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**Application of empathy in an entrepreneurial environment: An inside look at how empathy is transmitted by leaders.**

João Pedro Alexandre Pires de Carvalho

Master in Management

Supervisor:

PhD João Paulo Carvalho Aragão Pina, Former Invited Assistant Professor

Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon

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Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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## **Acknowledgement:**

A master's thesis is one of the hardest projects I have ever encountered. Managing a full time job, a part-time job and a social life is hard as it is, but add a master's thesis and you get what society likes to describe as an impossible task. And this impossible was made possible, but not without the help of some of the most wonderful people in my life.

First, I would like to thank my parents for everything they have taught me throughout my life. Without them and their guidance nothing I have achieved would be possible. They helped me grow as a student but most importantly as a person so to them I sincerely say thank you.

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## **Abstract**

The goal of this master's thesis is to investigate the behaviors that foster empathy in the workplace. There has been a lot of focus on empathy, a complex concept rooted in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes, in several academic disciplines. Modern research typically defines empathy as the capacity to grasp, share, and relate to the experiences, thoughts, and viewpoints of another.

This study looks at how managers use empathy and what they do to motivate staff members or make them feel valued. Do they hold weekly meetings to boost morale, or do they just ask staff members, "Is everything okay?" as they pass by the office? The goal is to provide answers to queries like: What actions taken by leaders on a regular basis foster or spread empathy? Do leaders act empathically consciously or is it just a thought in their head? Do leaders understand the advantages empathy can have for their group or business? The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the actions that leaders are taking to demonstrate empathy.

In terms of the architecture of the data collection, this research matches a cross-sectional design because it is qualitative in nature and involves interviews with individuals who fulfill the leader role. To draw conclusions, the information from these interviews will also be examined and contrasted with previous research and written works



## **Resumo**

O objetivo desta dissertação de mestrado é investigar os comportamentos que suscitam a empatia no ambiente de trabalho. Tem havido muito foco na empatia, um conceito complexo enraizado em processos cognitivos, emocionais e comportamentais, em diversas disciplinas acadêmicas. A pesquisa moderna normalmente define empatia como a capacidade de compreender, compartilhar e relacionar-se com as experiências, pensamentos e pontos de vista de outra pessoa.

Este estudo analisa como os líderes usam a empatia e o que fazem para motivar os colaboradores ou fazê-los sentir-se valorizados. Eles realizam reuniões semanais para aumentar o moral? Ou apenas perguntam aos funcionários: “Está tudo bem?” enquanto eles passam pelo escritório? O objetivo é fornecer respostas a perguntas como: Que ações tomadas regularmente pelos líderes promovem ou espalham a empatia? Os líderes agem com empatia e consciência ou é apenas um comportamento inconsciente? Os líderes compreendem as vantagens que a empatia pode ter para a sua equipa? O objetivo deste estudo é demonstrar as ações que os líderes realizam para demonstrar empatia.

Em termos da arquitetura do recolhimento de dados, esta pesquisa corresponde a um desenho transversal porque é de natureza qualitativa e envolve entrevistas com indivíduos que desempenham o papel de líder. Para tirar conclusões, as informações destas entrevistas também serão examinadas e comparadas com a literatura e outros artigos científicos ou académicos.



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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

To clarify the essence of leadership, academics have put out a wide range of ideas, each presenting a unique perspective. For instance, according to the characteristic theory, leaders have innate traits that set them apart from followers (Stogdill, 1948). On the other hand, the situational leadership theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982) highlights how leadership styles can change depending on the scenario.

Positive results including higher work satisfaction and organizational commitment have been linked to transformational leadership, which is characterized by inspiration, motivation, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The concentration on rewards and penalties in transactional leadership, on the other hand, may result in compliance but not necessarily commitment (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Starting with transactional leadership, this is a style of leadership known for the focus on standards and discipline, this style approaches employee motivation through financial benefits and career progressing incentives alternatively, the transactional leader is one who rewards (or disciplines) staff on the basis of their performance emphasizing work standards, task completion and employee compliance while relying heavily on organizational rewards and punishments to influence employee performance (Bass & Avolio, 1994). (Fakhra Batool, 2013).

There have been studies that have associated this leadership style to personality disorders as the people that achieved high management in the past were only people that practiced transactional leadership, furthermore they found that many of the characteristics attributed to success in senior management roles were similar to those described as personality disorders (PDs), specifically of the emotional components of psychopathic PD (Holt & Marques, 2012) .

Transformational leadership appears in society as a kind of savior to avoid employee burnout a leadership style way more focused on employee motivation, happiness, and emotional wellbeing, focused on building a better work environment and company culture which relates to how transformational leaders stimulate interest among colleagues, inspire a different outlook on the work, generate an awareness of the goals of the organization, develop others to a higher level of ability and motivate others to consider the interests of the group over their own interests. (Fakhra Batool, 2013). Leaders that use this leadership style have shown amazing results regarding employee happiness and team performance

“Researchers investigating the effects of transformational and transactional leadership have found that transformational leadership predict higher ratings of effectiveness and satisfaction (Hater & Bass, 1998), higher group performance (Keller, 1995) and higher amount of effort on the part of subordinates (Seltzer & Bass, 1990) compared to transactional leadership.(Fakhra Batool, 2013 page 1)”. The only downfall of this leadership style is the requirements it needs from the leader, not everyone can implement this style as it requires a high emotional intelligence and the ability to use empathy as a way of promoting emotional health amongst the team and boost performance.” The study recognizes that transformational project manager leader behavior has a positive impact on actual project performance, that emotional intelligence ability contributes to transformational project manager leader behavior and subsequent actual project performance. (Leban & Zulauf, 2004 page 9)”

The leader-follower relationship is not a unidirectional process but rather a dynamic interplay between leaders and their followers because a key aspect of this relationship is the notion of social exchange, where both parties contribute and receive benefits (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008).

Leadership is not without its challenges, complexities including diversity, moral issues, and change management must be negotiated by leaders, moreover the attributes of the leader, the situation, and the followers themselves are just a few of the variables that might affect how effective a leader is (Yukl, 2012).

Understanding and respecting coworkers' feelings and viewpoints becomes increasingly important when diverse teams collaborate to achieve shared objectives as according to Dutton, Brueller and Carmeli (2009) research, empathic interactions promote a feeling of psychological safety that encourages employees to freely communicate their worries and thoughts.

