that empathy involves an integration of both neural systems, one is associated with emotional resonance, and the other one is more about an executive control and moral reasoning. This process explains why good leaders can emotionally attuned with their co workers without getting overwhelmed. They basically can share other emotion while maintaining their composure due their prefrontal regulation. Empathy can be described as a regulated way of compassion guided by self awareness and restraint (Riess, 2017). This regulation can differentiate mature empathic leadership from emotional contagion/sympathy.

The impact empathy has on the leader in different organizational relationships is the most consistent finding in organizational literature. There is a concept called “High empathy strengths leader member exchange (LMX)”, is the ability to have a complex relationship as a manager with each of the members of a company. In Kellett, Humphrey, and Sleeth (2006) investigation it was shown that empathy can be used to predict the quality of the LMX, which is useful to measure the performance and satisfaction of a team. When employees feel understood, they reciprocate it with initiative and loyalty. Kim (2020) concludes in her meta analysis that empathy is a significant portion on the variance in leadership effectiveness, no matter the cultural or industrial context. In other words, empathy transforms formal authority in relational influence.

There's another way in which empathy combines with leadership outcomes is through the sensation of safety. An empathic leader is more into taking interpersonal risks, like questioning assumptions, marking errors, or even proposing new ideas; this can be explained by the vision that mistakes are tools of learning rather than failures (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). The feeling of psychological safety assures collaboration and innovation. When people have a sense of emotional safety, they use more of their cognitive energy into creating and problem solving, instead of thinking ways to protect their self from others. Cause empathy not only promotes wellbeing but boost team performance.

In our concept of empathetic leadership, we can also find how this one got influence on our ethical behavior. When a leader understands better his co workers emotional state he is also more aware of the human implications of their actions. Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017) said that empathy also has a moral sense purpose, by avoiding leaders from rationalizing unethical conduct or objectifying their employees. Through empathy is possible to support procedural and interactional justice by maintaining a transparent and respectful communication (Cropanzano & Stein, 2009).

This illusion of fairness assures trust and commitment, creating a cycle of cooperation in an organization.

Like mention before tons of research supports the universality of the effects of empathy on leadership. Like Sadri, Weber, and Gentry (2011) study that showed the world the positive correlation between empathy and leadership in 38 nations. Or Ramachandran et al. (2023) who demonstrate that compassionate leadership with empathy as the core end up in supportive actions which reduce the burnout of employees and improve talent retention. This articles just confirm the real impact of empathy by transcending cultural boundaries and different types of organizations, working as a universal human factor for effectiveness on a leadership process.

If we analyze it under the behavioral lenses, empathy can be seen in little behaviors which are noticeable and easy to replicate. Riess (2017) found out the main practices of empathic communication:

1. Maintaining eye contact
2. Have an attentive posture
3. Congruent facial expressions
4. An appropriate tone
5. Responsive verbal cues

The leaders that can replicate these actions show their employees: respect, validation and emotional availability; in the long term these actions create an atmosphere of trust. On the other hand, we have the leaders that fail, doing things like:

1. Interrupting others
2. Minimizing concerns
3. Having defensively reactions

This has a consequence the creation of a climate recognized by fear and disengagement.

Factors like gender and culture also affect how empathy operates. Sadri et al. (2011) was able to see how in collaborator cultures, empathy promote cohesion and harmony, but in individualistic cultures authenticity and personal growth were more encourage. Some studies even suggest that a female leader usually display higher empathy and is more relationally orientated (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This comparison isn't meant to show superiority rather is a proof of diversity in the practice of empathy. Empathetic leadership adapts its communication flow based on its context but maintaining its authenticity.

More importantly, empathy like any other skill can be developed, there are programs focused on EI, mindfulness and perspective taking, showing improvements on leader's empathy accuracy and communication skills (Boyatzis, Smith, & Beveridge, 2017; Chermis, 2010). This training methods rely on self reflection and feedback to teach leaders to regulate their emotional response and practice their active listening. When empathy improve, the outcomes do it as well on employee satisfaction, innovation, and ethical behavior.