When leaders and peers demonstrate empathy, it can be a potent tool for promoting the emotional health of workers, this relates to a 1983 study by Eisenberg and Lennon, where it states that employees who work in compassionate workplaces report lower levels of stress and higher levels of job satisfaction. Knowing what they are going through and offering the right assistance can minimize burnout, foster resilience, and result in a more motivated and engaged staff since leaders with a strong sense of empathy are more adept at understanding the needs and aspirations of their team members. (Leroy et al., 2012). By actively listening and responding empathetically to their employees, leaders can enhance morale, build stronger relationships, and inspire higher levels of commitment and performance, and they lead by example since the values and actions that members of an organization, especially

those in leadership roles, exhibit have a significant impact on the culture of that organization. (Glomb et al., 2011). A thesis focusing on the know-how of empathy can shed light on how organizations can incorporate empathy into their core values and practices. This can lead to a compassionate and inclusive culture, attracting and retaining talent, and positively impacting the organization's reputation and brand identity.

Organizations may foster a more compassionate and supportive culture that improves employee well-being, fosters cooperation, and sustains organizational performance by understanding the intricacies of empathy and how it is applied in the workplace (Holt & Marques, 2012) .“Empathy refers to one’s ability to understand the feelings transmitted through verbal and nonverbal messages, to provide emotional support to people when needed, and to understand the links between others’ emotions and behavior”(Polychroniou 2009, p. 345).

Leaders can demonstrate empathy in two ways. First, they can consider someone else’s thoughts through cognitive empathy (“If I were in his/her position, what would I be thinking right now?”). Leaders can also focus on a person’s feelings using emotional empathy (“Being in his/her position would make me feel \_ ”). But leaders will be most successful not just when they personally consider others, but when they express their concerns and inquire about challenges directly, and then listen to employees’ responses (Brower, 2021,p. 5) . “As the popular saying goes, people may not remember what you say, but they will remember how you made them feel.”(Brower, 2021,p. 5).

Emotional contagion is the term used to describe when people unintentionally copy the emotions and actions of those around them as people frequently accept other people's emotions through nonverbal clues, facial expressions, and body language, claims Hatfield et al. (1993), for example, someone around may feel happy as a result of someone else's expression of satisfaction, even if they don't completely understand the source. Not only is empathy shared between people, but it is also returned, empathy and emotional contagion are thought to be influenced by mirror neurons, a type of brain cell that activates when a person performs an activity and when they observe another person perform the same action (Decety, 2010).

Empathy is not only transmitted from one individual to another but also reciprocated. “When someone receives empathy, they are more likely to respond with empathy in return. This two-way process enhances interpersonal connections and strengthens social bonds” (Clark et al., 2019). The transmission and reception of empathy create a positive feedback loop, fostering a compassionate and supportive social environment since human nature's

fundamental quality of empathy has the capacity to promote social cohesion, understanding, and compassion (Clark et al., 2019).

Employee well-being may suffer in the workplace when empathy is lacking. Employees may feel more stressed, anxious, and emotionally worn out when they don't feel understood or supported (Dutton et al., 2014). Higher absenteeism and burnout rates could eventually result from this, which would be detrimental to both the individual employees and the company as a whole since in the absence of empathy, team members may struggle to understand and connect with one another's perspectives and emotions and this lack of understanding can lead to miscommunication, conflicts, and a breakdown in collaboration (Harms & Credé, 2010). The presence of empathy in the workplace is closely tied to the organization's culture, a culture that lacks empathy may be characterized by competitiveness, distrust, and self-centeredness as well as decreased loyalty and commitment (Glomb et al., 2011). A good work atmosphere, improved communication, and stronger social ties among employees are all made possible through empathy, and organizations may foster a more compassionate and encouraging work environment that will increase employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational performance by recognizing and resolving the lack of empathy (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003).

The present research on the transmission of empathy offers important new understandings of the neurological, psychological, and cultural systems underlying interpersonal empathy. In addition to being a learned skill, empathy can also be developed through focused interventions, emotional contagion, and social learning (Barsade, 2002).

Previous studies have proved empathy to be a key factor for success regarding the role of a leader (Fakhra Batool, 2013) but, the “how” of the use of empathy is not clear. The intent is to find out how managers use empathy (“Empathy refers to one’s ability to understand the feelings transmitted through verbal and nonverbal messages, to provide emotional support to people when needed, and to understand the links between others’ emotions and behavior” (Polychroniou 2009, p. 345), what are the actions they take that give employees motivation or make them feel appreciated, is it a weekly motivational meeting or is it the simple “is everything okay” question as the manager/leader walks across the office? The intent is to answer questions like: What daily activities, conducted by leaders, boost and/or transmit empathy? Do leaders take empathic actions subconsciously or is it a rational thought? Are leaders aware of the benefits empathy can bring to their team or company? With this study the aim is to present what sort of actions are leaders taking to show empathy, what is believed to be the most realistic outcome is that the use of empathy and how empathy

feels and is used on a daily basis is in some way subconscious to people (based on the research of Rizzolatti et al. (1996) referring to mirror neurons and Barsade (2002) referring to emotional contagion), the expectation is for the candidates to be aware of empathy and it's uses but when asked how they use it they won't be able to give a straight answer since most of the use of emotional intelligence comes subconsciously and not from a rational thought process.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature**

### **Review**

#### **2.1 Defining empathy**

According to Davis (1983), empathy is made up of two basic parts: cognitive empathy, which entails comprehending the thoughts and feelings of another person, and emotional empathy, which entails really experiencing the same emotions as the other person. Empathy is frequently characterized in modern research as the ability to comprehend, share, and resonate with the feelings, thoughts, and views of others (Decety & Cowell, 2014).

The definition of empathy goes beyond psychological factors to include biological and social components. Mirror neurons have a role in empathy, since it influences which people experience emotions vicariously by seeing the behaviors and feelings of others (Carr et al., 2003). Furthermore, research has shown that empathy is influenced by both genetic and environmental factors, emphasizing its biopsychosocial aspect (Warrier et al., 2018).

Contemporary literature emphasizes that cultural norms and socioeconomic context influence the expression and interpretation of empathy since empathy manifests differently in different cultures due to differences in values, communication methods, and socialization techniques (Leung et al., 2011).

#### **2.2 Types of empathy**

Recent studies have shown that empathy has several elements, each of which adds to our complex understanding of it. Affective, cognitive, and motor empathy are all parts of empathy, according to Decety and Cowell (2014). Affective empathy entails experiencing feelings with others (Rizzolatti et al., 2009), cognitive empathy deals with comprehending

others' emotions (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2009) , and motor empathy deals with mimicking others' bodily sensations (Gallese et al., 2004).

### **2.2.1 Affective empathy**

Empathy with others' feelings, commonly referred to as affective empathy or emotional empathy, entails sharing and reflecting their emotions (Decety & Yoder, 2016). According to research, affective empathy is the capacity to emotionally connect with people by experiencing feelings that are the same as or similar to those that they do (Singer & Klimecki, 2014).

The discovery of mirror neurons has revealed information on how people experience similar emotions. Mirror neurons fire when someone else's emotional expression is observed, which causes emotions to resonate in the observer's brain, as explained by Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia in 2016.

The development of interpersonal connections and the strengthening of emotional ties depend heavily on affective empathy since increased intimacy and trust result from having the capacity to comprehend and validate the feelings of others (Decety & Yoder, 2016). Additionally, affective empathy helps people feel better emotionally because they are less stressed and distressed when they feel understood and supported (Singer & Klimecki, 2014). A more caring and connected society results from the increased likelihood of kindness, generosity, and volunteering among empathic people (Eisenberg et al., 2015).

### **2.2.2 Cognitive empathy**

The ability to absorb and intellectually comprehend another person's feelings, thoughts, and opinions is known as cognitive empathy, also known as perspective-taking (Decety & Yoder, 2016). According to research, cognitive empathy refers to the mental component of empathy that entails understanding and identifying the feelings and views of others (Decety & Cowell, 2014).

Decety and Yoder (2016) talk about how the prefrontal cortex and other mentalizing-related brain areas are essential for cognitive empathy. According to neuroimaging research, these brain areas become more active when people perform perspective-taking activities, demonstrating the neurological underpinnings of cognitive empathy. (Decety & Jackson, 2006)

Studies have highlighted how cognitive empathy develops over time. According to Eisenberg et al. (2015), young children start to demonstrate basic perspective-taking skills as early as the first few years of life.

Research has also emphasized that being aware of another person's viewpoint improves communication clarity and decreases misunderstandings (Decety & Cowell, 2014). People can modify their interactions and create deep connections when they can effectively infer the thoughts and feelings of others. (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983)

Individuals can negotiate conflicts with increased sensitivity and discover common ground by understanding various points of view (Decety & Yoder, 2016). Cognitive empathy in leadership positions enables leaders to comprehend the issues that affect their team members, fostering better teamwork and morale (Holt & Marques, 2012).

### **2.2.3 Motor empathy**

The ability to experience and mimic the motions and actions of others is known as motor empathy, also known as action or imitative empathy (Oztop et al., 2013). The ability to reflexively mimic and resonate with others' motions, providing a sense of shared body sensations, is described in research as motor empathy (Decety, 2010).

Mirror neurons were first discovered in macaque monkeys and later in humans, highlighting the importance of the brain in replicating observed behaviors (Iacoboni, 2005). The neurological underpinning for motor empathy is provided by these neurons, which fire both when a person performs an activity and when they see another person do a similar movement. (Gallese et al., 2004)

Early imitational activities in kids as young as 14 months old show a sort of motor empathy (Decety, 2010). As kids become older, their imitation skills get better, which helps them build complex motor empathy. According to Decety (2010), gender has an impact on imitative conduct, with females frequently exhibiting higher levels of imitative empathy than males although there may be a mix of biological, social, and cultural explanations for these variations.

According to research, imitating and watching others' motions can help us better comprehend their motivations and emotional states (Oztop et al., 2013). The development of emotional resonance and empathetic reactions is aided by engaging in imitative behaviors, which promote a sense of connection and shared experiences (Decety, 2010). This base facilitates the development of deep connections which promote a sense of connection and

shared experiences, and facilitates the development of deep connections (Decety, 2010).

## **2.3 Application of empathy**

A critical skill for good leadership is empathy, the significance of sympathetic leaders in organizational performance has been emphasized by numerous research, for example, according to a 2012 study by Holt & Marques, leaders who demonstrate empathy are more likely to have motivated team members. Another study by Dutton and Heaphy (2003) stressed that caring and understanding leaders foster a favorable work environment that can increase employees' commitment and job satisfaction.

### **2.3.1 Reflective Responses**

According to literature, reflective replies show that the audience is aware of the speaker's viewpoint and feelings (Rogers & Farson, 1957). This method promotes a sense of understanding and deeper emotional investigation. The benefits of active listening on relationship satisfaction and communication effectiveness are highlighted by Bodie et al., a (2013) who says reflective responses are important because they show the speaker that their comments have been heard and understood in full.

Reflective replies support the speaker's feelings as they are articulated, acknowledging and validating another person's emotions can be therapeutic and foster a sense of being heard and understood, according to Linehan et al.'s (1983) study on empathy and validation.

Reflective responses might be helpful in resolving disputes says (Patton et al., 2021), underlining the value of acknowledging other people's feelings and points of view in their book "Difficult Conversations," according to the authors reflective reactions can assist in defusing tensions and facilitating amicable agreements.

### **2.3.2 Perspective-Taking**

Putting oneself in another's shoes to comprehend their thoughts and feelings is known as perspective-taking .according to research, cognitive perspective-taking helps people develop empathy by allowing them to see things from another person's point of view , which encourages sincere connection and respect for one another (Decety & Cowell, 2014).

In order to increase empathy, perspective-taking is seen as a crucial skill (Duan & Hill,

1996). The development of perspective-taking skills is emphasized in empathy training programs, which are frequently employed in the healthcare and counseling fields (Hojat et al., 2002).

Perspective-taking is crucial to negotiation and conflict resolution (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000) as it enables parties to comprehend one another's points of view and discover points of agreement, resulting in more amicable decisions.

### **2.3.3 Non-judgmental Attitude**

Literature highlights that it is possible to truly understand another person's feelings when one suspends one's own biases, judgments, and preconceived beliefs, according to Rogers & Farson, 1957 a nonjudgmental attitude fosters a climate where people feel secure in sharing their experiences.

## **2.4. Advantages and disadvantages on the application of empathy in the workplace**

In the workplace fostering empathy may help people connect on a deeper emotional level since they are able to comprehend and relate to the feelings of others. As Davis (1996) points out, empathy fosters intimacy and trust, laying the groundwork for long-lasting relationships. On the other hand empathy can take a toll on your emotions, especially in emotionally taxing occupations like counseling and healthcare, this syndrome, which Figley (2002) refers to as "compassion fatigue," occurs when people regularly take on other people's feelings and risk becoming burned out.