3. Innovation and Creativity

Empathy on leadership is not just visible on empathetic leadership; it's also like we started to mention before a source of fuel for creativity and innovation capacity on organizations. Innovation blooms in emotion secure environments where people are safe to make questions, share ideas and take risks. As argue on the last section of the article, empathy creates a sense of psychological safety which is key for employees to act (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). It permits leaders to understand the emotional state of its team and respond in a way that turns anxiety into curiosity. By doing so, empathy can be a catalyst of innovation, converting emotional awareness into collective discovery and learning.

The role of empathy on creativity and innovation can be divided in 2 interconnected mechanisms:

- **Cognitive flexibility:** It allows leaders to analyze diverse perspectives and adjusting them into new problem frames. By understanding different perspectives towards a problems leaders have a broader data base for act creatively. (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon Thomas, 2010)
- **Affective connection:** Sustains the motivation to work as a team by working on emotional bonds based on mutual respect. By doing this people feel valued and understood, making them more likely to share ideas and persist after failure. (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon Thomas, 2010)

In simpler words, empathy share both intellectual and emotional materials for the creative collaboration inside organizations.

These mechanisms are support on consistent research. Ma, Lui, and Huang (2024) found that in order that empathetic leadership was able to promote innovative behavior by increasing the employee's capacity of adaptability by learning new skills. Adaptability is a mediator for empathy and creativity, leaders that support their team members will boost their confidence and willingness to experiment. Kock, and Nilsson (2019) demonstrate that by applying the empathetic leadership style on organization managers combine knowledge sharing with feedback sharing, which are some of the first steps of innovation. When empathy is part of a leader skill set, team members notice it on the constructively feedback, this reduces defensive behaviors and accelerates improvement. This confirms that empathy isn't only mere interpersonal skill but a structural part of the creative performance.

We can observe that the relation between innovation and empathy is clear in design thinking and human centered innovation. Bronw (2018) make emphasis on the fact that the first part of design thinking process is "empathize", which means understand the experience, emotions and needs of our subordinates. Thanks to empathy is possible to identify unarticulated needs which data by itself can't capture. Think in the design of a product or a delivery service, by analyzing it with empathic lenses is possible to uncover frustrations or desires sometimes clients don't say out loud. Empathy ensure that every creative solution seems relevant, ethical, and sustainable. It transforms innovation from a technical process to a more deeply human centered.

The impact empathy has on the way creativity works inside a group dynamics and motivation is interesting too. The psychological safety is the push members look to speak up, but without empathy those interventions wouldn't be heard or valued. The leaders who hear actively,

validate different perspectives creating a sense of inclusion that every idea regardless of the rank of the member of the organization who share it can end up as a reality. This creates cognitive diversity on the group, increasing likelihood of innovation (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Empathy sustain motivation, employees look to innovate not because it's part of their tasks, but because a feeling of connection, of sharing purpose and trust their leader (Cherniss, 2010; Kim, 2020).

Another key factor is "Prosocial motivation". Mafriningsianti, Nugroho, and Zulkifli (2025) made a systematic review that linked empathy with ethics and organizational creativity. Their conclusion was that empathic leaders foster prosocial motivation a desire to helps in others wellbeing this can be explain into innovation that seek to be socially beneficial and ethical. When companies make innovations thinking in taking care of their clients and communities instead of only thinking about profits, creativity gains a moral depth. This prevents innovation to turn into exploitative or detached from a moral code. This means empathy not only backs up innovation, but it also humanizes it by guarantying creativity with ethical responsibility.

There is another neurological perspective that says the influence empathy has on creativity is cause by the neural overlap between cognitive and emotional networks. Decety and Meyer (2008) said that the empathic exercise activates the limbic structures related to emotion and the prefrontal areas that are related to reasoning and planning. This combines both cognitive flexibility and the skill to connect unrelated ideas in order to solve problems. When a manager uses the empathetic thinking their able to teach their teams how to integrate their emotions with reason. The result encourages: curiosity, tolerance, and imagination this allows innovation to bloom.