### **2.4.1 Advantages on the application of empathy**

Various opinions about empathy emerge in the literature, many of which point to great advantages of using it as a tool for success. Of these advantages, we highlight those that are most relevant to the study in question.

#### **2.4.1.1 Employee Engagement and Well-Being**

A productive workplace is crucially influenced by empathy, higher levels of employee engagement and job satisfaction are a result of empathetic leaders and managers that genuinely care about and support their employees' well-being (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008).

Research confirms that motivated, proactive, and enthusiastic workers are those who are

engaged at work (Saks, 2022). Individuals who are actively involved invest their free time, which boosts productivity and improves the effectiveness of the entire firm. According to research, an employee's performance, dedication, and job happiness are all intricately tied to their overall well-being (Wright & Cropanzano, 2004).

Employees who feel supported and engaged are more likely to be creative and productive as according to Bakker and Bal's (2010) research, motivated employees have higher positive affect levels, which boost their creativity and problem-solving skills.

When workers are motivated and their wellbeing is prioritized, a healthy workplace culture is fostered, according to research, a culture of support and caring results in fewer staff turnovers, more work satisfaction, and greater commitment (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012).

#### **2.4.1.2 Empathy-Driven Leadership**

According to research, empathy-driven leadership is a management approach that makes empathy a key competency, allowing leaders to engage with staff members more deeply. (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008)

Also according to research, team leaders are better able to effectively assign work and encourage creative thinking when they are aware of the particular talents and limitations of their team members (Bakker & Bal, 2010). Leading from a place of empathy helps to create a positive workplace environment as empathetic leaders are more likely to exhibit desired behaviors, which boosts staff morale and promotes overall wellbeing (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012).

#### **2.4.1.3 Empathy as a Catalyst for Innovation**

Innovation depends on collaboration, and empathy is its fuel as it fosters teamwork by allowing participants to really understand one another's views and motivations (Bakker & Bal, 2010). The key to innovative problem-solving is empathy due to empathic people being more likely to approach issues from many perspectives and attempt to understand root reasons before developing solutions (Decety & Yoder, 2016).

Innovation that is motivated by empathy offers a competitive edge in addition to being a creative strategy since businesses that genuinely care about their clients' welfare develop brand loyalty and advocacy (Brown & Wyatt, 2010).

#### **2.4.1.4 Enhancing Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture is intimately related to employee engagement as according to research, employees are more likely to be engaged and committed when they have a strong sense of belonging, trust, and purpose within the company , also employees who work in an atmosphere with a positive culture are encouraged to go above and beyond the minimum requirements of their positions. (Bakker & Leiter, 2010)

#### **2.4.2 Disadvantages on the application of empathy**

Although empathy offers many benefits, there are also drawbacks that are validated by the literature. We make reference to those that we believe are most relevant to the study in question.

##### **2.4.2.1 Emotional Exhaustion and Burnout**

According to published research, those who engage in caregiving fields including healthcare and social work may develop a condition called "compassion fatigue" (Figley, 1995). Empathetic people's personal wellbeing may suffer as a result of constant exposure to other people's emotional pain, the emotional anguish that might result from absorbing other people's feelings can overwhelm empathetic people and experiencing strong negative emotions like loss and trauma might make one feel emotionally burdened (Decety & Yoder, 2016).

Burnout and emotional tiredness have a number of negative effects on people and businesses, such as decreased job satisfaction, deteriorated physical health, and higher employee turnover intention (Leiter & Maslach, 2009).

##### **2.4.2.2 Empathy as a Double-Edged Sword**

Research has shown that having too much empathy can make it difficult to distinguish between personal and professional connections, which could jeopardize objectivity (Decety & Cowell, 2014).

##### **2.4.2.3 Empathy and Decision-Making**

Sometimes, decisions made with empathy in mind have less than ideal results due to making decisions with an excessive amount of empathy may favor immediate emotional comfort over long-term logical ones (Lerner et al., 2015).

#### **2.4.2.4 Empathy and Role Conflict**

According to a study, people who play various roles for example, manager and friend might find it difficult to be empathic when those positions clash (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008).

Previous research has demonstrated that empathy is a critical component of leadership success, we now wish to thoroughly explore the "how" of using empathy. The goal is to learn how managers use empathy and what measures they take to motivate staff members or make them feel valued. For example, do they hold weekly motivational meetings or do they just ask staff members, "Is everything okay?" as they pass by in the office? The goal is to provide answers to queries like: What actions taken by leaders on a regular basis foster or spread empathy? Do leaders act empathically consciously or is it just a thought in their head? Do leaders understand the advantages empathy can have for their group or business?

## **Chapter III**

### **Method**

#### **3.1 Research aim**

Through the development of this research the intention is to get deeper insights into the daily actions of leaders that convey empathic emotion. The intent is to find out exactly how a leader uses empathy and what action arise empathy.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The research for this study is qualitative research in order to provide a better understanding of the subject in question and allow different perspectives to be taken into account. Qualitative approaches are used to address questions regarding experience, meaning, and viewpoint, usually from the participant's point of view. (Creswell & Poth, 2016) Interviews were conducted with people that fit the leader role and these interviews were conducted only once so in regards to the design of the data collection this research fits a cross-sectional design. Since conclusions are taken from these interviews and this cannot be done before acquiring information from said interviews the design of the research is sequential.

Regarding the design of the interviews, a line of questioning was designed to perceive what leaders think empathy is, how they try to apply it in real life. The line of questioning was also designed as to not influence the candidates to give arbitrary answers.

#### **3.3 Data collection**

The target population for this research includes only people that are now in a position considered to be one where they lead one or more people (example: manager, supervisor, director). The number of years of experience was not considered since interviewing more experienced people and more naïve people in the role might give us different points of view as well as emphasize the difference between the old ways of leading and the new ways. Joining experience, age won't be discriminated against to perceive how younger versus older generations perceive empathy. Finally, the type of leadership used by the candidates in no order shape or form affected their choosing for the interviews, the objective is to find out across the entire spectrum of leadership how empathy is perceived/applied.

### **3.4 Credibility**

The criterion for assessing the truth value or internal validity of qualitative research is credibility. A qualitative study is credible when its findings and proper context descriptions are recognized by people who have shared the experience as well as those who care for or treat them (Sandelowski, 1986). As an instrument, I defend credibility through processes such as the significant description of the interpretation process, which is the interpretation of the candidate's replies through literature.

### **3.5 Applicability**

The criterion for evaluating external validity is applicability, or the transferability of study findings. When researchers regard the findings as significant and applicable to their own experience, a study is deemed to meet the criterion of applicability (Hammarberg et al., 2016). The sampling strategy I employed was practical. The leaders interviewed had a mix of minimal, medium, and extensive experience.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Numerous levels of analysis are typically involved, such as the explicit and implicit levels of meaning. Therefore, we must interpret what is said by reading "between the lines." It might sometimes be interesting to hear what is not expressed. We now need to analyze the data that was obtained for the research through interviews. To prepare them for the forthcoming analysis, every interview was transcribed. To draw conclusions, the information from these interviews were examined and contrasted with previous research and written works. Reviewing the applicants' responses is intended to highlight key points that will aid in defining what behaviors demonstrate empathy.

### 3.7 Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 10 candidates who were invited through personal channels of communication.

The pool of candidates ranged from ages 25 to 55, and was constituted by 6 males and 4 females , from which the experience as leaders ranged from a candidate with as little experience as 6 months to a candidate with 25 years experience in the role of the leader. It also ranged from people who work in the consulting sector to people who were connected to the sports industry. The main sample of candidates were selected from the consulting industry due to consulting companies having several different branches each one with a different culture and therefore different takes on the application of empathy.

Table 1.1 - Participants' professional experience

| <b>Job Description</b> | <b># of collaborators managed</b> | <b>Industry</b> | <b>Experience as a leader</b> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Sports Director        | 30                                | Sports          | 4 years                       |
| Senior Consultant      | 3                                 | Consulting      | 6 months                      |
| Associate Partner      | 40                                | Consulting      | 13 years                      |
| Manager                | 15                                | Consulting      | 14 years                      |
| Senior Consultant      | 6                                 | Consulting      | 1 year                        |
| Senior Consultant      | 5                                 | Consulting      | 3 years                       |
| Department head        | 6                                 | Banking         | 13 years                      |
| Chief coordinator      | 20                                | Sports          | 25 years                      |
| Manager                | 14                                | Consulting      | 10 years                      |
| CEO                    | 500                               | Consulting      | 25 years                      |

### **3.8 Procedure**

The pool of candidates chosen was based on people who besides being in a leadership position showed willingness to participate in the study. After the selection each candidate was contacted through email and presented with a formal invitation and a formal consent form.

Face-to-face interviews were used to gather the necessary data for the study because applicants would not have the opportunity to consider their response too carefully, in this manner, the data gathered would be more accurate because they stemmed from more sincere responses. The study was separated into two sections. In the first, participants were given the opportunity to give their informed consent and were informed that the information would only be used for academic and/or scientific purposes. Additionally, the study's duration and overall goal were stated. In the second section, the applicants were asked a series of open-ended questions to give them the opportunity to elaborate on their responses in as much detail as possible.

The confidentiality and anonymity of the surveys, as well as the appropriate treatment, which would only be for the relevant study, were all guaranteed as ethical procedures dictate. The participants were given a debriefing at the conclusion of the questionnaire, which included a thorough description of the study's goals, the opportunity to offer recommendations or criticisms, and contact information in case they had any questions.

The data were stored electronically in order to facilitate the processing and guarantee the participants' privacy. To conclude whether the elements described by the candidates during the interviews related to the conclusions offered, the literature in the area was consulted for the treatment and analysis of the data.

### **3.9 Questionnaire**

In order to get the data needed for the study's progress, a questionnaire was created with the aim of learning the views and practices that the candidates implemented in order to transfer empathy to their collaborators. In order to provide a framework for response comparison and validation, some of the questions created were merely exploratory in order to allow candidates to further elaborate on the subject. In a further study of the responses, conclusions were drawn by contrasting the data with the literature.

1. What is your interpretation/definition of what empathy is?

In order to make it easier to interpret the remaining answers, the first question seeks to construct a foundation for the candidate's understanding of empathy and compare it to a foundation established by the literature.

2. Would you say that your employees see you as an empathetic leader?

The aforementioned question was expanded upon in order to see whether the candidate recognizes his acts as actions that demonstrate empathy.

3. Would you say that conveying empathy to your employees is something you actively seek to do?

Candidates were questioned about whether or not they actively endeavor to transmit empathy. By doing this, we may more accurately assess the candidates' behaviors, taking into account whether they were intentional or unintentional.

4. How do you perform this active search? That is, what methods do you use to look for the transmission of empathy?

In order to identify the precise actions/tools utilized by candidates to successfully complete the transfer of empathy, we asked them how they went about actively seeking it out.

5. How often do you perform this active search to take empathic actions?

The aforementioned question was expanded with the intention of building a regularity on the actions of transmission of empathy carried out by the candidates.

6. When actively seeking the transmission of empathy, do you seek to do so in an individual or collective environment?

Candidates were questioned about whether the empathy transmission behaviors often take place in a group or individual environment in order to learn more specific information about the environment in which they were occurring.

7. What objective do you intend to achieve in this active search for the transmission of empathy?

The candidates were questioned about their goals in order to understand the driving forces behind the applicants' acts that display empathy.

8. What other actions do you think you could/should take to convey empathy to your employees?

The question of whether any more activities of transmitting empathy were taken by the candidates in addition to those already mentioned was asked in an effort to further describe those actions.

9. Do you feel that your employees have empathetic attitudes towards you? If yes, which ones?

At this point, candidates were asked which employee activities elicited their empathy, to ensure that the perspective of the applicant as a recipient of the transmission of empathy was included in addition to the candidate's perspective on his own actions.

10. Finally, do you want to add something that you remember and that you consider important?

Finally, the candidates were questioned and asked if they had any more thoughts to contribute to what had already been said in order to get their own ideas on the matter

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

The goal of the current study is to analyze empathy in the workplace from a practical standpoint. The goal is to identify the precise behaviors that foster empathy in a business or professional setting. The expectation was for candidates to be aware of empathy and its uses but when asked how they use it, they won't be able to give a straight answer since most of the use of emotional intelligence comes subconsciously and not from a rational thought process. What was believed to be the most realistic outcome is that the use of empathy and how empathy feels and is used on a daily basis is in some way subconscious to people.