On real world scenarios we can see how an empathetic leader support creativity in his

behaviors. Firstly, the leader will frame mistake as learning opportunities instead of failures. This point of view makes experimentation a calm task and accelerates iteration. Then is possible to observe a reflective dialogue with questions like “What can we learn from this experience?” instead of looking for someone to blame. Lastly, they manage the balance between challenge and support, by pushing their team to have an unframed thinking while assuring a safe space to commit mistakes. All these conducts reduce our cognitive load (feeling of fear or uncertainty) increasing the energy for creative thinking.

The relationship between innovation and empathy goes beyond teams into the strategic level of a company. Institutions that use empathy on their design process, feedback systems and their organizational culture usually stand out their competitors in the areas of creativity and adaptability. On this instance, organizations like IDEO or Google known for their empathic design cultivate collaboration between different areas and encourage being emotional open. This is explained by Brown (2018) with his concept “human centered innovation”, that shows how empathy can be seen as a strategic advantage.

More important when an innovation is based on empathy rather than only seek for a good performance it looks to be sustainability. When innovation understand the weight both societal and environmental stakeholders it’s easier to predict the ethical and ecological implications, avoiding public relations scandals. On times of social accountability and environmental urgency, empathetic leadership has added values and inclusion to their skill set (Hoffman,2000; Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017).

But we can’t deny the challenges that empathy has on his role in innovation. If a leader gets too emotionally involved it might have therefore compassion fatigue, this means leaders must regulate their empathy to keep the balance on sensitivity and objectivity (Decety & Meyer, 2008).

When leaders practice mindfulness and emotion regulation is easier to maintain an empathic engagement without burnout (Wibowo & Paramita, 2021). Nowadays organizations should confirm that empathy is not a trait of some individuals, but a core part of culture, policy and design.

4.Ethics, Pro sociality, and People Centric Styles

But empathy not only drives innovation and collaboration in organizations, but it also influenced deeply the moral valuer of an institution. Ethics and pro sociality not only come from already existing moral codes, but it can also be recognized in the emotional capacity of leaders to recognize other points of view as a human values exercise. Empathy is able to change moral from an abstract concept into something tangible, this as consequence makes ethics tangible too and possible to practice in our daily life (Hoffman, 2000). Empathetic leaders interpret ethical dilemmas not as a logical puzzle but as human experience. This ability of moral comprehension helps them to evaluate the consequences of their actions with sensitivity in order it goes beyond calculations.

Empathy is the emotional foundation for practicing ethical leadership. By fostering moral awareness, it allows leaders to image the consequences of their choices to prevent harm in their projects. Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017) talks about this idea with the term “Emotional foresight”, the capacity of anticipating the emotional outcome of every decision. When the manager thinks how his decisions might affect the emotional state of an employee or in how the community might react to environmental negligence. This is how empathy converts risk management in moral responsibility. When empathy is present ethical reasoning becomes human and preventative,

without it is detached and procedural.

Through empathy it's possible to mitigate "moral disengagement" a psychological process where individuals rationalize unethical actions depersonalizing others (Bandura, 1999). When leaders consider the emotional consequences on others because of their decisions, are leaders less likely to use phrases like "it's not personal, it's just business", this prevents dehumanization and exploitation.

An outcome of empathy in the ethics lenses is the "Organizational citizenship behaviors" or OCB, actions that maintain cooperation further formal duties (Organ, 1988). When an employee notice empathy from his manager it's most likely that the individual will go beyond their role tasks and assist other by mentoring new members of the organization and protecting the brand reputation. Cropanzano and Stein (2009) discover that the perception of empathy and fairness can predict OCB, especially when people feel seen and respected. That's when they'll reciprocate through commitment and effort. This strengthens cohesion and productivity, demonstrating that ethical leadership has as outcomes measurable organizational benefits.

The perception of justice also improves thanks to empathy. The concept of fairness in a company is divided in 3 dimensions: Fairness of outcomes, fairness of processes and fairness of interpersonal treatment. Leaders that can communicate their decisions following the EI principles uphold employee's dignity even on hard situations (Cropanzano & Stein, 2009). This leadership style reduce resentment and promotes trust in the integrity management.

The "Servant leadership" a concept/leadership style named by Greenleaf (1977), focus on service instead of authority. The servant leader gives priority to his subordinate's wellbeing and the development of the community; empathy allows leaders to sense their teams needs before they can name them. Greenleaf thought that empathy was essential for "the natural feel of wanting to

serve”. On real world situations a servant leader will listen and remove obstacles to form and environment safe for the development of the members of his team.

Another perspective is the “Authentic leadership”, shared by Avolio and Gardner (2005), it relies of empathy specifically on relational transparency and balanced processing. The Authentic leader is self aware of his values and likes to receive feedback. They connect with their followers’ perspectives but maintaining their integrity and moral compass. The exercise of keeping authenticity and understand others produce a notion of credibility. By doing this empathy becomes the catalyzer for personal integrity and social connection.

There is also a most recent concept “Compassionate leadership”, which makes empathy bright its fullest. The compassionate leader goes further in understanding and feeling others’ emotions, it takes hands into matter using empathy as the base to comfort others to enable growth. Ramachandran et al. (2023) proof that compassionate leadership can improve employee’s wellbeing by reducing their burnout and encouraging in them organizational commitment, sectors like education and healthcare compassion really makes the difference by transforming the workplace culture from survival to support. Compassionate leaders show the practical potential of empathy used as a strategy for human sustainability.

For coaching empathy is also need, by using compassion in a leadership development approach it’s possible to focus on helping people to understand their professional and personal potential thanks to empathic dialogue. Boyatzis, Smith and Beveridge (2017) found that coaching with compassion is better than compliance, this leads to deeper learning and changes on behaviors. With compassionate coaching it’s possible to perceive improvements on self efficacy and motivation, proving empathy is not only satisfying but effective for develop other skills. Thanks to this approach, empathy is both pedagogical tool and a mechanism of ethical growth.

Empathy goes beyond its influence on ethics or pro sociality it also affects genders and cultures. For example, in collaboration cultures, empathy improve harmony, shared responsibility and community, on the other hand (individualistic cultures) it also supports authenticity and mutual respect (Sadri, Webber, & Gentry, 2011). Eagly and Carli (2007) notice that female leaders count with better empathic accuracy and relation orientation, these traits helped to form inclusive and participatory organizational climates. Even though this shows more socialization rather than an innate ability; we can place under the spotlight the capacity for adapting empathy in diverse social scenarios. Showing respect and accepting new points of view without changing the leaders core values.

Empathy also contributes to the formation of an ethical climate inside an organization mostly to constituted what is understand as right behavior in a company. Some behaviors from the leader such as: Fairness, attentive listening and moral humility are internalized by the followers causing a cascade effect which combines individual values with collective ones (Hoffman, 2000). With the pass of time by adding moral sensitivity to a company's culture you'll observe how empathy institutionalizes ethics.

But it might experiment challenges. For example, emotional exhaustion (especially on markets which demand high compassion like healthcare o social work), that's why leaders need to be able to regulate their emotions to maintain empathy without getting burnout (Decety & Meyer, 2008). Another risk believe it or not is excessive empathy which might cloud your judgement. For balancing empathy is a most to add compassion by acting helpfully without compromising objectivity or fairness (Riess, 2017). Coaching programs for managers that had mindfulness and EI on their core are proven on maintaining this balance (Cherniss,2010).

5. Measurement Approaches

To convert empathy in a from a concept to an empirically testable variable requires a precise operation. As mentioned in the other sections of the article, empathy in leadership can be seen on: cognitive perspective taking, compassionated actions and affective attunement. If we want to measure empathy and capture all these components, reduce bias and link the results to behavioral criteria that organizations might interest like psychological safety, citizen behavior, innovation or the creation an ethical climate on the workspace. When the basic principle is aligning theory with method, showing empathy is not only multidimensional it's also relational and it should include self report disposition, multisource perceptions and behaviorally indicators (Cherniss, 2010; Boyatzis, Smith, & Beveridge, 2017).