#### **4.1 What are the actions that evoke empathy**

Interactions between coworkers that are similar to those between friends in a social situation can elicit empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand and share another person's feelings. Several elements contribute to the evocation of empathy when coworkers build close ties and participate in exchanges that resemble friendships. Friends frequently share personal stories, experiences, and challenges. Similarly, peers who share their workplace experiences and challenges can foster a sense of camaraderie. When one coworker experiences a challenging situation, their coworkers may empathize because they have faced similar obstacles or can connect to the difficulties. Trust and vulnerability are important factors in both friendships and intimate business relationships. When coworkers trust each other enough to speak up about their feelings, issues, and personal lives, an environment conducive to empathy is created. Individuals are more willing to communicate their emotions when they know their coworkers will listen and encourage them. Empathy is also promoted in some companies through team-building events, open communication, and empathy training. These exercises assist coworkers in understanding and appreciating one another's uniqueness and struggles, resulting in stronger friendships and enhanced empathy. In conclusion, interactions between coworkers that are similar to friendships can elicit empathy when they incorporate shared experiences, trust, active listening, emotional intelligence, empathy-building activities, a supportive atmosphere, and mutual goals. These elements foster a sense of connection and understanding among employees, increasing their likelihood of empathizing with each other's sentiments and situations. We can infer that any interactions between coworkers that are comparable to those between friends in a social situation have the ability to evoke empathy on both sides of the relationship. It is important to emphasize that these behaviors must be real and true in order to have the desired effect.

#### **4.2 Do leaders take empathic actions subconsciously or is it a rational thought?**

Empathy is a multifaceted psychological phenomenon including both conscious and unconscious processes. It is a conscious process that comes from underlying unconscious processes. The brain's unconscious processes are always at work, processing a large quantity of sensory information, including nonverbal clues like facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. Based on these indications, these unconscious mechanisms automatically and quickly judge the emotional state of others.

The mirror neurons, which are located throughout the brain, activate when we do an activity as well as when we see someone else performing the same action. They enable us to unconsciously duplicate the feelings and experiences of others, laying the groundwork for empathy. When these unconscious systems identify emotional cues in others, they can spark a conscious sympathetic imagination process. This is deliberately imagining oneself in the shoes of another person and imagining what they could be feeling or experiencing based on unconscious emotional clues perceived. Another conscious part of empathy is cognitive empathy, which involves knowing and identifying another person's emotional state. This comprehension is frequently based on conscious thought and mentalizing—attempting to logically analyze and make sense of another person's emotions, thoughts, and perspective. Individuals may experience an empathic response after conscious empathy processes have occurred, which is a conscious emotional reaction to the emotions or suffering of another person. This response can take the form of compassion, sympathy, or a desire to assist. Throughout the study the participants referenced how they adapt their behavior and how they transmit empathy which leads us to conclude they identify the emotional needs of their coworkers and then rationally make a decision regarding how they approach the situation.

In conclusion, empathy entails both unconscious and conscious processes. Through the mirror neuron system, unconscious processes detect emotional cues in others and produce a fundamental sense of shared experience. This unconscious foundation lays the groundwork for conscious processes that require active thought and attention, such as sympathetic imagination and cognitive empathy. These conscious processes allow people to understand, relate to, and respond to the emotions and experiences of others, resulting in a more compassionate and empathetic response. Are leaders aware of the benefits empathy can bring to their team or company?

A strong indication that leaders understand the advantages empathy offers is the fact that they plan and prepare such empathic behaviors, which means there is a rational thought process where action leads to a benefit. So we can conclude leaders are aware of the benefits of empathy.

The outcomes gained unequivocally showed that the presumption is not supported by reality. All of the candidates showed that they intentionally consider their empathic behaviors and how they affect employees, and even more significantly, they consciously consider how frequently to carry them out. There's even evidence of applicants who stated that they customize their timing and style of sympathetic action depending on the employee they will be interacting with. Additionally, one may contend that the existence of mirror neurons and the phenomenon of emotional contagion cause the conscious process to emerge from an unconscious realization of the emotional state presented by the other person. After completing a lot of interviews with candidates with a range of experience, industry, and age, we come to the conclusion that it is impossible to build a list of a finite number of acts that demonstrate empathy. We can infer that any interactions between coworkers that are comparable to those between friends in a social situation have the ability to evoke empathy on both sides of the relationship. It is important to emphasize that these behaviors must be real and true in order to have the desired effect. A further indication that leaders understand the advantages empathy offers is the fact that they plan and prepare such empathic behaviors.

Table 1.2 - Study's main questions and answers

| Questions                                                                     | Answers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What are the actions that evoke empathy ?                                     | We come to the conclusion that it is impossible to build a list of a finite number of acts that demonstrate empathy. We can infer that any interactions between coworkers that are comparable to those between friends in a social situation have the ability to evoke empathy on both sides of the relationship. |
| Do leaders take empathic actions subconsciously or is it a rational thought?  | One may contend that the existence of mirror neurons and the phenomenon of emotional contagion cause the conscious process to emerge from an unconscious realization of the emotional state presented by the other person.                                                                                        |
| Are leaders aware of the benefits empathy can bring to their team or company? | A strong indication that leaders understand the advantages empathy offers is the fact that they plan and prepare such empathic behaviors, which means there is a rational thought process where action leads to a benefit. So we can conclude leaders are aware of the benefits of empathy.                       |

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

The outcomes of the current inquiry are discussed in this chapter. The responses of the applicants are documented and analyzed in order to confirm whether the behaviors mentioned by the candidates are casuistic of the sense of empathy. The objective is to get knowledge of the techniques managers employ to inspire employees or make them feel important. Do they, for instance, ask staff members, "Is everything okay?" as they pass by in the office or do they have weekly motivational meetings? The objective is to address questions like: What routine activities by leaders promote or spread empathy? Do leaders intentionally act empathically or is it just a mental construct? Do leaders recognize the benefits empathy can have for their team or organization?

#### **Question 1 - What is your interpretation/definition of what empathy is?**

Concerning question number one, four major points were discovered throughout the candidates' comments, which are as follows:

- Establishing connections
- Perceiving and acknowledging the impact one's message has on others.
- Transparency
- Various forms of communication

Empathy involves establishing connections among team members. It emphasizes the mutual willingness of all parties to cultivate empathy. This perspective highlights the importance of active participation from everyone in the workplace, indicating that empathy is a collaborative effort. One of the issues described here is what we call the proximity factor that tells us that, in order for a synthetic character to evoke affective and cognitive empathy, users must feel close to the character.

Empathy also revolves around perceiving and acknowledging the impact one's message has on others. It encompasses the ability to recognize that one's actions or words can significantly affect individuals. This understanding forms the basis for creating meaningful connections and positively influencing others.

We also must consider the role of empathy in enabling individuals to be transparent in all instances, whether discussing positive or negative points. This perspective underscores

the significance of honest and open communication as a core component of empathy. It implies that empathy thrives in an environment where individuals feel safe to express their thoughts and emotions.