A good starting scale is the "Interpersonal Reactivity Index or IRI", it measures 4 subscales: Empathic concern and Perspective taking (indicators for cognitive and affective empathy) adding Personal distress and Fantasy as auxiliary facets (Davis,1983). IRIS' s strength is its validation story, clear linkage to theory and its adaptability to languages and cultures, this make IRI suitable for academic field studies. However, IRI is a self report instrument which means it is susceptible to social desirability and common method variance. For research it is better to combined with observer rating for approximate how empathy is perceived.

Empathy Quotient or EQ offers an alternative focus on cognitive an affective aspect for everyday empathy (Baron-cohen & Wheelwright, 2004). Because its brevity is useful for larger organizational studies whit multiple constructs making the leght of the survey a constraint. Bur EQ is nos centered on leadership; it captures general tendencies from empathy rather than

leadership behaviors. For it to work correctly is necessary to triangulated with a leadership focused observation.

The 360 degree assessments are particularly attractive on leadership contexts because it's a comparison of self perception with ratings from reports, co workers and managers. For example an emotional competence inventory as well as its successors include empathy within broader awareness and relationship management competencies (Boyatzis, Smith, & Beveridge, 2017; Cherniss, 2010). This measures bias and better reflect relational nature on leadership, because what matters to a team is not how empathic leaders perceive them self, but how empathic they experience to be. When we combine it with self reports like IRI, 360 degree data permits researchers can draw a clearer image of empathic effectiveness.

There also sector scales, for example the "Jefferson scale of empathy or JSE" is originally developed for clinicians but it has been adapted to contexts that require high relational sensitivity. For example, on services settings that demand emotional labor JSE scores usually relate to burnout and quality outcomes, being useful for complementing the research questions based on wellbeing, talent retention and empathy.

We can all agree by now that empathy is not just a disposition is a set of behaviors than can be align with indicators. Short ethnographic observations as well as video coded meetings capture active listening, perspective taking and compassion actions. Aponte Moreno (2020) shows how storytelling can exercise empathic responses that can be describe as reliable. A simple behavioral checklist made by a trained observer can index the frequency of empathic micro behaviors like paraphrasing, fair turn taking and validation. These approaches look for score on observable conducts and facilitate to connect empathy to an outcome like error reporting or conflict de escalation.

For research that looks to prove the correlation between empathic leaders and success is better to use a multi wave design following this structure:

1. Collect empathy measures (IRI and 360 empathy facet)
2. After a maximum of 6 weeks collect mediators like psychological safety and career adaptability (Edmondson, 1999, Ma, Liu, & Huang, 2024).
3. Reunite outcomes like the innovative or organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988; Cropanzano & Stein, 2009).

This separation reduces bias and allows mediation test which are more consistent with the mechanism mention. If resources allow the addition of a brief training or coaching intervention during the mention steps might convert the design in a quasi experiment, allowing pre and post comparisons of empathy.

Source strategy and sampling should be intentional. Prioritize intact teams and dyads over solitary individuals since leadership is by its very nature relational. To approximate performance requirements, gather ratings from peers and subordinates for the focus leader and, if possible, from supervisors. Given cross-cultural variations in display rules and power distance, cultural orientation and hierarchical level should be measured as moderators (Sadri, Weber, & Gentry, 2011). In exploratory analyses, gender should be regarded as a descriptive trait and possible mediator, keeping in mind the literature on inclusive climates and empathic accuracy (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

The previously described mechanisms empathy predicting psychological safety and career adaptability, which in turn predict inventive behavior and citizenship can be tested analytically

using mediation models. When data are nested in teams, hierarchical linear modeling or multilevel structural equation modeling may be suitable to maintain the distinction between team level outcomes and leader level constructs. Verify factor structure when sample size permits, give Cronbach's alpha or omega for each scale, and test measurement invariance when comparing subgroups.

Finally, measurement should support practice rather than only theory. After data collection a summary that highlights 2 or 3 behavioral commitments for improvement, such as scheduling protected time for listening, using reflective language in feedback, or closing the loop after tough decisions with an explanation and acknowledgment of impact. This summary should compare the leaders' ratings of empathy with those of others. Evidence that shows coaching with compassion consolidates change more successfully than corrective feedback alone highlights the significance of integrating developmental feedback into the research process (Boyatzis, Smith, & Beveridge, 2017).

6. Conclusions

This article proof that empathy is much more than a superficial leadership quality or an interpersonal courtesy. It is a fundamental skill that connects organizational success, ethical judgment, and emotional intelligence. Empathy in its 3 dimensions allows leaders to understand others, control their own reactions, and behave in a manner that promote justice, cooperation, and trust. Every previous section has reaffirmed that empathic leadership is a systemic factor that contributes to organizational performance in addition to being a psychological phenomenon.

Theoretically, transformational leadership, servant leadership, and emotional intelligence frameworks are all incorporated into empathic leadership. Leaders that are cognitive empathetic can comprehend other perspective and interpersonal circumstances. While compassionate empathy converts those insights into moral and prosocial action, affective empathy enables them to emotionally connect and inspire loyalty, these skills are combined to enable human an effective leadership. Decety and Meyer (2008) and Shamay Tsoury (2011) provided neurobiological evidence that emphasizes how empathy is able to coordinate executive control with emotional resonance by this guaranteeing that compassion is base by regulation instead than sentimentality. Plenty of strategies have been use to share the organizational influence of empathy, LMX improve trust and fosters psychological safety. This encourages skills like: Learning, adaptability, and creativity (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014), empathy also promotes ethical consciousness by highlighting the consequences of decisions and discouraging immoral actions (Hoffman, 2000; Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017). Teams led by compassionate leaders: Perform better, have higher talent retention, and are happier (Ramachandran et al., 2023; Kim, 2020). These proofs the advantage of empathy for both people and companies.

One of the main findings of our study is the fact empathy serves as a moral compass and a catalyst for creativity, the emotional base for risk taking and experimentation is empathy. It guarantees that: innovation can remain consistent with human values, promotes inclusive cooperation, and starts curiosity (Ma, Liu, & Huang, 2024; Kock, Kock, & Nilsson, 2019). In ethics empathy provides a base for moral reasoning by accepting the suffering and value of others. By linking corporate codes and emotional realities of everyone affected by management decisions. Leaders that possess authentic empathy can create businesses that are not just prosperous but also ethical, inclusive, and enduring.

Empathy's is supported by the investigation of people centric leadership paradigms, these styles of managing people change authority for cooperation and redefine power through: compassionate communication, openness, and caring. This causes an intrinsic motivation and in the long term behavioral change, as Boyatzis, Smith, and Beveridge (2017) proof. Empathy shifts the focus of leadership from correction to connection. It encourages a change from performance management to purpose cultivation. Measuring empathy is still difficult yet possible. This document suggests a triangulated method that incorporates behavioral observations or vignettes (Aponte Moreno, 2020), multisource assessments like the Emotional Competence Inventory (Boyatzis et al., 2017), and dispositional self-reports like the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983). Psychological safety, career adaptability, and organizational citizenship behaviors can all be used in multi wave/mixed method designs to demonstrate mediation (Organ, 1988). The cognitive, emotional, and behavioral complexity of empathy is captured by this combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Furthermore, giving participants feedback that contrasts their assessments of themselves with those of others transforms measurement into development and embodies the thesis' main claim that empathy is both a subject of study and a tool for change. Empathy provides the capacity for integrating that leadership most needs in an environment that has daily technology innovation, social variety, and ethical uncertainty. It balances authority with humanity, creativity with compassion, and performance with morals. Empathetic leaders foster cultures where individuals feel free to develop and work together, where a shared goal surpasses personal interest.

The evidence presented on this paper confirms the correlation between the presence of empathy and organizational success. Understanding empathy not as a static trait but as a dynamic practice. Through actions like mindfulness, and compassionate coaching, leaders can improve their empathic capacity and translate it into ethical, creative, and high performing companies. Future

studies should continue to define how empathy can be cultivated through leadership training, organizational design, and policy so that it becomes a norm. Lastly, empathy redefines the concept of leadership: from managing systems to inspiring people. The main lesson I get after writing this article is that in every decision, success is not defined only by outcomes but in the dignity with which those outcomes are fulfilled.

7. References

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