Last but not least, empathy involves understanding and utilizing various forms of communication within a team. Effective communication, encompassing both verbal and non-verbal methods, allows team members to bridge gaps, resolve conflicts, and foster empathy. This perspective underscores the importance of employing diverse communication channels to promote empathy in the workplace. “the situational theory: The basic premise of the [situational] theory is that different situations demand different kinds of leadership.

### **Question 2 - Would you say that your employees see you as an empathetic leader?**

The candidates' responses reflect 3 major points:

- The subjective perception of empathy
- Balance between empathic leadership and maintaining professional standards.
- Personal connection

The subjectivity to the perception of empathy as it can be influenced by individual perspectives and the extent of identification employees feel with their leader. This suggests that the perception of empathy can be nuanced, varying among team members.

The situational theory requires diverse leadership techniques in different contexts. The situational theory indicates that good leadership is not a one-size-fits-all idea in the context of the quote. Instead, it recognizes that leaders must change their leadership approaches to meet the demands and complexities of various situations. Let us now apply this quote to the subjective perception of empathy. Like leadership styles, empathy in leadership is not generally viewed the same way by all persons. Just as situational theory recognizes the necessity for adaptable leadership styles dependent on the scenario, individuals' perceptions of empathy can vary based on their unique experiences, viewpoints, and the context in which interactions occur. In other words, just as different conditions necessitate different approaches to leadership, different personalities and circumstances might result in varying interpretations of empathy. One employee may see a leader's sympathetic behavior as very effective and supportive, whereas another employee may interpret the same action differently, depending on their own experiences and expectations. The situational theory acknowledges that leadership performance is dependent on responding to different settings,

and similarly, empathy perception is influenced by the unique dynamics of interpersonal interactions and individual viewpoints.

Empathic leaders that focus on individual well-being and assistance can influence work satisfaction and organizational commitment favorably. It must also be stressed the importance of leaders combining empathy with firmness when it comes to upholding standards and responsibility. Leaders must walk a narrow line between empathy and professional norms. While empathic leaders can improve relationships and employee well-being, they may also exhibit favoritism, unclear boundaries, or decision biases. To find the correct balance, we must underline the importance of clear communication, consistent behavior, and transparency.

The personnel connections referenced by candidates entails making connections among team members. It highlights all parties' willingness to foster empathy. This viewpoint emphasizes the significance of active participation from all employees in the workplace, implying that empathy is a collective endeavor.

**Question 3 - Would you say that conveying empathy to your employees is something you actively seek to do?**

Concerning this subject, all candidates answered unequivocally that they actively endeavor to transfer empathy to their staff.

Several candidates express their willingness to actively convey empathy on a regular basis. This dedication and continuous demonstration of empathy correlate to better levels of employee satisfaction, trust, and engagement over time.

**Question 4 - How do you perform this active search? That is, what methods do you use to look for the transmission of empathy?**

The following major points were determined based on the responses of the candidates:

- Treating employees with the same respect one desires
- Timing and contextual understanding in empathetic communication
- Employees' personal motivations
- Personal connections
- Leading by example

Treating employees with the same respect as one would like to be treated corresponds

with the concept of authentic leadership, in which leaders demonstrate real concern for their team members regardless of their hierarchy. Recognizing when to engage in conversations that show empathy increases the impact of those talks. This method is based on situational leadership theory, which states that leaders should modify their conduct according to the needs of the circumstance and individuals.

Understanding employee's interests and goals fosters a sense of belonging and demonstrates that leaders actually care about their development. This strategy is consistent with the transformational leadership idea, according to which leaders inspire and motivate by focusing on individual growth. It also allows leaders to learn about employees' hobbies and interests which leads to engaging in meaningful conversations, building rapport and demonstrating a willingness to invest time and effort in understanding their team members' lives outside of work.

We must also take into consideration personal connections, humor, and observation as tools for empathetic leadership. Creating a comfortable environment where employees feel heard and valued nurtures mutual understanding..

Last but no least candidates highlighted the significance of leading by example and approachability. Displaying positivity and openness encourages employees to reciprocate with the same behavior, creating a workplace culture of mutual support.

We can conclude from the candidates' responses that the methods they use in their interactions with employees always seek to convey the message that they respect their employees, are concerned about their employees' personal motivations and life outside of work and seek to create personal connections with them.

#### **Question 5 - How often do you perform this active search to take empathic actions?**

The following points received the most attention in the candidates' comments.

- Consistency in Empathic Actions
- Tendency to prioritize empathy only during challenging times
- Project-dependent empathic actions

It is critical to regularly engage in compassionate activities. The responses of the candidates stress the daily nature of actively seeking empathic relationships. Frequent expressions of empathy contribute to positive emotional contagion, in which employees' pleasant emotions spread throughout the company.

Some candidates' responses also introduce the concept of project-dependent empathetic behaviors, implying that the frequency of empathic engagement may change according to project timelines and demands. While this method recognizes the dynamic nature of empathic leadership, striking a balance between project-focused contacts and continuing empathy building in daily encounters is critical.

**Question 6 - When actively seeking the transmission of empathy, do you seek to do so in an individual or collective environment?**

According to the candidates' comments, the following were the areas of highest emphasis:

- Balance between individual and collective environments when conveying empathy

While individual relationships may be more straightforward, cultivating empathy within the collective team environment is equally important, as seen by the candidates' comments. This method is consistent with transformational leadership theory, which holds that leaders inspire and motivate others via personalized attention and a shared vision.

As a result, striking a balance between the collective and the individual is critical to team performance.

**Question 7 - What objective do you intend to achieve in this active search for the transmission of empathy?**

The following points were discovered based on the responses of the candidates:

- Comfort in the workplace
- Shared understanding among team members
- Growth of employees
- Valuing and recognizing every team member

Empathy-driven leadership seeks to foster an environment in which team members feel appreciated, understood, and supported. This is consistent with the concept of psychological safety, which allows employees to take chances and express their thoughts without fear of repercussions.

The purpose of encouraging team members to understand one another. Empathetic

leaders strive to bring their team together around a single goal, ensuring that each member understands the greater vision and purpose. This is consistent with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the need of developing a sense of shared purpose and values.

Leaders strive to improve motivation, self-confidence, and personal development in addition to improving performance. This approach is consistent with the concept of servant leadership, in which leaders prioritize the growth and well-being of their team members.

We must emphasize the necessity of appreciating and acknowledging employees as part of a leader's ethical and moral responsibilities. Authentic leaders prioritize strong connections, employee empowerment, and establishing an environment in which people feel valued for who they are and what they offer to the table.

The goal of empathy transmissions is to let employees feel comfortable in their workplace, free to express their thoughts, and grow as professionals.

#### **Question 8 - What other actions do you think you could/should take to convey empathy to your employees?**

The following major points were determined based on the responses of the candidates:

- Adapting the expression of empathy based on individual needs
- Time constraints in conveying empathy
- Collective actions to promote empathy

Candidates generally identified the points mentioned above, all of which have already been addressed/explained in terms of their connection with empathy, with the exception of the point "time constraints in conveying empathy," which appears through one of the candidates emphasizing the fact that they did not always have the necessary time to interact with their collaborators, due to personal life circumstances. In this scenario, we may state that recognizing when to engage in conversations that demonstrate empathy will be the ideal answer for increasing the impact of those chats. This strategy is founded on situational leadership theory, which posits that leaders should adjust their behavior based on the needs of the circumstances and individuals.

**Question 9 - Do you feel that your employees have empathetic attitudes towards you?  
If yes, which ones?**

The following points received the most attention in the candidates' comments.

- Sharing personal experiences and feelings
- Genuine care

Sharing personal experiences and thoughts, as well as simple actions like inviting team members to lunch and asking about their well-being (as mentioned by candidates), assist to build trust. Empathy from leaders promotes good feelings, organizational affiliation, and employee well-being.

For certain candidates, empathic views appear to be ingrained in business culture. They remarked on how their teams openly share personal milestones and accomplishments, fostering a sense of support and camaraderie.

Candidates said that their teams have empathic attitudes toward them, with employees displaying empathy through acts that reflect genuine care, such as enquiring about personal well-being, inviting for coffee, or expressing thanks even after leaving the firm. Genuine empathy is also demonstrated when team members recognize the person behind the leadership role and when personal tales are shared.

So, in conclusion, behaviors such as sharing personal stories, inviting candidates to coffee, or displaying real concern for applicants evoke empathy.

**Question 10 - Finally, do you want to add something that you remember and that you consider important?**

Concerning the last question of the questionnaire, major points were discovered throughout the candidates' comments, which are as follows:

- Humanizing the Work Environment
- The Authenticity of Empathy
- Balance

Candidates underline the importance of treating people as humans with feelings and

goals rather than as simple resources. Recognizing employees' feelings and needs improves job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Empathy acts as a link that allows leaders and employees to realize each other's humanity, providing the foundation of true partnerships.

They all agree on the importance of genuine empathy that stems from shared experiences and authentic connections, which is consistent with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the importance of human connections and meeting individual needs.

While empathy is essential, the candidates recognize that its application must be balanced and context-dependent. Some candidates emphasize the nuances of employing empathy in diverse contexts, particularly when prioritizing project demands or professional development. This equilibrium guarantees that empathy is used efficiently to improve teamwork and personal development.

In this question, the candidates typically referred to issues already addressed in earlier replies, but they placed special focus on three factors that appear to emerge as the three pillars of empathy transmission. Make employees feel like people rather than resources, demonstrate genuine concern and empathy, and strike a balance between empathy and professionalism.

### **Limitations and suggestions**

The possibility that participants might later assign causality to earlier activities limits the applicability of the study's findings. Individuals can make decisions based on subconscious processing, with the conscious mind later reasoning these choices, according to research by Dijksterhuis and Nordgren (2006). One of the other potential limitations of the study is that it is human nature to want to present a positive self-image, so there is always a chance that the candidates' responses may be distorted to improve their image and conform to the social norms that are imposed, such as the idea that a leader must have empathy for his or her subordinates. People usually adhere to social norms in an effort to come off as respectable, according to research on conformity and normative influence (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004) as such exaggeration and fabrication of data are common among people who want to adhere to cultural norms that demand certain behaviors or characteristics.

Conducting interviews with the candidates to be examined simultaneously for their brain activity is one idea that might ensure the objectivity of future studies. This would ensure that the answers given were sincere and that causality was not being assigned to unintentional actions, also perhaps a bigger sample size would help to improve the accuracy of results.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of the study was to identify the specific behaviors that foster empathy at work. We arrive at the conclusion that it is impossible to compile a list of a finite number of behaviors that show empathy after conducting a number of interviews with applicants that varied in experience, industry, and age. We can draw the conclusion that any interactions between two coworkers that are similar to those between two friends in a social setting have the potential to arouse empathy on both sides of the relationship. Furthermore, it must be underlined that for these actions to have the desired outcome, they must be true and sincere.



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## **Annexes**

### **Chapter III**

#### **Annex A**

##### **Interview Guide**

Application of empathy in an entrepreneurial environment: An inside look at how empathy is transmitted by leaders.

Good Morning/Afternoon. I would like to start by thanking you for your participation in this investigation. My name is João Carvalho and I attend the Master's Program in Management, at ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

I am carrying out a study on actions that transmit empathy within the workplace. The main objective of this investigation is to identify the characteristics of the actions taken by people in the role of leader who transmit empathy towards employees.

Your opinions and ideas on this subject are very important for this study. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

I would like to request your authorization to record the interview, guaranteeing the confidentiality of the information recorded. Your individual identification will not be revealed in published works.

Do you have any questions you would like clarified?

Before starting the interview, I ask you to read this document (informed consent) and sign it if you agree with the terms of your participation.

Thank you.

I ask you for a brief presentation. Can you tell me your age? The number of years of professional experience? The number of years in the role of leader? How many people are you in charge of?

Thank you.

Let us then move on to the questions themselves. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers and that all opinions are important.

##### **Questions**

1. What is your interpretation/definition of what empathy is? [P1]
2. Would you say that your employees see you as an empathetic leader? [P2]

- a. Follow-up question if necessary
  - i. Could you explain further why you think that is? [P3]
  
- 3. Would you say that conveying empathy to your employees is something you actively seek to do? [P4]
  - a. Follow-up question if the candidate says they actively seek conveying empathy i. How do you perform this active search? That is, what methods do you use to look for the transmission of empathy? [P5]
    - ii. How often do you perform this active search to take empathic actions? [P6]
  
    - iii. When actively seeking the transmission of empathy, do you seek to do so in an individual or collective environment? [P7]
  
- 4. What objective do you intend to achieve in this active search for the transmission of empathy? [P8]
- 5. What other actions do you think you could/should take to convey empathy to your employees? [P9]
- 6. Do you feel that your employees have empathetic attitudes towards you? If yes, which ones? [P10]
- 7. Finally, do you want to add something that you remember and that you consider important? [P11]